

What Remains: Japanese American World War II Incarceration in Relation to American
Indian Dispossession

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Abstract

This dissertation examines how government agencies crafted policies that exploited Japanese American incarceration in service of U.S. settler colonialism by settling the land and disciplining Japanese American, American Indian, and Alaska Native people into distinct roles. These policies were often created by different agencies for different sites with different ends: from the expropriation of Japanese American-owned lands by the settler state, white settlers, and corporations; to the placement of concentration camps on American Indian reservations without the consent of the nations to whom those lands belong; to the exploitation of Japanese American incarcerated labor to convert Indigenous lands into homesteads for predominantly white veteran settlers; to the forced removal and incarceration of mixed Alaska Native and Japanese American families from Alaska. Taken together, these policies reveal deeply held settler colonial imperatives that undergird settler state-making even in purportedly unrelated racial projects. This dissertation uses an interdisciplinary methodology that draws on a combination of state and community-based archives, oral histories, and landscape and material culture analysis to show how communities have theorized and challenged state-based narratives of the incarceration. I argue that these communities have jointly crafted a narrative of relationality that challenges hegemonic understandings of the incarceration, which depict the incarceration as an exceptional moment in U.S. history. The narrative of relationality places Japanese American incarceration in conversation with other examples of racialized and Indigenous forced removal, imprisonment, and other forms of subjugation to show that the U.S. has been constructed on interlocking oppressions.

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Introduction

Fifty years after the Office of Indian Affairs forced Apsáalooke (Crow) to leave Heart Mountain, the War Relocation Authority (WRA) forced 10,000 Japanese Americans to Heart Mountain.¹ I was confounded when I learned about this back in 2013 while working for Heart Mountain: Why would the federal government force Apsáalooke from land that would remain essentially unused for the next fifty years only to force Japanese Americans to that land in 1942?²

I had always known that my grandfather's family had been imprisoned on the Gila River Indian Reservation. I also knew that Gila River was not the only reservation that the federal government used for Japanese American incarceration: Poston had not only been created on the Colorado River Indian Reservation, it was also run by the Office of Indian Affairs until January 1944. When I learned that my grandmother's family had

¹ The first was a gradual process that began with the Treaty of Fort Laramie of 1868 which established the southern end of the reservation at the Wyoming-Montana border. In April 1884, Crow agency superintendent Henry Armstrong forced 3000 Apsáalooke to walk 200 miles to the Little Bighorn area on the southeast corner of their reservation, in an effort to consolidate them on one portion of the reservation and dispossess them of the rest of their lands for white settlement. Around this time, the Office of Indian Affairs and the Crow Agency instituted policies to confine Apsáalooke to the reservation and deny treaty-protected hunting rights that would have offered some level of access to Heart Mountain. As such, 1884 is the date I am focusing on here. See Alden Big Man, "Crow History 1700-1950: A Political and Social Battle to Retain Their Culture" (ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2011), <https://search.proquest.com/docview/879045717?pq-origsite=primo>, 122.

² As I discuss in Chapter 3, there was some limited settlement in the area starting in the early 1900s, but the Heart Mountain area in particular was at least unused enough that 13,000 people of Japanese ancestry could be brought in starting in 1942.

been forced to land that Apsáalooke forced from within living memory of the camps, I began to compile a mental list. Tule Lake was built on the site of the Modoc War. In 1863, the U.S. military forcibly removed the Nüümü (Paiute) from the Owens Valley, which in 1942 would be converted into Manzanar. ... Leupp, a site where the WRA would send “troublemakers” for a brief period in 1943, had been a boarding school on Navajo Nation land up until 1942. “Amache,” a popular nickname for Granada in Colorado, was named after Amache Ochinee Prowers, the daughter of Cheyenne leader Ochinee who married a white settler-rancher in the area. Many incarcerated recalled searching for arrowheads at Topaz, Heart Mountain, Manzanar, Tule Lake, Minidoka. Fort Snelling, where my great-uncle and other Japanese Americans drafted into the U.S. army often from camp, was located on a ridge overlooking Bdote, a Dakota creation site, and had been used as a concentration camp for Dakota following the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862. And 55 Alaska Native people, either because of their mixed Japanese American heritage or because of their family ties to Japanese Americans, were looped into the forced removal of Japanese Americans from Alaska.

A list of bitter ironies, strange coincidences, poetic injustices? I had no idea what to make of it. An early education in American public schools and a private international school in Washington D.C. had given me an array of misconceptions about American Indians—when it bothered to cover them at all.

I admit this now because this ignorance is not uncommon in the U.S. This was not a failure of me or my education, but of an education system and dominant culture that treat American Indians as a topic to be mentioned on select holidays, slurs to bestow

upon sports teams, costumes for Halloween or the Boston Tea Party, and perhaps the occasional college elective course. At no point in my education was I ever asked to consider that American Indians are people, or even that the history and present interactions of the U.S. and American Indian nations might be integral to understanding our place here.

When I started graduate school, I wanted to take courses in American Indian studies to answer the only question I had managed to come up with: why? Now this question seems embarrassingly basic to me—though not because it’s not formulated in the way academics expect research questions to be. In a country that is all built on Indigenous land, *of course* there are histories of American Indian dispossessions and forced removals and incarcerations embedded into each and every landscape of Japanese American incarceration. As Manu Karuka writes, “To conceive of the United States in national terms is to naturalize colonialism.”³

In my first year of graduate school, I learned about settler colonialism—and realized suddenly that what I had thought was coincidental, ironic, even poetic was in fact deeply embedded in the very fabric of the settler state. I began to learn about the work that had already been done: Jodi Byrd has examined the ways the U.S. aimed to imagine democracy at Poston and the politics of reincorporation into the settler state during Japanese American “resettlement.”⁴ Richard Drinnon has shown that WRA director Dillon Myer would go on to serve a brief but impactful stint as Commissioner of Indian

³ Manu Karuka, *Empire’s Tracks: Indigenous Nations, Chinese Workers, and the Transcontinental Railroad* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2019), xii.

⁴ Jodi A. Byrd, *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

Affairs, in which he instituted many of the core tenets of American Indian termination policy of the 1950s.⁵ In many ways, his efforts to send American Indians away from the reservations into menial labor in cities reflected the values and aspirations of the policies he created during the “resettlement” of Japanese Americans in World War II. Iyko Day has examined Asian racialization in the context of U.S. settler colonialism using literary, artistic, and film analysis, arguing that Japanese American incarceration resignified exploited and incarcerated Japanese American labor as a “surplus” labor force, aided by a perception of Japanese Americans as extremely efficient.⁶ Laura Fugikawa grounds Myer’s work with both Japanese Americans and American Indians to understand how the U.S. was constructing both as “moveable” populations.⁷

Cacophonies and the White Settler Colonial Imperative

How could policies that seemed at face value to have nothing to do with American Indians come to impact them so much? How could this happen persistently across multiple different sites and state agencies?

John Shurts has shown that even policies that purportedly “helped” American Indians were appropriated—even created—to help the settler state adapt and expand. In the 1908 case *Winters v. United States*, the supreme court affirmed American Indian water rights—in a case largely pushed by white settlers in Montana to negate the water

⁵ Richard Drinnon, *Keeper of the Concentration Camps: Dillon S. Myer and American Racism* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1989).

⁶ Iyko Day, *Alien Capital: Asian Racialization and the Logic of Settler Colonial Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016).

⁷ Laura Sachiko Fugikawa, “Domestic Containment: Japanese Americans, Native Americans and the Cultural Politics of Relocation” (University of Southern California, 2011).

rights of settlers further upstream.⁸ In other words, a policy that seemed at first glance to counter settler colonialism still advanced white settlers' goals for the lands and failed, moreover, to ask for Indigenous perspectives on the case. These contradictions did not contradict our understandings of U.S. settler colonialism—rather they enabled its persistence by obscuring its intentions. The case portrayed the settler state as a benevolent guardian to American Indians—which as I show in Chapter 1 served to promote anti-Asian immigration policies and to naturalize white settler sovereignty. Moreover, this “benevolence” obfuscated the countless other ways the settler state was still dispossessing American Indians of their lands. To name one example, the allotment of Indigenous nations' lands into individual homesteads was well underway at this point and was used to facilitate the conversion of Indigenous lands into private property that could then be purchased by white settlers. Allotment, too, relied on optics of benevolence by suggesting that the concerns of the lawmakers involved were assimilation and education, while masking how these contributed to the elimination of Indigenous land and nationhood. The contradictions within settler colonialism helped it adapt.

Even when state agencies had seemingly irreconcilable goals, even when individual employees disagreed with one another, the end result could still advance settler colonialism with remarkable consistency. For instance, in Chapter 4, I discuss how the WRA wanted to release four Alaska Native and Japanese American men into the jurisdiction of the Office of Indian Affairs (OIA). The OIA refused to take them on the

⁸ John Shurts, *Indian Reserved Water Rights: The Winters Doctrine in Its Social and Legal Context, 1880s-1930s*, *Legal History of North America* ; v. 8 (Norman, Norman, Okla: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000).

grounds that it did not have the ability to take adequate security measures to do so. Even as the OIA racialized them as Japanese, it shirked its responsibility for Indigenous people. If the WRA had succeeded, the agencies would have perpetuated a longstanding relationship of Indigenous wardship and settler paternalism. In the end, the WRA released them as labor—a suggestion that the OIA made to them first. This suggests that the envisioned role for Indigenous people was not that of wards ultimately, but rather that of racialized alienated labor. All three of these tactics furthered U.S. settler colonialism—even as they seemed to diverge in their goals.

In Chapter 2, we see the Office of Indian Affairs attempt to use Japanese American incarcerated labor to develop Gila River Indian Community and Colorado River Indian Community land. At face value, this might seem to advance American Indian interests. In reality, the OIA did not consult the Councils, undermining Indigenous sovereignty and reminding them of their precarity on that land. It never considered whether the Colorado River Indian Community and Gila River Indian Community *wanted* to have their land developed or how they envisioned using that land, thus reinforcing U.S. paternalism toward Indigenous people and settler agricultural values as the only right way of using the land. And then, it used incarcerated Japanese American labor to develop the land as a tactic to promote American Indian “independence” that would allow it to shirk its responsibilities to these Communities. This also suggests how American Indian “independence” was a form of elimination under the guise of assimilation to settler agricultural practices: elimination of its duties to Indigenous people, elimination of their lifeways, elimination of their sovereignty. The WRA did not

fulfill much of the work it had promised the OIA in negotiations, proving not for the first time that the settler state could break its promises to Indigenous nations with impunity. Again, their conflicting interests coalesced to advance U.S. settler colonialism.

I have come to view these contradictions and conflicting interests as a form of the cacophony that Jodi Byrd describes in *Transit of Empire*, distracting us from the ways their results consistently advanced U.S. settler colonialism. Byrd writes, “One strategy is to read the cacophonies of colonialism as they are rather than to attempt to hierarchize them into coeval or causal order.”⁹ Heeding this strategy, I seek to understand how the implementation of policies produced certain effects—some desired, some unforeseen—based on how specific agencies interpreted and responded to—at times with empathy, at times with prejudice—the policies within Japanese American incarceration. Decisions made by government personnel vested in them considerable ability to interpret the policies how they saw fit: choosing what sites to nominate for consideration and which to select, how to define the limits of the incarceration (whether a mixed person was to be removed based on age and gender and which parent their Japanese ancestry came from; whether a non-Japanese spouse could exempt their partner or whether they could accompany that partner to camp), whether exceptions could be made and who for, whether someone’s case and interests might be fast-tracked even if an exception could not be made. In these moments of interpretation, we see the white settler colonial imperative of the settler state take shape. This imperative took form through a deeply embedded foundation of cultural assumptions about the nation-state—what it should look

⁹ Jodi A. Byrd, *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011). xxvii.

like, who should be a part of it, who had to be controlled and disciplined, whose interests it advanced and how. Of course, lawmakers might not have agreed on these assumptions entirely, let alone how they should be enacted. A law might not have explicitly demanded or acknowledged these assumptions—a lawmaker might not have even intended to fulfill these assumptions—but this imperative still somehow coalesced throughout Japanese American incarceration policy to advance U.S. settler colonialism.

In my analysis of Japanese American incarceration, some of the assumptions and biases that became evident to me included: that the settler should be white; that the correct way of using land was to settle it and convert it into private property; that white settlers were entitled to expect their lawmakers to advance their interests; that American Indian land could be taken whenever demanded by the settler state; that Japanese Americans should serve as good workers for the settler state.

These “roles” that groups were expected to play served not only to discipline members of that group but also other marginalized communities. By forcing American Indians to assimilate, white settlers could protect their own claims to the land (as paternalistic protectors of their Indigenous “wards”). Simultaneously, they used American Indian forced assimilation as “proof” that what prevented Asians from settling was not structural but rather a fault of their communities: they were unable to assimilate, lived in Chinatowns and Japantowns, were too foreign. Then, by casting Asian immigrants as a foreign invader, white settlers portrayed themselves and American Indians as mutually under threat and used that to demand the “temporary” sacrifice of

their land to prove their belonging to the settler state or risk even greater theft of their lands.

To give an example from the incarceration, the Office of Indian Affairs used Asian labor to pressure Indigenous people to adopt settler agricultural practices at Gila River Indian Reservation and Colorado River Indian Reservation—thus using stereotypes about Japanese Americans as good workers, and in particular good farmworkers, to develop American Indian land so that this land could be turned back over to American Indians after the war to pressure them to use that land in ways deemed proper by the settler state. That land had been taken without the permission of the Councils, which reinforced their sense of precarity on their own land and made them feel as if they had to comply or be deemed bad Americans unwilling to help the war effort. In this way too, the incarceration served as a tool to aid in the forced assimilation of American Indians.

The state's implementation of the incarceration demonstrated that some populations were to be confined and controlled, while others were meant to be assisted and facilitated in their acquisition of private property. The assumption that the settler should be white is evident throughout American history but to name a few examples: the 1790 Naturalization Act specifying that only a "free white person" could become a naturalized citizen, the alien land laws across the West Coast and many other parts of the U.S. that excluded "aliens ineligible from citizenship" from owning or leasing land, and the exclusionary policies that severely limited Asian immigration starting in 1882. On top of that, though, there existed an assumption that white settler land ownership should be facilitated and preserved wherever possible: the use of homestead acts to distribute land

among white settlers demonstrated this instinct of the federal government. This instinct persevered even when white settlers' lands were being taken away: the WRA waited until the crops came in to take land from white lessees to build Granada concentration camp; the agency opted to forego the purchase of a privately-owned tract at Heart Mountain and instead built a private road out to the highway just for the family; the families who owned homesteads that were displaced by the Shoshone Dam were compensated for their losses; and in several cases where homesteads turned out to be unprofitable, the Bureau of Reclamation compensated the owners—often at rates that exceeded its value—for land it had given to them.

Racial Capitalism and Settler Colonialism

Throughout this project I have struggled to balance theories of racial capitalism and settler colonialism that attempt to some degree to account for the other but generally privilege land or labor rather than holding both together. I argue that racial capitalism and settler colonialism are mutually constitutive projects that rely on alienations of land and personhood to expand power.

Patrick Wolfe holds that “Territoriality is settler colonialism’s specific irreducible element.”¹⁰ In contrast, racial capitalism, theorized by Cedric Robinson, suggests that modern capitalism was built on slavery not as a “historical aberration” or “mistake” but rather as “a critical subsector of this developing system” that could not be accounted for

¹⁰ Patrick Wolfe. “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” in *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006): 387–409. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623520601056240>. 388. When I say “remainder,” I am thinking of Terrian Williamson’s work on Black bodies and those parts of them that remain illegible and extraneous to white supremacy.

under the label of “feudal agrarianism.”¹¹ Thus race is an underlying logic of modern capitalism that continues to reduce black bodies to their capacity for labor.¹² Labor though is not the irreducible element of racial capitalism; rather it is the person. As Robinson puts it, “The cargoes of laborers also contained African cultures, critical mixes and admixtures of language and thought, of cosmology and metaphysics, of habits, beliefs, and morality. These were the actual terms of their humanity.”¹³ Labor was extracted from the person, but the person was the irreducible element.

Black labor is then, as both Robinson and Wolfe acknowledge, put in service of the settler state. Wolfe succinctly writes, “Once evacuated, the Red man's land would be mixed with Black labour to produce cotton, the white gold of the Deep South.”¹⁴

Robinson likewise treats slavery and the dispossession of American Indians as co-constitutive logics grounded in “an even older mythology, one that preceded the development of an American bourgeoisie with its nationalist sentiments and war of independence. Colonialism in America had required a different rationale: the Savage.”¹⁵ Robinson shows that this mythology of savagery served to justify both the institutions of slavery and settler colonialism. In acknowledging the roots of both settler colonialism and slavery in the dehumanization of specific populations, Robinson ties together racial capitalism and settler colonialism in practices of dehumanization, albeit ones that used diverse tactics to assert these principles.

¹¹ Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (University of North Carolina Press, 2005). 200.

¹² Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native.”

¹³ Robinson, *Black Marxism*, 121.

¹⁴ Wolfe, 392.

¹⁵ Robinson, *Black Marxism*, 186.

Clearly, racial capitalism and settler colonialism cannot be neatly disentangled to where land equals settler colonialism and labor equals racial capitalism. Jodi Melamed likewise suggests that racial capitalism cannot necessarily be reduced to just alienation of labor: “Accumulation under capitalism is necessarily expropriation of labor, land, and resources. . . . the production of social separateness—the disjoining or deactiv[at]ing [sic] of relations between human beings (and humans and nature)—needed for capitalist expropriation to work.”¹⁶ Melamed importantly refuses the separateness of “relations between human beings (and humans and nature)” that both settler colonialism and racial capitalism rely on. I hold that both settler colonialism and racial capitalism are connected by their reliance on processes of alienation. As such, holding land and people and other-than-human beings and nature together can help us to challenge these logics of alienation that would treat each separately.

In fact, the very elimination that Wolfe describes is also separation of land from Indigenous *people*. And, while Indigenous dispossession is not reducible to an issue of race, settler colonialism has used racial capitalism as a mode of Indigenous dispossession. The very idea that Indigeneity can be reduced to an issue of race rather than a discourse of nationhood and politics shows how race has served to internalize—and thus eliminate—Indigenous sovereignty.¹⁷ As I show in Chapter 4, the settler state attempted to convert Alaska Native incarceratedees into racialized labor as a mode of Indigenous dispossession. Even as the War Relocation Authority attempted to portray Alaska Native

¹⁶ Jodi Melamed, “Racial Capitalism,” *Critical Ethnic Studies* 1, no. 1 (2015): 78, <https://doi.org/10.5749/jcritethnstud.1.1.0076>.

¹⁷ Byrd, *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism*, 125.

incarcerees as Indigenous “wards,” the Office of Indian Affairs argued (successfully) for them to be treated as racialized labor instead. The construction of racialized labor served to alienate Indigenous people from their land and labor, while simultaneously reducing the political formations of Indigeneity to an issue of race.

If settler colonialism is about both Indigenous land and Indigenous people, racial capitalism is not only an alienation of Black people from their labor but also from the land they were forced to work that land at the expense of their own bodies without any possibility of benefiting from that labor. Thus, neither is reducible to one element: people and land are deeply intertwined in the extractive processes of both settler colonialism and racial capitalism. This extractive alienation also runs much deeper than a binary of land and person can encompass: In chapter 3, I discuss how property relations alienated land from water through irrigation structures and Indigenous histories and presents from “public” land. By making relationships piecemeal, these structures extract parts to separate out those that are “useful” while eliminating or incorporating what remains, whether that be labor from people; property from land, water, minerals; livestock from animals; crops from plants.

And yet, the excess does not necessarily conform to our expectations: one of the unintended side-effects of the settler colonial irrigation structures like the Shoshone dam was sandstorms that ravaged the Heart Mountain area wreaking havoc on the environment and on settler agricultural practices, as I show in chapter 3. Likewise, these structures and their processes of dehumanization and alienation did not occur without human challenge. Even as this project illuminates the underlying mechanisms that enable

this white settler colonial imperative, it simultaneously seeks to show how Japanese American, Alaska Native, and American Indian people challenged these assumptions to advocate for themselves and for their communities. Sometimes, they did this in ways that bought into and advanced the logics of the white settler colonial imperative: asserting for instance Japanese Americans' right to settle or basing their claims to rights on notions of citizenship within the settler state. But, there also emerged during the incarceration and in community-based commemorations after the fact what I call the narrative of relationality. First developed by the Colorado River Indian Community Council, this narrative challenges dominant narratives of the incarceration that cast it as an exceptional moment in U.S. history. As Agnes Savilla, a Mohave woman who worked for the Council back in spring 1942, tells it, the Council had two reactions: 1) that their land was being taken again, 2) that the government was treating Japanese Americans "just like us."¹⁸ This radical assertion of empathy from the Council even as the war was going on tears down the notion that Japanese American incarceration was exceptional by relating the incarceration back to American Indian history. In addition, they showed that Japanese American incarceration was another instance of taking their land—of settler colonialism. This narrative, first articulated by the Mohave and Nüwüwü Council at the Colorado River Indian Reservation, guides my analysis of the white settler colonial imperative of the incarceration to show how Japanese American and American Indian experiences during this time interlocked with one another.

¹⁸ Agnes Savilla, Oral History, interview by David A. Hacker, Transcription, April 8, 1978.

Relationality

My understanding of the narrative of relationality of Japanese American incarceration is grounded in American Indian and Indigenous Studies scholarship. Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark and Gina Starblanket have shown that a “relational paradigm can aid us in being attentive to power and the asymmetrical relationships born out of power imbalance.”¹⁹ Relationality is just one example of how theories that have emerged in Indigenous communities and nations, have been brought into academia by Indigenous scholars “in order to make intellectual space for Indigenous cultural knowledge systems that were denied in the past,” as Lester Irabinna Rigney puts it.²⁰

Foregrounding a relational approach centers an American Indian and Indigenous Studies lens. While settler colonial studies continues to center settler structures and, often, settler scholars, theories of relationality privilege Indigenous theorizations of settler colonialism. It requires us to take responsibility for the ways our own positionalities uphold systems of oppression. Moreover, it makes room for the possibility that there are many interwoven positionalities and calls on us all to account for those positionalities for ourselves.

Relationality is also a call for specificity and for each of us to think critically about our own positionalities and the responsibilities that inhere within that positionality. Eve Tuck and Wayne Yang write, “‘What is colonization?’ must be answered

¹⁹ Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark and Gina Starblanket, “Towards a Relational Paradigm - Four Points for Consideration: Knowledge, Gender, Land, and Modernity,” in *Resurgence and Reconciliation: Indigenous-Settler Relations and Earth Teachings*, 2018, 178.

²⁰ Lester-Irabinna Rigney, “A First Perspective of Indigenous Australian Participation in Science: Framing Indigenous Research towards Indigenous Australian Intellectual Sovereignty,” *Kaurna Higher Education Journal* 7 (2001): 9.

specifically, with attention to the colonial apparatus that is assembled to order the relationships between particular peoples, lands, the ‘natural world,’ and ‘civilization.’ Colonialism is marked by its specializations.”²¹ Since colonialization is specific, it needs to be analyzed according to the place, time, and people in which it is occurring. As Tuck and Yang write, “it cannot be reduced to a global historical answer. To do so is to use colonization metaphorically.”²²

Manu Karuka has begun to think through what it means to do relational work from an Asian American perspective. He analyzes how three American Indian authors engage concepts of relationality next to capitalism and colonialism: “Where Indigenous modes of relationship work through interdependence, colonialism works through dependency. Where Indigenous modes of relationship provide a context for individual voices to differentiate themselves, colonialism homogenizes.”²³ Karuka has argued that the drive for consumption under racial capitalism and settler colonialism means that relationships under capitalism take the form of conflict. I struggled initially with this interpretation of capitalism and colonialism as a form of relationship. In many ways, these structures represent more accurately the failure of relationship and the replacement or approximation of relationship with power as a bind between people and communities that occurs in these settings. Think about how, for instance, debt or colonialism forces people to continue to speak to one another when a relationship has deteriorated.

²¹ Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, “Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor,” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (September 8, 2012), <https://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/des/article/view/18630>. 21.

²² Tuck and Yang, “Decolonization is Not a Metaphor,” 21.

²³ Manu Karuka, *Empire’s Tracks: Indigenous Nations, Chinese Workers, and the Transcontinental Railroad* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2019), 31.

Stark and Starblanket helped me understand why it is important to understand colonialism and capitalism in terms of relationality and its failure: “colonialism is always in relationship. It is not some abstract logic that operates outside of people. It is structural, but it is also a process that is dynamic, interactive, and fluid.”²⁴ This adaptiveness comes from how people in positions of power engage with and manipulate the logics of settler colonialism to their advantage while using those adaptations to obscure their complicities in these structures. In other words, they use these structures—and resistance to those structures—to preserve imbalances of power. Understanding the roles people play in settler colonialism demands accountability for our own roles within these structures.

It also helps us to understand how the racial settler state thrives on conflict. By pulling some resistant forces into its fold while repudiating others, the state undermines the power of movements in what Omi and Winant have described as a “process of clash and compromise between racial movements and the state.”²⁵ Analyzing the racial state in the 20th century, they show that those forces which are incorporated or absorbed into the state are confined to “terrains that if not entirely symbolic” are “at least not crucial to the operation of the racial order,” essentially defusing them.²⁶ They describe this as an “unstable equilibrium” in the same way that racial settler state is expansive and insatiable. This act of pulling some forces into its fold mimics relationality in order to

²⁴ Stark and Starblanket, “Towards a Relational Paradigm,” 182-183.

²⁵ Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, 3rd edition (New York: Routledge, 2014), 86.

²⁶ Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation*, 86-87.

disempower it, in fact preserving the hierarchical, coercive, and conflict-driven basis for these relationships, as opposed to the interdependent relationships Karuka describes.

The point then, is that being in relation is not enough—we must be in good relation. Kim TallBear writes, “I foreground an everyday Dakota understanding of existence that focuses on ‘being in good relation.’ ... Thinking in terms of being in relation, I propose an explicitly spatial narrative of caretaking relations—both human and other-than-human.”²⁷

Likewise, I understand my relational practice as working toward a “special narrative” of the incarceration that centers the land. Byrd writes,

"A land that remembers is a land that constructs kinship relations with all living beings who inhabit it. ... For American Indians, who have lived for tens of thousands of years on the lands that became the United States two hundred and thirty years ago, the land both remembers life and its loss and serves itself as a mnemonic device that triggers the ethics of relationality with the sacred geographies that constitute indigenous peoples' histories."²⁸

Though this project tends to move across sites to show how settler colonialism structurally impacted each of these sites, I aim to center the land itself throughout this project as well as human and other-than-human relationships with the land. This is a natural instinct in this project because of its origins in the sites' histories, the site-specific nature of the incarceration, and the expectations for how Japanese Americans' work during their incarceration would shape the land. The incarceration experiences of Japanese Americans at Gila River, in Arizona, and at Heart Mountain, in Wyoming, were both similar in some ways and strikingly different in others. Among Japanese Americans

²⁷ TallBear, “Caretaking Relations, Not American Dreaming,” 25.

²⁸ Byrd, *Transit of Empire*, 118.

who had family in the camps, it is not uncommon for us to ask one another “which camp were your folks in?” Even as this project traverses different sites, I try to center the land and Indigenous relationships with the land.

Caretaking and responsibility to the land and to both human and other-than-human relations helps us to understand ourselves as interdependent and urges us to nurture balance in our relationships rather than, as settler colonialism and racial capitalism do, aggravate and perpetuate power imbalances. TallBear conceives of a relational web: “A relational web as spatial metaphor requires us to pay attention to our relations and obligations here and now. ... A relational web framework can also articulate obligations across the generations, or over time if one is attached to that idea.”²⁹ The relational web decenters whiteness by refusing to allow it to mediate our relationships with one another.

As Byrd writes, Indigenous critical theory “asks that settler, native, and arrivant each acknowledge their own positions within empire and then reconceptualize space and history to make visible what imperialism and its resultant settler colonialisms and diasporas have sought to obscure.”³⁰ Reflecting on our positionality allows us to understand the obligations that TallBear describes.

This positionality is specific to individuals and their geographies at any given moment. My understanding of positionality and relationality also comes from Black feminist scholars and activists like Kimberlé Crenshaw who showed that multiple oppressions can coalesce within a single body in ways that generate new oppressions and

²⁹ TallBear, 25.

³⁰ Byrd, *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism*, xxx.

the Combahee River Collective which, back in 1977, saw the struggle against “racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression” as “interlocking.”³¹ These seminal works illuminate how oppressions can intersect both in individual bodies and structurally across communities. Because of these specificities of intersecting identities and oppressions, we need to understand positionality not just through a paradigmatic lens that attempts to make diverse positionalities legible under two or three key terms, but also as an individual experience that we must all reflect upon critically for ourselves. For instance, as a mixed Asian American and white woman, I understand both that I am not read as white, but also that I carry a certain amount of white privilege from having been raised by a white woman who understands how to navigate white supremacist power structures. I also understand that my family on my mother’s side descends from white Anglo-Saxon settlers directly implicated in British and American settler colonial rule from the 1600s. As a mixed Asian woman, I understand that this shapes how I move through the world in a way that differs from my mother’s experience of womanhood and from my grandmother’s experience of Asian womanhood. As a Japanese American, I know that I must grapple with how Japanese American history has been incorporated (even if unsatisfactorily so) into American education while South Asian, Southeast Asian, and Pacific Islander histories at times are rendered invisible through the lumping together of Asian American and Pacific Islander into a social and political group.

Part of my positionality that I draw from Asian American Studies as an Asian American scholar is about “de-centering” the field of Asian American Studies. This “de-

³¹ The Combahee River Collective, “A Black Feminist Statement,” *Women’s Studies Quarterly* 42, no. 3/4 (2014): 271, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24365010>.

centering” is not about ignoring work being done in Asian American Studies; rather it is what I see as an emerging value of the field. Mae Ngai has identified a question in American Studies “What would the field look like if African American Studies (or women, or ...) were at the center?”³² Mary Helen Washington, Jean O’Brien, and Philip J. Deloria have all made compelling cases for the importance of centering Black Studies and American Indian Studies to American Studies.³³ Centering these communities is important work—particularly to a project like American Studies when the definition of “American” has too often relied on the exclusion of these groups. No one writes about centering Asian American Studies in American Studies—because to do so would, quite frankly, feel ridiculous. As Lye explains, “The Asian American ... has always been a comparative identity,” a feature that she attributes to “historical insecurity.”³⁴ Ngai explains that “the expansion of the field has led to a significant de-centering” away from the geographies (California) and the themes (exclusion and internment) that had originally defined it. Ngai also notes the increase in comparative work within the field. She attributes this at least in part to the fact that most dissertations created from 1990 to 2006 were written “under the supervision of non-specialists... Those seeking graduate study found sympathetic advisors with backgrounds in African American, Chicano/a, and

³² Mae M. Ngai, “Asian American History: Reflections on the De-Centering of the Field,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 25, no. 4 (2006): 97, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27501746>.

³³ See Mary Helen Washington, “Disturbing the Peace: What Happens to American Studies If You Put African American Studies at the Center?,” Presidential Address to the American Studies Association, October 29, 1997,” *American Quarterly* 50, no. 1 (1998): 1–23, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30041597>; Jean M. O’Brien, “Why Here? Scholarly Locations for American Indian Studies,” *American Quarterly* 55, no. 4 (2003): 689–96, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30042002>; Philip J. Deloria, “Forum on American (Indian) Studies: Can The ASA Be An Intellectual Home? American Indians, American Studies, and the ASA,” *American Quarterly* 55, no. 4 (2003): 669–80.

³⁴ Colleen Lye, “The Afro-Asian Analogy,” *PMLA : Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 123, no. 5 (2008): 1733. <https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2008.123.5.1732>.

European immigration history, as well as in intellectual, political, legal, and women's history." Decentering became a way for Asian American Studies to draw connections and understand itself in relation to other communities and fields of study. This, Ngai suggests, "encouraged [them] to draw connections to broader historical questions and to take intellectual risks."³⁵ This comparative nature of Asian American identities also exists in part because of how it has been used under white supremacy to discipline other groups, as I discuss in Chapter 1. As such, we can use relationality as a way to foreground the relationships between experiences of racialization rather than just the comparisons and differences between these experiences.

This tendency toward connection has become if anything more evident since Ngai wrote this article. In a 2015 special issue of *Amerasia*, Myla Vicenti Carpio and Karen Leong write, "The only way to accurately theorize one's 'place' is by acknowledging that this place has been stolen."³⁶ Work by Iyko Day, Manu Karuka, Ellen Wu, Thy Phu, Juliana Hu Pegues, and Gail Nomura gesture to the prevalence of this trend in Asian American Studies. This challenge in Asian American Studies to decenter ourselves, and to see these connections as a central part of the field, has moved past historical insecurity toward an asset of the field.

³⁵ Ngai, "Asian American History," 99, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27501746>.

³⁶ Karen J. Leong and Myla Vicenti Carpio, "Carceral States: Converging Indigenous and Asian Experiences in the Americas," *Amerasia Journal* 42, no. 1 (March 1, 2016): vii–xviii, <https://doi.org/10.17953/aj.42.1.vii.ix>

A Relational Methodology to Resist alienNation

I use a practice of relationality in my methodology and writing to challenge the obscuring of relationships and accountability in settler archives. Ann Laura Stoler writes, “Colonial administrations were prolific producers of social categories.”³⁷ As different agencies were created to administer to different populations, their records became not only separated by agency but also racialized as separate based on the site, individuals, and agencies involved. Lisa Lowe writes, “The National Archives[?] ... imperatives are classification, collection, and documentation, rather than connection or convergence.”³⁸ We might consider the ways these archives are rendered piecemeal as a form of historical alienation from the sites of the incarceration, the populations affected by it, other documents relating to these, and prevalent narrations of history.

Once a document is created, each agency determines what must be saved and what can be thrown away, then how to initially catalogue each document. Records can be separated not only according to agency but also through geography—with different portions of agencies’ work shipped to different edges of the country and anywhere in between. While these might keep the records closer to those they relate to, these are also subject to federal funding: like in the case of the Alaska BIA records sent to Seattle when the Anchorage branch was closed and then nearly sent to Riverside before the Biden administration nixed the plan to close the Seattle branch in April 2021. Another factor that might separate out related records is the bureaucratic imperative for efficiency:

³⁷ Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2009). 1.

³⁸ Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 5.

oversized records might be shipped off to a specific facility away from the rest of the records they relate to according to the availability of staff and storage facilities designed for those objects. This geographic separation can heighten the financial and temporal challenges researchers—particularly at the graduate student level—already face, making some projects impractical at best and at times untenable or even unimaginable.

Settler archives have bounded and reaffirmed racial categories through archival and bureaucratic classifications: the Japanese American filed under the War Relocation Authority; the American Indian filed under the Office of Indian Affairs. As Lowe puts it, “These racial classifications in the archive arise, thus, in this context of the colonial need to prevent these unspoken ‘intimacies’ among the colonized.”³⁹ These intimacies—“the varieties of contacts between laboring peoples,” as Lowe defines them—are “not explicitly named in the documents” and yet also “paradoxically, everywhere present in the archive in the presence of such detours.”⁴⁰ Even for agencies created around race—like the War Relocation Authority or the Office of Indian Affairs (as it was known in 1942)—these categories obscure how these different agencies worked together in ways that left significant amounts of Japanese American records in the Bureau of Indian Affairs records and significant amounts of American Indian records in the War Relocation Authority records. Nor can these categories account for how people exceeded the boundaries of these record groups.

³⁹ Lowe, *Intimacies of Four Continents*, 35.

⁴⁰ Lowe, *Intimacies of Four Continents*, 35.

To challenge this archival alienation, we must, as Lowe explains, “read across the separate repositories of the archives.”⁴¹ In particular, I argue that logics of race and racial classification constitute a form of Indigenous elimination that settler archives replicate through their own structures of categorization. Jodi Byrd and Aileen Moreton-Robinson have shown that Indigeneity “exceeds discussions of race.”⁴² Byrd explains, “American Indian national assertions of sovereignty disappear into U.S. territoriality as indigenous identity becomes a racial identity and citizens of colonized indigenous nations become internal ethnic minorities within the colonizing nation-state.”⁴³ Portraying American Indian issues as a matter of civil rights within the settler state erases the fact that Indigenous people belong to sovereign nations. The Indian racial classification homogenizes American Indians to dismiss the nation- and land-specific aspects of Indigenous identity formation. The very concept of a “Bureau of Indian Affairs” (or Office of Indian Affairs or Indian Agency, as the agency was called depending on the era) illuminates how American Indians have often been treated as a racialized group rather than as distinct nations with specific diplomatic and territorial concerns. Because racial classification, then, has fundamentally shaped how American Indian and Alaska Native elimination, race as a mode of analysis cannot sufficiently account for American Indian experiences of colonization.

⁴¹ Lowe, *Intimacies of Four Continents*, 5.

⁴² Byrd, Jodi A. *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism*. Minneapolis: University Of Minnesota Press, 2011, 125. See also Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive: Property, Power, and Indigenous Sovereignty* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015).

⁴³ Byrd, 125.

By reading differently racialized records relationally, we can address how agencies worked together and against one another to discipline people into specific roles in ways that perpetuated U.S. settler colonialism and racial capitalism. By better understanding how these logics of race operated within settler archives, we can see the limitations of race as a mode of analysis for examining Indigenous histories in settler archives. Moreover, in examining the discrepancies in how agencies understood and prioritized racial and settler colonial imperatives, we can better understand how these imperatives coalesced even as agencies' disagreed on how they should be executed.

I came to this approach as a way of working against the persistent erasures and eliminations of American Indians and other Indigenous people from settler archives—an erasure that tends to get replicated in structural analyses in settler colonial studies. J. Kēhaulani Kauanui has drawn our attention to the incommensurability of settler colonial studies and Indigenous Studies: it is possible to talk about settler colonialism without ever talking about Indigenous people. As such, an approach grounded solely in structural analyses of settler colonialism can perpetuate the erasure of Indigenous people.⁴⁴ Taking this as a premise, I not only want to center American Indian and Alaska Native voices and experiences but also Indigenous epistemologies and voices that denaturalize settler colonial epistemologies.

I quickly realized that nobody in the Office of Indian Affairs or the War Relocation Authority really cared about the perspectives of the Community Councils

⁴⁴ J. Kēhaulani Kauanui, "'A Structure, Not an Event': Settler Colonialism and Enduring Indigeneity," *Lateral*, June 1, 2016, <http://csalateral.org/issue/5-1/forum-alt-humanities-settler-colonialism-enduring-indigeneity-kauanui/>.

whose lands they were taking. I reconciled myself to the not entirely unsurprising idea that the information I wanted wasn't available in these archives and made copies of what I could find. But about a week before I was about to leave DC, Rebecca Sharpe, one of the archivists I'd worked with, came up to me and told me she'd had an idea for my research.⁴⁵ There were a series of cards—an old cataloguing system that the archives had used years ago and that was no longer available to the public. I couldn't look at it, but she could. If I provided her some key terms, she could pull out the cards that related to those terms and bring those down to me to look through.

As I looked through those cards, the number that kept coming up was “123”—which, as Sharpe told me, stood for “Transfer and Removal of Indians.” I had never thought to look at those files—and would have probably skimmed past the subject classification if I had encountered it on a list. Why would files on Japanese American incarceration be filed under “Transfer and Removal of Indians”? And yet, two boxes on Japanese American incarceration on American Indian reservations were hidden in the Office of Indian Affairs General Service records under “Transfer and Removal of Indians.”

On a whim, I asked for the Bureau of Indian Affairs Alaska Superintendency folders labeled “123” as well. One of the things I learned while looking through these files labeled “123” was the name of four mixed Alaska Native and Japanese American

⁴⁵ A relational approach also understands the value of building interpersonal relationships inside and outside of the archives as a researcher. I don't take for granted the amount of time and energy Sharpe put into helping me with this project. I admire her creative approach to the archives and learned a lot about from her about how to navigate archives. I am grateful for the excitement, interest, and expertise she brought to my project. This relationship—my appreciation of her expertise and her interest in my project—enabled me to delve into this project in ways that I would not have been able to on my own.

individuals who had been incarcerated. I wouldn't find a list of incarcerated with Alaska Native ancestry until much later—and that list was far from comprehensive. For three years, those four names were all I had.

Henry Ozawa was one of those four names. After I requested Ozawa's file, I began to realize how much he had interacted with other Alaska Native incarcerated—and I started paying attention to traces of these interactions in his file. He was released with eight other incarcerated of Alaska Native ancestry to do seasonal work. They all signed the same contract, a copy of which was in his file. I requested their records. His records also mentioned that he had a brother, Joseph, which was also evident in the final account of Minidoka incarcerated. But it took me a while to realize that they had another brother—through their mother. Paul Henry Ozawa had gone out to work before Minidoka opened, and for this reason was not included in the list of Minidoka incarcerated. It took me a long time to figure out how they were connected—I wondered if Henry had a wife and kids I did not know about and thus were one person. Was Paul Henry Ozawa was someone completely unrelated to Henry Ozawa? If they were related, how? Henry Ozawa's individual record did not mention Paul; the only trace of his half-brother in Henry's file was in a few documents tucked into the back of his file making arrangements for getting Paul and his family back to Alaska at the end of the war. Someone likely assumed they were the same person and put Paul Henry Ozawa's travel documents in Henry Ozawa's file instead. A relational approach treats “mistakes” in hegemonic knowledge production as valuable sources of knowledge. Their shared names allowed the archive to inadvertently point out the half-brother I might have never known existed—human

fallibility preserved traces of relationships against settler archival impulses toward separation.

Ultimately, Ozawa—and his relationships—led me to the WRA’s list of incarcerated with Alaska Native ancestry. His relationships made Alaska Native incarcerated visible within the archives in a way that WRA lists and “individual records” could not. To give an example of how the archives erased Indigeneity: some of these incarcerated were sometimes listed as “Indian” on their Individual Records, while others were listed as entirely Japanese as in the case of George Miyasato, or Russian as in the case of Costia and George Yoshida. I discuss this as a form of what I call archival elimination in greater depth in chapter 4. Having now worked on this project for the last five years and done three research trips to the National Archives in D.C., I have yet to find a complete list of incarcerated with Alaska Native ancestry in the War Relocation Authority, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Western Defense Command, and Alaska Defense Command record groups. This does not necessarily mean such a list does not exist either in the national archives or elsewhere, but it does mean that there is no list filed anywhere where I or the archivists I have worked with would think to look for it. To give you an idea of how hard it was to track the lists I have found down: It was not until my third research trip that I found any semblance of a list of incarcerated with Alaska Native ancestry. My first trip, two years earlier, had been two months long.⁴⁶ None of the lists I have found is complete: one contains 28 names, the other contains 41.

⁴⁶ I did spend significant amounts of that time also looking at records for Poston and Gila River, so the two months were not spent exclusively on this task.

Even if someone was listed as “Indian” or included on one of these lists, this designation provided no insight into their specific affiliations with Native nations, gesturing once again to the limitations of race in analyzing Indigeneity. Here too, their relationships guided my research into their Indigenous identities. A Japanese American genealogist gave me a piece of advice that has guided me in my understanding of reading archives relationally: “Look to the women,” she told me.⁴⁷ Indigenous Studies too insists on the value of women, their forms of knowledge, and their lineages. Because of the gender dynamics of the mixed-race policies for the forced removal in Alaska, most of the Alaska Native incarcerated were men. Because of this, I was in danger of replicating this focus on men’s experiences in my research. But they were also almost entirely Alaska Native on their mothers’ sides because of the gender dynamics of Japanese immigration to Alaska: Japanese men brought over to work in canneries made up a large portion of early Japanese immigration to the area. Looking at these individuals’ mothers’ census records often revealed information about their specific Indigenous affiliations that records about these men would not yield because they were listed as “Mxd” or “Japanese” or “Eskimo” or “Indian” in their own census records—all terms that fall wildly short of describing their Indigenous identities. Their mothers were their connections to their communities and to their Indigenous identities—even settler archives could not erase that.

The relationships between these families and individuals not only shaped Alaska Native experiences of the incarceration shed light on both the individual and communal

⁴⁷ My thanks to Karen Kinoshita for this wisdom.

impacts of the incarceration on Indigenous people. Clearly, a relational approach to the archives must center the connections between individuals and stories rather than using them to categorize and separate those individuals and stories. Each individual's file shares the bare outlines of a story about how they negotiated the removal, incarceration, and resettlement. The separation of each family's members into individual case files means that significant parts of one individual's wartime experience might be held in another individual's file. This was particularly true for young children or for non-Japanese spouses where their documents might literally be held in another person's folder, but it was also true in the sense that a family member's departure from camp might greatly shape someone's experience even if that departure is not mentioned in that person's file. Reading for their family members and their friends gives a sense of the network they built in camp and how those relationships impacted their experiences within and beyond camp. A relational approach centers the traces of connections between different individuals as ways to make the leap between different files and for Indigenous relationships that persist even as settler agencies erase their presence in settler archives.

Even then, the records themselves offer little on the perspectives of Indigenous people. Mandated to store government records, the records unsurprisingly privilege the voices of government employees often over the voices of the people they serve. In this way, people themselves are alienated from their own histories. As Stoler explains, "producing rules of classification was an unruly and piecemeal venture at best."⁴⁸ Stoler's words also remind us that the archive's answers are limited and that those answers are

⁴⁸ Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense*.

created and mediated through the racial settler state. The power dynamics of the records themselves demand that we look beyond settler archives to mitigate the state's narration of history that emerges within its records.

One tactic for mitigating the omission of Indigenous voices from settler archives is to draw out the questions we cannot answer to both shed light on the limitations of the archive and to read it intentionally. 75 years out from the incarceration, we are privileged to still have some who can tell us about their own experiences. But sometimes, the answers we seek are no longer available, or maybe they never were. A relational methodology treats the questions themselves as a form of knowledge. Figuring out—and acknowledging—what we do not know is an important part of the learning process.

A relational method acknowledges the limits of settler archives in telling any story and seeks out the voices that archives neglect in recognition of the scholar's responsibility and accountability to the communities they work with. As such, I also read across settler and community-based archives, and across archives and other forms of knowledge, like oral history. Oral history helps to make space in historical narratives for how communities, particularly those underrepresented in the archives and the academy, remember their own history. Oral tradition has long been a way of passing along history within communities and the act of telling someone a story is a way of building relationships. While I was unfortunately unable to conduct oral histories myself due to travel and ethical research restraints during COVID, I use oral histories I have found online to make space in historical narratives for how communities, particularly those underrepresented in the archives and the academy, remember their own history. Treating

oral history as an important source for historical projects, as community-based theorizing and historical preservation, allows us to compensate for the ways communities' voices are often excluded in hegemonic archives and in historical analyses in the academy and can help to destabilize the focus on structural sources in settler archives.

And just as a question is an important source of knowledge, so too is the refusal to answer. A relational approach also treats “no” or silence as valid answers to our questions. As Audra Simpson has shown, the act of refusal is an important way that Indigenous people assert their sovereignty over their own knowledge and lives.⁴⁹ A relational approach respects this boundary.

I carry this relational methodology through my writing process as well. We relate to others through story; as such, I often use story to ground my arguments. Story also helps us to straddle different scales in a way that might feel uncomfortable to academics. Story occurs at the individual level—each person has a story that is uniquely their own. But in bringing together these stories, in highlighting the familial and communal impacts of the incarceration, I hope to show how seemingly disparate policies and the exceptions we make to them cohere into structures; without losing sight of the fact that these policies shaped real people's lives.

Indigenous Studies scholars have long treated story as theory and I believe such an approach makes academic knowledge more accessible to people beyond the academy—a goal that must be centered in a relational methodology. I do not want to write to be read just by other academics—I want what I have learned to be accessible to

⁴⁹ Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/umn/detail.action?docID=1666608>.

the communities I am working with and I try where possible to share my writing with those communities and to convert it into other projects that might make it more accessible to them. I want this project to contribute to their own theories about their experiences and to be in conversation with those theories. Moreover, I want this project to be part of a larger conversation. No one project can hope to cover everything, but I would like to think that I am contributing something to a world of thought that will be picked up by others where I left off, and that in making this contribution we will together become part of this network of relationships I am trying to honor and to foster.

Chapter Outline

Chapter 1 interweaves racial capitalism and settler colonialism through the start of World War II to show how they mutually disciplined racialized bodies into specific roles and enforce settler borders. I argue that racializing Asians as a preferred and excludable labor force reconfigured Black people post-Emancipation as expendable and American Indians as relics of the past while racializing American Indians as a dependent ward shaped Asians as an unassimilable foreign threat. These racializations served to consolidate and naturalize white settler sovereignty. I then consider the arrival of Issei, or Japanese immigrants, and examine how this positioned them as alien labor, as well as how the Issei positioned themselves as settlers within both the U.S. and Japan to advance their status in both countries, even though they could not own land or become citizens. Finally, I bring us up to the forced removal of Japanese Americans from the West Coast

to argue that the incarceration served to revert people of Japanese ancestry to the role of alien labor and reclaim Japanese American-leased and -owned land for white settlers.

In Chapter 2, I trace the emergence of what I call the narrative of relationality around Japanese American incarceration to the moment when the Office of Indian Affairs (OIA) first introduced the idea of taking Colorado River Indian Community lands for a Japanese American concentration camp in March 1942. I argue that the settler state attempted to destabilize their sovereignty by taking their lands without permission and by bulldozing them into accepting Japanese American concentration camps on their lands, turning around to do exactly the same thing at Gila River a month later. While the OIA suggested that this was purely temporary, the implied threat of losing their lands forever was on the forefront of the Councilmembers' minds at the time and shaped their responses to the incarceration of Japanese Americans on their land. I trace the Councils' resistance to the camps and show that a narrative that grounded Japanese American incarceration in the history of American Indian dispossession, and expressed solidarity with Japanese Americans through the similarities in their forced removals and confinements began to emerge in Spring of 1942. Using a combination of archival, material culture, landscape, and personal narrative analysis, I hold that this narrative of relationality around the incarceration dismantles the assumptions of the narrative of emergency—a persisting remnant of the narrative of military necessity.

Chapter 3 examines the site of Heart Mountain as a sacred place for the Apsáalooke from which they had been removed over decades of U.S. treaty-making and OIA policies that impeded their access. I analyze the Bureau of Reclamation's use of

irrigation to facilitate the conversion of public land into private homesteads for white settlers. Bringing us up to World War II, I show that the use of Japanese American incarcerated labor advanced settler colonial irrigation and agricultural practices in the area, only to convert the site into a series of private homesteads for veterans after the war to perpetuate settler mythmaking about the frontier that erased Indigenous and Japanese American histories on those sites. Bringing us up to the present, I highlight Apsáalooke presence and resurgence at this site in relation to the establishment of a museum on Japanese American history at Heart Mountain.

In Chapter 4, I look at the 55 people with Alaska Native heritage who were swept up in the incarceration either by virtue of their mixed Japanese American ancestry or through their Japanese American family members. Using letters from these incarcerated, an early interview with Charles Kikuchi of the Japanese Evacuation and Resettlement project, and archival analysis that reads the archives for individuals' movements as well as their voices, I show that state agencies manipulated racial logics to make these individuals and families conform to whatever role suited that agency at the time, using the incarceration as a way to reduce Indigeneity to an issue of race. At the same time, I argue that letters, interviews, and movements demonstrate the persistence of their Indigenous identities through their prioritization of kinship relations and of returning to their lands.

Traveling between sites with vastly different environmental and Indigenous histories, this project demonstrates that the implementation of Japanese American incarceration policy was littered with white settler colonial assumptions that guided the

War Relocation Authority and other settler state agencies in their work with Japanese Americans.

Chapter 1

“Pioneers of this New Land”:

Japanese Immigration Pre-1924 and Indigenous Dispossession

My family was lucky. My great-grandfather, Seiichi, managed to hold onto the farm longer than many. A more typical story: Mitsuo Usui’s family owned a nursery in Los Angeles. They’d bought it for \$10,000 in 1938 and had paid off \$4,500 at the time of the removal. The family sold everything for \$1,000. When the family returned after the end of the war, the owner would only sell it back to him for \$26,000—\$13,000 for the land, and \$13,000 for the inventory.¹

But Seiichi, after the forced removal, after everything had been sold off for pennies on the dollar, still managed to hold onto the farm. It was only in 1943, locked up in Arkansas, unclear when—if—they’d be allowed to return to the West Coast, that he gave in to the pressure to sell. The neighbor he’d leased it to was demanding that the terms of the lease be changed to 75%, reporting that the grape vines were dying from Pierce root disease. Seiichi knew he wouldn’t be able to pay the property taxes on those terms. There were rumors that the state of California was revamping its alien land laws. Worried that he might end up with nothing if prosecuted, Seiichi sold the farm for \$7,719.61, with the assistance of the WRA’s Evacuee Property Division (EPD).²

¹ Connie Y. Chiang, *Nature Behind Barbed Wire: An Environmental History of the Japanese American Incarceration* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018). 193.

² Tsuji, Joyce. “Tsuji Family History,” July 2000. Personal Collection.

The EPD was constantly fielding requests like this: “will you please send me a list of the land owned by Japs. in Santa Clara, Alamato, and San Mateo, counties. When will this land go on the market? and how will one go about buying it?”³ Early P. Browne, supervisor of the division, summed up his role in a letter responding to one such request: “the land in California belonging to persons of Japanese descent has not been taken over by the Government. Whenever a citizen of Japanese ancestry who owns a farm in California requests our assistance in disposing of it, we offer the land for sale and obtain bids which we submit to the owner for his acceptance or rejection.”⁴

The EPD was purportedly attempting to advocate for Japanese American incarceratedees and their property. To give you an idea of what its advocacy looked like: Seiichi sold the farm for \$7,719.61 in 1943. He had purchased the farm in 1919 for \$13,000, with a \$3,000 down payment. By the time the family was forced to leave for Fresno Assembly Center, the farm had just been paid off.⁵ They lost \$5,280.39 off the price they had paid for the farm. They’d also put in more than twenty years of work into nurturing the land, building a successful farm that harvested grapes that they then dried into raisins.

Technically, the farm had never been Seiichi’s at all. The land belongs to the Yokut and Mono nations, which like other American Indian nations were subjected to decades of genocidal policies that included abductions, forced labor, forced

³ A.O. Sessions, San Leandro, CA, to Property Custodian, Sacramento, CA, on May 29, 1944, Farms Folder (Farms); Subject Classification 700 (SC700); Subject Classified General Files, Evacuee Property Division, Entry 42 (E42); War Relocation Authority, Record Group 210 (RG210); National Archives Building, Washington, D.C (NARA-DC).

⁴ Earle P. Browne, Evacuee Property Supervisor, to Mrs. Raymond R. Hirst on May 18, 1944, Farms; SC700; E42; RG210; NARA-DC.

⁵ Tsuji, “Tsuji Family History.”

confinements, homicides, battles, massacres, and mass death on reservations. These policies decimated California's American Indian population from an estimated 150,000 in 1846 to 16,277 recorded in the census in 1880—just five years before Japan legalized immigration to the U.S.⁶

In 1919, nearly 35 years after Japan legalized immigration to the U.S., Seiichi and his brother Masao had saved up the money for the down payment on 40 acres of farmland in Fresno. But as immigrants ineligible for citizenship they were not allowed to own land under California's alien land law.

Seiichi had immigrated to the United States from Motowatari, a village in Wakayama, at the age of 16. His father, Masakichi, had inherited the family's rice farm as the eldest son but according to family lore lost the family's money due to an unwise penchant for investing in friends' financial schemes. The other side of that story is that Japan was in a financial depression that hit the small-scale farming class, of which Masakichi was part, hard—an effect of the rapid modernization and militarization brought on by the Commodore Matthew Perry forcibly “opening up” Japan to American trade in 1853. Masakichi departed from Yokohama for Honolulu in 1905 with \$15. He then made his way to California and was in San Francisco at the time of the 1906 earthquake. His eldest son, Seiichi, worked as a hoko, or child servant, to help support his family from age ten onward. In July 1910, Masakichi wrote to request that Seiichi join him in the U.S. He thought they would make more money if the two of them were there together. Then sixteen years old, Seiichi landed in Seattle in July 1910. The Gentlemen's

⁶ Benjamin Madley, *An American Genocide: The United States and the California Indian Catastrophe, 1846-1873*, Lamar Series in Western History (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 5.

Agreement had come into effect two years earlier, making farm laborers ineligible for passports to come to the U.S. Because of this, Seiichi's employment was listed as "clerk." He took a train down to Fresno to meet his father and began working as a migrant farm laborer in the San Joaquin and Sacramento valleys. His younger brother Masao and sister Hisano joined them a few years later, around 1915. Masao was listed as a student; he also worked as a migrant labor although was able to take some classes. Hisano eventually married an immigrant from Wakayama and they had a daughter, Toshiye, in 1917.

In 1919, Seiichi and Masao purchased the land in two-year-old Toshiye's name. The previous owner was listed as a minority non-Asian shareholder, which was required by the law. The next year, the law was changed to require that the citizen owner be at least 21 years old.⁷

In 1924, the Immigration Act of 1924 looming, my great-grandfather returned to Japan to find a wife. He met Kinue Yamasaki, the 19-year-old daughter from the nearby village of Nunohiki. They married in April, and arrived in San Francisco in May on the Shinyo Maru. The Shinyo Maru was the second to last ship permitted into the U.S. from Japan before the Immigration Act of 1924 came into effect. Kinue was detained at Angel Island for three weeks because she had a parasite. While being treated, she observed the differences between her accommodations and those of the Chinese women who had been barred from immigration after the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and were awaiting deportation back to China. She got lessons from a white woman whose husband had been a missionary in Japan on how to assimilate. Masakichi had returned to Japan permanently

⁷ Tsuji. "Tsuji Family History."

in 1918, and had died there two years later. Hisano, Toshiye, and their family moved back to Japan in 1926.

By the time Seiichi decided to sell, the state of California was cracking down on Nisei under the age of 21 listed as the landowner. Toshiye was 24. Though born in the United States, she was currently living in Japan. It is also possible that Seiichi had put the farm under the name of his eldest son Kiyō, who was only 18. Though the source of his anxiety is not entirely clear, his faith in the U.S. was shattered. It is little wonder that Seiichi decided his best bet was to take what he could get.

In 1943, the family lost the home Seiichi had brought his bride home to when she first joined him in America, the only home their children had ever known, the place where Seiichi and Kinue had buried their eldest daughter, who died as an infant. They'd left Mitsuko's ashes behind when they'd left first for Fresno Assembly Center, then on to Jerome. All of that gone. Seiichi used some of the money from the sale to send Kiyō and his daughter Kats to college, which allowed them to leave camp early. About a year after they'd sold the farm, Kiyō got permission from the army—he'd been drafted by then—to go back and dig up the urn in which Mitsuko was buried. He returned Mitsuko's ashes to her parents at Heart Mountain.

Overview

My family's story illustrates how U.S. imperialism and immigration policy, as well as state land laws, shaped the experiences of individuals and families on a small scale. In this chapter, I think through a period of rapid racial formation and border

making starting in the mid-1800s. I historicize the U.S.'s exclusionary and imperialist policies toward Asians in the second half of the 19th century through the start of World War II with the ways it was contemporaneously using wars, treaties, reservations, and policies to dispossess American Indians and Indigenous peoples on the lands that now form the U.S. while also casting Asian immigrants as a "superior" replacement for Black labor in way that reduced the perceived role of Black people under the settler colonial/white supremacist/racial capitalist state to a vessel for violence needing to be confined or eliminated.

The terms upon which people were included and excluded from the settler state reveal the roles specific groups of people were expected to play in the settler state and how government agents and settler civilians enforced those roles by positioning them in relation to other marginalized groups, implicitly shaping white western settler nationhood in response to the exclusion or elimination of each. Placing these histories side by side, I argue that the U.S. was formulating and advancing a specific conception of what it means to be "American" by defining what it was not. I hold that by examining the emergence of a role for Asians in the U.S., we can see how the state redefined the roles of Black people post-Emancipation and American Indians from the peace policy through the allotment era, to define each as eliminable or excludable based on unique criteria.

Next, I analyze how Japanese immigrants pre-1924 fit into definitions of the settler, how the state excluded them from settling, and how they claimed settler identity for themselves in response. Finally, I bring us up to the forced removal of people of Japanese ancestry from the west coast. My hope is that this chapter will illuminate how,

as I see it, the United States has shaped itself through the exclusion and elimination of certain undesirable populations—making exclusion and elimination key tactics for defining what it was as well.

Throughout this chapter, I weave in and out of the local history of the Yakama Indian Reservation and the national history to show how the unique positioning of Issei on the reservation both enabled their settlement in ways that were precluded on state lands, and continued to maintain them a high-level of precarity on the lands they were leasing before the war. This chapter spans diverse geographies and weaves in and out of a structural scale—both at a national and international levels—to dip back into the individual and community based scales. It might feel jarring at times but will, I hope, help us think about the impact structures have on people, and how the experiences of individuals and communities create and recreate structure. The world after all does not exist in easily separable scales: by insisting that we consistently deal with one scale at the expense of others, we obscure the ways each relies on the others. Even as we acknowledge differences between regions and different communities, we can nonetheless make out trends that illustrate how Asian exclusion, anti-Blackness, and American Indian policy interacted with one another to discipline these populations to fit roles responding to the perceived threats of the time.

Border Construction, Whiteness, and the “Other”

Josue David Cisneros has shown that the U.S.-Mexico border “was drawn not only across a territory but also across a colonized group of people ... The border’s

crossing took shape through the rhetorics of race and gender, coloniality, and nationality.”⁸ That moment redefined what was the U.S. and what was Mexico, as well as who was the citizen and who was the alien—and depicted Indigenous bodies from south of that border as alien. With the passage of Chinese exclusion laws in the late 1800s, the U.S. became what Erika Lee has described as a “gatekeeping nation,” gesturing to how the state created its own identity by rigidly controlling its borders even as it simultaneously impinged on others. These processes enabled the U.S. to render Asian workers hyper-exploitable through exclusion and incarceration mechanisms while also defining itself in opposition to these new populations, creating through these oppositions “the very definition of what it meant to be an ‘American’,” as Lee puts it.

From the Mason-Dixon line to the constant formulation and reformulation of borders of American Indian reservations, to the southern U.S.-Mexico border and the west coast, to growing imperialism in Asia and Hawai‘i, the U.S. was solidifying its borders by determining who belonged and who did not from the mid 1800s through 1924. A year after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo defined the U.S.-Mexico border, the first Chinese laborers would arrive to work in the California gold rush, introducing decades of Asian immigration to the United States that would shape the role Asians were envisaged as playing in this country. Two years later, the first treaty of Fort Laramie confined the Apsáalooke to a portion of their lands. In 1853, Commodore Matthew Perry “opened up” Japan to the West. In 1855, the Yakima Treaty was signed. Less than two weeks later, settlers had begun crowding into lands that were supposed to be reserved for the Yakama

⁸ Josue David Cisneros, *The Border Crossed Us: Rhetorics of Borders, Citizenship, and Latina/o Identity* (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: University Alabama Press, 2014), 20.

for the next two years to allow them to migrate to reservations. This kicked off the Yakama-U.S. War, which continued on and off for the next four years. In 1859, the Gila River Indian Reservation was established, confining Akimel O’odham and later Pee Posh to a small portion of their homelands. In 1861, the Civil War began. In 1862, the U.S. banned the coolie trade as a form of coerced labor that distanced the country from its own moral guilt over chattel slavery and instead built up its imperial pretensions as a protector of freedom.⁹ In 1864, the U.S. and the Modoc signed a treaty in which they gave up lands in Northern California and moved to a newly established reservation, to be shared with the Klamath and Yahooskin nations, on the Oregon border. In 1865, the Civil War ended, and with it the institution of chattel slavery. That same year, the Colorado River Indian Reservation was established for Mohave and Nüwüwü (Chemehuevi). In 1868, the second treaty of Fort Laramie removed the Apsáalooke from south of the Montana border—and from Heart Mountain. During this decade, with a newly freed labor force in the American south, the Central Pacific Railroad and other companies began to look to Asia—specifically China—for a new labor source and actively recruited workers in that area.¹⁰ In 1872, the U.S.-Modoc War broke out when Kintpuash (Captain Jack) and his followers returned to the Tule Lake area.

These borders though were not just geographic; they were also operating at the level of discourse to define who belonged, who should be absorbed into the nation state and to what extent, and who needed to be contained or excluded. By defining some

⁹ Moon-Ho Jung, *Coolies and Cane: Race, Labor, and Sugar in the Age of Emancipation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 13.

¹⁰ Erika Lee, *America for Americans: A History of Xenophobia in the United States* (New York: Basic Books, 2019). 65.

populations as threats, some as expendable, some as wards, the state defined itself against and in relation to perceived “others” to advance its borders and its sovereignty. This process was geographically messy, and always happening on multiple fronts, in spite of rising concerns about the closing of the “frontier.” But by organizing these moments in relation to one another, we can see how the exclusion of Asians and Latinx immigrants as alien, the expendability of Black people, and the absorption of American Indians helped catalyze racial formation during this time in relation to whiteness, but also to each other.

As Kornel Chang has shown, designating Asians as a threat to the nation “naturalized the presence of white colonists in the Pacific world ... justifying Anglo-American imperial ambitions in Asia and the South Pacific.”¹¹ Laws that excluded some from citizenship while inviting others affirmed the sovereignty of the United States and its authority as the maker of borders. Settler paternalism and morality became a method of absorbing populations and acquiring their land, thereby erasing borders that got in the way of U.S. colonialism. Discourses about threats to the nation became a way to justify incursions upon others’ borders while solidifying settler sovereignty at home. The borders of the settler state at home were by no means fixed though.

The 1840s kicked off a period of American settler expansion westward, which became even more acute in 1849, with the California gold rush newly underway. That same year, the first working class Chinese immigrants, a group of 325, arrived to work in

¹¹ Kornel Chang, “Circulating Race and Empire: Transnational Labor Activism and the Politics of Anti-Asian Agitation in the Anglo-American Pacific World, 1880-1910,” *Journal of American History*, December 2009, 678–701.

mining in California.¹² The gold rush coincided with an increased determination to build a network of railroads that spanned the country, and would become another major employer of Chinese immigrant labor. The railroads led to what Manu Karuka has called “railroad colonialism,” which used state and capitalist means to dispossess American Indians. One example of this was the 1851 Treaty of Fort Laramie (also known as the Treaty of Horse Creek): the U.S. instigated the treaty at least in part to secure a safe route through the Great Plains for its railroads.¹³ This treaty established settler borders through the region that aimed to demarcate specific lands to specific Native nations and to secure the safety of settlers and railroad workers in the region. These borders disregarded the migration traditions of these nations and attempted to confine them, pressuring them to assimilate into settler land management practices. In 1868, a second treaty confined the Apsáalooke above the Montana-Wyoming border, although the treaty preserved their right to hunt and journey south. In September 1883, the Northern Pacific Railway was completed, crossing straight through Apsáalooke territory. Railroad companies’ efforts began to turn to distributing the lands they had been granted and to fostering settlement and commerce along the railroad—leading to an influx of white settlers. Less than a year later, in April 1884, Captain Henry Armstrong, who had been detailed to the OIA, moved Crow Agency headquarters to a new site and implemented policies that turned the reservation more explicitly into a carceral site to confine the Apsáalooke.

¹² This was not the first instance of Asian immigration to the U.S. For more on early Asian American history, see [Erika Lee, *The Making of Asian America: A History*, \(New York: Simon & Schuster, 2016\)](#).

¹³ Raymond J. DeMallie, “The Great Treaty Council at Horse Creek,” in *Nation to Nation: Treaties Between the United States and American Indian Nations*, ed. Suzan Shown Harjo (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Books, 2014), 94.

The Apsáalooke were not alone in being confined to a small portion of their lands: Ronald Takaki has shown that reservations were spaces for “rigid reformatory discipline.” Luana Ross echoes this: “As the nineteenth century closed, Native people were confined, imprisoned on reservations.” These carceral spaces were supposed to separate then assimilate American Indians into western “civilization” to be trained in manual or vocational labor while really dispossessing them rapidly of the lands that remained to them. Barbara Leibhardt Wester has noted, “As early as 1878 the Bureau [of Indian Affairs] issued a circular instructing its agents not to allow Indians to leave the reservation without express permission.” But these policies could be circumvented if American Indians engaged in wage work off the reservation—which did not require a pass from the government agent to leave the reservation.¹⁴

In Washington territory, philosophies surrounding land and irrigation were shifting to favor the capitalist over the small-scale independent farmer. “By the 1850s,” Wester writes, “common law doctrines governing water and other property use shifted from a system that promoted the ‘quiet enjoyment’ of property to one that valued use for commercial gain.”¹⁵ These deepening entanglements between capitalism and settler colonialism were not happening in one industry—it was happening across the gold rush, railroads, and agriculture. Thus, in 1855, in Washington and Oregon territories, the federal government attempted to negotiate—or, more accurately, coerce—several Native nations onto three reservations.¹⁶ Joel Palmer, superintendent of Indian Affairs for

¹⁴ Barbara Leibhardt Wester, *Land Divided by Law: The Yakama Indian Nation as Environmental History, 1840-1933* (New Orleans, LA: Quid Pro, LLC, 2014), 91.

¹⁵ Wester, 133.

¹⁶ Wester, *Land Divided By Law*, 61.

Oregon territory, and Isaac Ingalls Stevens proposed one reservation in Nez Perce country and one in Yakama country that would collect “all the Plateau peoples.” He only added a “third reservation in the Umatilla Valley as a result of Cayuse, Umatilla, and Walla Walla opposition to being forced to move to the Nez Perce reservation.”¹⁷ Several nations were not included in the negotiations at all but were still subjected to the treaties, including peoples in the Grand Coulee and Moses Lake regions. The Yakama reservation is now home to Yakama, Kittitas, Palouse, Wenatchi, Klickitat, Columbia, Chelan, and Wishram nations—a coalition that exists only because of the treaty. And despite the fact that the treaty stated that the Yakama confederation had one year following the ratification of the treaty (which occurred in 1859) to move to the reservation, Stevens placed an ad in the Oregon Weekly Times twelve days after the treaty was signed.¹⁸ This kicked off a war that lasted four years between the U.S. and the Yakama.

The U.S.-Yakama treaty foreshadowed changed in national American Indian policy that would be coming about thirty years down the line. The treaty included provisions that the President could survey the land into individual lots to be made available to individual members. Wester writes, “The 1855 treaty between the Yakama peoples and the U.S. government, with its provisions for dividing tribal lands into individually owned holdings set the stage for later federal legislation that attempted to transform Native peoples into yeoman farmers, after the Jeffersonian ideal.”¹⁹ As we’ll

¹⁷ Wester, *Land Divided By Law*, 60.

¹⁸ Wester, *Land Divided By Law*, 68.

¹⁹ Wester, *Land Divided By Law*, 9.

see in a bit, this policy would later become known as allotment. It was not forced upon Yakama at the time and while some members did select lots, most did not.

In 1871, the Indian Appropriations Act asserted that “hereafter no Indian nation or tribe within the territory of the United States shall be acknowledged or recognized as an independent nation, tribe, or power with whom the United States may contract by treaty.”²⁰ While the act upheld existing treaties, the act also continued in the same vein as the supreme court case *Johnson v. McIntosh*, in which chief justice John Marshall found that the Cherokee nation—and other American Indian nations because of how the ruling would be used as precedent against them as well—were “domestic dependent nations.” By refusing to make treaties with American Indian nations, Congress took this “domestic dependent nation” status a step closer toward incorporation and absorption by refusing to engage in a core facet of state-to-state diplomacy with Native nations.

But even as Congress asserted that American Indian nations were “domestic dependent nations,” these relationships were still under much contention. In 1872, after the failure of the U.S. to uphold its treaty with the Modoc, a man named Kintpuash led some three hundred followers back to their homelands around Móatokni É-ush, known to settlers as Tule Lake. This region is the center of the Modoc universe, the place where the Creator made the world from the mud at the bottom of the lake. Under the treaty signed in 1864, the U.S. had removed the Modoc to the Klamath reservation in Oregon, while promising supplies and protection from white settlers. The supplies had never arrived. On

²⁰ “Present Status of Indian Treaties” (Cornell Legal Information Institute), accessed June 28, 2021, <https://www.law.cornell.edu/constitution-conan/article-2/section-2/clause-2/present-status-of-indian-treaties>.

November 29, 1872, the U.S. army attempted to arrest them and take the group back to the Klamath reservation, but Kintpuash and others resisted. The Modoc took shelter in nearby caves, where they managed to hold off the U.S. army for months using their superior knowledge of the landscape. The war received much media attention at the time.

In 1887, five years after the Chinese Exclusion Act turned this country into a gatekeeping one, the Dawes Act enacted into federal policy a method of converting American Indian reservations into individual allotments under the guise of speeding up the assimilation of American Indians.²¹ Allotment relied on the colonialist premise that American Indians should be assimilated into settler colonial agricultural structures by dividing up their lands and turning them into “yeoman farmers.” On its face, allotment represented a shift toward a strategy of assimilation over separation.²² In practice, allotment facilitated the transfer of American Indian reservation lands to white settlers through a variety of channels: leases, the selling of allotted lands, the inheritance of allotted lands, the declaration of certain people as “incompetent,” the selling of remaining “surplus” lands.²³ Remember that less than ten years prior, the OIA’s policy had dictated that American Indians required permission to leave the reservation unless they were working as wage labor. Confinement was not incommensurate with allotment and assimilation to the settler state—both were ways of managing American Indians. Both confinement to reservations and allotment reduced American Indian land holdings—they in fact both responded to pressing advocacy from white settlers for American Indian land

²¹ Lee, *America for Americans*. 93.

²² Frederick E. Hoxie, *A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880-1920* (Lincoln, NE: Bison Books, 2001). 29.

²³ Hoxie, *A Final Promise*, 157.

by taking American Indian land. One just did it under the guise of assimilation and peace. Indeed, while there was much talk initially during allotment of turning American Indians into farmers, no funds had been granted toward training or tools for this endeavor, and this plan began to be abandoned even before the initial 25 year trust period written into the initial act was up.²⁴ Between 1887 and 1934, this disastrous policy reduced American Indian landholdings to a third of what they had been, a figure that should make all of us question if the stated goal of assimilation was ever more than just a pretense for alienating American Indians from their lands.

By constantly impinging on and redefining reservation boundaries and limiting the ability of American Indians to move on their own lands, the U.S. asserted its sovereignty and undermined Indigenous nations' ability to enact their sovereignty. As it was doing this, the country was also asserting its presence as an imperial presence in Asia—in other words, undermining the borders that Asian nations had constructed. In 1853, Commodore Matthew Perry entered Tokyo Harbor with the goal of “opening up” Japan to the West. Japan had been practicing strict isolationism for the last two centuries. A year later, with no navy to speak of, Japan somewhat grudgingly signed a treaty that permitted U.S. trade at two ports. Emigration was still illegal but that too would eventually give way to the demands of a period of rapid modernization and U.S. capitalists' demand for labor.

²⁴ The 1902 “Dead Indian Act” made it possible for heirs to sell allotted lands before the trust period had ended. In 1906, the Burke Act authorized the secretary of the interior to designate American Indians as competent or incompetent. If the allottee was determined to be competent, their land would be taken out of trust and made taxable—sometimes without the knowledge of the allottee. If an allottee or their heirs were deemed incompetent, the secretary of the interior gained the power to lease or sell the allottee's land. See Hoxie.

Of course, Asian immigration to the Western Hemisphere was nothing new by that point. Even before the first Chinese immigrants began to arrive en masse in 1849, the increasing circulation of images of Cuba's "Chinamen coolies" in the American press had begun to crystallize an image of Asian people and the role they could play here in the American imaginary. Lisa Yun has argued that "debates regarding the coolie in the Americas were intimately entangled with the impulse to define, fix, contain, and maintain the borders of 'blackness' and 'whiteness.'"²⁵ As Moon-Ho Jung has shown, the image of the "coolie" was "pivotal in the reconstruction of racial and national boundaries and hierarchies in the age of reconstruction."²⁶ Thus, even before Chinese immigration to the United States had taken off, the image of the Asian laborer had already begun to take shape in the American imaginary.

As Chinese immigration increased, cultural representations and legal policies in the U.S. "identified Chinese labor as a form of servile labor, analogizing it to the black chattel slavery it was supposed to replace," Edlie Wong writes.²⁷ American media and the press exploited this analogy to both defend Chinese exclusion on the grounds that the Coolie trade was akin to the transatlantic slave trade and to oppose it as a way of excluding Chinese immigrants that was antithetical to democratic ideals of this country. As the Coolie Trade Act went before Congress, Jung explains, "The language of abolition infused the proceedings on Chinese exclusion ... A stand against coolies was a stand for

²⁵ Lisa Yun, *The Coolie Speaks: Chinese Indentured Laborers and African Slaves in Cuba* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009). 27.

²⁶ Jung, *Coolies and Cane*, 5.

²⁷ Edlie L. Wong, *Racial Reconstruction: Black Inclusion, Chinese Exclusion, and the Fictions of Citizenship* (New York: NYU Press, 2015). 6.

America, for freedom.”²⁸ Though Chinese “coolie” labor never took off in the U.S., more than 500 Chinese laborers were imported from Cuba and China between 1869 and 1870 as a purported replacement for now emancipated Black labor. Rather, the image of the coolie—and the strong moral stance American politicians took against the institution—enabled the U.S. to rebuild its reputation in the wake of slavery. The U.S.’s Coolie Trade Act put the country in the not undesirable position of being able to point out Britain’s hypocrisy in instituting a labor practice that, as slavery defender James Henry Hammond put it, was seemingly at odds with “their noble generosity in manumitting their slaves.”²⁹ Politicians advocated against the coolie trade by attempting to fix Asians within pre-existing U.S. racial binaries but instead “exposed the ambivalent and conflicted core of American worldviews toward free and unfree people.”³⁰ From Chinese immigration to the institution of the “peace policy” to the Civil War to allotment, the image of the “coolie” “disturbed and frustrated” racial discourses of the time, reverberating across racial formations and setting off a period of what Jung aptly calls “racial reconstruction” that fundamentally altered racial formation in the U.S.³¹

Chinese immigration thus became deeply associated with a cheap exploitable racialized labor source that might compete with the formerly enslaved. Day explains how this developed over time such that “the Asian subject in North America personifies abstract processes of value formation anchored by labor.”³² Building on Marx’s

²⁸ Jung, *Coolies and Cane*, 12.

²⁹ Jung, *Coolies and Cane*, 29.

³⁰ Yun, *The Coolie Speaks*, 26.

³¹ Yun, *The Coolies Speaks*, 27.

³² Iyko Day, *Alien Capital: Asian Racialization and the Logic of Settler Colonial Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 8.

formulation of alienation, Day demonstrates that Asians “incorporated provisionality, excludability, and deportability into the notion of alien-ness.”³³

Even as numerous scholars have shown how Asian racialization carries associations of abstract and alien labor, Black Studies scholars have pushed us to see how Black racialization exceeds associations with enslaved labor. The forced separation of parents from children, spouses, and siblings, the lifelong status that constituted chattel slavery, and the possibility of inheriting that status, the physical, sexual, and psychological violence perpetuated against enslaved bodies—all of these lead Saidiya Hartman to posit that the core of slavery was not about labor but about the violence of fungibility. To be sure, a key part of that violence of fungibility was about labor: as Stephanie Smallwood has shown, Black labor became abstracted through its association with an indistinguishable type (“Black man” or “Black woman” or “Black child”), rather than with the individual performing that labor. But the violences of slavery exceeded the bounds of labor.

By highlighting these violences that defy claims to rationalism under capitalism, Black studies scholars challenge not only core tenets of Marxism but also challenge Asian American Studies scholars and settler colonial studies scholars to move past models of alienated labor to understand the positionality of Black people in the U.S., and consider how grappling with these violences might in turn nuance our understandings of how Asian racializations relate to Black racializations.

³³ Day, Iyko. *Alien Capital: Asian Racialization and the Logic of Settler Colonial Capitalism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016. 24.

The ability to turn humans into a commodity through chattel slavery translated into a designation of expendable labor that after emancipation translated more and more into pure expendability—something that a labor framework cannot adequately demonstrate. As Clyde Woods explains, “In the Mississippi Delta ... successful planters were able easily to buy African Americans to replace the thousands who died of exhaustion as they toiled in the receding malarial swamps. The plantations have been described both as factories in the fields and death camps.”³⁴ This commodification of Black labor (and racialized labor more widely) did not end with slavery—it merely took on new forms. Black people have been disciplined into the role of worker through the criminalization of running away from a job, drunkenness, wantonness in conduct or speech, neglect of job or family, and “all other idle and disorderly persons.” By criminalizing idleness and running away from a job and neglect of a job, the Black codes ensured that the South could continue to coerce Black labor. Angela Davis writes, “The expansion of the convict lease system and the county chain gang meant that the antebellum criminal justice system, which focused far more intensely on black people than on whites, defined southern criminal justice largely as a means of controlling black labor.” Mostly, though, Black bodies after the end of slavery went from expendable labor, to just expendable—as shown by what Hartman refers to as the afterlives of slavery—“skewed life chances, limited access to health and education, premature death, incarceration, impoverishment.”³⁵ The policing and incarceration of Black bodies

³⁴ Clyde Woods, *Development Arrested: The Blues and Plantation Power in the Mississippi Delta* (London : New York: Verso, 2017), 6.

³⁵ Saidiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008), 6.

demonstrates how violence—not labor—became the role that persisted post-slavery. Coerced labor was a byproduct of control—control which existed both through the threat of incarceration and incarceration itself.

We can actually better understand why Asian labor became envisaged as a desirable replacement for enslaved labor when we understand that expendability and containment are the central features of how the state manages Black bodies. For labor itself, capitalists found cheap Chinese labor as a way “to revitalize the southern economy and to counter the effects of black enfranchisement,” as Erika Lee puts it. If the point post-emancipation was Black labor under capitalism, would it not have been cheaper to just pay newly-emancipated Black people the meager wages they now envisioned for Asian labor? Why look halfway across the world for a new labor force that already existed? Instead, they used Chinese labor to control Black people, and in doing so Southern planters affirmed that the role of Asian people was to work—and to discipline Black people by positioning them as competition under capitalism. The threat of Asian competition was just another tool that facilitated white supremacist control over Black people.

The need for control over Black people stems in part from the challenge that they inherently pose to white settler sovereignty. Black people challenge white settler sovereignty because they represent a persistent reminder that white settlers did not in fact work the land—they made slaves do it for them. “Agriculture, with its life-sustaining

connectedness to land,” Wolfe explains, “is a potent symbol of settler-colonial identity.”³⁶

Wolfe has reflected briefly on how the role of Black people within the U.S. changed post-Emancipation: “On emancipation, Blacks became surplus to some requirements and, to that extent, more like Indians.”³⁷ At the same time, his analysis relies on the premise that their expendability emerged after the demise of slavery—when in reality that logic was clearly written into the fungibility of slavery that enslaved people little more than replaceable units for one another, as Saidiya Hartman has shown.³⁸ Wolfe put this even more starkly a page later: “As valuable commodities, slaves had only been destroyed in extremis.” This language of value and surplus buys into logics of slavery that reduced Black life to an economics where people were only valuable insofar as their labor could be subjugated and was worth more than what it cost to keep them alive. To paint Black death as exceptional ignores the fact that the Transatlantic slave trade killed around five million of the fourteen million people it captured, and the life expectancy of Black people was consistently lower than that of white people in the same area.³⁹ The rate of Black infant mortality was more than double that of white infants in 1850 in Charleston and Mississippi.⁴⁰ Perhaps capitalism valued the potential profit in an enslaved person’s work but that is hardly the same as wanting to keep them alive: that

³⁶ Patrick Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006): 396, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623520601056240>.

³⁷ Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” 404.

³⁸ Saidiya V. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1997).

³⁹ Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship: A Human History*, Illustrated edition (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2008), 17.

⁴⁰ Kenneth M. (Kenneth Milton) Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South* (New York, Knopf, 1956), <http://archive.org/details/peculiarinstitut00stam>, 319-320.

value disappeared the minute it was more profitable to throw a captive overboard and collect the insurance money, when a person stopped being able to work, when they challenged authority or otherwise threatened the ability of the enslaver to capitalize on the work of the people they enslaved. This also doesn't begin to account for other forms of elimination, as Wolfe notes—forced assimilation geared at destroying cultural inheritance, the separation of Black children from their parents, their forced Christianization, and the penalization of cultural practices that didn't fall under their captors' understandings of "civilization." Robin D. G. Kelley has pointed out that in settler colonial studies at times "through linguistic sleight of hand, Africans are turned into Black Americans." This move erases Indigenous people in Africa and contributes to "a process of elimination: eliminate the culture, identity, and consciousness while preserving the body for labor." It fails to recognize the cultures and knowledge systems the enslaved brought with them and taught where they could.⁴¹ Still, as Wolfe rightly notes, what little that "value" may have meant in keeping Black people alive disappeared outright after Emancipation. Instead, Black people now posed a threat to white settler sovereignty on top of their pre-existing expendability.

Because white settler sovereignty relied on claims that they "settled" the land and made better use of that land than American Indians, Black people are persistent reminders of the fact that white people did not work the land themselves. In this way, as Asians came to compete with and replace Black labor, Black people became somewhat dissociated from the role of labor. In the West in particular, where chattel slavery never

⁴¹ Robin D. G. Kelley, "The Rest of Us: Rethinking Settler and Native," *American Quarterly* 69, no. 2 (June 26, 2017): 268, <https://doi.org/10.1353/aq.2017.0020>.

became institutionalized in the way it did in the South, served as an alternative labor force that could be excluded from this country through immigration policy in a way that was not possible for the formerly enslaved and their descendants. As Anthony Wood explains that white settlers created “a distinctly western structure of racism that worked in tandem with settler colonialism. Under this new structure, the ‘whitening of the West’ was not an event, but a constructed goal.”⁴² The West tried to exclude Black populations by discouraging Black people from moving to the West. Oregon went so far as to institute Black exclusion laws starting in 1841—over fifteen years before lawmakers would draft the first semblance of an alien land law targeting Asian immigrants into its state constitution. It was not alone in seeking to institute policies excluding Black people and preventing them from settling there—some southern states, as well as Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Iowa all passed legislation “to curtail black people from settling there,” as Wood explains.⁴³ Asian immigration was then also based on the understanding of the undesirability of Black labor in the west and into the Midwest. As such, part of the desirability of Asian labor was the built-in ability to exclude and deport them through immigration exclusion laws and the denial of citizenship.

Deportation and exclusion—in other words, alienness—became a new way to control racialized labor forces. Manu Karuka explores how U.S. claims to sovereignty asserted through railroads were constructed by “Chinese workers as an alien, excluded

⁴² Anthony W. Wood, “Colonial Erosion: Unearthing African American History in the Settler Colonial West,” *Settler Colonial Studies* 9, no. 3 (2019): 397, <https://doi.org/10.1080/2201473X.2018.1493968>.

⁴³ Kenneth R. Coleman, *Dangerous Subjects: James D. Saules and the Rise of Black Exclusion in Oregon* (Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University Press, 2017), 6.

pool of labor that fueled racial capitalism.”⁴⁴ Their vulnerability and exploitability as labor depended on their being alien and excludable/deportable. Angelo Ancheta theorizes how some groups—predominantly Asians, Muslims, and Latinx—are treated as “foreign-born outsiders” even after generations of their families have lived on these lands. In the case of Latinx people, the assumption of alienness directly challenged their Indigenous heritage on this land.

White settler society used immigration exclusion, ineligibility for naturalized citizenship, and alien land laws to maintain the precarity of the Asian workforce—policies that also in practice discouraged Asian immigrants from settling too. From the Coolie Trade Act of 1862, the Page Act of 1875, to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and its renewal in the Geary Act, Chinese exclusion laws turned the U.S. into a gatekeeping nation that relied on carceral practices to exclude and manage certain population based on racist beliefs about who belonged, as Erika Lee has shown.⁴⁵ Exclusion was determined based not only on race but also through the prisms of class, gender, disability, poverty, and other criteria. Because of policies that restricted the immigration of Chinese women and anti-miscegenation laws and culture, it was difficult for Chinese immigrants to form families—an important part of how communities settle. At Angel Island, many Chinese immigrants also dealt with carceral structures that criminalized them even before they set foot in the United States. The severe scrutiny of their “cases” showed they were presumed to be lying on their application and associated

⁴⁴ Manu Vimalassery, “The Prose of Counter-Sovereignty,” in *Formations of United States Colonialism*, edited by Alyosha Goldstein. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 194.

⁴⁵ Erika Lee, *At America’s Gates: Chinese Immigration during the Exclusion Era, 1882-1943* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

with criminality. Chinese immigrants found ways around these exclusions—paper sons became a popular mode of circumventing the exclusion laws—which, as Mae Ngai has shown, turned them into the first undocumented immigrants in this country. While much of this early legislation targeted Chinese immigrants specifically, it also helped shape an image of Asian labor as excludable that would come to likewise define advocacy against Japanese immigrant labor.

Initially, American capitalists sought out Japanese labor to replace Chinese excluded labor. But Gary Okihiro and David Drummond point out that white capitalists began to turn against Japanese immigrants once they took moves to step out of the position of labor and began to compete as business owners: “Asian labor was useful to the large landholders; their upward mobility represented a loss of human capital and posed a political liability insofar as they competed with the small growers.”⁴⁶

When Japanese immigrants became undesirable in the early 1900s, the U.S. used a diplomatic agreement with Japan to curb Japanese immigration to the U.S. “Under the bilateral agreement,” Eiichiro Azuma explains, “the entry routes from Mexico, Canada, and Hawaii into the U.S. mainland were shut down under an executive order of President Theodore Roosevelt, and Tokyo limited the issuance of America-bound passports to specific classes of individuals.”⁴⁷ The Gentleman’s Agreement strengthened U.S. colonial borders by asserting the authority of the president to refuse entry to Japanese laborers

⁴⁶ Gary Y. Okihiro and David Drummond, “The Concentration Camps and Japanese Economic Losses in California Agriculture, 1900-1942,” in *Japanese Americans: From Relocation to Redress*, ed. Sandra C. Taylor, Roger Daniels, and Harry H. L. Kitano, 2nd edition (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991), 168.

⁴⁷ Eiichiro Azuma, *Between Two Empires: Race, History, and Transnationalism in Japanese America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005). 30-31.

with passports for Hawai‘i, Canada or Mexico. The Immigration Act of 1924 cut off Japanese immigration altogether—along with immigration throughout Asia, specifying that “no alien ineligible to citizenship shall be admitted to the United States.”⁴⁸ The act also severely restricted Eastern European immigration as well according to a quota system based on the ethnic demographics of the time.

Getting into the country was just the first of an Asian immigrant’s concerns. The Naturalization Law of 1790 limited naturalized citizenship to “free white persons.” In 1870, Congress passed an Act that extended its Naturalization laws to “aliens of African nativity and persons of African descent.” The Chinese Exclusion Act had made Chinese immigrants ineligible for citizenship specifically, but left some gray area in how Japanese immigrants might be interpreted. Because of inconsistencies in how local courts interpreted the term “free white person” a small minority of Japanese immigrants—around 420 according to the 1910 census—managed to become naturalized before 1906.⁴⁹ Then, in 1906, the U.S. attorney general ordered courts to stop issuing naturalization papers to Japanese immigrants. In 1921, Takao Ozawa’s lawyers argued that that ““free white persons’ ... does not exclude Japanese.”⁵⁰ Yuji Ichioka writes, “In order to go to court, the [Pacific Coast Japanese Association Deliberative Council] had to find an idea test case, both in a political and legal sense. That case proved to be that of Ozawa Takao which originated in Hawaii.”⁵¹ Ozawa had lived in either the U.S. or

⁴⁸ Immigration Act of 1924 (43 Stat. 153).

⁴⁹ Yuji Ichioka, *The Issei: The World of the First Generation Japanese Immigrants, 1885-1924* (New York : London: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1988), 211.

⁵⁰ Takao Ozawa v. United States, 260 U.S. 178 (1922).

⁵¹ Ichioka, *The Issei*, 219.

Hawai'i for more than twenty years, was fluent in English, was Christian, did not drink, smoke or gamble, had some college education, and was married to a Japanese woman educated in the U.S. with whom he had two children. He satisfied all the requirements of U.S. naturalization laws aside from the racial requirement—and, more than that, he “was a paragon of an assimilated Japanese immigrant, a living refutation of the allegation of Japanese unassimilability.”⁵² Ozawa had filed a petition of intent to naturalize in 1902; in 1914, he filed for naturalization. Unsurprisingly, his petition was rejected. His case went all the way to the supreme court, which in 1922 determined that “white person” was “meant to indicate only a person of what is popularly known as the Caucasian race.”⁵³ The Court found that “The Japanese is not, and never has been, regarded as white or of the race of white people” and used that as grounds to deny his application for naturalization. In short, they defined whiteness in this case as not-Japanese. A year later, a Punjabi immigrant by the name of Bhagat Singh Thind brought a case to the supreme court that argued that he should be considered eligible for citizenship on the grounds that he was “Caucasian,” according to racial “science” of the time. In his case, the supreme court noted, that “the statute ... does not employ the word ‘Caucasian,’ but the words ‘white persons,’ ... The words of the statute are to be interpreted in accordance with the understanding of the common man from whose vocabulary they were taken.”⁵⁴ Again, the courts defined whiteness by determining that Japanese people and Indian people were not white and by excluding them from citizenship.

⁵² Ichioka, *The Issei*, 220.

⁵³ Takao Ozawa v. United States, 260 U.S. 178 (1922).

⁵⁴ Bhagat Singh Thind v. United States, 261 U.S. 214 (1923).

In addition to immigration exclusion and the denial of citizenship, the inability to own land attempted to keep Asians in the role of alien labor in the U.S. The laborer who had to move from job to job was never in one place long enough to settle. Pay disparities were extreme: on the [which] railroad, Japanese workers were being paid half the rate of their white counterparts, and 25-50 cents less than “boys and Indians.” If they did somehow manage to save enough money to transition out of that role, they could not buy land. Oregon wrote a law that no “Chinaman” could own property into its constitution in 1859. The California state constitution limited land ownership to citizens or aliens of “the white race or of African descent” in 1879. In 1889, Washington included a cause in its constitution that only permitted aliens who “in good faith have declared their intention to become citizens of the United States” to own property. These states and others continued to strengthen these laws—making it increasingly difficult not only to own land but also to sign leases.

Building foreignness into certain populations also enabled white settlers to cast Asians as a threat to their sovereignty. Crafting belonging against an external threat—whether that be Germans, Catholics, Chinese, Japanese, or Mexicans—shielded white settlers from the uncomfortable knowledge that, as Manu Karuka puts it, “we live and think in an ongoing situation of colonial occupation.”

White settlers not only cast Asians as foreign to naturalize their own claims to the land but also appropriated Indigeneity to support these xenophobic tendencies. Erika Lee writes, “Asserting native American status [through xenophobic immigration policies and

rhetoric] was clearly about immigration, but it was also about real Native Americans.”⁵⁵

While the term “Native American” became popularized in the 1960s, the Oxford English Dictionary indicates that it was being used in reference to Indigenous Americans as early as 1628.⁵⁶ When white protestant settlers used the term to refer to themselves and exclude German and Irish immigrants, they were claiming native status to solidify their sovereignty and position themselves alongside American Indians based on the location of their birth. Patrick Wolfe has described how settlers appropriate or “recuperate indigeneity in order to express its difference—and, accordingly, its independence—from the mother country.”⁵⁷ As Philip J. Deloria has shown, Americans have used stereotypes and tropes about American Indians to define a national identity in what he calls “playing Indian.”⁵⁸ As Wolfe explains, “settler colonialism does not simply replace native society tout court. Rather, the process of replacement maintains the refractory imprint of the native counter-claim.” White settlers have often appropriated American Indian cultures and stereotypes as a way to bolster white settler claims to the land, as Deloria has shown.⁵⁹

This is evident in a piece by John S. Chambers from 1921 entitled “The Japanese Invasion”:

In the courtyard of one of California’s most famous hotels there stands the life-sized statue of an Indian, leaning slightly forward, his right hand shading his eyes, and underneath him, cut into the solid granite, these words: ‘Where there is no

⁵⁵ Erika Lee, *America for Americans: A History of Xenophobia in the United States* (New York: Basic Books, 2019), 12.

⁵⁶ “Native American, n. and Adj.,” in *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed July 2, 2021, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/245459>. See also Lee, *America for Americans*, 11.

⁵⁷ Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” 389.

⁵⁸ Deloria, Philip J. *Playing Indian*. Revised edition. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1999, 7.

⁵⁹ Deloria, *Playing Indian*.

vision the people perish.’ We of California see clearly today; the pity of it is that we did not see more clearly twenty years ago, or even ten years ago.⁶⁰

The image of the statue represented American Indians as extinct—evoking what Jean O’Brien describes as the “lasting” of American Indians.⁶¹ At the same time, the piece appropriated Indigeneity by casting themselves as under threat from Japan. Chambers used the perceived threat of an Asian invasion to bury claims to the land that superceded white settler claims, deploying the trope of the “vanished” or “perished” American Indian as an ominous lesson about the future of white people if they did not rise to meet this new threat.

Kim TallBear has written about the stakes of appropriation for American Indians: “the appropriation of Indigenous identities and representations is a critical form of dispossession, and not less important as some commentators like to assert—e.g., ‘Don’t we have more important things to worry about.’”⁶² The concept of appropriation highlights how Indigeneity could be weaponized against American Indians—used to kill, confine, kidnap children—while a far-removed American Indian ancestor (or the myth of an ancestor) could bolster white settler claims to the land and become an important part of family lore. Lauren Michele Jackson traces the roots of cultural appropriation in this country to its origins: “In the history of problematic appropriation in America, we could start with the land and crops and cuisine commandeered from Native peoples along with

⁶⁰ John S. Chambers, “The Japanese Invasion,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 93 (1921): 23–29, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1013829>, 28.

⁶¹ Jean M. O’Brien, *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians out of Existence in New England* (Minneapolis: University Of Minnesota Press, 2010).

⁶² TallBear, “Caretaking Relations, Not American Dreaming,” 31.

the mass expropriation of the labor of the enslaved.”⁶³ Appropriation then happens in cultural spheres, but it also happens politically and economically—the roots of this were evident in allotment policy. If we understand appropriation to be not just a cultural tool but also a political one, we can see how appropriation is also a form of elimination—it takes the image of the American Indian and uses it to advance settler sovereignty, thereby further eliminating Indigeneity.

The passage of the Indian Citizenship Act and the Racial Integrity Act in Virginia, both passed in 1924, reveals the consolidation of American Indian policy around appropriation. The “Pocahontas exception” of Virginia’s Racial Integrity Act counted “persons who have one-sixteenth or less the blood of the American Indian and have no other non-Caucasic blood” as white.⁶⁴ This law not only aided white settlers in “relegat[ing] Indians to existence only in a distant past” (also solidifying white settler sovereignty) but also enabled them to assert Indigenous claims to the land through their distant ancestors.

This refractory imprint or recuperation of Indigeneity went beyond appropriation: it is also evident in tactics of forced assimilation of American Indians that emerged around the same time. Boarding schools, for instance, kidnapped, confined, neglected, and abused American Indian children to force them to forget their cultures and to discipline them into manual or domestic labor.⁶⁵ As I discuss in Chapter 4, disciplining

⁶³ Lauren Michele Jackson, *White Negroes: When Cornrows Were in Vogue... and Other Thoughts on Cultural Appropriation* (Beacon Press, 2019), <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/umn/detail.action?docID=6071337>, 10.

⁶⁴ Kevin Noble Maillard, “The Pocahontas Exception: The Exemption of American Indian Ancestry from Racial Purity Law,” *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2005, 352–53, <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.871096>.

⁶⁵ Brenda J. Child, *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1900–1940* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2000).

Indigenous people into the role of wage labor or domestic labor was a way of reducing Indigeneity to race, and thus of obscuring Indigenous sovereignty by turning them into just another minoritized population.⁶⁶ Reducing American Indians into racialized labor was a way of facilitating their absorption into the settler state without the privileges of white settlerhood. I consider the concept of race as a form of Indigenous elimination that attempts to convert Indigenous people into racialized labor that can be moved anywhere—thus, theoretically, rupturing Indigenous connections to the land. Of course, the goal was not just labor—it was first and foremost “access to territory.”⁶⁷ Still, disciplining Indigenous people into labor—specifically racialized labor—facilitated that access to territory and undermined Indigenous persistence and sovereignty while also enabling the settler state to appropriate Indigeneity to serve its needs.⁶⁸

Forced assimilation tactics were also part of broader policies to absorb American Indians into the settler state, evident in the Dawes Act that turned American Indian reservation lands into lands that could be absorbed into the settler state as individual property that could be sold and bought up by white settlers—often under extremely coercive conditions. In another example, the Indian Citizenship Act “gave” American Indians citizenship—something that “in fact very few saw it as unambiguously positive.”⁶⁹ Kevin Bruyneel notes, “I have found that two distinct and direct indigenous responses to the prospect of U.S. citizenship prevailed at this time: (1) support for it as a

⁶⁶ Byrd, *Transit of Empire*, xxvii.

⁶⁷ Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” 388.

⁶⁸ Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” 388.

⁶⁹ Kevin Bruyneel, “Challenging American Boundaries: Indigenous People and the ‘Gift’ of U.S. Citizenship,” *Studies in American Political Development* 18, no. 1 (April 2004): 30–43, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0898588X04000021>, 30.

just measure to secure the longstanding political identity of indigenous people in America; and (2) outright rejection of it in the name of tribal sovereignty and citizenship.”⁷⁰

In the Canadian context, Sunera Thobani has written about how citizenship within the settler state attempted to foreclose Indigenous sovereignty and citizenship to Indigenous nations in the Canadian context: “The category citizen, born from the genocidal violence of colonization, exists in a dialectical relation with its Other, the Indian, for whom the emergence of this citizenship was deadly, not emancipatory.”⁷¹ As such, the U.S. used citizenship to erase Indigenous sovereignty by absorbing them into the fold and by reducing their political and diplomatic issues to internal issues of civil rights and race.

On top of advancing a narrative of American Indian inclusion in the settler state that harmed Indigenous sovereignty, American Indian citizenship was severely limited as well—it did not even necessarily include voting rights, which were granted or refused by the state in which they resided. For example, Arizona—which is where more than 30,000 people of Japanese ancestry were incarcerated at Gila River, Poston, and Leupp—did not extend the right to vote to American Indians whose lands were within its borders until 1948, three years after the camps were dismantled.

The settler state used forced assimilation and absorption policies to claim a parental—and thus kin-like—relationship with American Indians by portraying the

⁷⁰ Bruyneel, “Challenging American Boundaries,” 30.

⁷¹ Sunera Thobani, *Exalted Subjects: Studies in the Making of Race and Nation in Canada* (University of Toronto Press, 2007), 74.

president as the “Great Father,” using this relationship to justify attempts to “educate” or forcibly assimilate American Indians under the guise of knowing what’s best as that paternalist figure. Asian unassimilability and foreignness became evidence of a common threat that justified white settler paternalism toward American Indians, as I discuss in chapters 2 and 4. At the same time, Frederic Hoxie has argued that American Indian assimilation served then as proof of the democratic potential of this country, even as anti-Asian and anti-Black prejudice threatened to reveal that it was not the enlightened, liberal and democratic nation it depicted itself as. According to settler logics, if American Indians could be absorbed into the nation, the nation itself was not racist—the fault lay in these other unassimilable groups.⁷²

Bruyneel has noted that Congress passed the Indian Citizenship Act just one week after the Immigration Act of 1924, suggesting how the racial state was forming itself in relation to the Indian and the alien simultaneously, using each to serve its needs. Bruyneel has shown that the Immigration Act of 1924 did not just affect Asian and Southern European immigration to the U.S.—it also “had an immediate impact on upon indigenous political identity, which involved a direct imposition of colonial political boundaries upon indigenous tribes and their citizens.”⁷³ In fact, Tuscarora Chief Clinton Rickard observed that Asians were not the only ones excluded: “Orientals and North American Indians coming into the United States from Canada were excluded.”⁷⁴

⁷² Hoxie, *A Final Promise*, 33-39.

⁷³ Bruyneel, “Challenging American Boundaries,” 39.

⁷⁴ Quoted in Bruyneel, “Challenging American Boundaries,” 39.

As we have seen, the state used the emergence of the Asian racialization to discipline Black and Indigenous people into racial roles as well—and in the process, defined belonging and inclusion against all three. Meanwhile, these policies facilitated access to property for white settlers. In the 1820s, Daniel Dupre has shown, white settlers in the west “lay claim to federal largesse by conflating their private ambitions and struggles with the national interests of settlement and expansion.”⁷⁵ But the state also constructed this impression that the state was meant to assist them in their private ambitions through policies that offered credit to prospective settlers before the Panic of 1819, and the follow-up efforts to bail out settlers who could not pay off their debt on the lands they had purchased. Consider these efforts to facilitate settlement in contrast to the alien land laws and the Jim Crow laws, which stand in stark contrast to the ways the state itself has also created and sustained itself through the expansion white settlement.

In 1841, Congress used the Preemption Act of 1841 to define the settler as white when it created a law to enable squatters to buy up to 160 acres of land at the minimum price to “every person being the head of a family, or widow, or single man over the age of twenty-one years, and being a citizen of the United States, or having filed his declaration of intention to become a citizen, as required by the naturalization laws.”⁷⁶ This explicitly excluded non-white immigrants who were unable to “file his declaration of intention to become a citizen” under the Naturalization Act of 1790 and Black people who were not at that point considered citizens of the United States, regardless of whether

⁷⁵ Daniel Dupre, “Frontiers Knit Together and Unraveled: The Rhetoric of Land Relief in an Age of Boom and Bust,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 40, no. 4 (2020): 682, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jer.2020.0095>.

⁷⁶ Preemption Act of 1841 (5 Stat. 453).

they were free or enslaved. Moreover, it sanctioned illegal land theft by white settlers by not penalizing squatters who settled before the land became open to the public.⁷⁷ In fact, by allowing them to acquire the homesteads they had stolen, Congress demonstrated that the state would actually assist white settlers who broke the law.

In 1862, the Homestead Act took this a step further by making it possible for settlers to acquire a tract of public land—which might more accurately be termed dispossessed Indigenous land—by keeping a residence on the site for five years and making specified improvements or by a combination of six months’ residence and improvement and a fee of \$1.25 per acre.⁷⁸ Scholars have long noted that the latter stipulation enabled land monopolies across the west that impeded the seeming purpose of the act: “to promote a large number of relatively small landowners who would retain title to the land and cultivate it.”⁷⁹ Richard Overton noted back in 1946 that “during the period from 1862 to 1891, rapid disposal was the prime object of Federal land legislation.”⁸⁰ This calls into question the premise that individual white settlement was ever the goal—rather it suggests that the goal was rapid American Indian dispossession. This hypothesis is supported by the ways the settler state granted land to railroads: between 1850 and

⁷⁷ Thomas Riggs, ed., “Preemption Act of 1841,” in *Gale Encyclopedia of U.S. Economic History*, 2nd ed., vol. 2 (Farmington Hills, MI: Gale, 2015), 1047.

⁷⁸ Aaron Sakolski, “Public Domain since the Homestead Act,” in *Land Tenure and Land Taxation in America*, vol. 1, 1957, 136, <https://heinonline.org/HOL/P?h=hein.beal/Indtnre0001&i=148>.

⁷⁹ Sakolski, “Public Domain since the Homestead Act,” 136-7.

⁸⁰ Richard C. Overton, “Westward Expansion since the Homestead Act,” in *The Growth of the American Economy: An Introduction to the Economic History of the United States*, ed. Harold F. Williamson (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1946), 373, <https://heinonline.org/HOL/P?h=hein.tera/grameinh0001&i=3>.

1871, the federal government distributed 130,000,000 acres to railroads.⁸¹ As Sean Kammer puts it, “Whereas Congress intended the railroad land grants to serve as a means to the end of railroad construction and the settlement of the federal government’s expansive public domain, the railroads came to see them as an end in themselves: as independent sources of wealth and power.”⁸² Although Kammer’s analysis of this as a rapid disposal of the “public domain” elides the significance that this played in American Indian dispossession, his point about consolidating wealth and land in railroad companies through the conveyance of land as property reinforces that Congress was using land grants to convert Indigenous lands into private property quickly. Moreover, it suggests that settler colonization of the west was better served by railroads—with their ability to rapidly transport American military and to sell the lands they had been granted for a profit—than by individual homesteaders. By privatizing the land quickly, rather than widely, the federal government created new claims on the land regardless of whether anyone intended to live on those lands. It facilitated the transformation of Indigenous land into property.

Robert Nichols has shown that “dispossession has come to name a unique historical process, one in which property is generated under conditions that require divestment and alienation from those who appear, only retroactively, as its original owners.”⁸³ In other words, the creation of land and territory as property—a concept that is

⁸¹ Sean M. Kammer, “Railroad Land Grants in an Incongruous Legal System: Corporate Subsidies, Bureaucratic Governance, and Legal Conflict in the United States, 1850–1903,” *Law and History Review* 35, no. 2 (May 2017): 392, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0738248017000049>.

⁸² Kammer, “Railroad Land Grants,” 391–392.

⁸³ Robert Nichols, “Theft Is Property! The Recursive Logic of Dispossession,” *Political Theory* 46, no. 1 (February 1, 2018): 1, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0090591717701709>.

theoretically grounded in European epistemologies—can only come about through the alienation of land from Indigenous people. In this way, European ideas about land “ownership” as property become a method of alienating indigenous people from their lands. In suggesting that dispossession is in many respects a form of alienation, Nichols draws a connection between settler colonialism and capitalism.

As these lands became privatized, it would become more difficult to turn these lands into the individual homesteads envisaged by the act—and more capital would be required to do so. The class dimensions of this would have become an additional hoop through which to jump for white settlers, but for newly emancipated Black Americans in particular it would have foreclosed the possibility altogether. After the 14th amendment gave them citizenship, Black Americans were technically eligible as homesteaders under act. But the vast majority would not have the capital to travel to the homestead—let alone to make it for the first two or three years until the farm became productive.⁸⁴ Add to that the fact that they’d lost six years on the Homestead Act, during which time land monopolies had begun to take hold, and as such would have had fewer opportunities to acquire land through the Homestead Act and have been more likely to have to buy land if they wanted to farm, in yet another financial burden impeding Black homesteading.

The historiography around the Homestead Act makes it clear that white people were the envisioned settlers of the west. In 1946, the same year the last Japanese Americans were released from Tule Lake, Overton (who had also pointed out that the

⁸⁴ Jacob K. Friefeld, Mikal Brotnov Eckstrom, and Richard Edwards, “African American Homesteader ‘Colonies’ in the Settling of the Great Plains,” *Great Plains Quarterly* 39, no. 1 (2019): 11–37, <https://doi.org/10.1353/gpq.2019.0001>.

Homesteading Act facilitated rapid expansion not homesteading) challenged the extent to which Turner's frontier had in fact closed on the grounds of high rates of white settler population expansion that had moved the "geographical center of population . . . westward."⁸⁵ He explained, "the so-called birth-residence index of native white population reveals that since 1860 there has been a consistent and continuing net westward movement originating in the New England, Mid Atlantic, and East North Central States."⁸⁶ His casual and uncritical inclusion of racial metrics for settlement demonstrates the assumption that white people were the only settlers. He also completely failed to account for the possibility that some people might have been traveling eastward to the Pacific coast. This becomes even more evident because he excluded from his comparative analysis of the U.S.-born to foreign born population: "the Deep South, where racial considerations make comparisons inapplicable."⁸⁷ The implication of course was that the high rate of U.S.-born Black people would have skewed this ratio—and indicates the desirability of their exclusion from our understanding of the settler.

Overton encapsulated white anxieties over the dwindling amount of public land available for white settlement. A decade later, Aaron Sakolski expressed similar anxieties in his analysis of the Homestead Act:

Despite the abundance of land, which Thomas Jefferson said would be enough for all for many generations to come, there still is in America, in large numbers, 'the landless man.' . . . The 'land question' may be ignored economically and politically for some time to come, but it is bound to be a disturbance in the future unless proper action is taken to solve it.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Overton, "Westward Expansion since the Homestead Act," 347.

⁸⁶ Overton, "Westward Expansion since the Homestead Act," 347.

⁸⁷ Overton, "Westward Expansion since the Homestead Act," 348.

⁸⁸ Sakolski, "Public Domain since the Homestead Act," 144.

These anxieties reveal the extent to which white American settler identity has been constructed through agriculture and settlement of the land and that those anxieties did not go away just because homesteading had ceased to be a primary motivator of westward settler migration. A decade earlier Overton suggested that the primary movement westward was no longer agricultural but industrial. Salkowski's concern shows that such an analysis failed to account for the role that homesteading and settlement played in creating identity and belonging for settlers. Dupre writes, "Those tropes of wilderness and cultivation were reminders of the centrality of settlers in the national project of territorial expansion."⁸⁹ But perhaps settlers were not just central to territorial expansion, but also to the nation. The centrality of settlement to American settler identity may explain why the Department of the Interior continued to create opportunities for homesteads during and after World War II, even though Congress and the public had begun prioritizing conservation of land, forests, and water.⁹⁰

Clearly, white settlement was a means of settler nation-building; while non-white people were managed and confined in ways that positioned these groups to facilitate white settler claims to land and labor. The conversion of Indigenous lands into public lands and then into private property dispossessed Indigenous people while also facilitating claims to those lands for settlers—but only those who were desired as settlers. Alien land laws, Jim Crow laws, and redlining demonstrated how laws cast a vision of some people as settlers and others as populations that needed to be controlled.

⁸⁹ Daniel Dupre, "Frontiers Knit Together and Unraveled: The Rhetoric of Land Relief in an Age of Boom and Bust," *Journal of the Early Republic* 40, no. 4 (2020): 679, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jer.2020.0095>.

⁹⁰ Brian Q. Cannon, *Reopening the Frontier: Homesteading in the Modern West* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2009), 6.

The Issei and the Settler

On February 19, 1942, 110 leases on the Yakama Indian Reservation belonged to Japanese Americans, and the sheriff's office of Yakima County had gathered 150 local officers to raid and search each one. The sheriff called the Federal Bureau of Investigation for its approval and was "definitely informed that the Bureau in no way approves such raids and in no way will sanction them," as J. Edgar Hoover later wrote in a memorandum to the attorney general.

This was not the first time that the Japanese American tenants on the Yakima reservation had faced trouble from their white neighbors. The first Japanese immigrants had arrived in the area in 1891 mostly as farm labor. As early as 1907, six Issei working for the Northern Pacific Railway near Wapato, a town on the Yakama reservation, had been threatened by "white youths." The first leases to Japanese immigrants had been signed a year earlier.⁹¹ The reason Carr could make those first leases for Japanese immigrants in 1906 was because of the allotment of the Yakama reservation, which as we saw earlier preceded national allotment policy. Article 6 of the 1855 treaty between the Yakima and the U.S. permitted the creation of lots of 200 acres. The Dawes Act, which dictated that reservations were to be split into individual lots of 80 acres of farm land or 160 acres of grazing land, sped up that process in the late 1880s. In 1892, a special agent of the OIA, John Rankin, assigned the first allotments under the Dawes Act on the

⁹¹ Gail M. Nomura, "Becoming 'Local' Japanese: Issei Adaptive Strategies on the Yakama Indian Reservation, 1906-1923," in *Nikkei in the Pacific Northwest*, ed. Louis Fiset and Gail M. Nomura, Japanese Americans and Japanese Canadians in the Twentieth Century (University of Washington Press, 2005), 44, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvct01ht.6>.

Yakama reservation. The Dawes Act also enabled the OIA to secure leases on these allotments—which enabled Japanese immigrants to lease land on the reservation.

It was extremely difficult for Japanese immigrants to get leases in Washington state at the time. Issei dealt with the prejudices of individual landowners, as well as restrictions on the length of the lease. But the Yakama reservation, particularly before irrigation programs instituted by the federal government, was not particularly desirable land for white settlers. Gail Nomura has explained that the Office of Indian Affairs was willing to rent larger amounts of uncultivated land at low prices because of the “shortage of farmers.”⁹² Nikkei were also less likely to face anti-Asian prejudice because they only had to deal with one superintendent, rather than “individual, often racist landowners.” Don M. Carr, Yakama Indian Affairs Superintendent from 1912 to 1923, was even accused of having “given the Japs preference to the white man” according to a 1919 letter to the editor in the *Seattle Star*. The writer, an F.V.W. from Yakima County, wrote, “Mr. Carr also adds that in the near future he will have this entire region leased to the Japanese.”⁹³ The writer did not provide any time or location in which this alleged conversation occurred, but Carr was willing to lease land to people of Japanese ancestry and faced personal and professional backlash for this. Still, Issei were always a small minority of the lessees in the region.

This localized anti-Japanese sentiment was part of a nationwide wave that led to the San Francisco school policy that segregated Japanese students from white students—a

⁹² Nomura, “Becoming ‘Local’ Japanese.”

⁹³ F.V.W. “Letter to the Editor: A Serious Charge.” *The Seattle Star*, Published by E.H. Wells & Co., August 30, 1919. Library of Congress. <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn87093407/1919-08-30/ed-1/seq-6/>.

catalyst for the Gentlemen's Agreement. In Wapato, the Japanese consul intervened, and the company to ask the Yakima County sheriff for protection.⁹⁴

The anti-Japanese prejudice on the Yakima reservation was both part of a wider trend on the west coast, and also extremely specific to the site as a reservation that had undergone allotment in Washington state. As such, it is uniquely positioned to help us understand how Asian racialization and American Indian dispossession occurred in tandem and built off one another. In this section, I begin by examining the concept of the settler and the different definitions available for it. I then examine the Issei in relation to these definitions: why they came, what factors mitigated their settlement, and why they stayed. I weave in the experiences of Issei, both on the Yakama reservation and off, to show how their precarious positioning in the settler state undermined their ability to settle, but also how they exploited the imagery of the pioneer to claim belonging in ways that reinforced their complicity in the settler state.

Patrick Wolfe writes, "settler colonizers come to stay." This definition connotes the importance of the act of the arrival as a choice—"they come" rather than "are brought" or are "forced to come." It also suggests that the choice to come involves an intention to stay—a goal or a dream for themselves and their descendants.

The Issei challenge the boundaries of this definition. Many Issei, including my own great-grandparents, did not come with any notion that they were going to stay. James Nishimura's grandfather, for instance, "came to this country before the turn of the century, as many did, I'm sure [to] make money here and go home and reclaim what he

⁹⁴ Thomas Heuterman, *The Burning Horse: The Japanese-American Experience in the Yakima Valley 1920-1942* (Cheney, Wash: Carnegie Mellon University Press, 1995), 7.

had lost. Never happened.”⁹⁵ Some did come with an idea of remaining permanently in the U.S. but they were not in the majority. The idea that settlers come to stay puts a lot of emphasis on the intention behind their arrival and on the moment of arrival itself. This definition replicates ideas about individualism deeply embedded in western culture. It does not account for the circumstances and pressures that shaped their decision to leave or those they encountered once they arrived, the evolution of thinking that might occur upon arrival, or their impact upon Indigenous people.

I separate Wolfe’s definition into two separate decisions, to come and to stay, that might occur across decades or even across generations. But in addition to grappling with settlers’ intentions and decisions, it’s also worth considering the circumstances under which people left their home countries and arrived in a new one, as well as the circumstances encountered while living here. Under what conditions, what influences, did they decide to stay? Or, did the circumstances under which they decided to stay also foreclose the ability to return?

Wolfe’s definition of the settler is not that of the settler state. Were the U.S. settler state to define the settler, the concept might be much more closely tied to citizenship, and specifically white settler citizenship. As Thobani astutely points out, the institution of citizenship is instrumental in Indigenous dispossession as a form of investment in the settler state. Citizenship dictates how long a person can stay, whether their family can come into the country and if they can stay, the jobs that are open to them, their ability to have a say in the direction/governance of the country, and their ability to own land. But

⁹⁵ Nishimura, Segment 2.

citizenship does not in practice operate this way for many—the state has mitigated the ability of some citizens to access some of these tenets of citizenship/settling, gesturing to what Yen Le Espiritu terms “differential inclusion.” Differential inclusion refers to “a process whereby a group of people is deemed integral to the nation, but integral only or precisely because of their designated subordinate standing.”⁹⁶ Inclusion, or citizenship, has not been used to protect the rights of these groups but rather to manage them by keeping them invested in the *possibility* of inclusion. This possibility does not exist for Indigenous people because of the ways inclusion/exclusion discourses “further reinscribe the original colonial injury,” as Byrd has noted.⁹⁷

My point here is not that the settler state—any settler state—should be allowed to define the settler; I strongly believe that it should not. Nor do I want to attempt to redefine the settler. Trask writes, “Our indigenous origin enables us to define what and who is indigenous, and what and who is not indigenous.”⁹⁸ Likewise, that positionality enables Indigenous people to define the settler with a clarity of vision that might be obscured for non-Native people due to whatever privilege the settler state has bestowed upon us to secure our continued investment in its structure. But I would urge anyone undertaking such a task to account for the vast diversity within the Asian American population and the historical and spatial specificities that have shifted Asians here—to do

⁹⁶ Yen Le Espiritu, *Home Bound: Filipino American Lives across Cultures, Communities, and Countries* (University of California Press, 2003).

⁹⁷ Byrd, *Transit of Empire*, xxiii.

⁹⁸ Haunani-Kay Trask, “Settlers of Color and ‘Immigrant’ Hegemony: ‘Locals’ in Hawai’i,” *Amerasia Journal* 26, no. 2 (January 1, 2000): 6. <https://doi.org/10.17953/amer.26.2.b31642r221215k7k>.

less would buy into the racial logics that Asians do face, even as it undermines settler colonial logics.

The Issei were neither allowed to become citizens through 1952 nor to own land in many states. The U.S. quickly began limiting their immigration as well, suggesting yet again how the state's definition of the settler might differ from those in American Indian and Indigenous Studies and Settler Colonial Studies. This differentiation between the way the state defines the settler and the way people can structurally function as settlers without the state's buy-in leaves considerable room for misunderstanding.

It is also worth considering that the U.S. was not the only state attempting to define the settler—Japan had its own conceptions of the settler and how emigration to the U.S. fit into those conversations. There are three terms that Azuma defines that relate to the idea of the emigrant/settler: *dekasegi*, which translates loosely to sojourner; *imin*, which refers to emigrants generally; and *shokumin*, which is what Azuma identifies as the synonym for settler. Azuma notes however that *shokumin* connotes a higher purpose to the Japanese settler in which they did not just come to stay, but also came to settle for Japan. *Dekasegi* and other *imin* were stigmatized in Japan because they were thought to be migrating for personal gain rather than for the nation. Fukuzawa Yukichi, one of the early advocates for Japanese emigration, limited his ideas about *shokumin* to “people of warrior background” and mocked “common people of rural origin...as lacking national consciousness and modern sensibilities.”⁹⁹

⁹⁹ Eijichiro Azuma, *Between Two Empires: Race, History, and Transnationalism in Japanese America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 21.

The terms shokumin and settler do not neatly map onto one another. Shokumin settle as agents of the state, but, U.S. and capitalist connotations of the term settler in fact highlight the importance of personal gain as a motive for settling—not the importance of the state. As such, the American settler could include both shokumin and some imin who intended to stay or did stay. But the term dekasegi or sojourner, highlights the intention to return to Japan that many early immigrants espoused. In 1909, the Japanese consul calculated that of the 88,000 Issei living on the west coast about 88.5% were laborers, 9% were “small-scale settler-entrepreneurs and agriculturists,” and 2.5% were educated “professionals, literati, and other social leaders.”¹⁰⁰ This means that at least 88.5% of the Japanese population in the United States was dekasegi— Azuma’s sources also echo this vision that they would “make a bundle of money” and come home to their home villages to build a “tile-roofed house.”¹⁰¹

Numerous Nisei have affirmed this narrative in Densho oral histories. Ted Hamachi explained that his father “spoke about making money and when they get back to Japan, he could have servants, serving him, he could get cheap labor in Japan... a lot of the goals of Issei Japanese.”¹⁰² Hamachi pointed out that this was a common goal for Issei, at least initially. Sumie Suguro Akizuki said her grandparents had a similar goal “to make money to return to Japan to retire.”¹⁰³ And according to Eiichi Sakauye, his father’s “intention was to make a few dollars, then return to Japan.” Masao Suzuki’s research

¹⁰⁰ Azuma, *Between Two Empires*, 59.

¹⁰¹ Azuma, *Between Two Empires*, 26.

¹⁰² Ted Hamachi, Segment 1, interview by Kirk Peterson, Video, March 4, 2010, Manzanar National Historic Site Collection, Densho Digital Repository, <https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-manz-1-91-1/>.

¹⁰³ Sumie Suguro Akizuki, Segment 1, Video, October 30, 2008, Densho Digital Repository, <https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-densho-1000-228-1/>.

supports these anecdotes' claim that the goal of returning to Japan was common: he found that in the continental U.S. "between 1920 and 1940 there was a net emigration [from the United States back to Japan] equal to one third of their [Japanese immigrant] population in the United States in 1920."¹⁰⁴

K. Morgan Yamanaka, for instance, said that his parents not only sent money back to their family in Japan to prepare for their eventual return, but also took other steps like "registering our name with the Japanese consulate was part of that plan. ... [in] the beginning of 1941, late '40, late '40, 1941, my sister, Toshiko, was sent to Japan, ostensibly for her Japanese education." All of this, Yamanaka said, "was in preparation for going back to Japan."¹⁰⁵ Yamanaka's parents were not alone in sending Toshiko back to Japan for her education. There was even a term for this generation—the first generation born in America but educated in Japan. They were called *kibei*. As Mitsue Nishio put it, "Well, at that time all the people from Japan thought someday they want to go back to Japan, so they send kids ahead of time so they will know enough Japanese, Japanese education."¹⁰⁶

Structural factors—primarily American imperialism and capitalism, as well as Japanese politics and the country's economy—informed the decision to leave home. Nishimura alluded to his grandfather's losses in Japan before he decided to leave for the U.S. Perry's arrival in Japan had ushered in a period of rapid modernization, economic

¹⁰⁴ Masao Suzuki, "Success Story? Japanese Immigrant Economic Achievement and Return Migration, 1920–1930," *The Journal of Economic History* 55, no. 4 (December 1995): 890. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022050700042200>.

¹⁰⁵ K. Morgan Yamanaka, Segment 9, Video, August 13, 2014, Densho Digital Repository, <https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-densho-1000-329-9>.

¹⁰⁶ Mitsue Nishio, Segment 4, Video, August 13, 2014, Manzanar National Historic Site Collection, Densho Digital Repository, <https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-manz-1-152-4>.

growth, and political turmoil in the archipelago. Then, in 1868, a group overthrew the shogun and restored the emperor, Meiji Tenno, as the head of government, believing that this would help them compete with foreign technology and resist outside imperial influence. This kicked off what would become known as the Meiji Era. In 1873, the Japanese government created a new three percent land tax that targeted rural farmers to pay for its modernization and issued 42 million yen in paper currency, leading to runaway inflation, which the Meiji government then attempted to curb by driving down prices on agriculture. The land tax though was fixed, and small-scale farmers increasingly went into debt trying to pay it. Heightened divisions between the wealthy and the small-scale farming class led first to “violent peasant uprisings” in the early 1880s, and then, when Japan legalized emigration in 1885, to increased emigration of this class from the agricultural regions hardest hit by the economic hardships, like Hiroshima.¹⁰⁷

Many farmers, fishermen, and local artisans lost their lands, livelihoods and homes during this time. Nishimura’s grandfather was a local merchant who “went into debt ... And he lost not only his business, his house, everything.”¹⁰⁸ Yooichi Wakamiya’s grandfather, a craftsman who sold agate, recalled that when he left Japan, “the economy was so bad you couldn’t sell things like that to anybody anymore.”¹⁰⁹ His grandfather told him that “he was looking at his bank account and he said, ‘I could count the days when the money was gonna run out.’ So he decided to take a chance and come over to the

¹⁰⁷ Ichioka, *The Issei*, 42-43.

¹⁰⁸ James Nishimura, Segment 2, interview by Richard Potashin, Video, November 7, 2007, Manzanar National Historic Site Collection, Densho Digital Repository, <https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-manz-1-33-2/>.

¹⁰⁹ Yooichi Wakamiya, Segment 2, interview by Potashin Richard, Video, February 4, 2010, Manzanar National Historic Site Collection, Densho Digital Repository, <https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-manz-1-87-2/?tableft=segments>.

U.S.” Other Japanese Americans reiterated versions of this narrative in their own families.¹¹⁰

Some came to repay their families’ debts, like Heidi Sakazaki’s father who “had to send [most of his earnings] to his grandfather in Japan to pay off his debts. I think that’s what a lot of Isseis did. They sent their earnings to Japan to pay off debts.”¹¹¹

American businessmen were becoming increasingly interested in bringing Japanese immigrant labor to the U.S. and Hawai‘i, even though emigration was illegal in Japan until 1885. At times, American capitalists flaunted these laws. In an early example, Eugene Van Reed, an American trader, recruited 190 people to work in Hawai‘i and Guam in 1868, nearly two decades before Japan legalized emigration. Particularly after the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the desire for Japanese labor as a replacement for Chinese labor became even more pronounced.

Joseph Norio Uemura explained that American businessmen convinced his father and uncle “were recruited by Americans in Wakayama in order to work in the American railroad.”¹¹² Bill Hosokawa’s father was similarly recruited to work for the railroad. Hosokawa said, “The recruiter had come to the village where my father lived and apparently the recruiter was well-known in that area because he rounded up a number of farm boys and brought them to the United States to work on the railroad.”¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Wakamiya.

¹¹¹ Heidi Sakazaki, Segment 6, interview by Donna Graves and Jill Shiraki, Video, October 2, 2012, Preserving California’s Japantowns Collection, Densho Digital Repository, <https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-densho-1010-15-6/>.

¹¹² Joseph Norio Uemura, Segment 1, interview by Tom Ikeda, Video, June 16, 2009, Twin Cities JACL Collection, Densho Digital Repository, <https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-densho-1014-3-1/>.

¹¹³ Bill Hosokawa, Segment 1, interview by Alice Ito and Daryl Maeda, Video, July 13, 2001, Densho Digital Repository, <https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-densho-1000-129-1/>.

Mary Hamano's father told her that "some sugar company came and recruited several men and taking them to Hawaii." At that time, he didn't want to leave but he needed a job: "they said that they would give him fifteen dollars a month." Unfortunately, when he arrived, he learned that this income was mostly going back to the company for room and board: "But when he got to Hawaii, the fifteen dollar was the room and board you had to pay."¹¹⁴ Hamano's father ended up staying in Hawai'i for "six or eight years" before moving to the bay area.

Sue Kunitomi Embrey's father signed a two year contract after being "recruited by agents to work in Hawai'i on the plantation, the sugar and the pineapple plantations."¹¹⁵ Many returned to Japan after their contract was up, "saving whatever they could save out of their meager wages," but Kunitomi Embrey's father and a number of others went onto San Francisco and Seattle.

American businessowners were not the only ones recruiting Japanese laborers. Fred Shiosaki's father was recruited to work for the Canadian-Pacific railroad. Shiosaki said, "it's my understanding that they paid for his passage to Canada. To make sure that they were covered, they put an insurance policy on him, so in case he got killed or injured, they would recoup their money."¹¹⁶ Shiosaki's narrative highlights the exploitative nature of these contracts and how Japanese laborers would often come to the Americas already in debt to their employers.

¹¹⁴ Mary Hamano, Segment 11, interview by Megan Asaka, Video, May 14, 2008, Densho Digital Repository, <https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-densho-1000-215-11>.

¹¹⁵ Sue Kunitomi Embrey, Segment 1, interview by John Allen, Video, November 6, 2002, Manzanar National Historic Site Collection, Densho Digital Repository, <https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-manz-1-2-1/>.

¹¹⁶ Fred Shiosaki, Segment 2, interview by Tom Ikeda, Video, April 26, 2006, Densho Digital Repository, <https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-densho-1000-190-2/>.

The Meiji government legalized emigration 1885 and negotiated an immigration treaty in 1886 with the Kingdom of Hawai‘i for Japanese emigrants as contract-labor on sugar and pineapple plantations. Under this system, Japan sent about 29,000 to Hawai‘i between 1885 and 1894. Permanent settlement was still illegal and contract workers were required to return to Japan after three years.

Some Japanese capitalists started highly profitable recruitment companies. Labor contractors earned a commission on their workers’ wages. For instance, in 1899, Japanese workers on the Northern Pacific and Oregon Railway earned \$1.10 a day, from which the labor contractor would take 10 cents. Labor contractors often had more than 1,000 workers each, and reported monthly incomes of around \$2,500.¹¹⁷ Homer Yasui stated, “there were these labor contracting companies, and one of them was Shinzaburo Ban which was in, stationed in Portland. The other one you may have heard of was the Teikoku Company. This is the Matsushima family, and they also recruited laborers.”¹¹⁸

Eiichiro Azuma writes, “this state-regulated labor recruitment ... was to enable the economic rehabilitation of small landowning farmers and the enlargement of Japan’s foreign reserves through emigrant remittances.” The Meiji elite was also increasingly concerned about overpopulation in Japan.¹¹⁹ This rhetoric is echoed in Densho oral histories. Takashi Matsui said that his parents, who came from the countryside in Fukuoka, were “urged to come because Japan couldn’t feed the population and there were

¹¹⁷ Ichioka, *The Issei*, 72-73.

¹¹⁸ Homer Yasui, Segment 2, interview by Margaret Barton Ross and Tim Rooney, Video, October 10, 2003, Japanese American Museum of Oregon Collection, Densho Digital Repository, <https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-one-7-27-2/>.

¹¹⁹ Eiichiro Azuma, *In Search of Our Frontier: Japanese America and Settler Colonialism in the Construction of Japan’s Borderless Empire* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2019), <https://www.ucpress.edu/book/9780520304383/in-search-of-our-frontier>, 82-83.

a lot of our returning soldiers [from the Russo-Japanese war] and sailors and they were looking for volunteers.”¹²⁰ Azuma explains that, while emigration was initially led by individuals, Japan began to increasingly encourage emigration as a means to solve its economic and population problems.¹²¹ As Roy Matsumoto put it, “the Japanese government solicit[ed] the contract laborer,” like his grandfather.¹²²

Immigrants also had their own reasons to want to leave Japan: Avoiding conscription in Japan’s military was a common factor. In 1873, the Meiji government instituted a law that made all males between the ages of 17 to 40 subject to military conscription. James Omura explained that his father “was sixteen years old and just about ready to go into the Japanese army.” Opposition to the conscription law was common among people in his village of Katsusa. Omura explained, “So many of the people who came to the United States, whether they say it or not, came to escape the military.”¹²³ Joseph Norio Uemura’s father came with his brother from Wakayama to work on the railroad. The two left in part because of concerns about the imminent Russo-Japanese war just as they were about to hit draft age.¹²⁴ Tak Yamashita’s father had fought in Russia for a couple of years when he returned home to Kagoshima on furlough and signed up to go to Hawai‘i to cut sugar cane.¹²⁵

¹²⁰ Takashi Matsui, Segment 2, interview by Elmer Good and Matt Emery, Video, October 29, 1997, Densho Digital Repository, <https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-densho-1000-45-2/>.

¹²¹ Roy H. Matsumoto, Segment 1, Video, December 17, 2003, Densho Digital Repository, <https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-densho-1000-153-1/>.

¹²² Matsumoto.

¹²³ Jimmie Omura, Segment 1, interview by Omori Chizu, Video, March 21, 1994, Emiko and Chizuko Omori Collection, Densho Digital Repository, <https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-densho-1002-11-1/>.

¹²⁴ Uemura, Segment 1.

¹²⁵ Tak Yamashita, Segment 1, Video, September 14, 2011, Densho Digital Repository, <https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-densho-1000-365-1/>.

Perhaps, like Helen Harano Christ's grandmother, they didn't get along with a family member, in her case a stepmother.¹²⁶ Or, like Shosuke Sasaki's father, who was working on a ship under a bad captain, decided spontaneously to jump ship to avoid having to make the return journey under this man.¹²⁷

This migration was not unidirectional. Many returned to Japan. Some returned back to the United States after returning to Japan. The Hamano family was living in Oakland with their two young sons when they decided to return to Japan. Mary Hamano, who had not been born yet, explained, "they found that it was very difficult to live in Japan, when you once lived in United States where there's so much freedom, I guess you might call it, and easier to make a living. In Japan, it was very difficult." They decided to leave their sons and came back to the United States, where Mary was born in 1921.¹²⁸

In the U.S. and Hawai'i, these workers also often lived transient lives that followed the availability of jobs particularly during those early years of Japanese immigration. Part of this was because of the transient nature of the work these laborers were hired to do, or the bad working conditions which led many to quit and seek employment elsewhere. Labor recruiters also shaped Issei transience. Tak Yamashita's family was initially recruited to cut sugar cane in Hawai'i but after "one or two years ... he saw a sign saying they're recruiting railroad spike pounders in the United States" and decided to go on to the continent.¹²⁹ Tom Matsuoka's father also initially went to Hawai'i

¹²⁶ Helen Harano Christ, Segment 3, interview by Dana Hoshide, Video, June 18, 2008, Densho Digital Repository, <https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-densho-1013-6-3/>.

¹²⁷ Shosuke Sasaki, Segment 1, interview by Chizu Omori and Emiko Omori, Video, September 28, 1992, Emiko and Chizu Omori Collection, Densho Digital Repository, <https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-densho-1002-2-1/>.

¹²⁸ Mary Hamano, Segment 1, <https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-densho-1000-215-1/>.

¹²⁹ Yamashita, Segment 1.

but heard from a “big recruit from mainland” that he could get “big money”—a dollar a day—working in a “fishing cannery in Alaska.”¹³⁰ Matsuoka had already been born at that point and had traveled back to Japan with his mother, while his father stayed to make more money—again pointing to the ambivalence about staying that characterized the experiences of many Issei.

Another cause for this mobility was to get around Japan’s limitations on emigration (guided by U.S. pressure to restrict immigration to the U.S.): Because it was no longer issuing passports for laborers to the United States, some laborers would get passports for Mexico, Canada, or Hawai‘i and then cross into the continental United States. By this point, the anti-Japanese movement was in full force on the West Coast. The Gentlemen’s Agreement started a years-long process of shutting this movement down: Once “highly mobile,” “shifting from job to job, place to place,” the Issei could no longer cross the border to follow the next job.¹³¹ The Immigration Act of 1924 shut this down entirely. Had the Hamano parents left the United States after 1924, they might have found it much more difficult to return. Somewhat ironically, the closing of the borders in effect made it more practical for Japanese immigrants to settle in one place rather than continue to move around.

Even when it endorsed emigration to the U.S., Japan was heavily regulating it. Seven years before the Gentlemen’s Agreement, as anti-Japanese sentiment ramped up, Japan started to crack down on immigration by laborers to the United States.¹³² Still, as

¹³⁰ Tom Matsuoka, Segment 5, interview by Alice Ito and Matt Emery, Video, May 7, 1998, Densho Digital Repository, <https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-densho-1000-47-5/>.

¹³¹ Azuma, *Between Two Empires*, 26.

¹³² Azuma, *Between Two Empires*, 30.

population control became more of a concern, so too did the willingness of the Japanese government to entertain the idea of permanent settlement outside of its borders. At the same time, the U.S. was not the place envisioned for these settlements. The shutting down of American borders helped formulate Japanese emigration policy into an outright policy of settler colonialism, as Eiichiro Azuma has shown. After the Gentlemen's Agreement in 1907, Japan began turning its attention toward Brazil, Australia, and other parts of Asia. This policy was guided by an elite class of former immigrants to the U.S. who had returned to Japan disenchanted with American race prejudice and advocated for a Japanese colonial presence that would unite Asia to compete with Western imperialism and simultaneously bought into Japanese prejudices against other Asian populations. In addition, this movement built on insecurities about the inability of the country to house its growing population. Initially, these advocates hoped to turn toward Northern Australia but soon realized that anti-Japanese sentiment was also prevalent among white settlers in Australia.¹³³ Next, they turned to Brazil, where, as Sidney Xu Lu has shown, Japan began a policy of "farmer migration" that focused on creating whole farming communities under a principle of "coexistence and coprosperity" meant to challenge Western militarist imperialism. This became a basis for propaganda around Japanese expansion into Manchuria and Korea. At the same time, this policy had not coalesced into state-sanctioned settler colonialism before the Gentlemen's Agreement and any hope that race relations with the U.S. came to an end when the Immigration Act of 1924 terminated Japanese immigration entirely.

¹³³ Azuma, *In Search of Our Frontier*, 71.

Issei Lessees on the Yakama Reservation

The story of Issei lessees on the Yakama reservation also shows how anti-Asian sentiment coalesced with white settler entitlement to strengthen white interests at the expense of American Indians. As Carr sold off and leased off more of these lands to white settlers, anti-Japanese sentiment in the region grew. In 1917, local settlers came together to push for farms to hire white laborers on sugar beet farms rather than Asian. At the same time, Carr was selling off portions of the reservation to white settlers, following a new policy instituted by Commissioner of Indian Affairs Sells instituted in April 1917. This policy stated that any American Indian deemed “competent” was to “be given full control of his property.” The Burke Act in 1906 had “created a mechanism by which the secretary of the interior had the power to determine competency. . . . such decisions were often based on the racial identity of the allottee, and officials determined Native people of mixed heritage to be ‘competent’ more often than those who were ‘full-blooded.’”¹³⁴ This completely irrelevant gauge of “competency” shows how the designation could be wielded against American Indians to suit the priorities of the superintendent of a reservation, the OIA commissioner, the agency more widely, and the current administration. As such, in late 1917, Carr announced that he was taking bids “for the purchase of 43 tracts of reservation land.”¹³⁵ In early 1918, the Spokesman Review

¹³⁴ Cathleen D. Cahill, *Federal Fathers and Mothers: A Social History of the United States Indian Service, 1869-1933* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 228.

¹³⁵ “Asks Bids for Reserve Land: Forty-Two Tracts of Yakima Acreage Will Be Offered” (Spokesman-Review, December 26, 1917), Washington State University Libraries Digital Collections, <https://content.libraries.wsu.edu/digital/collection/clipping/id/9373>.

reported that Carr had “received instructions to expedite all pending sales.”¹³⁶ While the article doesn’t mention a reason for this, the timing is suspect: 1918 was an election year—the only one that took place while the U.S. was engaged in World War I. A year later, the Spokane Chronicle announced that Carr was selling 15,000 acres of “lands allotted [sic] to Indians now dead or incompetent.”¹³⁷ It should be noted that because the lands were for sale—not for lease—Japanese Americans would not have been eligible to purchase them.

In 1921, as Washington state strengthened its alien land laws, a new wave of anti-Asian sentiment emerged in the area. Asians were not allowed to own land in Washington state—that much had been written into the state’s constitution in 1889. In 1921, the state added language forbidding aliens ineligible for citizenship from signing leases, renting, or sharecropping as well. The reservation, which was on federal land and thus not subject to state law, was exempt from this policy and as such the Yakama reservation became a focal point for the issue of Japanese immigration.

In early 1922, the Wapato American Legion began to campaign against leases for Asian immigrants on land under the jurisdiction of the Office of Indian Affairs. When the Wapato Japanese Association president W. K. Hirano reached out to Office of Indian Affairs Commissioner Albert B. Fall asking about recently expired leases belonging to Japanese immigrants, Fall replied,

All Indian agents have been notified that in the matter of expiration of leases and in the matter of issuing new leases such leases must be made to American

¹³⁶ “To Expedite Indian Land Sales,” *Spokesman Review*, February 7, 1918, Washington State University Libraries Digital Collections, <https://content.libraries.wsu.edu/digital/collection/clipping/id/9357>.

¹³⁷ “Hold Large Sale of Indian Land,” *Spokane Chronicle*, February 6, 1919, Washington State University Libraries Digital Collections, <https://content.libraries.wsu.edu/digital/collection/clipping/id/9347>.

citizens, preferential rights being accorded discharged American soldiers of the late war. No discrimination whatsoever against Japanese is intended. This policy is a general one and in the interest of American citizens and particularly American ex-soldiers. This Government through its departments has not only the authority but the right to choose its own tenants for property of its wards, over whom and over which property it exercises all the rights both of a sovereign and of a guardian.¹³⁸

Fall used what was happening on the Yakama Reservation to shift policy for the entire agency. Moreover, he justified this choice by suggesting not only that it would benefit American citizens and veterans but by asserting the “authority” and “right” of the federal government to do this because of its imposed guardian-ward relationship with the Yakama. In doing so, Fall used the policy to assert settler sovereignty over American Indian nations—not only the Yakama.

Fall did not mention that this was in the interest of the “wards” to whom this land belongs—perhaps because it was not. Nealy Olney, a Yakama citizen, wrote a letter to Fall asserting just how much this “guardian” was failing to look out for the Yakama with this policy. He called the policy “a very detrimental ruling to all classes of people on the Reservation.” He explained that he had found Japanese farmers were “willing to carry out the provisions of the leases” and paid their rents “more promptly than the white renters and in most cases take better care of the land,” while also being “more law abiding than most any other class of farmers on our reservation.” He also noted that Japanese farmers had contributed immensely to land development in the area, which in turn had made the land more attractive to white farmers.¹³⁹ Olney was just one individual and we should not

¹³⁸ “Bars Japanese Lessees: Fall Confines Yakima Indian Lands to American Citizens.” *New York Times*. March 4, 1922. Proquest Historical Newspapers.

¹³⁹ Nomura, “Becoming ‘Local’ Japanese,” 62-63.

assume that he he spoke for all Yakama. Wester suggests that he adopted U.S. ideas around property and land management fairly early on and was an active member of the Yakima Indian Commercial Club. At the same time, it shows that that there was vocal Yakama opposition to the denial of leases to Issei—and that Fall was not listening to that opposition.

Lucullus Virgil McWhorter, a white man who had “long mingled with the Yakimas,” wrote to Senator M. Clyde Kelly, explained that the policy “is an Anti-Jap movement pure and simple, and at the cost of the Yakimas.” He argued that losing their tenants would be an economic hardship to the Yakama because Japanese farmers were willing to take inferior lands and did more with them. In addition, he felt that the Yakama should “have a voice in the control of his own lands, permitting him to reap best results.”¹⁴⁰

McWhorter demonstrated how allies of the Yakama used the premise that Japanese lessees were enabling the Yakama to benefit from capitalism—implicitly using Japanese lessees to make the case for Yakama as capitalists, and demonstrating their assimilation into settler colonial racial capitalism. McWhorter was not concerned about the “anti-Jap movement”—he could reconcile anti-Japanese sentiment while also defending the right of the Yakama to benefit from Japanese immigrant labor and leases. This sentiment fit into larger trends in which white settlers were holding up the principle that American Indians might be absorbed into the nation—to show the inclusiveness of

¹⁴⁰ McWhorter, Lucullus Virgil. “A Letter to U.S. Senator M. Clyde Kelly of Pennsylvania from Lucullus Virgil McWhorter in Regards to a Yakima Indian Reservation Controversy,” January 13, 1923. Washington State University Libraries Digital Collections. <https://content.libraries.wsu.edu/digital/collection/methhist/id/21>.

the nation—as they advocated for Asian exclusion on the grounds that Asians were unassimilable.

Despite Olney and McWhorter’s efforts, the policy stayed in place through the end of Fall’s time in that position. Both McWhorter and Olney pointed primarily to how Japanese lessees were helping Yakama to develop their land, attempting to use settler colonial values about land management to advocate both for the Yakama and their Japanese lessees. The fact that these rationales failed suggests how land development for American Indians is not in fact a priority for the settler state—instead, the priority was clearly facilitating white settler land claims to Yakama land.

Fall envisioned neither Japanese farmers nor Yakama landowners as proper settler capitalists. Instead, the policy—created by the Office of Indian Affairs—looked out for the interests of citizens and veterans, and used that language to codify citizens and veterans as white. This too angered Olney: in personal correspondence between Olney and McWhorter, Olney made it clear that he was not only angry about representations in local newspapers that tried “to raise prejudice against the little oriental” but also about how this portrayed the Yakama as wards who “do not know anything” and could not make decisions about their lands for themselves. In a letter from January 4, 1923, he detailed an article in a newspaper identified as “P.I.”—likely the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*—that “in no place ... does he give the Indian credit or the Japanese for the part he has played in the development of the reservation.”¹⁴¹ By highlighting how both

¹⁴¹ “Four Confess Bomb Attacks: ‘Well, We Done It,’ Is Plea Of Reservation Youth In Wapato Cases.,” *Seattle Daily Times*, April 29, 1933, Washington State University Libraries Digital Collections, <https://content.libraries.wsu.edu/digital/collection/clipping/id/143177>.

Yakama and Japanese were wronged by the policy, Olney articulated how anti-Japanese sentiment could be used to “protect” American Indian wards while in reality advancing white settler claims to Yakama land.

In March and April 1933, there was a series of six bombings and arson attempts against Japanese American farms. Kara Matsushita Kondo, who grew up in Yakima recalled, described these attacks as “the third wave of anti-Japanese feeling.”¹⁴² The Matsushita family’s front porch was set on fire. Kondo’s father managed to stamp out the fire and calm everyone down. He took out his knife and started to sharpen it, Kondo later recalled. An unexploded bomb was later found in a field on the property as well.

The attacks were “mainly of greenhouses or some structure that was on—not the residences, normally—but generally some structures that were on the farms.” No one was harmed, but the attacks were “enough to do some damage and, of course, to frighten people.” A truck was targeted in one; a garage—in which a worker was sleeping—in another. The worker was fortunately unharmed, although he did have to dig himself out of the debris. One residence, Sanzo Ito’s family home, was reportedly bombed. Kondo suggests that the attacks “targeted the Japanese farmers that had hired Filipinos.”¹⁴³ Local newspapers affirmed that these attacks were about anti-Japanese and anti-Filipino sentiment in the area. This may suggest that they were targeting farms which had brought in additional Asian labor or which were wealthy enough to hire outside labor. Four white men pleaded guilty to the crimes in late April 1933.

¹⁴² Kara Kondo, Segment 19, interview by Alice Ito and Gail Nomura, December 7, 2002, Densho Digital Repository, <https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-densho-1000-139-19>.

¹⁴³ Kondo, Segment 6, <https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-densho-1000-139-6>.

The move to extralegal forms of intimidation to force Japanese American families out of the area shows the increasing desperation—and entitlement—of white settlers to American Indian lands. The belief of their impunity for these crimes is highlighted in the response the men gave: “‘Well, We Done It,’ Is Plea of Reservation Youths in Wapato Cases,” reads an article on the subject. Note the slippage whereby these white settlers became “Reservation Youths.”¹⁴⁴

The Yakama Indian Reservation puts in bold relief the entanglements of Japanese immigration and American Indian dispossession on this specific site, but anti-Asian legislation and the allotment of American Indian reservations that facilitated the transfer of reservation lands to white settlers were occurring all down the West Coast and throughout the country.

Kodomo No Tame Ni, For the Sake of the Children

As the country began shutting down its borders, the Issei (in a likely unintended side-effect) became less mobile. They could no longer follow the job from place to place, and increasingly it helped to have a community of people who knew them that could protect them from growing anti-Japanese sentiment. As such, the regulation of immigration began to push Issei toward settling. It also helped that the Gentlemen’s Agreement did not limit the immigration of wives. Few Issei had saved up enough money to return with the kind of wealth they envisioned, and it increasingly made more sense to

¹⁴⁴ “Four Confess Bomb Attacks: Well, We Done It,” Is Plea Of Reservation Youth In Wapato Cases. Arraign Three Other. : Pleadings Not Entered And Bonds Are Set.- Japanese Consul, Who Asked Action, Will Speak.,” Seattle Daily Times, April 29, 1933, Washington State University Libraries Digital Collections, <https://content.libraries.wsu.edu/digital/collection/clipping/id/143177>.

marry and live in the U.S. Many who had arrived as young men a decade earlier were now at the age where they wanted to settle down and have a wife and family, and had realized that they could not foresee a time when they had accumulated the wealth they had imagined before they left Japan. Settling down then was an integral part to settling. The U.S. saw a massive influx of women in the years after the Gentlemen's Agreements: there were 410 married Japanese women in the U.S. in 1900, to 5,581 in 1910, to 22,193 in 1920. Part of this shift likely had to do with the ages of the Issei men.

But those who were already married were now stable enough to bring their wives and children over from Japan and, in addition to reuniting them with their families, also allowed them to avoid having the expenses of two households and to help them work and save money for their future. Bringing over a wife might also allow both spouses to work and save more money toward their eventual return.

The arrival of wives also shifted the Issei approach to the countries in which they were residing, suggesting how "settling down" might also impact the act of settling in a place. As Dale Ann Sato has argued, "the migration of Japanese women precipitated significant shifts from temporary to permanent U.S. residence, from bachelor status to stable married life, from indentured workers to co-dependent family enterprises and viable communities." In acknowledging the arrival of Japanese women post-1907 as a shift, Sato suggests how their arrival likewise played an important role in the formation of the Japanese American settler. The arrival of Issei wives thus becomes one instance that demonstrates how "the relentlessness of settler colonialism is the consistency and thus naturalization of heteropatriarchy and heteropaternalism." Issei heterosexual

marriage became a way of adding an additional body to labor for the household, which enabled further property accumulation, and in addition created reproductive potential for that household to create a generational capacity for owning and inheriting land and property. More explicitly, Gary Okihiro and David Drummond write, "...the immigration of Japanese women during the 'picture bride' era, 1908-1920, had resulted in the eventual transformation of the Japanese community from one of sojourners to that of settlers."¹⁴⁵

Sonia Gomez explains that the arrival of Issei wives also pushed Issei toward settlement in another way: "Their arrival facilitated settlement and the emergence of the second generation of Japanese—the Nisei—born in the United States."¹⁴⁶ The Nisei were birthright citizens of the United States, unlike their immigrant parents, and as such could own land, unlike their parents. In many cases, Issei parents purchased land in their Nisei children's names, showing how children served as a proxy for land ownership—and settlement—in the Japanese American community.

Because they were ineligible for citizenship and could not own land, the Issei based their dreams of settling (down) in their U.S.-born children, the Nisei. The juxtaposition of Issei experiences with those of their children, the Nisei, reveals both the differences between their experiences—and the precarity of their position as "aliens ineligible for citizenship"—as well as the commonalities that show the limitations of birthright citizenship and land ownership to protect racialized populations. This process suggests how for racialized immigrants and their descendants settling might more

¹⁴⁵ Okihiro and Drummond, "Japanese American Economic Losses in California Agriculture," 169.

¹⁴⁶ Sonia Christina Gomez, "From Picture Brides to War Brides: Race, Gender, and Belonging in the Making of Japanese America" (Ph.D., United States -- Illinois, The University of Chicago, 2018), 4, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/2063405392/abstract/C15A8057EB1A4BDAPQ/1>.

accurately be conceived as an intergenerational process of acquiring settler property over time and for future generations.

Kim TallBear's concept of settler property emphasizes how one might acquire or accumulate property (both literal and figurative) as a way to claim settlerhood (or citizenship or whiteness, or a combination of all three), in ways that can at times mitigate or camouflage—although not erase completely—other forms of oppression. TallBear writes, “*settler relations ... are also enacted as property relations.*”¹⁴⁷ This suggests how the ability to settle might function as a form of property and privilege much akin to Cheryl Harris's conception of whiteness as property. Unlike whiteness as property, settler property is something that might be acquired over time and the acquisition of settler property might reach a point where it stops impeding access to settling, though perhaps not facilitating settlement in the way the state does for white settlers.

In the U.S., having a family was one source of stability within the settler state for the Issei particularly after the Alien Land Laws. It was also a feature of Japanese immigration that often distinguished them even from other Asian immigrants—as we saw earlier, the immigration of Chinese women was quickly tamped down, preventing many from having families here. The Nisei had U.S. citizenship because they were born in the U.S. and, as such, could own land. Some purchased land or signed leases in their young children's names because they could not own land or sign leases for themselves. But it also meant that their children's birthplace was not Japan but America. And for most, their first home, their first friends, their early education—all these were in the U.S. As Arthur

¹⁴⁷ Kim TallBear, “*Caretaking Relations, Not American Dreaming.*” *Kalfou (Santa Barbara, CA)* 6, no. 1 (2019): 32, <https://doi.org/10.15367/kf.v6i1.228>. Italics in original.

Nishimoto explained, “once they started raising their families, I don’t think they had any idea of returning there with their families. Because now they knew that the kids were Americans.”¹⁴⁸

This investment in their children in the U.S. shows that even though the Issei were unable to settle themselves, they were able to accumulate settler property that would be passed along to their children. This right to accumulate settler property for their children was upheld in the *People of California v. Jukichi Harada*. In 1915, Harada, an Issei, had bought a house in a predominantly white neighborhood under his American-born children’s names. His neighbors quickly challenged the sale on the grounds that it violated the Alien Land Law of 1913 that forbade “aliens ineligible for citizenship” from owning property. The court ultimately sided with Harada that he was allowed to purchase property in his children’s names.

There was a popular saying among the Issei in camp: “kodomo no tame ni.” It means “For the sake of the children.” This was evident in the poems of Teiko Tomita, an Issei woman who wrote poetry under the pen name “Yukari.” Tomita immigrated to the United States in 1921 to join her husband Masakazu Tomita, an Issei farmer near Wapato with whom she had corresponded for nearly two years before he traveled back to Japan for their wedding. “Tomita thought that they would live only a few years in the U.S.; however, she was never able to return to see her parents again,” writes Brian Niiya.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸ Arthur Nishimoto, Segment 5, interview by Alisa Lynch and Kristen Luetkemeier, Video, August 22, 2012, Manzanar National Historic Site Collection, Densho Digital Repository, <https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-manz-1-129-5/>.

¹⁴⁹ Brian Niiya, ed., “Teiko Tomita,” in *Japanese American History: An A-to-Z Reference from 1868 to the Present* (VNR AG, 1993), 390.

Several of her poems evoke imagery of frontier and suggest how she understood her settling intergenerationally. In one, she wrote,

Long ago are the days
I helped my husband
Cultivate the raw land
And raised our children
We two have grown old.¹⁵⁰

The imagery of cultivation of “the raw land” evokes imagery of wilderness common to frontier rhetoric. The concept of untouched wilderness erases Indigenous inhabitants of the land and naturalizes them into the landscape. The next line describes how they “raised our children” putting the idea of children in conversation with settling or cultivating the land.

In another poem, Tomita overtly refers to the “frontier struggles” in her memory. Like the Issei men described by Azuma, Tomita depicts herself as a settler in her poetry.

Another poem described

The dream I passed
On to my children
How many years!
The house is finished.¹⁵¹

The image of the house as a dream alludes to the iconography of the American Dream. Both a form of converting land to property and of national belonging, home ownership is a crux of how individuals and families settle under settler colonialism. The fact that Tomita passed this dream on to her children suggests the intergenerational nature of her vision. At the same time, the line break between “passed” and “on” suggests an

¹⁵⁰ Gail M. Nomura, “Tsugiki, a Grafting: A History of a Japanese Pioneer Woman in Washington State,” *Women’s Studies* 14, no. 1 (November 1987): 299, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00497878.1987.9978683>.

¹⁵¹ Nomura, “Tsugiki, a Grafting,” 298.

ambivalence toward the dream itself. The first line read alone suggests that she passed by the dream. Only with the qualifier “on” in the second line do we understand the dream did live on—just through her children. The third line—like the word “passed” in the first line—highlights how much time it took to fulfill the dream, although the fourth line suggests that she did live to see this dream fulfilled. Indeed, many Issei did live to become eligible for citizenship in 1952, through the Immigration and Nationality Act.

Tomita also used the motif of seeds and trees to allude to generational change, as Gail Nomura has shown. Nomura has explained that the title of her section of a poetry anthology, *tsugiki*, refers to the “grafting or a grafted tree” and “reflects her vision of a Japanese American grafted community rooting itself in Washington State through the pioneering experiences of women like herself.” Nomura interviewed Tomita for her research in addition to analyzing her poetry. In one poem, Tomita writes about the joy she felt watching “the seeds I planted / Sprout and grow up.” In another, she discusses the hope and indeed “certainty” of buds next spring she felt while she was “carefully grafting / Young cherry trees.”¹⁵² Tomita’s poetry highlights the care in her labor of planting and grafting and shows how agricultural work for Issei was about growing something both for the next spring but also for years to come. Tomita’s work also takes on special meaning as we know that she was writing about life on Yakama land, which she had access to in large part because of settler state policies of American Indian dispossession and absorption.

¹⁵² Nomura, “*Tsugiki*, a Grafting,” 291.

Despite white settler state attempts to restrict Asian immigrants from settling, some Issei, like Tomita, claimed settler status as a means of advocating from themselves against American racism. In *Between Two Empires* (2005), Eiichiro Azuma examines Japanese language texts from the early twentieth century to suggest how Japanese immigrants constructed themselves as “pioneers” on a frontier of racism to claim belonging both in the U.S. and in Japan, appropriating a romanticized image in ways that claim belonging by ignoring the elimination of Native peoples. Issei “placed their collective past within narratives of the American frontier and Japanese expansionism in their relentless pursuit of national inclusion.” He details the emergence of what he calls the Issei Pioneer Thesis during the 1920s and 30s to illuminate how they claimed belonging to the U.S. even as the U.S. sought to limit their inclusion in its settler processes. It should be noted that there was likely a class bias in these texts: Issei who were writing and publishing texts on this subject likely did not come over to this country as *dekasegi*. Still, it shows that some Issei were thinking of themselves as settlers by the late 1920s.

In 1927, Shiro Fujioka published a treatise whose title translates to “Pioneers of Japanese Development” and which became the foundation for the Issei Pioneer Thesis, as Azuma calls it. The Issei were pioneers according to Fujioka because they “endured poor living conditions, patiently fought exclusion and persecution day and night, and still established the basis for social progress.”¹⁵³ The hardships and challenges they faced

¹⁵³ Azuma, *Between Two Empires*, 91.

turned Issei into pioneers in a country that did not want them to succeed. Claiming the status of a “pioneer” became a way for the Issei to assert their potential as settlers.

In 1936, Issei leaders in Los Angeles compiled a pamphlet entitled “Kibei No Shiori” (which translates to “Guide to Returning to America”). In it, they proclaimed, “Our farms, which we, the pioneers of this new land, established in the last four decades, despite anti-Japanese exclusion, are panting under the shortage of racial successors.”¹⁵⁴ These community leaders aimed to get Kibei—people of Japanese ancestry born in the United States, and thus American citizens, who had been sent back to Japan for their education—to return to the United States to take up their families’ farms and businesses. As Azuma argues, Issei “placed their collective past within narratives of the American frontier and Japanese expansionism in their relentless pursuit of national inclusion.”¹⁵⁵

The “pioneer” status was a way for the Issei to protect themselves against their precariousness in the U.S., but it also simultaneously became a way for them to claim belonging in Japan. Because of the stigma associated with *dekasegi*, and to some extent *imin*, claiming *shokumin* status—and many of these documents were originally written in Japanese, so used the term *shokumin* rather than *settler*—was a way of protecting their image back home. Ironically, as Azuma has shown, their efforts to claim the term “*shokumin*” for themselves highlight their continued ambivalence about staying in the U.S.

The Issei claimed this status only insofar as it was useful to them—it did not motivate their emigration, as we saw earlier, and it also did not mean that they saw

¹⁵⁴ Azuma, *Between Two Empires*, 120.

¹⁵⁵ Azuma, *Between Two Empires*, 13.

themselves as agents of Japan against the U.S. That most Japanese immigrants would not have been seen as *shokumin* in Japan highlights that they were not coming as agents of the Japanese government—a somewhat basic but nonetheless important point because of the prevalence of invasion tropes in the early 20th century to justify U.S. prejudice. As we saw earlier, Japan was by this point already curtailing Japanese immigration to North America, turning its attention to Latin America and Australia somewhat, but first and foremost to settlements in Manchuria and Korea.

The Western Hemisphere did remain a popular destination to a growing populist movement in Japan that “dreamed of social mobility through education, entrepreneurship, and self-help in places like America,” running on “an undercurrent of US frontier discourse.”¹⁵⁶ This contradiction between the political ends of the state and popular discourse highlights how people can operate independently of the state, though these individuals would have had little ability to actually enact these settler desires by this point, given the government’s limitations on passports and the U.S. Immigration Act of 1924.

In addition, the prevalence of U.S. frontier discourse gestures to the ongoing cultural influence of U.S. imperialism in Japan. This is even more relevant because of how Japan defended its own settler colonialism in Asia. Satō Torajiro, an early “ideologue and practitioner of migration and agricultural colonization” who had had a brief and unsuccessful stint in the United States at least in part because of the prejudice he encountered there, advocated for a Japanese “Monroe doctrine for self-defense.” He

¹⁵⁶ Azuma, *In Search of Our Frontier*, 98.

was indignant about the United States' "invasive Monroe doctrine" and called for Japan to "rise up with our neighboring nations for the future's sake. That is our manifest destiny."¹⁵⁷ Clearly, Japan styled its settler colonialism in Asia through discourses on U.S. imperialism and settler colonialism.

In the U.S., the Issei found ways to reconcile their lives in America with their love of their birth country. As one Issei explained, "We are not legally [able to become] American citizens, but in spirit we have come American citizens. We are loyal to our native land, but in that loyalty we find nothing incompatible with loyalty to our land of adoption."¹⁵⁸ Some Issei placed these into frontier narratives as well by casting themselves as pioneers for "harmonious relations between Oriental and Occidental races"—and racial equality between Asians and whites.

Sei Fujii, an Issei, pushed Nisei to use their Japanese ancestry to "serve America your mother country." He goes on to say:

The present brilliant culture of America has been built up in less than five centuries since it was opened, by the various peoples each bringing a different culture from Western Europe. We Japanese, too, by bringing ours ... should enrich the contents of the spiritual culture of America, contributing toward the realization of the ideal of its foundation.¹⁵⁹

Fujioka posited that this made them better Americans than white Americans—because they truly wanted "justice and equality for all." While this goal might seem noble on its surface, they were primarily concerned about equality for Japanese with white Americans. Their concerns did not extend to other Asians, let alone other

¹⁵⁷ Azuma, *Between Two Empires*, 73.

¹⁵⁸ Azuma, *Between Two Empires*, 102.

¹⁵⁹ Azuma, *Between Two Empires*, 130.

racialized groups. They relied on rhetoric of racial supremacy about “Japanese diligence and superiority in [farming] skills” to make their claim and suggested that even the Alien Land Laws had failed to stop them because of “our exceptional ability and talent.”¹⁶⁰

Whether by fighting for Issei citizenship or by challenging the alien land laws or by nurturing the land and their families, Issei used these to claim belonging in this country. Claiming inclusion, though, is not an innocuous goal. Sunera Thobani writes in the Canadian context, “As racially excluded immigrants sought to expand the institution of citizenship to accommodate their own demands for inclusion, they left largely unchallenged the role of this institution in the dispossession of Aboriginal peoples.”¹⁶¹

In Canada, Asian immigrants could nominally become citizens, though they could not vote. Thobani explains, “The extension of citizenship rights to these racialized immigrants thus resulted in their qualified integration into the political community, but at the cost of fostering their complicity in the colonial domination of Aboriginal peoples.”¹⁶² Though unable to become citizens in the U.S., *Ozawa v. United States* and *Bhagat Singh Thind v. United States* demonstrate the investment that Asian communities had in attaining naturalized citizenship. People of Asian ancestry born in the United States already had birthright citizenship, thanks to the case of *Wong Kim Ark v. United States*. In 1898, the supreme court found that Wong Kim Ark, a Chinese American born in San Francisco, held birthright citizenship. This case protected the citizenship rights of Nisei, or people of Japanese ancestry born to immigrant parents. In fighting for inclusion

¹⁶⁰ Azuma, *Between Two Empires*, 92.

¹⁶¹ Sunera Thobani, *Exalted Subjects: Studies in the Making of Race and Nation in Canada* (University of Toronto Press, 2007), 76.

¹⁶² Thobani, *Exalted Subjects*, 76.

to the racial settler state, Issei and Nisei attempted to align themselves with the state, ignoring how citizenship has failed to protect Black and Native people and implicitly buying into the structure responsible for their oppression. Indeed, the state would also fail to protect Nisei American citizens when it incarcerated them and their parents during World War II.

The ways that Issei claimed belonging and settler identity complicates the notion that they were mindlessly assisting either the U.S. or Japan as settler states. It highlights how they might fit into western narratives about the individualistic pioneer. At the same time, they managed to reconcile their belonging to both their new home and their ancestral land, something that made their identities somewhat illegible to both states. This identification with “settler”/shokumin suggests—somewhat ironically—a certain ambivalence toward either state, and the prospect of staying in “America.”

And then, on February 19, 1942, the Yakama County Sheriff gathered up his officers and prepared to raid Japanese homes in the area. While Hoover emphasizes to the sheriff that this was not sanctioned by the FBI, the fact that the sheriff felt comfortable organizing this action up to that point demonstrates how anti-Japanese prejudice was being facilitated by the federal government in so many other ways—even if it would take decades for the state to call it that. Suppose the sheriff had gone through with this: would this have been extralegal if he had just gone ahead with the raids without thinking to ask the FBI for permission? The sheriff after all was a representative of the county, and thus, at a local level, of the settler state. The sheriff’s inclination shows how easily anti-Japanese prejudice might become official policy based on one individual’s interpretation

of how to implement state mandates for policing. Even without the sheriff's action, the state was sanctioning raids of Japanese homes. Issei had been arrested for the last few months, taken from their homes, sometimes in their pajamas, without any indication of where they were going or for how long.

Likewise, while Browne insisted that Japanese American-owned land in California "has not been taken over by the Government," in practice the forced removal and incarceration put such extreme pressure on Japanese Americans to sell their property that the people who managed to hold on to their homes and businesses and farms were far and away the exception—not the rule.

In 1940, there were 6,118 Japanese American-owned farms in California, Oregon, and Washington.¹⁶³ These made up a minority of those who operated farms though; 70% of Japanese-operated farm lands were leased. In a region and at a point in time where farm tenancy was around 20%, the extent to which Japanese farmers relied on leases demonstrates the effectiveness of the alien land laws. Before the war, Adon Poli and Warren M. Engstrand estimated that, in early 1942, 266,120 acres were operated by Japanese people removed from California, Washington, and Oregon.¹⁶⁴ They estimated that land losses during the incarceration had "reduced these farm ownership interests to less than a fourth of the total pre-war Japanese land holdings, including leaseholds," or roughly 60-65,000 acres. Those reliant on leases were disproportionately affected: the

¹⁶³ War Agency Liquidation Unit, "People in Motion: The Postwar Adjustment of the Evacuated Japanese Americans" (U.S. Department of the Interior, 1947), 59.

¹⁶⁴ Adon Poli and Warren M. Engstrand, "Japanese Agriculture on the Pacific Coast," *The Journal of Land & Public Utility Economics* 21, no. 4 (1945): 354, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3159008>.

WRA estimated that “all but a very few leaseholds were given up.”¹⁶⁵ This suggests that the forced removal and incarceration effectively reclaimed Japanese-owned and leased lands for more desirable settlers.

Okihiro and Drummond point out that the settler state favored large-scale companies over individual farmers, suggesting a class bias as well. As the Farm Security Administration implemented the transfer of Japanese American lands to predominantly white farmers and companies, it made it possible for these entities to enter into these agreements with little to no risk: “The fruit companies obtained generous risk-free government loans to subsidize their operation (loans were secured on the assets of the Japanese farms), acquired the full use of the farm machinery on those farms at no cost, and, in most cases, shared half of the profits on the sale of the 1942 crops.”¹⁶⁶ In fact, in Northern California, these policies consolidated “196 Japanese farms totaling 5,772 acres” under the authority of nine farm corporations, illustrating how the forced removal consolidated these lands not just among white settlers but also in the hands of a wealthy few.” The loans—which totalled over \$1 million—show how the government facilitated access for these entities at the expense of Japanese American farmers.¹⁶⁷

The Decision to Stay and the Loyalty Questionnaire

For those who did end up staying, the decision wasn’t usually made in an instant. Many came to the realization over decades that this had become their home and their

¹⁶⁵ War Agency Liquidation Unit, “People in Motion: The Postwar Adjustment of the Evacuated Japanese Americans” (Washington, DC, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1947), 61.

¹⁶⁶ Okihiro and Drummond, “Japanese American Economic Losses in California Agriculture,” 173.

¹⁶⁷ Okihiro and Drummond, “Japanese American Economic Losses in California Agriculture,” 173.

children's home. Sue Kunitomi Embrey said of her father: "when he reached, I think he was sixty, he told his friends he was not planning to go back to Japan, and he died in an auto accident prewar."¹⁶⁸

For some, it was an ambivalent decision, one that might change with the circumstances. "My dad, his dad came with him the first time, and then I don't know how long he stayed, but then he went back to Japan and my dad just stayed," said Taylor Tomita.

In my own family, the way I have heard this narrative constructed is that the war itself is what determined that the family would not return to Japan. Signing the loyalty questionnaire forced many families to explicitly decide where they wanted to live—and my great-grandparents understood that this was their children's home and therefore was their home too.

Starting in 1943, the WRA began to distribute a form that was infamously dubbed the "loyalty questionnaire." Two questions in particular challenged incarcerated: Question 27 asked incarcerated to declare their willingness to fight for the U.S. Armed Forces. Many incarcerated were confused by this question: if they answered yes, were they volunteering to go fight? What did it mean for women or Issei or anyone outside the draft age? The confusion only worsened with Question 28, which asked incarcerated to forsake allegiance to the emperor of Japan. Many Nisei wondered if this was a trick question—meant to catch them into saying that they *had* allegiance to the emperor that they had never had to begin with. Many more were insulted by even being asked the question: it

¹⁶⁸ Embrey, Segment 1.

was yet another indication that their birthright citizenship meant nothing; they were under suspicion purely by virtue of having been born to Japanese parents.

For Issei, the question introduced a different challenge: if they answered question 28 affirmatively, they would be essentially forsaking the country of their birth for a country that did not allow them to become citizens or buy homes and had shown no qualms in locking them up in concentration camps. Interpretations varied widely. Chiho Tomita, an Issei, recalled interpreting the questions as: “You shoot emperor with gun?”¹⁶⁹ This issue with interpretation was likely heightened by the vastly different levels of English language learning among Issei as well as some Nisei, particularly those educated in Japan.

Rather than focusing on the actual answers around the questionnaire, I want to focus on the coercive demand upon their loyalty that left many feeling as if they didn’t have a choice other than to answer “yes-yes.” Kaori Miyawaki has argued that the incarceration compelled enactments of whiteness and loyalty from Japanese Americans to prove their American citizenship and identity. Similarly, Tule Lake incarceree, George Iseri, explained the relationship he had with the federal government at the time of the loyalty questionnaire: “the government can say, ‘Okay. We’ll put you into solitary confinement or whatever.’ ... I’ll be a hypocrite. I’m gonna get the hell out of here.”¹⁷⁰ His words suggest that he felt endangered by the federal government’s power over him in camp and that he viewed the loyalty questionnaire not just as a threat about what might

¹⁶⁹ Linda Tamura, *The Hood River Issei: An Oral History of Japanese Settlers in Oregon's Hood River Valley* (University of Illinois Press, 1993), 191.

¹⁷⁰ George Iseri, Segment 11, interview by Alton Chung, December 5, 2004, Japanese American Museum of Oregon Collection, Densho Digital Repository, <https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-one-7-40-11/>.

happen if he answered incorrectly, but also that answering “yes-yes” was a way to protect himself from the state by getting permission to leave. Moreover, the suggestion of his hypocrisy shows that he was willing to answer whatever he felt like they wanted him to say, regardless of whether it matched up with what he believed.

As another Tule Lake incarcerated Tetsushi Marvin Uratsu put it, “I said, Joe, you know if a guy had a gun at my forehead and told me what to do, I’ll do whatever he tells me because I want to live another day.”¹⁷¹ The image of a “gun at my forehead” and the desire to “live another day” demonstrate the stakes at which this decision was made.

Yet another Tule Lake incarcerated, Frank Miyamoto, explained, “for most of us, I guess the feeling was ... ‘It’s not a fair question directed to us, but what can we do? We want to get out of these centers.’” It’s significant that all three of these incarcerated were from Tule Lake. Tule Lake was one of the first concentration camps where the WRA distributed the loyalty questionnaire and the administration’s handling of the questionnaire was a disaster. They provided little to no information about the significance of the loyalty questionnaire, forced incarcerated to answer the questions before a strict deadline, refused to illuminate the consequences of a “no” answer, did not allow the incarcerated adequate time and space to discuss their answers, and treated qualified answers the same as outright “nos.” Tule Lake had the largest number of incarcerated declared “disloyal,” and several dozen incarcerated in Block 42 refused to answer the loyalty questionnaire outright and were threatened with prison time and a fine of \$10,000. Tule Lake administration initially confined this population at local jails but eventually

¹⁷¹ Tetsushi Marvin Uratsu, Segment 19, interview by Tom Ikeda, May 25, 2011, Densho Digital Repository, <https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-densho-1000-338-19/>.

moved to a nearby former Civilian Conservation Corps camp where the Constitution did not apply. A large part of why the WRA eventually selected Tule Lake to segregate out incarcerated deemed “disloyal” (those who had answered “no-no”) was because of the high rates of “no-no” answers at Tule Lake.¹⁷²

While this indicates that incarcerated had a choice at least to some degree, the options were extreme. As Miyawaki explains, “loyalty was associated with Americanness and disloyalty was associated with Japaneseness in the U.S. government’s rhetoric, creating a nearly inseparable association of those terms.”¹⁷³ In addition, people had no idea what the consequences would be, especially in the early days of the loyalty questionnaire. Would they would be repatriated to Japan for a no-no answer? Separated from their families?

Question 28 would eventually be revised to ask that incarcerated “swear to abide by the laws of the United States and take no action which would in any way interfere with the war effort of the United States?” But the relationship with the government that the incarcerated at Tule Lake spoke to was not dissimilar, even if the questions were different. The sense of having to say whatever necessary to get out of camp—that dynamic remained true. Perhaps the question did not as overtly demand that Issei forsake the Japanese emperor, but in many ways it still affirmed a pre-existing sense among Japanese Americans that to be American was to be anti-Japanese. Though the language had been finessed, the irreconcilability of Americanness and Japaneseness remained. It

¹⁷² “Tule Lake | Densho Encyclopedia,” accessed July 3, 2021, https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Tule_Lake/.

¹⁷³ Kaori Miyawaki, “Constructing Loyalty, Citizenship, and Identity: A Rhetorical History of the Japanese American Incarceration” (ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2014), 31, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1664610089?pq-origsite=primo>.

wasn't just Japanese Americans who felt this way: In chapter 2, I discuss how Office of Indian Affairs employees pressured Mohave and Nüwüwü Councilmembers at Colorado River to assert anti-Japanese sentiment to prove their own loyalty in order to be “permitted” to have a say over their own land.

In fact, forced declarations of loyalty were nothing new for Japanese Americans—particularly for Issei and Kibei, which refers to Nisei who were educated at least in part in Japan –by the time the loyalty questionnaire came out. One Kibei recounted,

War started December 7th. Monday morning [the day after] I got picked up by the FBI ... I have to make a statement. Questions about how you feel about this war; which side you on. ... I already have kids and the wife [a Nisei] in the United States. They don't know anything about Japan. Since you have family and kids, you have to make a decision. You have to sacrifice yourself. ... So I made a statement that I like to see the United States win. ... I told that to the FBI; then I have to sign the doggone statement.¹⁷⁴

But he also admitted that internally he felt that “it's a draw. No win and no lose.”¹⁷⁵ His ambivalence as a Kibei mirrors the ambivalence that Azuma noted among Issei—the claiming of “settler” identity as a way to promote either their return to Japan or their decision to remain in the U.S. This suggests that at least some Nisei continued to feel a similar ambivalence about remaining in the U.S. Shima's hopelessness about a happy outcome, as well as his sense of sacrificing himself for his family by signing this

¹⁷⁴ William T. Masuda, “A Participatory Study of the Self-Identity of Kibei Nisei Men: A Sub Group of Second Generation Japanese American Men,” *University of San Francisco*, 1993, 117, <https://repository.usfca.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1467&context=diss>.

¹⁷⁵ Masuda, “Self-Identity of Kibei Nisei Men,” 117.

“doggone statement,” shows the coercive nature of these declarations of loyalty and in many ways forced the Issei and the Kibei to make a decision to cut themselves off from Japan. It suggests a constant pressure to declare loyalty throughout the incarceration that exceeded the bounds of the loyalty questionnaire, a pressure that instilled in many a sense that loyalty to the U.S. was irreconcilable with any sense of belonging to or heritage with Japan. Nor did that sense necessarily originate during the incarceration: Curtis B. Munson described the vast majority of Nisei as “pathetically” loyal to the U.S. in his report submitted to the Roosevelt administration on November 7, 1941.¹⁷⁶ But while that loyalty might have been mostly self- or culturally-imposed before the war, the settler state and the loyalty questionnaire affirmed for once and for all that to be American meant to renounce Japan entirely, reshaping how many Issei understood their own identities between both countries. Indeed, the Japanese American Citizens League urged the community to go along with their own incarceration as a way to “prove” their loyalty to the U.S. Many Nisei continued to “prove” their Americanness by becoming hyper-invested in American culture and refusing to speak Japanese—even when it was the only language their parents spoke. Later on, many refused to teach their children Japanese as well—or maybe by that point they had just forgotten so much of it that it felt like too much work to teach their children the language. Clearly, though, these declarations of loyalty permeated Japanese American culture beyond the war and instilled in them a sense that their ability to go about their lives in this country depended on their

¹⁷⁶ Michi Nishiura Weglyn and James A. Michener, *Years of Infamy: The Untold Story of America's Concentration Camps*, Rev. ed (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1996), 43.

willingness to shun Japan and Japanese culture even when it came at expense of being able to communicate with their own family.

Still, if the Issei did not come to stay, they also did not come with any definite plans to leave. If we understand their labor in the context of U.S. imperialism, we can see how the Isseis' arrival in "America" served the settler state's imperatives to settle the land—both domestically and in terms of empire. Many Japanese worked in agriculture, timber, mining, and fishing—all jobs that relate to subjugating the land for colonization. These industries promoted Western conceptions of land, property, and resource extraction, which contributed to the repudiation of Indigenous knowledges. And they fought against their exclusion from land ownership and citizenship in this country—in part, by casting themselves as pioneers, or settlers. It is worth considering then if the Issei were settlers because they came to this country (even if not to stay), because they claimed that status for themselves, or because of the effect of their labor for this country. Understanding the circumstances that mitigated their settlement shows that settlerhood is not a monolithic status and can go hand in hand with state oppression. The fact that the state impeded and at times explicitly prevented their settling only to then turn around and submit them to a highly coercive demand for their loyalty highlights the unique circumstances at play. In addition, it is worth considering that settling does not necessarily happen in the space of a moment—in "coming to stay"—but rather over the course of generations—as demonstrated by the Issei's multi-generational intention of "kodomo no tame ni."

Conclusion

My great-uncle Kiyō, Seiichi and Kinue's eldest child, was the first to leave camp. At age 18, he graduated from high school in Jerome and signed the loyalty questionnaire—"yes-yes," like his parents—so that he would be permitted to leave camp to attend college. While he was off at college, his family was shipped off to Heart Mountain when Jerome was turned into a Prisoner-of-War camp. While attending the University of Minnesota, Kiyō was drafted into the U.S. Army. He was trained to become part of the Military Intelligence Service, using the language training he had from years of Japanese language school his parents had forced him to attend in the thought that the family might one day return to Japan. They'd since come to terms with the fact that that would never happen. Kiyō completed his MIS training at Fort Snelling, which was built on a bluff that overlooked Bdote, a Dakota site of creation. After the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862, the site had served as a concentration camp for Dakota. I do not know if he knew about the Dakota history of the site. What Kiyō did tell me when I was in high school was that he felt the coerciveness of being forced to serve but, like most, decided to go along with it anyways. The family was still behind barbed wire at the time.

When my great-grandfather left Heart Mountain, he returned to Fresno with no home to speak of. He found a job working as a farm laborer—the same job he'd held when he first arrived in this country. He lived in a shed on the farm of his employer. When his wife and two youngest children joined him a few months later, that shed was their first home outside of camp. Seiichi never returned to farming after the war. He became a gardener instead.

Seiichi was not alone in turning to gardening after the war. Connie Chiang writes, “gardening proved to be a permanent postwar occupation for many Japanese Americans, evidence of their labor segregation and, in the case of former farmers, their downward mobility.”¹⁷⁷ Seiichi and Kinue, and all of their children, lived out the remainder of their lives in the U.S. While Seiichi never went back into farming, Kiyoko, eventually would buy an avocado farm outside of Pasadena that remains in the family to this day.

¹⁷⁷ Connie Y. Chiang, *Nature Behind Barbed Wire: An Environmental History of the Japanese American Incarceration* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 191.

Chapter 2

“The Government’s Doing It Again”:

Japanese American Incarceration on American Indian Reservations

Some people feel ghosts out here, the land-use officer from the Gila River Indian Community (GRIC) told me on my first trip out to Butte Camp.¹ My grandfather and his family had been incarcerated at Butte, one of two camps on the Gila River Indian Reservation, in barrack 57-3-a.² The GRIC representative showed me the cement outlines of the foundation for their one room barrack “apartment,” the remains of the small cement pool a neighbor had made out front to cope with the Arizona heat. I have a photo of my great-uncle sitting at that pool a few years before he died, grinning up at the camera.

I did not feel any ghosts. I felt the hot summer sun burning on my back. I felt the sand shifting beneath my feet, my car’s engine struggling to make it up the hill to the monument. I ran my hands over the rough texture of the plaque at the monument, which had been struck over and over again by a pick of some sort, laying bare a silvery metal underneath the dignified bronze and brown. I touched the multiple coatings of paint on the memorial that the local branch of the Japanese American Citizens’ League (JACL)

¹ I am not naming this individual here because I have not yet heard back from him about whether he is comfortable with being named. I will share a copy of this with him and ask him if he is comfortable with having his name shared in the book.

² Because the land belongs to the GRIC, anyone who is not a GRIC member must apply for a permit to come out here. The GRIC generally allows former incarcerated and their descendants to return, but the process to get the permit and organize the site visit can take up to five weeks so requires advanced planning.

had in its biannual clean-ups of the site to cover over graffiti. I felt the pull of a cactus catching my pant leg for a moment.

I tried to feel how special this place was. I tried to feel those three years my grandfather had spent here, and I wondered how those three years had shaped the rest of his life. I wondered if I had felt ghosts at Gila River, what they would have said to me. What would my grandfather have said?

Instead, I felt unanswered questions. There is a weight that comes with not seeing any ghosts, of feeling disconnected from the place that twisted the trajectories and lives of your grandfather and great-grandparents, and every family that was sent here for all the generations to follow. I suppose the questions are my ghosts. The questions I tried to ask my grandmother that she answered with a shrug or a monosyllable reply. The questions I've wished I could ask my grandfather, who died when I was five. The questions I was never able to translate for my great-grandmother, who lived eighty years in the U.S. but never learned to speak English. I had tried—and more or less failed—to learn Japanese.

When I came back a year later for the Japanese American Citizens' League Arizona Chapter clean-up, I found even more questions. The rusted edges of the bullet casings that littered the ground around the memorial. I wondered why someone fired a gun here. The dents in the beer cans and soda bottles worn smooth from dust and sun. I wondered if they had been left during the war or at some point after. At what point after. If they came from 1942 to 1945, they are a relic of history; any time after, they are considered trash.

Even if I can't see the ghosts or feel them there, I believe the GRIC officer when he says they are there. The way many tell this story today, it seems as though the ghosts of Japanese American incarceration were buried with the departure from camp, the first pilgrimage back, the passage of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 through which the surviving incarcerated received reparations. It seems as if we have attained closure.

Returning to Gila River obliterates the notion that this memory can stay buried. The barracks and buildings may be long gone, but the concrete foundations remain, ruins poking out of the ground amid saguaro cacti and the teddy-bear cholla and the dry cracks in the dirt.

I worked with the Huhugam Heritage Center (HHC), a museum run by the Gila River Indian Community (GRIC), for two months in summer 2018. While there, I heard the staff members—predominantly Community members—say that the history of Japanese American incarceration on GRIC land didn't feel like their history. It represented yet another example of the federal government excluding them from their own land. How could they tell the history of Japanese American incarceration at Gila River if most of their Community had never been allowed beyond the fence during the three years of its operation? The GRIC members I worked with told me about grandmothers and grandfathers and aunts and uncles who remember watching the food being trucked into the camp from the train station at Casa Grande as they went hungry. In an oral history, Arnold Allson recollected, "It was pretty rough, you know, on the reservation and we couldn't hardly, you know—no jobs, nothing."³

³ Arnold Allson, Return to Butte Camp: A Japanese-American World War II Relocation Center, interview by Orit Tamir, Transcription, July 6, 1993, Bureau of Reclamation, Arizona Projects Office, I-2.

A good thirty years before electricity came to the reservation, a city lit up in the dark desert—the bright beam of more than 5,000 lightbulbs, each lighting the room of another family in the 859 residential barracks with six rooms each.⁴ A city the GRIC had never wanted on their land. And then one day, after the prisoners left, that city was razed, ensuring that all that copper wiring would not go to the community to whom the land belonged.

To this day, there is anger about the camp. I can feel its pulse in the pick that someone took to the memorial plaque on the monument. The graffiti. The gun shells. The beer cans and the cigarette butts. The spray paint. Of course, as Allson put it, “Kids get a hold of that paint, well, they’ll spray anything with it.”⁵

Vandalism is not uncommon around the sites of Japanese American concentration camps. At Heart Mountain, located outside the predominantly white settler towns of Cody and Powell, Wyoming, the old memorial was often graffitied, and kids would go into the hospital building barrack and smoke there until the building was boarded up. Here, though, the charge of unresolved emotions lingers—the injustice of the infringement upon their Indigenous sovereignty that occurred when concentration camps were placed on their land. I don’t want to speak for them because, both as a non-Native person and as someone who is not a GRIC member, I don’t believe I can fully grasp the depth of the emotion for them here. At the same time, I think it’s important to recognize that this is not just youthful vandalism. Seeing what was done to this land—the

⁴ My thanks to Donald Sabori for sharing his family history with me and trusting me to write about it here. I am honored by that trust.

⁵ Allson, I-23.

desecration of the site by the settler state into what one GRIC member called “a dump”—how could it not make them angry and resentful and sad and so much more?⁶ And this is just one event in a long line of abuses and systemic violences in their histories—violences that are ongoing, that the settler state has yet to begin to reckon with.

It should also be noted that there is a strong possibility—one the GRIC officer mentioned to me—that settler teenagers from the surrounding area also come here and participate in this destruction of the site. It would be far from the first time settlers have thoughtlessly destroyed American Indian land and the prejudices that settlers espouse at other sites are likely prevalent here as well. These actions are not the same. For them, the site is not the persistent reminder of the disrespect the settler state has for Indigenous sovereignty that it is for GRIC members.

Gila River and Poston—two of the ten primary War Relocation Authority (WRA) centers—were on reservations without the permission of the Indigenous Nations to whom those lands belong. As we will see in the rest of this chapter, the OIA and WRA did not inform, let alone consult, the Councils about the concentration camps on their land before they began building on these sites. Anger was an inevitable consequence.

But if I see anger, I also see care. I see stewardship for and commitment to the history of Japanese American incarceration on their land. Seventy-five years after Japanese Americans left Gila River, the GRIC guide researched where my family’s barracks had been located and took the time to show me their exact site. As he showed

⁶ Sam Thomas Statement, undated; Exhibits Folder (Exhibits); Docket 236A (DKT236A); Entry 11UD (E11UD); Indian Claims Commission, Record Group 279 (RG279); NARA-DC.

me around, he told me about the land and the camp, things that I hadn't known even after having done years of research on Japanese American incarceration. After Japanese Americans left, the GRIC has cared for our history—my family's history, Japanese American history, and their history. This history is not over and done with—there are too many emotions for that. But in the anger and the care and the hauntings of this history, I see communities that were brought together by the land and are wrestling with the complexities of this history in ways that challenge preeminent narratives of closure and redress around Japanese American incarceration.

Overview

In this chapter, I argue that the Colorado River Indian Community (CRIC) and the Gila River Indian Community's (GRIC) narratives of Japanese American incarceration on their lands refute the hegemonic narrative of exceptionality that has emerged during and since the Redress Movement of the 1970s and 80s. I analyze first person testimonies of GRIC and CRIC members as well as Diné that take the form of oral histories, conversations I had, and depositions and statements from Indian Claims Commission (ICC) cases, a panel presentation, and an article. I juxtapose these personal narratives with documents from settler archives to discuss the emergence of the narrative of relationality and how it challenges narratives of exceptionality that seek to redeem the racial capitalist settler state. I suggest that it can help us deconstruct the narrative of military necessity as being not just unnecessary but also not an exception.

Next, I examine how the GRIC narrated the incarceration for their Indian Claims Commission case and the concessions they had to make to render the wrongs done to them legible to—and thus recompensable by—the settler state. I examine how the narrative of relationality begins to take form in oral tradition around Japanese American incarceration at Leupp. I argue that the narrative of relationality is illegible to the settler state, gesturing to the potential this narrative holds for destabilizing narratives that prioritize redress and closure around the incarceration.

Finally, I use the landscape itself and material culture from the sites to consider how the incarceration continues to haunt in these places and for these communities. I discuss how care and anger can coexist in memory and how these assert themselves both through the protection of art, artifacts, and land, as well as through acts of vandalism. I hold that these acts of vandalism are expressions of that which is unresolved in our memory of the incarceration—of how the incarceration continues to haunt the communities it affected.

The State of Exception

In implementing the incarceration, the settler state generally relied on a narrative of “military necessity.” In 1976, Michi Weglyn uncovered a report commissioned by Franklin D. Roosevelt that concluded “there is no Japanese ‘problem’ on the coast” that had been submitted to the president on November 7, 1941. The Congressional Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians challenged the claim of military necessity by demonstrating that the incarceration was not in fact necessary.

Though the narrative of military necessity has been repeatedly disproven by scholars and denounced by a Congressional commission in 1982, it continues to persist in American politics—drawn on most recently to guide the Muslim Ban and the detention of undocumented migrants. The primary causes of the incarceration, the commission found, were “racial prejudice, war hysteria, and a failure of political leadership”—two out of three were not systemic but rather based in specific circumstances of the war and the political leaders of the time. This suggests that the circumstances were exceptional. Even as it (with limited success) challenged the idea that the incarceration was necessary due to military reasons, the report left intact the associated notion that this was a state of emergency—and was thus an exception to American norms.

Naomi Paik has shown that Redress “contradicted itself in asserting that internment was exceptional to U.S. history and culture, while simultaneously arguing for redress of Aleutian Islanders,” Paik explains. Even as it offered reparations for both Japanese American and Unanga survivors, it subverted attempts by African Americans and American Indians to claim reparations through its “focus on individual rights [which] foreclosed the ability to expand redress to other aggrieved groups.” It simultaneously undermined the claim to the communal and race-based impact of the incarceration by focusing on the specific individuals who had been incarcerated.⁷

The notion that the incarceration was exceptional didn’t originate with Redress. Its roots are evident in the narrative of military necessity. On March 20, 1942, J.C. McCaskill from the OIA announced the creation of the three camps that would make up

⁷ A. Naomi Paik, *Rightlessness: Testimony and Redress in U.S. Prison Camps since World War II* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 33.

Poston concentration camp to the CRIC. He informed the Council that he had attempted to keep the camps under 5,000 people of Japanese ancestry, but the Army insisted that “the situation was of such an emergency character that they must immediately construct facilities for 10,000 people.”⁸

McCaskill’s words—“the situation was of such an emergency character”—illustrate how the OIA relied on claims of emergency and military necessity not only to forcibly remove and incarcerate Japanese Americans but also to compel the CRIC and GRIC to accept the use of their land to assist with this and to depict the OIA as the CRIC and GRIC’s allies.

Plans had been under discussion for a little more than a month when McCaskill made his announcement. On February 18, 1942, Geo P. Clements wrote a letter to OIA Commissioner John Collier in which he related a conversation he had had with one of Collier’s employees recently. During that conversation, they “discussed with him the possibility of moving the Japanese aliens east of the Colorado River, and the Colorado Reservation was suggested.”⁹ The date of the letter is notable because Executive Order 9066, which enabled the forced removal and incarceration of Japanese Americans from the West Coast, had not yet been signed. It would be signed the next day—February 19.

⁸ J.C. McCaskill, Assistant to the Commissioner, Office of Indian Affairs, to John Collier, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Washington, March 27, 1942 (McCaskill to Collier, March 27, 1942); Folder 1; Box 479; Transfer and Removal of Aliens, Subject Classification 123 (SC123); General Service (GS); Central Classified Files, Entry 121 (E121); Bureau of Indian Affairs, Record Group 75 (RG75); National Archives Building, Washington, DC (NARA-DC).

⁹ Geo Clements, Counselor, Agriculture and Conservation, Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, to John Collier, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, February 18, 1942; Part 1 Folder; Box 21; Office Files of John Collier, Entry 178 (E178); RG75; NARA-DC.

Collier did not receive the letter until March 4, according to OIA records—the same day that he sent to Secretary Harold Ickes of the Department of the Interior (DOI) a list of seven potential sites under DOI jurisdiction that might fit the needs of the WRA.¹⁰ Three of these sites were on American Indian reservations: Gila River, home to Akimel O’odham (Pima) and Pee Posh (Maricopa); Yuma, home to Quechan; Colorado River, home to Mohave and Nüwüwü (Chemehuevi). Of these three, two—Gila River and Colorado River—would eventually be deemed suitable by the War Department.

On March 13, 1942, Secretary of War Henry Stimson wrote to the Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes that “As soon as your permission is obtained, it is our intention to construct emergency shelters for an unknown number of Japanese aliens and citizens” on the Colorado River Reservation. Stimson invoked the language of the state of exception through the term “emergency shelters.”¹¹

On March 16, Collier assured Ickes that “we already have an excellent understanding, including an understanding about the necessity of terminating the Japanese occupancy after the War is over.”¹² He seemed to believe that because the lands would be returned to the Communities after the war—and because Japanese Americans would not be allowed to settle on those lands—that there was no infringement on American Indian sovereignty. But the failure to consult and actually give the CRIC a real

¹⁰ John Collier, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, to Harold Ickes, Secretary of the Interior, March 4, 1942 (Collier to Ickes, March 4, 1942); Internment of Japanese Pima Agency Folder (Internment); Box 3; National Defense Program - Records Relating to the War Relocation Authority 1942-1946, Entry 180H (E180H); RG75; NARA-DC.

¹¹ Henry Stimson, Secretary of War, to Harold Ickes, Secretary of the Interior, March 13, 1942 (Stimson to Ickes, March 13, 1942); Folder 1; Box 479; SC123; GS; E121; RG75; NARA-DC.

¹² John Collier to Harold Ickes, March 16, 1942 (Collier to Ickes, March 16, 1942); Folder 2; BX479; SC123; GS; E121; RG75; NARA-DC.

choice in the matter meant that the taking of their land—whether permanent or temporary—served to undermine Indigenous people’s confidence in their sovereignty and their ability to assert that sovereignty in their own interests.

At some point between March 13 and March 19, Ickes gave Stimson verbal permission over the phone to begin construction at Colorado River, which he confirmed in writing on April 8. Construction began at CRIC on March 19. Not once during this month did anyone think to ask the CRIC what they thought of the possibility of their land being used in this way, or even think to inform them of their plans.

On March 20, when McCaskill informed the CRIC of this project for the first time, he “had to say to the Council frankly that I believed it was too late to stop the project even though they might wish to.”¹³ Army engineers had already arrived on site the day before. The lumber had already been ordered and carpenters were expected “almost immediately.”

Poston was not the exception: Myla Vicenti Carpio and Karen Leong have shown that GRIC Superintendent A.E. Robinson also “evoked what might be called a ‘state of exception’ to federal-tribal nation relations to describe the federal government’s actions in seizing GRIC lands.”¹⁴ The language of the emergency went much higher than Robinson. On April 16, 1942, Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes gave Secretary of War Henry Stimson permission to begin building two camps on GRIC land. He wrote,

¹³ McCaskill to Collier, March 27, 1942.

¹⁴ Karen J. Leong and Myla Vicenti Carpio, “Carceral Subjugations: Gila River Indian Community and Incarceration of Japanese Americans on Its Lands,” *Amerasia Journal* 42, no. 1 (March 1, 2016): 103–20, <https://doi.org/10.17953/aj.42.1.103>.

We shall undertake at once to negotiate with the Indians an acceptable agreement whereby the needed land can be made available for Japanese occupancy and use. I am sure the Pima Indians will be more than willing to conclude an arrangement that will be satisfactory to all parties concerned and that it will not be necessary for you to invoke emergency power in order to obtain the use of the land. You therefore have my consent to enter immediately upon the reservation and begin the construction of housing facilities...¹⁵

His certainty echoes the sentiment McCaskill conveyed to the CRIC nearly a month earlier that Ickes “believed the Indians ... would not say no.” But a lot had happened between March 20 (when McCaskill approached the CRIC) and April 16. McCaskill had explained (albeit inadequately) the concerns of the CRIC in his report back to Collier. Collier did not convey those concerns to Ickes as far as I can tell but this oversight preserved Ickes’ individual certainty, showing how the failure of communication within governmental bureaucracy made it that much easier for the CRIC’s concerns and oppositions to be dismissed and forgotten by those in Washington making the decisions about how to use their land.

Thus, the narrative of exceptionality was in fact a crucial part of the narrative of military necessity—one that has remained mostly intact even as the premise of military necessity was dismantled. In Giorgio Agamben’s theorization of the “state of exception,” the state uses seemingly exceptional circumstances to argue for the suspension of the law, at least temporarily. In the long run, this serves to increase state power and solidify its

¹⁵ Harold Ickes, Secretary of the Interior, to Henry Stimson, Secretary of War, April 16, 1942 (Ickes to Stimson, April 17, 1942); Internment; Box 3; E180H; RG75; NARA-DC.

sovereignty. Agamben uses Japanese American incarceration as an example of the state of exception, dubbing it “the most spectacular violation of civil rights.” Agamben claims the state of exception has ceased to be temporary: “the voluntary creation of a permanent state of emergency (though perhaps not declared in the technical sense) has become one of the essential practices of contemporary states, including so-called democratic ones.”¹⁶ Agamben limits his analysis of the state of exception to a specific time frame. In the section titled “A Brief History of the State of Exception,” Agamben writes that “this dialectic has taken shape historically (and in an exemplary way already beginning with the Civil War).”¹⁷ By starting there, he fails, as Jodi Byrd points out, to consider how the state of exception might relate to American Indians. Drawing on this, Byrd argues,

Linking Japanese American experiences of the state of exception that was internment to American Indian history allows us to scrutinize the theoretical blind spots within critical philosophy and postcolonial theory and identify the discourses of colonialism that facilitated the violation of Japanese American civil rights.¹⁸

Using the history of Poston to make this move, Byrd hones in on the “colonial logics that underpin the United States’ internment of Japanese Americans,” basing it instead “in the prior colonization of indigenous peoples.”¹⁹ They argue that Japanese American incarceration “allow[ed] the United States to enforce the frontier as the site of exception” and posits that it is in fact the norm for the U.S.—not an exception at all.²⁰

¹⁶ Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, trans. Kevin Attell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 2.

¹⁷ Agamben, *State of Exception*, 19.

¹⁸ Byrd, *Transit of Empire*, 191.

¹⁹ Byrd, *Transit of Empire*, 191-192.

²⁰ Byrd, *Transit of Empire*, 192.

Mark Rifkin calls into question the notion that the state of emergency was ever temporary, pointing out that it is a long-standing facet of American nation-building that has been perpetually deployed against Indigenous people to further U.S. settler colonialism. Agamben conceptualizes sovereignty as the state's ability to assert and enforce its claims to jurisdiction. This definition of sovereignty, Rifkin points out, naturalizes U.S. sovereignty and perpetuates the illegibility of Indigenous sovereignty in settler state discourses.

In contrast, the narrative of relationality argues that not only was the incarceration not necessary, it was also not exceptional. Rather, it fell into a deeply embedded pattern of exploiting "emergencies" to enforce and advance settler colonialism and racial capitalism. In this way, the narrative of relationality can help to speak back to hegemonic narratives about the redeemed nation state that has made amends for its wrongs. Even during the war, the CRIC and GRIC challenged the idea that what was happening to Japanese Americans on their land was remotely exceptional by grounding it in narratives of their own dispossession. They suggested that the incarceration fit into a long trend of infringements on Native sovereignty and land, and expressed empathy as another group that had undergone its own forced removal and confinement. These form the pillars of the narrative of relationality around Japanese American incarceration.

Unnecessary and Unexceptional

When McCaskill and CRIC superintendent Clyde Gensler informed the CRIC Council that 20,000 Japanese Americans were to be incarcerated on their land, the

Council had two initial reactions. Agnes Savilla, a CRIC member who worked for the Council at the time, later recalled in an oral history with Arthur Hansen,

...when we went out to the meeting, we were sitting there and Mr. Gensler told them. They just looked at him. They couldn't believe it. Then, that was the first thing they said, 'Well the government's doing it again: taking our lands!' Because they said that we wouldn't have the use of that lower part of the reservations, then, you see.

The word "again" shows that Savilla and—according to her, the CRIC Council—saw this not as an isolated incident but rather as one of many iterations of the government taking their lands. She—and in her telling, the Council—immediately saw this in the context of other forced removals and dispossessions of not only the Mohave and Nüw, but also American Indians more broadly.²¹

When McCaskill informed the CRIC Council that he "believed it was too late to stop the project even though they might wish to," the U.S.'s former thefts of Mohave and Nüwüwü land were on many Councilmembers' minds.

Savilla said, "there's always been that feeling that whatever you own, and whatever you have, you're at the mercy of the government; because they can take this away, and they can do that."²² This statement shows how much the CRIC's ability to enact their sovereignty depended on the U.S.'s willingness to respect it. When McCaskill told them that Japanese Americans were to be incarcerated on their land and that it was "too late to stop the project," they rightly interpreted this as a challenge to their

²¹ Agnes Savilla, Japanese American World War II Evacuation Oral History Project, interview by David A. Hacker, Transcription, April 8, 1978, Part V: Guards and Townspeople, Volume 2, <http://content.cdlib.org/view?docId=ft12900308&brand=calisphere>, 793.

²² Savilla, 793.

sovereignty—not an exception. Even if the land was returned intact (it was not), the way that this act made CRIC sovereignty precarious was not limited to that 3-year time frame, and that precarity also undermined the CRIC’s ability to assert their sovereignty.

This power dynamic suggests that whatever “consent” the OIA received was coerced, reinforced by McCaskill’s statement that he made it clear to the CRIC that “the President and the War Department had the authority to place the Japanese on the unused lands of the Reservation without awaiting their consent.” But, while McCaskill tends to treat this as an exception or emergency, the Council showed that this event could not be treated in isolation from the rest of their history. As Patrick Wolfe has shown, settler colonialism is a “structure not an event.”²³ Treating it as structure—as the CRIC and Savilla did—not only fundamentally undermines the settler state’s narrative of the emergency, it also suggests that this behavior falls into a pattern in which the state uses these “emergencies” to undermine Indigenous sovereignty.

In addition, Savilla points out that the reservation itself was not a conservation of their land; rather, it confined them to a small portion of those lands. The reservation actually embedded in the CRIC a sense of their own precarity on their land: “This reservation was set aside by an Executive Order in 1865. It’s just like we can stay here until the government thinks we’ll get out, that’s the way we felt when the Japanese Americans came in. We lost the use of that land while they were here.” By juxtaposing the creation of Japanese American concentration camps on their land with the creation of the reservation through Executive Order, Savilla suggested how the reservation itself also

²³ Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” 388.

served as a site of confinement for them.²⁴ And though the OIA suggested that they were only putting Japanese Americans on unused lands, Savilla makes it clear that this was not the case: “I had an old aunt living at that end of the reservation. ... We would take things to her, you know, if we thought she needed anything, and we couldn’t go through without a pass. It was pretty hard to get through at certain times.”²⁵ The camps impeded her ability to maintain relationships with family in addition to the loss of access to the land. The OIA did not recognize this as a way of using the land, showing how Mohave uses of land—particularly as they relate to maintaining relationships—were dismissed as illegitimate. The placement of the camp made it difficult to care for family and maintain familial relationships, and thus also challenged Indigenous forms of belonging.

After McCaskill broke the news to them, the Council went to see the site—where construction was already underway. In Savilla’s words, “It didn’t set too well with them, so they decided to take a recess and go over there during lunch break. ... they were clearing the land there. My heavens, it looked like the land was just being torn to pieces down there. So they got them in here.” Her juxtaposition of “clearing the land” and “the land was just being torn to pieces” shows the inherent violence in settler colonial agriculture and land management.²⁶ This was not just a wrong to the CRIC but also to the land. The juxtaposition of the loss of the land and what that meant to her with the violence of the Army Corps of Engineers tearing the land to pieces highlights the vast differences between how Mohave care for the land and how settlers violate it.

²⁴ Savilla, 793-4.

²⁵ Savilla, 795.

²⁶ Savilla, 793.

Savilla's interview shows that Japanese American incarceration on CRIC land was not just a wrong against Japanese Americans—it also dispossessed the CRIC who were excluded from their own lands. The OIA would insist to the WRA and the War Department that the lands be returned after the war. But Savilla's phrasing suggests that this wasn't some sort of temporary "borrowing" even if it was impermanent—they were "taking our lands." It was unclear to the CRIC what condition those lands would be returned in, or if they would be returned at all. The U.S., after all, had a habit of renegeing on its promises to American Indians. What was to stop them from doing the same here? This fear would prove prescient. The OIA would "return" the lands to the Mohave and Nūw after the war, but they would also bring Hopi and Navajo dispossessed from elsewhere to the CRIC, housing them in the abandoned barracks.

Though Savilla says in the interview that the Council's first reaction was "the government's doing it again," she actually did not begin with this first reaction in her narrative of the events. She began, "I know what the second reaction was: 'The white man is treating them just like he treated us.'"²⁷ In foregrounding the second reaction, she highlights the CRIC leadership's empathy with the Japanese American community at that time. The use of simile—just like us—makes the statement sound comparative, but it is equally an expression of empathy at a time when Japanese Americans were being treated as the enemy. I don't want to minimize the importance of her positionality in making this statement. It is one thing for her to make this statement; it is totally different for a non-Native researcher like me to make it. There are certain similarities in the use of

²⁷ Savilla, 792.

confinement as a way to discipline racialized and Indigenous bodies, but there are also significant differences. First and foremost among these is that the containment of Japanese Americans was limited to about four years at most, and while the effects of that incarceration are still felt in our community, the impact has been nowhere near as devastating as the centuries' long wars, policies of containment and removal, and the failure to uphold treaties have been on American Indian nations. Another important difference is that American Indians consist of unrecognized nations; Japanese Americans were either Americans and/or Japanese—sometimes not by choice—but both of these were and are recognized as military powers. Part of the power of the narrative of relationality comes from the fact that it originates in the CRIC.

Savilla is careful to say that their anger was directed “against the government—not the Japanese—the government.”²⁸ By making this distinction, she alludes to an emerging narrative of relationality that the CRIC would use to give voice to their discontent.

This statement is in direct opposition to McCaskill's narrative. In his letter, he reported to his superiors back in Washington that the CRIC Council:

The Indians made it perfectly clear that they were not inviting the Japanese, that they didn't want them, they thought all of them should be sent back to Japan, but that inasmuch as they were being asked to make this contribution to the war effort they would offer no objection if assured the Japs would be moved at the end of the war.²⁹

McCaskill suggested that the CRIC's opposition came from allegiance to the settler state and prejudice against people of Japanese ancestry. McCaskill portrays the

²⁸ Savilla, 793.

²⁹ McCaskill to Collier, March 27, 1942.

lack of objection as a success—as consent. He implicitly defined consent to mean “not offering an objection” rather than actual approval. While the President and the War Department had the ability structurally to override CRIC sovereignty altogether, McCaskill and Gensler used the emergency to put added pressure on the Tribes to “not offer an objection.” By equating this to consent, they demonstrate the ability and willingness of the settler state to bully Indigenous nations into allowing the use of their lands.

While it would be easy to dismiss Savilla’s words as a statement made thirty years after the fact, while McCaskill’s letter was written mere days after the meeting, it should be noted that his temporal proximity does not necessarily make his version of events more reliable. Alessandro Portelli has challenged the notion that “oral sources are distant from events, and therefore undergo the distortion of faulty memory. Indeed, this problem exists for many written documents, which are usually written some time after the event to which they refer, and often by nonparticipants.”³⁰ As Portelli points out, there are different forms of distance. Who is to say that an OIA agent writing in 1942 in Washington D.C. was any “closer” to the event than the person who witnessed it firsthand but recounts it thirty years later? Or even a first-hand witness to the event—if the other parties felt obliged to hide some part of their reaction at the time for their own safety or to protect their community?

Rather, McCaskill’s note about sending them back to Japan shows how anti-Japanese prejudice became a marker for the settler state of the success of Indigenous

³⁰ Alessandro Portelli, “What Makes Oral History Different,” *Wrocławski Rocznik Historii Mówionej (Wrocław) special, no. 2018 (2018): 52*, <https://doi.org/10.26774/wrhm.213>.

assimilation during World War II and an indicator of the extent to which they identified as Americans. Anti-Japanese sentiment did exist in the Community, Savilla acknowledges, but she suggests that it was not so much a factor in the Council's decision-making process as it was just some individuals in the area putting up "No Japs Allowed" signs in their businesses. McCaskill's words suggest how the settler state was constructing loyalty during the war as being anti-Japanese. This is not to suggest that the "No Japs Allowed" signs were mere displays of patriotism put on for the government—just that Americans were certainly being encouraged to think like this. And for the CRIC, who were essentially being asked to prove their loyalty by making this "contribution to the war effort" to avoid having more of their lands stolen, taking this stance could generate important goodwill. We perhaps cannot draw firm conclusions about what happened during the CRIC meeting from these two sources, but we know enough to question McCaskill's ability—let alone authority—to tell how the CRIC were feeling in 1942. This makes Savilla's account of the Council's empathy even more remarkable.

The CRIC could not stop the project, but they found subtle ways to leave traces of their reluctance in settler archives. In a draft of the agreement between the War Relocation Authority (WRA) which ran the Japanese American concentration Camps and the Colorado River Tribal Council, the Council wrote, "the present war emergency does not leave the tribal council any alternative reconcilable with the national interest." The clause was crossed out and excluded from later versions of the agreement. Their reluctance shows that the narrative of the emergency not only compelled the CRIC to allow Japanese Americans to be imprisoned on their land but also to align themselves

with “national interest.”³¹ In this way, McCaskill, Gensler and the OIA also used Japanese American incarceration to further the forced assimilation of Indigenous people by promoting anti-Japanese rhetoric.

Gila River

Poston was the first site created on an American Indian reservation, but it was not the last. The process at Gila River looked eerily similar to the events at Colorado River. In this section, I juxtapose documents from settler archives with the GRIC Council’s depositions and statements to the Indian Claims Commission to show how federal employees routinely undermined Indigenous sovereignty in its interactions with them and how the GRIC interpreted the imposition of Japanese American concentration camps on their land in the context of their wider experiences of settler colonialism. Ickes gave Stimson permission to enter the land at least five days before the GRIC was notified of this. Why hadn’t they been told? Why hadn’t they been consulted in the matter? These questions become even more pressing because we know that Robinson did consult some people locally about this possibility.

On April 9, 1942, Robinson reassured his higher-ups in Washington that he foresaw no issues—going so far as to speak for the “people in the surrounding area” who “would understand the necessity of such action which this emergency has brought on.”³²

³¹ Draft Resolution of the Tribal Council of the Colorado River Indian Tribes of the Colorado River Reservation, Box 21, Folder Part 2, E178, RG75, NARA-DC.

³² A.E. Robinson, Superintendent, Pima Agency, Office of Indian Affairs, to Walter Woehlke, Assistant to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, April 9, 1942 (Robinson to Collier, April 9, 1942); Internment; Box 3; E180H; RG75; NARA-DC.

In another letter also dated April 9, he told Collier, “I have had very little opportunity to discuss the proposed placing of ten thousand Japanese in this district with farmers and other influential people here in the valley, however, those I have contacted have responded in a very favorable manner toward this proposal.”³³ But he had not informed the GRIC of the OIA’s plans for the use of their land—by his account, he would not tell them until April 21 at the very earliest. GRIC records state that this meeting happened on April 29.³⁴

To whom then was Robinson referring? Apparently, the GRIC leadership qualified neither as “people in the surrounding area” nor as “farmers and other influential people here” to Robinson, who was supposed to be a liaison for them with the OIA in Washington.

The fact that Robinson told anyone outside of the OIA suggests that from April 9 onward he was able but neglected to inform the GRIC of the plans. Moreover, in his letter to GRIC Governor Alex Cannon, he wrote, that on April 16 the news had been “announced to the newspapers and to this office.” Not informing them of these plans denied them crucial time they might have used to strategize their response.³⁵

Robinson also suggested that the only reason they were being informed of this so late was because “I was not permitted to make any statement regarding the matter since

³³ Robinson to Collier, April 9, 1942.

³⁴ There is some disagreement on when the GRIC were informed of this. The GRIC ICC statements state uniformly that they were first notified of this on April 29. However, Robinson sent Alex Cannon, GRIC Governor, a letter dated April 21. The OIA in DC received a copy of the letter on April 27. It is not clear whether or when Cannon received Robinson’s letter or whether he passed it along. Cannon recalled first hearing about it at the April 29 meeting in his ICC statement. Robinson later told Collier that he informed the Council at their April 22 meeting and discussed it again at their April 29 meeting.

³⁵ Robinson to Alex Cannon, Governor, Gila River Indian Community Council, April 21, 1942 (Robinson to Cannon, April 21, 1942); Internment; Box 3; E180H; RG75; NARA-DC.

... there had been no commitment by the War Department as to whether or not they would take this land.” He thus used the seriousness of the emergency to justify the late notice, even though the general public had been informed five days prior.³⁶

To Robinson, the OIA, both in DC and Arizona, was blameless, and did not have “any thing to do in the matter.” But the only reason that the War Department had even considered the GRIC as a site was because Collier had included it on a list he had submitted to the War Department of possible sites on March 4. Robinson lied to Cannon in his April 21 letter, saying, “the Indian Office had neither approached the War Relocation Authority nor had even suggested this land for the Japanese.” He also attempted to reassure Cannon that the OIA “of course, would not have done so without due consideration being given to the Indians’ wishes in the matter.” In fact, he positioned the OIA as equally out of the loop: “in this matter, neither the Indians nor the Indian Office was consulted.”³⁷

Portraying himself as reluctantly resigned to the reality “that the War Department has definitely decided to send these Japanese people here, and since there is nothing that the Indians or the Indian Office can do about it,” Robinson urged the “Tribal Council not take any action in opposition since such action would be entirely futile and only tend to develop an attitude toward the tribe not to their best interests.”³⁸ In fact, John Collier had proposed the site to the War Department in the same letter in which it proposed the CRIC

³⁶ Robinson to Cannon, April 21, 1942.

³⁷ Robinson to Cannon, April 21, 1942.

³⁸ Robinson to Cannon, April 21, 1942.

as a site.³⁹ And as his April 9 letter suggested, Robinson had been actively involved in the negotiations on where to place the site.⁴⁰

Robinson's lies and thinly veiled threats reveal how the OIA exploited the narrative of the emergency—regardless of whether they believed it was true—to both push forward their own goals for these lands and to maintain a certain power dynamic between the U.S. and the GRIC and CRIC. Even if Robinson did believe that the emergency was real, it is not clear that the circumstances required him to hide these plans from the GRIC at any point—but especially after April 16.

The idea that Robinson did tell people in the area—just people who were not GRIC members—is supported by how Gee Gage recalls learning of the plan for the first time. He recalled, “I worked off the Reservation at a steady job in Mesa, Arizona, and rumors were heard there from Whites that Japanese might be brought onto the Reservation.”⁴¹ Learning this from rumors was not just an insult to the GRIC, it was an affront to their sovereignty. Evidence suggests that Robinson used this withholding of information as a tactic to make it more difficult for the GRIC to fight this plan. In a May 5 letter, Robinson explained somewhat why he took so long to inform the Council. He wrote to Collier, “I have not quoted any definite terms to the Tribal Council ... If this memorandum should not be accepted, my having brought it to their attention might further confuse the situation which is rather delicate...”⁴² It is not implausible that a man

³⁹ Collier to Ickes, March 4, 1942.

⁴⁰ Robinson to Collier, April 9, 1942.

⁴¹ Gee Gage Statement, November 7, 1968; Exhibits Folder (Exhibits); Docket 236A (DKT236A); Entry 11UD (E11UD); Indian Claims Commission, Record Group 279 (RG279); NARA-DC.

⁴² A.E. Robinson, Superintendent, Pima Agency, Office of Indian Affairs to John Collier, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, May 5, 1942 (Robinson to Collier, May 5, 1942); Internment; Box 3; E180H; RG75; NARA-DC.

who had used the withholding of information once to manipulate the situation, might have also delayed informing them of the memorandum in the first place in case it “should not be accepted.”

Even supposing the circumstances had been exceptional, Robinson’s use of these sorts of tactics was not. According to GRIC leadership from the time, Robinson had a habit of strong-arming the GRIC into doing what he wished. Loyde Allison, a councilmember, talked of an earlier instance in which Robinson tried to pressure individuals into supporting his efforts by firing two when they would not go along with him, and trying to offer favors to a third. He said, “This was Mr. Robinson[’s] strong method used on reservation to get things done his way.”⁴³ The narrative of exception starts to collapse when we understand that this method was one Robinson used regularly.

Other councilmembers affirmed this point. Councilmember Edison Evans, explained, “Robinson tried to run the Reservation, Pima People, and Council and used all kinds of methods to get his way.”⁴⁴ David Johnson, despite seeing Robinson as “a very personal friend” recalled that Robinson “tried to push or force [his goals] upon the Council and the Pima people.” Johnson also stated, “Mr. Robinson always told the Council what the Government would do. I did not trust the Government and was afraid of them. They had not, before this, done what they promised the Pimas, even though the Pimas always helped the white man.”⁴⁵

⁴³ Loyde Allison Statement, November 7, 1968; Exhibits; DKT236-A; E11UD; RG279; NARA-DC.

⁴⁴ Edison Evans Statement, November 7, 1968; Exhibits; DKT236-A; E11UD; RG279; NARA-DC.

⁴⁵ David Johnson Statement, November 7, 1968; Exhibits; DKT236-A; E11UD; RG279; NARA-DC.

Johnson's quote makes it clear that Robinson was just one cog in a much wider system, a system that had constantly exploited the fear in their relationship to pressure the GRIC into accepting whatever the U.S. demanded. For all Robinson's pretenses of kindness, he was also clearly exploiting this fear in his workings with them, as we saw in his letter to Cannon that any resistance would "only tend to develop an attitude toward the tribe not to their best interests."⁴⁶ If he wrote this in a letter, it's very possible he was even more explicit in person when he had no reason to fear that his higher-ups might read a copy of his words. I found no records of the meeting in the OIA records in Washington D.C. Johnson's testimony demonstrates that he clearly understood Robinson's words as a veiled threat and was afraid of him, gesturing to how any consent received from the GRIC Council, like the CRIC Council, was necessarily coerced.

According to both Councilmembers and Robinson himself, he told the Council that the Government would do this regardless of the Tribes' wishes—that they had no choice in the matter. Edison Evans wrote, "Mr. Robinson ... told us that the Japanese were coming. We were told that they were being sent by the War Department and that there was nothing that we could do about it."⁴⁷

Like McCaskill, Robinson attempted to appeal to a sense of wartime patriotism. Alex Cannon recalled, "He was "always stating 'War is War,' 'Can't fight the United States Government', 'Had to sign.'"⁴⁸ Robinson used the justification of war to demand an extraordinary display of loyalty from Gila River. Likewise, Allison stated that

⁴⁶ Robinson to Cannon, April 21, 1942.

⁴⁷ Edison Evans Statement.

⁴⁸ Alex Cannon Statement, November 18, 1968; Exhibits; DKT236-A; E11UD; RG279; NARA-DC, 2.

Robinson told them, “in War you have to go along,” and Johnson recalled him saying that the tribes “must help our Country during war.”⁴⁹

Robinson also tried to appeal to their sense of duty to the Community. According to David Johnson, Robinson implied that they were failing their people: “Robinson played up our patriotic duty, ... [that] our people needed the money we were losing because we would not sign the permit.”⁵⁰ He reminded them how much money they were losing everyday they did not sign—somehow the fact that they had not signed the lease made it possible for the federal government to just not pay the GRIC for the lands they were already using. Alfred Jackson testified, “We were told that we were losing daily rental of \$387.60 by refusing to sign the permit.”⁵¹ The GRIC was in no position to turn down an added income—especially if they were going to have to give up the land regardless of whether or not they signed the permit. As Evans put it, “We were threatened with loss of money.”⁵² The fact that this came across as a “threat,” reinforces the power dynamics of the situation. Recall from the introduction the circumstances the GRIC members faced at that time—hunger and lack of jobs. This rental money would help with the first; the WRA offered the potential to help with the second.

Robinson also played up the potential benefits of leasing the land to the WRA. He “promised subjugation of the undeveloped land”—another promise from the U.S. government that would go mostly unfulfilled. Cannon wrote in his statement, “We were

⁴⁹ David Johnson Statement.

⁵⁰ David Johnson Statement.

⁵¹ Alfred Jackson Statement, November 18, 1968; Exhibits; DKT236-A; E11UD; RG279; NARA-DC.

⁵² Edison Evans Statement.

told they would build roads, pay rent on 6,000 acres of land, and develop (subjugate) 8,850 acres.”⁵³

Robinson likely anticipated that the GRIC would interpret this as an affront to their sovereignty. As he explained to Collier, “I told them [the Gila River Tribal Council] if it had been at all possible they would have been consulted and in only such an agency as the War Department could an emergency exist which would permit the taking over of their land without first consulting them.”⁵⁴

And they did protest on these grounds. Robinson wrote, “the Council feels that they should have been consulted in the matter pointing out that they are an organized chartered tribe and that their governing body is authorized to pass upon such matters.”⁵⁵

In a letter dated April 24, Robinson reported to Collier, “I have talked to the members of the Tribal Council and have prevailed upon them to not offer objection other than a resolution of protest, which they are privileged to make, but that because of the emergency which made this whole project necessary that it was one of the ways in which they were being required to do their bit.”⁵⁶

But by the Council’s April 29 meeting, this had changed. In spite of Robinson’s pressure on the GRIC, the Council passed a resolution on April 29, in which they called for the matter to be brought before the wider Community. They called for a ballot vote with “as many alternative policies as they may consider necessary to determine at one

⁵³ Alex Cannon Statement.

⁵⁴ Robinson to Collier, May 5, 1942.

⁵⁵ A.E. Robinson to John Collier, April 24, 1942 (Robinson to Collier, April 24, 1942); Internment; Box 3; E180H; RG75; NARA-DC.

⁵⁶ Robinson to Collier, April 24, 1942.

election the exact desires of the communities.”⁵⁷ Robinson wrote to Collier, “They passed a resolution by a vote of 9 to 5 to ‘Reject the Japanese coming on to our Reservation’, such resolution to be taken to the people for their consideration.”⁵⁸ This portrayal of the motion was inaccurate and served to escalate the tone of the negotiations.

Robinson’s attitude toward the Council’s concerns was condescending at best. On April 24, 1942, he wrote, “the situation prevailing around here is very much like that which prevails around an ant hill that has been disturbed.”⁵⁹ On May 5, 1942, Robinson reported in a letter to Collier that the Council “was not conducive toward an agreement on such a matter and will not be until their feelings on the matter somewhat subside.”⁶⁰ By attributing this to hurt “feelings,” Robinson diminished the GRIC’s reasonable reaction to having their land taken without their permission (not for the first time). Robinson explained in the May 2 letter that “their [the Tribal Council’s] deepest concern was about the fact that they had not been previously consulted.” Despite evidently understanding why they would be opposed to these plans, he handled the matter in a way that was designed to give them no voice in the matter, and diminished their sovereignty to hurt “feelings.” In doing so, he showed how the federal government’s modus operandi used its interactions with American Indian nations to undermine their sovereignty.

However, we can gain additional insight into the Tribal Council members’ specific concerns from their testimonies. David Johnson’s concern aligns most with

⁵⁷ Resolution of Gila River Indian Community Council, May 9, 1942; Internment; Box 3; E180H; RG75; NARA-DC.

⁵⁸ A.E. Robinson to Walter Woehlke, May 2, 1942 (Robinson to Woehlke); Internment; Box 3; E180H; RG75; NARA-DC.

⁵⁹ Robinson to Collier, April 24, 1942.

⁶⁰ Robinson to Collier, May 5, 1942.

Robinson's explanation to Collier: "I was against the permit because the Pima people were never asked or given a chance to talk about the Government sending the Japanese to our Reservation." His words explicitly put this into the framework of tribal sovereignty—they should have the right to decide what to do with their own land. But Johnson was also just trying to buy the tribes more time: "Because of my doubts and the hurry, hurry talks of Mr. Robinson, I opposed the Permit to try and give everyone a chance to find out more about it and have a definite understanding." The words "hurry, hurry talks of Mr. Robinson" suggest that this may have been a tactic Robinson used often to try to get the tribes to sign onto matters without fully understanding the details.⁶¹

Gee Gage was concerned about whether this would in fact benefit the tribes: "I was against it because no one would say that the Tribe would get the rental (W.R.A.) monies."⁶² This showed considerable prescience, because the money owed to the tribe through the lease went into a trust kept by the OIA.

And crucially, their statements show that Robinson did not distribute the permit to them. Robinson, in an unsurprising if appalling continuation of his pattern of not informing the GRIC of anything under the guise of not "confusing" them, did not show them the permit until the day it was to be signed. Instead, they had to rely on his interpretation of its terms. Alfred Jackson stated, "I never saw the Memorandum of Understanding before we voted [on] the permit. Robinson just told us what was to be done and the benefits. W.R.A. took land as they wanted and need and we didn't even

⁶¹ David Johnson Statement.

⁶² Gee Gage Statement.

know what land was being taken.”⁶³ Cannon also recalled that he only read the permit after the Council had voted to approve it, and stated that “Only part of the Council people read or saw the Permit until everything was signed, etc.”⁶⁴

Despite the threats and the promises, the GRIC continued to refuse to sign the lease until October 7, 1942—six months after the Army Corps of Engineers had first begun building the site on their land. After the GRIC Council signed the permit, the little power they had faded. Gage wrote, “After the permit was signed, when I asked any questions, the Agency people told me that everything was under the War Department and they were running it and there was nothing the Tribe could do about it.”⁶⁵ In this way, the OIA attributed the withholding of information to the War Department and used that to deny the GRIC crucial information about the use of their land. The GRIC’s primary point of contact with the federal government was Robinson, who was with the OIA and not the War Department. The multilayered set-up of federal bureaucracy insulated the War Department from any questions or concerns the GRIC may have voiced, while also offering the OIA plausible deniability and a claim of powerlessness to avoid doing anything to rectify the situation.

Leupp

Leupp Isolation Center was not one of the main WRA camps; it served as a WRA isolation center for about 70 perceived “troublemakers” for about nine months in 1943. It

⁶³ Alfred Jackson Statement.

⁶⁴ Alex Cannon Statement.

⁶⁵ Gee Gage Statement.

was located on Navajo Nation land in a former boarding school that had closed in 1942. Some came from a former Civilian Conservation Corps building at Moab, in Utah, another WRA isolation center, but transferred them to Leupp beginning April 27, 1943. The Leupp boarding school, which was open from 1909 until 1942, had also served as a site of family separation and confinement for its students. Because the site was located on Navajo Nation land, students' families were able to visit their loved ones during the school year, which was somewhat atypical at American Indian boarding schools. Students, however, were not able to return home during the school year—initially they were not even allowed to return home for Christmas, as one former student, Alex Riggs, recalled.⁶⁶ Nonetheless, during its years of operation, the school violently stole students from their families by sending policemen to their homes and threatening the parents with jail time; punished the children for speaking Diné by forcing them to eat soap; violently cut children's hair and undressed them to uphold settler colonial ideas of "cleanliness;" did not provide adequate nutrition for its students; and instituted other forms of corporal punishment including whipping and hitting students.⁶⁷ One student was hit so hard he had to go to Winslow Indian Hospital and though he related the abuse to hospital authorities, nothing changed—except that the student was transferred to a different school.⁶⁸

Initially, the WRA leadership at Leupp were opposed to any interaction between Japanese Americans and Diné (Navajo) at Leupp. On August 6, 1943, Leland Barrows,

⁶⁶ Davina Ruth Two Bears, "Shimásání Dóó Shicheji Bi'ólta' - My Grandmother's and Grandfather's School: The Old Leupp Boarding School, A Historic Archaeological Site on the Navajo Reservation," *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses* (Ph.D., United States -- Indiana, Indiana University, 2019), <http://www.proquest.com/docview/2305191109/abstract/CCE51FD9CE0F49DEPQ/1>, 211.

⁶⁷ Two Bears, "Shimásání Dóó Shicheji Bi'ólta'."

⁶⁸ Two Bears, "Shimásání Dóó Shicheji Bi'ólta'." 182.

Acting Director of the OIA, wrote to Paul Robertson, Leupp Project Director that “it is within the authority of the War Relocation Authority to exclude Indians from the relocation area; ... you are authorized to exercise this authority on behalf of the War Relocation Authority.”⁶⁹

This cut off Diné access to the area. Davina Two Bears explains that, while the boarding school was no longer active, “There was a trading post that was right next to the boarding school and it was open until the 1980s so this trading post is where a lot of the Navajo people would go.”⁷⁰ In order to get to the trading post, they had to go by the old boarding school.

Meanwhile, Leupp, Debra Redsteer explains, “was encased by a high barbed wire fence and 150 military police patrolled the unit. The guards outnumbered the Japanese American occupants two to one.”⁷¹ These security measures would have made it all but impossible for Japanese Americans to interact with the Diné passersby. But, in spite of Robertson’s clear concern with preventing this type of interaction, they did occur. In July 2020, Two Bears was one of three American Indian participants in a virtual panel that spoke about Japanese American incarceration on their lands.⁷² Two Bears, a Diné archaeologist descended from Leupp Boarding School survivors, does research on the site

⁶⁹ Leland Barrows, Acting Director, WRA, to Paul G. Robertson, Acting Project Director, Leupp, WRA, August 6, 1943 (Barrows to Robertson, August 6, 1943); Correspondence Japs Poston Internment Camps Folder (Correspondence); Box 22; E178; RG75; NARA-DC.

⁷⁰ Davina Two Bears, Janine Pease, and Robert Johnson, “Japanese American Incarceration on Indigenous Lands” (Tadaima, A Virtual Pilgrimage, Virtual, June 11, 2020), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6IKWc3gN66Q>.

⁷¹ Debra Redsteer, “Leupp, Arizona: A Shared Historic Space for the Navajo Nation and Japanese Americans,” *Discover Nikkei*, June 28, 2008, <http://www.discovernikkei.org/en/journal/2008/6/28/enduring-communities/>.

⁷² I moderated this panel.

that juxtaposes settler archival sources with oral histories with former students and other firsthand accounts. During the panel, Two Bears said, “And so they would pass by the Japanese internment camp and the Japanese men would say hello—learned how to say Yá’át’éeéh, which means hello in Navajo—but they weren’t allowed to interact with the Navajo people. They could just say hi as they went by.”⁷³

In this section, I analyze this act as an acknowledgment of the sovereignty of the Diné on that land. The languages we speak—as Two Bears also pointed out—are fraught with power. Sometimes, when we go to new places, we learn the languages spoken in that place. Other times, we rely on people to learn our language—we expect them to make the effort to communicate with us. The power dynamics between the visitors and the local populations often dictate the extent of the effort made. There was no requirement to learn how to say hello in Diné for the incarcerated. In fact, they were explicitly not supposed to speak to passersby.

This act is even more poignant in light of the fact that just a year before the incarcerated arrived speaking Diné at that site was a punishable act. One of Two Bears’ sources described being forced to put soap in her mouth that made her sick for two days as a consequence for speaking Diné.⁷⁴ Two Bears poignantly demonstrates the ironies of how the federal government both relies on American Indian languages while also penalizing the speakers of those languages:

⁷³ Two Bears, Pease, and Johnson, “Japanese American Incarceration on Indigenous Lands.” This story has been reiterated in articles and community-based projects, like “The Oral Navajo History of Leupp.” accessed June 27, 2021, https://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~113/beauty/thematic_units/slb23/leupp_penal_colony.html.

⁷⁴ Davina R. Two Bears, “Researching My Heritage: The Old Leupp Boarding School Historic Site.” *KIVA* 0, no. 0 (March 9, 2021): 1–18, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00231940.2021.1892928>, 13.

And then also at the same time, simultaneously, while the United States government was forbidding Navajo children to speak their language—the Navajo language—in school at Leupp and other federal Indian boarding schools, they were recruiting Navajo men into the military service so that they could become Navajo code talkers and fight in the war against the Japanese empire.⁷⁵

By learning how to say hello in Diné, Japanese American incarcerated subtly defied the facility's history. It had been used to erase the language; now it was a way for Japanese Americans behind barbed wire to connect with the people whose lands they were imprisoned on. Using the Diné word showed the Japanese American incarcerated' respect for Diné sovereignty on that land. Though they did not have to learn the Diné word for hello, these Japanese American incarcerated insisted on learning this basic level of communication with the people whose land they were on.

They did so even with the very real risk that this might arouse suspicion. A hundred miles away, on the eastern side of the Navajo Reservation, this risk was becoming a reality. On October 3, 1943—while Japanese Americans were confined at Leupp—the Albuquerque Journal reported that four Japanese American teachers were working at Navajo schools. Japanese American women were working at the Tuba City and Fort Defiance schools, a Japanese American man was serving as the boys' advisor at Toadlena. Franc J. Newcomb wrote to Collier, "As Chairman of Indian Welfare for the state federation of Women's Clubs I am writing to ask if it would not be advisable to keep all Japanese away from places where it would be possible for them to learn the

⁷⁵ Two Bears, Pease, and Johnson, "Japanese American Incarceration on Indigenous Lands."

Navajo language?” Newcomb was concerned that it would be tense “considering the number of Navajo boys who were killed or imprisoned on Bataan.”⁷⁶ Margritte Dietrich, chair of the New Mexico Association on Indian Affairs, expressed concerns that “their code is not likely to be the American way which is to be taught in the Indian schools” and that having Japanese American teachers would be “completely harmful to the developing personalities of these Navajo children.”⁷⁷ This concern about the detriments of contact with Japanese Americans to American Indian assimilation is something that I discuss further in chapter 4. Dietrich went on to explain that Japanese American teachers could not possibly have “confidence among the Indians.” She too reiterated the concern that “brothers and sisters” of Navajo fighting in the U.S. armed forces could not “love and trust teachers of the race they are taught is treacherous and cruel.”⁷⁸ But beneath this façade of concern (a form of anti-Indigenous prejudice) about Diné students lay anti-Japanese prejudice: that these Japanese American teachers might learn Diné and help the Japanese army to decipher American military intelligence encoded in Diné—a concern both Dietrich and Newcomb acknowledged, even as they suggested that this did not motivate their writing.

J.M. Stewart, the OIA superintendent of the Navajo Reservation, rebutted these concerns: “the reports from all quarters are that the Navajo school children act more normally, talk more freely, and respond more warmly to the two Japanese girls than they

⁷⁶ Franc Newcomb, Chairman of Indian Welfare, New Mexico Federation of Women's Clubs, to John Collier, October 7, 1943; Correspondence; Box 22; E178; RG75; NARA-DC.

⁷⁷ Margritte Dietrich, Chairman, New Mexico Association of Indian Affairs, to John Collier, October 4, 1943 (Dietrich to Collier, October 4, 1943); Correspondence; Box 22; E178; RG75; NARA-DC.

⁷⁸ Dietrich to Collier, October 4, 1943.

do to our regular white personnel.” He suggested that some had written in that “these Japanese people will not be sympathetic to Navajos,” an assertion he deemed “utterly false.” He did not address the concern about their effect on Navajo assimilation but did say that these employees were “as good or better most other appointees.” But regarding the possibility of them teaching the Diné language to the Japanese, he wrote, “this is a matter which I am sure the military authorities can well handle. Otherwise, these citizens would not have been given their freedom to take their place in our society.”⁷⁹

Learning how to say hello in Diné implicitly gestured to Japanese American incarceratedees’ respect for the Diné people and their recognition that they were on Diné land. Language helped to form that relationship. Though the relationship was limited by the barbed wire and guards that separated them, the significance of that relationship is evident in the fact that this act continues to be remembered by Diné community members.

Diné members also expressed empathy for the Japanese American incarceratedees. Two Bears said, “My mother told me that my grandmother felt sorry for the Japanese people there imprisoned at Leupp. A lot of people felt sorry for them and they just saw that it was unfair, that these Japanese American citizens were being held prisoner at the boarding school.”⁸⁰

The boarding school’s carceral past for Diné was evident to Japanese Americans imprisoned there. Taneyuki Harada, who was imprisoned at Topaz before being sent to

⁷⁹ J.M. Stewart, General Superintendent, Navajo Service, OIA, to John Collier, November 16, 1943; Correspondence; Box 22; E178; RG75; NARA-DC.

⁸⁰ Two Bears, Pease, and Johnson, “Japanese American Incarceration on Indigenous Lands,” 13:30.

Leupp, later said that the site was “on the Navajo Indian reservation, it used to be the boarding school for the Navajo children. And this kind of large room, which, I don't know whether it was used as a sleeping quarter or for the classroom, but anyway, the army cot was all lined up on both sides.”⁸¹ Lucinda Machen, one of Two Bears’ informants, clarified that the incarcerated stayed in the “old dorm.”⁸² Another former student, Alex Riggs, described the dorm: “The dormitory was like a circle. Half of it was the boy’s building, and half of it was the girl’s building. In the middle of the circle was an open area, in which there was a basketball court.”⁸³

These details about the site were particularly helpful because of the acknowledged gaps in Harada’s own memory. Harada explained of his experience getting sent to Leupp: “As I understand it, I was at the art school, then a couple of FBI agents came and asked for Taneyuki Harada. I suppose I was in shock that I really can't remember, but friend of mine who was at the school told me what had happened.”⁸⁴ He was supposed to have received a letter but either could not recall receiving one or had not in fact received one. The next thing he remembered was being escorted by the agents back to his room to pick up some of his belongings. Having other perspectives can fill in details about the site that Harada either could not know or forgot.

Despite the gaps in his memory, Harada’s words show his concern with the prior use and occupants of the site. Harry Ueno, who had been taken from Manzanar to Moab

⁸¹ [Taneyuki Dan Harada, Segment 18, Video, November 30, 2010, Densho Digital Repository, https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-densho-1000-306-18.](https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-densho-1000-306-18)

⁸² Two Bears, “*Shimásání Dóó Shicheii Bi’ólta’*,” 206.

⁸³ Two Bears, “*Shimásání Dóó Shicheii Bi’ólta’*,” 208.

⁸⁴ [Harada, Segment 17, November 30, 2010, Densho Digital Repository, https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-densho-1000-306-17.](https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-densho-1000-306-17)

before being sent to Leupp, was initially kept in a jail cell in nearby Winslow, AZ, but was later transferred to Leupp because of the high cost of keeping him confined in the jail. There, the authorities initially tried to keep him separated from the other incarcerated. He noted “they have a jail in down cellar. I imagine they used to put the Indian kids into the jail, you know.”⁸⁵ Like Harada, he did not have explicit information about the history of the specific rooms they were housed in, but he used what knowledge he did have to hypothesize about the treatment of students.

Two Bears notes that, while a former teacher claimed she never witnessed corporal punishment, she was also not responsible for punishment—these duties were assigned to the dormitory staff. Two Bears writes, “the Diné elders that I interviewed told a different story - one of severe punishment for speaking one’s language or breaking the rules.”⁸⁶ While Two Bears’ informants did not discuss a prison specifically, they did mention being locked up as a form of punishment.

This detail from Ueno also provides a crucial detail about the structure of the building because the buildings were for the most part torn down in the 1960s. Two Bears recalls her maternal grandfather’s questions about the buildings’ destruction. He questioned the waste of the demolition of these sturdy buildings made of local red sandstone, after which the debris was dumped in the Little Colorado River.⁸⁷ His questions suggest that the Diné understood this as an erasure of their boarding school history, and points to how they were theorizing this destruction on the ground. These

⁸⁵ Harry Ueno, Segment 28, interview by Emiko Omori, Video, February 18, 1994, Densho Digital Repository, <https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-densho-1002-7-28/>.

⁸⁶ Two Bears, “Researching My Heritage,” 7.

⁸⁷ Two Bears, “Shimásání Dóó Shicheji Bi’ólta’,” 249.

details that get filled into Diné and Japanese American histories at this site through the conversation between the two points to the potential of relational research methodologies. Two Bears employed such an approach in her research: “Since the Leupp boarding school files I examined did not contain the map I was seeking [of the Leupp Boarding School], I examined records in the files of the Leupp Isolation Center... I successfully discovered a map of the [Leupp] campus drawn by the Department of Interior, U.S. Indian Service, Navajo Agency on June 16, 1941.”⁸⁸ Her finding begets the question: why did Two Bears not find this map—a map created during the era in which it served as boarding school by the OIA, not the WRA—in the OIA records? What settler archival logics made it so that this document was eliminated from those records and instead placed in Japanese American incarceration records? And how did the piecemeal nature of U.S. bureaucracy—the lack of consistent oversight and coherent goals across agencies—allow this to be preserved in WRA records when it was not preserved in OIA records? Likewise, because of the gaps in incarceratedees’ memory and knowledge, the memories of the boarding school survivors can provide crucial knowledge about the site.

In fact, one of Two Bears’ Diné informants recalled that Japanese American prisoners participated in a “field day” where they “were allowed to eat among the Navajo people. ... the Navajo and Japanese even played some games together.”⁸⁹ Either because they were not present at the site when this field day occurred or because they did not remember the event, neither Harada nor Ueno mentioned this event in their oral histories,

⁸⁸ Two Bears, “Shimásání Dóó Shicheji Bi’ólta’,” 71-72.

⁸⁹ Two Bears, “Shimásání Dóó Shicheji Bi’ólta’,” 206.

demonstrating how Japanese American history at Leupp survives in the memories of Diné who lived around Leupp at the time.

Clearly, the depth of the connection between Japanese Americans and Diné at Leupp was greater than a single word and that connection can strengthen the research on both topics. The enduring power of that relationship is visible how the story has been passed along in the Diné community through two generations only to be returned back into the Japanese American community through Two Bears' work.

The Conditions

Even before Japanese Americans arrived at Poston and Gila River, the sites' selection processes set up a complex dynamic between the Communities and the Japanese Americans incarcerated on their lands. This relationship continued to evolve over the three years Japanese Americans spent on these sites and over the decades that have followed.

The OIA initially went to considerable trouble to make sure that the incarcerated and GRIC members would not interact. Robinson wrote that as he negotiated the boundaries with the WRA and the War Department, he "insisted upon this to create a buffer region between the Japanese-occupied area and our school and village."⁹⁰ He also wrote in another letter,

The War Relocation Authority would have proposed to take the entire 10,000 acre tract but we felt that the 3,000 acres reserved should be withheld in order to more

⁹⁰ Robinson to Collier, April 24, 1942.

definitely isolate the area occupied by Japanese ... they would be some three miles from Sacaton at the nearest point. The location of the entire proposed area is such that they will not come in contact with any land occupied by Indians.⁹¹

But while interactions between the incarcerated and the GRIC were not supposed to happen, in reality they did. Some incarcerated got passes to leave camp and go buy things at local stores; others managed to sneak away for brief periods of time. Arnold Allson recalled that GRIC members “seemed to get along with them [Japanese American incarcerated], you know, because them people would come down, you know, buy chickens and fruit, stuff like that.”⁹²

While most of the WRA administration was white, GRIC members did get jobs in the camp. Some of them worked as guards briefly, before the military police arrived. A more common job was with the camouflage net factory, which operated for five months in 1943.⁹³ Allson worked there along with “oh, I’d say about, 20 people.”⁹⁴ Allson recalled friendships he built up with some of the incarcerated, including one by the name of Joe Ikudo. “He’d tell me, ‘Hey, I need some copper wiring or copper tubing,’ ... stuff he wanted like that, you know,” Allson said. “I’d get it for him...”⁹⁵

Albert Cooley, who took charge of the cattle in the camp among other WRA jobs during the war, lived with his wife and their daughter Ruth in a barracks. He said, “I had

⁹¹ Robinson to Collier, April 9, 1942.

⁹² Allson, I-12.

⁹³ Robinson to Collier, April 24, 1942.

⁹⁴ Allson, I-13.

⁹⁵ Allson, I-17.

three Japanese boys that were helping with and a Pima boy from Casa Blanca, Wallace Lewis, he's gone now."⁹⁶

Nine-year-old Ruth, who attended school in camp, recalled helping her Japanese American friends sneak off from the camp and taking them to share a meal with her aunt:

We took them all over to my aunt's house and boy did they feed them. You know, my aunt she fixed Indian corn and beans and all kinds of stuff for them, and we had a big old meal and then we went swimming in the canal there because the fence was just a little ways from the canal and we swam in the canal and we went back and we took that guard a couple of burritos. We used to do everything together as kids.⁹⁷

Clearly, interactions between Japanese Americans and GRIC members did happen, and sometimes deepened into strong friendships. Still, the GRIC members who were able to engage this deeply with Japanese Americans were few and far between. They might occasionally see Japanese Americans swimming or fishing in the canal, buying melons from GRIC members, but that was the extent of it. One person I spoke with had heard stories from his mother about the camp. The closest interaction she had with an incarcerated was when a Japanese lady walked by her school on her way back from the store and gave her a piece of candy through the schoolyard fence. The teacher got mad at her and told her "not to talk to those people because they were mean."⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Albert Cooley and Ruth Cooley, Return to Butte Camp: A Japanese-American World War II Relocation Center, interview by Scott C. Russell, Transcription, July 7, 1993, Bureau of Reclamation, Arizona Projects Office, K-4.

⁹⁷ Albert Cooley and Ruth Cooley, K-7.

⁹⁸ Conversation with Donald Sabori, June 2018.

She never saw inside the fence and only knew about the goings-on in camp from rumors, the trucks they witnessed entering and leaving, and the lights they could see in the distance in the dark. She used to “sit [on the roof] looking at the camps wondering what it would be like to have running water and electricity.”⁹⁹ The reservation didn’t have electricity until the 1970s, so the camps with their single lightbulbs in every barrack were “bright with light” in the distance.¹⁰⁰

It would be difficult not to put the treatment of Japanese Americans in comparison with the treatment of the GRIC and CRIC when the camps were right there in front of them. In the late 1930s, as Allson put it, “It was pretty rough, you know, on the reservation and we couldn’t hardly, you know, no jobs, nothing, you know...”¹⁰¹ In separate conversations with two GRIC members, these individuals told me about family members’ feelings of bitterness when they witnessed the camps being built and operated.

Donald Sabori’s mother told him about her recollections of Japanese Americans being put on their land. As he put it, the general feeling was “Yeah, they were taken from their homes but we were still struggling to put food on the table.”¹⁰² He wasn’t alive during the camps, which shows the power that this communal memory continues to hold decades later.

After being told that Japanese Americans were the enemy, most of the GRIC members saw a city emerge with food, running water, and electricity. Allson said, “they farmed...maybe—oh, about 5,000 acres, I’d say that they took over to plant vegetables

⁹⁹ Conversation with Donald Sabori, June 2018.

¹⁰⁰ Conversation with Donald Sabori, June 2018.

¹⁰¹ Allson, I-2.

¹⁰² Conversation with Donald Sabori in June 2018.

... And then they had their own dairy, ... and they had their milk and everything. Then they had their beef cattle raised and ... they had big chicken yards there.”¹⁰³ Beyond the fence, GRIC members could see incarcerated leave camp—but none of the processes or ordeals the incarcerated had to go through or risks they had to take to do so. They saw trucks going into the camps but not how many people they had to feed. They saw the bright lights in the distance, but not the single barrack room that housed a whole family. They heard rumors of running water and latrines that seemed like a step up when most of them had only ever had access to outhouses. Is it any wonder that some felt bitter about this—especially given the extent to which the US had neglected its obligations to them?

At CRIC, Savilla also occasionally felt anger toward the incarcerated. She said, “It wasn’t because I didn’t like them. But, it seemed like they had such good food. We couldn’t buy bacon or ham, and whatnot. And the government put up lunches for them with boiled ham sandwiches, and you’d see them strewn on the road—they’d throw them out. ... Such a waste!”¹⁰⁴

She continued to sort through these complex feelings in the interview, also empathizing with the incarcerated: “I suppose it was because maybe they had their own kind of food, too.” But in the next sentence, she returned to her anger, “And the way they’d waste it. The way they threw it around, and threw it out! You’d see a good sandwich out there, with two slices of bread and boiled ham, and we couldn’t buy that.”¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Allson, I-3.

¹⁰⁴ Savilla, 805.

¹⁰⁵ Savilla, 805.

Savilla clearly struggled between these conflicting feelings. This was not about race though, for her, “the resentment was caused by their treatment of the stuff that was given to them.”¹⁰⁶ Savilla’s interview shows the complex interplay between the empathy that she felt for them and the resentment about how they were being treated in comparison to the Mohave and Nüwüwü—“the stuff that was given to them.”

Savilla makes clear that the anger the CRIC Council felt was toward the government and not the incarcerated: “it wasn’t the people, but the government taking the land away from us for them. We were bitter about that, but we didn’t hold it against the people.”¹⁰⁷ Still, anger rarely follows neat boundaries and for some it was difficult to distinguish between their anger at the state and their anger at the Japanese Americans who had been forced onto their lands. On top of that, some had children who were off fighting the Japanese and were understandably worried about their wellbeing.

“We had some people up here that were very bitter against the Japanese,” Savilla said. Some people “wrote things against them on the doors and on the windows, and whatnot. ‘No Japs allowed.’”¹⁰⁸ But this behavior did not come from Mohave values, she explained: “...there were some there that kind of made you ashamed of them; because you may feel that way, but you don’t treat people that way. Our people just aren’t brought up that way.”¹⁰⁹ She attributed this prejudice to settler colonialism.

By acknowledging that different individuals in the CRIC might have very different feelings about the incarcerated and interpretations of what had happened, Savilla

¹⁰⁶ Savilla, 805.

¹⁰⁷ Savilla, 796.

¹⁰⁸ Savilla, 796.

¹⁰⁹ Savilla, 796.

makes it impossible to essentialize its members. That multiple perspectives exist should be a given in any work about a community, but too often we treat marginalized communities as if they are cohesive, coherent and consistent entities. They are not. Far from detracting from the impulse toward solidarity that the CRIC Council expressed, understanding how these different perspectives coexisted highlights the value and significance of the CRIC Council's leadership during that time. As the governing body, their voices likely did a great deal in shaping CRIC members' opinions. The federal government's own "failure of leadership" during this time stands in direct contrast to the CRIC's.

Still, these accounts should show the diversity of opinion that people hold about the camps even decades later. The graffiti on the monument, the pick that was taken to the plaque, the bullet shells that litter the ground—all of these show how unresolved the memory of the camps continues to be. How do we hold the desire to empathize with and the reality of that anger simultaneously? In the next section, I argue that theorizing this as haunting can help us understand the persistence of these emotions tied to the incarceration.

Hauntings

Some GRIC members have said they have seen graves at the former camp site.

Alex Cannon wrote in his statement to the ICC,

I have gone up to Butte Camp hills and found graves up on side of hill—counted six that I saw. One grave you could see where candles had been burned. They were buried different than the way Indians bury. Indians mound their graves.

These graves were flat on top. I went back last week and took some pictures. I saw the graves [s]till there. The monument is still on the hill.¹¹⁰

When GRIC members asked about it, they were told that a dog had been buried there. Gee Gage, another Councilmember, wrote in his ICC statement, “While W.R.A. was on Reservation I saw some Japanese people around a big, huge monument. I questioned what this was and was told that they buried a dog. I thought that it must have been a big dog to have been so large a grave.”

Iver Sunna also heard that it was a dog: “There was one family, or one couple, they were middle-aged couple and they had a big Newfoundland dog. I guess it was a great big dog, and they buried him out there at the edge of the camp, south of the camp...”¹¹¹

Gage later noticed two more burial mounds with markers, also on the side of the hill. He did not believe it when he heard that it was a dog—in part because they returned to the hill to visit the site two years in a row. He said, “I believe it was humans.”¹¹²

Avery Gordon uses the concept of haunting as a framework through which to examine “abusive systems of power ... especially when they are supposedly over and done with (slavery, for instance) or when their oppressive nature is denied (as in free labor or national security).”¹¹³ Japanese American incarceration at Gila River and Poston brought together different power structures—racialized labor and settler colonialism—in ways that remain unresolved.

¹¹⁰ Alex Cannon Statement.

¹¹¹ Iver Sunna, Return to Butte Camp: A Japanese-American World War II Relocation Center, interview by Scott C. Russell, Transcription, July 6, 1993, Bureau of Reclamation, Arizona Projects Office, J-4.

¹¹² Gee Gage Statement.

¹¹³ Avery F. Gordon, Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination, 2nd ed (Minneapolis: University Of Minnesota Press, 2008), xvi.

Gordon writes, “haunting was precisely the domain of turmoil and trouble, that moment (of however long duration) when things are not in their assigned places, when the cracks and rigging are exposed, when the people who are meant to be invisible show up without any sign of leaving, when disturbed feelings cannot be put away, when something else, something different from before, seems like it must be done.”¹¹⁴

Her repetition of the term “when” highlights how we tend to conceive of haunting through a temporal lens. But haunting is also often extremely site-specific. We talk about ghosts that are tied to a place that had meaning to them in their lives, where some part of their lives remains unresolved. That place where things are not in their assigned places, where the cracks and rigging are exposed, where the people who are meant to be invisible show up without any sign of leaving... This aptly describes the 16,500 acres the WRA leased at Gila River, the 71,000 acres it leased at Poston, and the four buildings it leased at Leupp.

Danika Medak-Saltzman has shown that “precisely because the ‘fact’ of Native vanishing has become part of a ‘common-sense’ belief that renders Indigenous peoples always already ghostly presences, postcolonial notions of haunting and the trace simply cannot serve as recuperative, or decolonial, strategies for Indigenous peoples.” At the same time, she theorizes “specters of colonialism” that “haunt in order to maintain the foundational narratives of Indigenous absence/inconsequence that justify settler colonial

¹¹⁴ Gordon, xvi.

presence on Indigenous lands and manage to absolve guilty consciences in the process.”¹¹⁵

An example of these “specters of colonialism” at Gila River is the name of the post office for the concentration camp: Rivers. Named after Jim Rivers, the first Akimel O’odham soldier to be killed in World War I. Rivers often served as a nickname for the wider camp as well. Perhaps the WRA intended to honor Rivers, but the naming of a concentration camp after him implicates Rivers’ legacy in the building of the settler and carceral state in a way that is profoundly disrespectful. What is more is that this is not the only example of bestowing the name of an American Indian person upon a concentration camp as a nickname: “Amache,” became the nickname for Granada in Colorado, also because the post office at Granada was named Amache. Bernadette Pérez has written about the nickname, explaining that Amache Ochinee Prowers was the daughter of a Cheyenne leader, Ochinee, and married John Prowers, a white settler-rancher. She and her family were imprisoned on their ranch in Boggsville to prevent them from warning their relatives about the Sand Creek Massacre, in which the U.S. army brutally murdered her father and many other Cheyenne civilians.¹¹⁶ Pérez writes,

According to local white lore, Amache worked hard to transform herself into a good American woman. ... The real Amache is lost in this construction; just [as] her complexity is lost in the appropriation of her name for a Japanese American prison camp.

¹¹⁵ Danika Medak-Saltzman, “Empire’s Haunted Logics: Comparative Colonialisms and the Challenges of Incorporating Indigeneity,” *Critical Ethnic Studies* 1, no. 2 (2015): 17, <https://doi.org/10.5749/jcritethnstud.1.2.0011>.

¹¹⁶ Bernadette Pérez, “Before the Sun Rises: Contesting Power and Cultivating Nations in the Colorado Beet Fields” (2017), <https://conservancy.umn.edu/handle/11299/206633>, 383.

Imposed upon the camp's prisoners, the figure of Amache signaled the right way to be an 'enemy alien' in a white supremacist agrarian nation.¹¹⁷

To this day, Granada is more popularly known—both in the Japanese American community and beyond—by this nickname. It is an insult to the memory of a woman who had to be imprisoned herself to prevent her and her family from warning their nation about U.S. settler colonial violence. Likewise, the “Amache” and “Rivers” nicknames demonstrate how the settler state appropriated Indigeneity—and specifically the “specters”—to simultaneously relegate American Indians to the past and assist in building concentration camps for the settler state.

Heeding Medak-Saltzman, the haunting or “specter of colonialism” that I wish to consider here is not of Native people but rather of an event—one of many events—that forms the structure and process that is settler colonialism. Can an event haunt?

Eve Tuck and C. Ree write that haunting “is the relentless remembering and reminding that will not be appeased by settler society’s assurances of innocence and reconciliation.” They go on to explain,

Haunting doesn’t hope to change people’s perceptions, nor does it hope for reconciliation. Haunting lies precisely in its refusal to stop. Alien (to settlers) and generative for (ghosts), this refusal to stop is its own form of resolving. For ghosts, the haunting is the resolving, it is not what needs to be resolved.¹¹⁸

If “the haunting is the resolving,” how does this change our understanding of resolution? Or of redress? Clearly, something remained unresolved even with the passage of the 1988 Civil Liberties Act and the ICC decision that in 1971, through which the U.S.

¹¹⁷ Pérez, 384.

¹¹⁸ Eve Tuck and C. Ree, “A Glossary of Haunting,” in *Handbook of Autoethnography*, ed. Stacey Holman Jones, Tony E. Adams, and Carolyn Ellis (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2013), 642.

was ordered to pay the GRIC \$1,569,396.20; in the other, they were awarded \$6,069.70 for two cases relating to Japanese American incarceration.¹¹⁹

David Wilkins has shown that the legal system that the ICC claimed when it shaped itself as a court (despite having no imperative to do so) created profound limitations in its ability to meaningfully redress even the cases that were brought before it. Wilkins explains,

the very nature of the way the U.S. tried to resolve indigenous claims was unjust ... we have a clear example of courts making law to suit themselves or the co-equal branches of the federal government they share political power with, and not actually rendering decisions that ensure that justice has been done for particular Native communities.¹²⁰

Even in cases where Indigenous nations did receive compensation—like the GRIC—this compensation was often, to use Wilkins’ term, hollow. These claims were limited to monetary claims and had no power to return land even though that was what many wanted. They also arbitrarily decided who was eligible to file a claim and used their authority to determine eligibility to reinforce the legitimacy of some Indigenous nations while undermining the existence of others by casting them as merely a collection of individuals.

¹¹⁹ While the CRIC also filed a claim with the ICC about the seizure of their lands for Japanese American incarceration during World War II, they ultimately dropped the claim in April 1965 in exchange for beneficial ownership as granted by Congress on April 30, 1964. As far as I can tell, there were no depositions or statements from CRIC members in their original filings.

¹²⁰ David E. Wilkins, *Hollow Justice: A History of Indigenous Claims in the United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 196.

The court-like structure undermined its Native plaintiffs ability to advocate for themselves and instead forced them to depend on attorneys to make their cases for them. While a claimant was not technically required to have lawyers, in reality the case did not move forward unless they did. Attorneys had an inordinate amount of power to determine the shape these cases took. Wilkins writes, “the BIA drafted its procedural guidelines in such a manner as to place the initiation of claims cases in the hands of attorneys.”¹²¹ Not only did the attorneys hold disproportionate sway in whether and how cases would be filed, they also reported directly to the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Department of the Interior—not to their claimants. Vine Deloria explains,

...the attorneys must be approved by the United States before they can sue the United States on behalf of their Indian clients, they are a remarkably congenial group. One need only check the number of stipulations in the course of an Indian case to see that the tribal attorneys are most cooperative with the United States so that in many instances one could hardly say that an adversarial system of litigation exists.¹²²

Because their ability to take on future cases depended in large part on the good will with the BIA, attorneys might shape the claims in ways that would preserve that “cooperative” relationship. While it is not clear what kind of a relationship the GRIC had with their counsel, the sway attorneys had in these cases undoubtedly shaped the operations of the commission.

Moreover, the constraints the ICC imposed on “evidence” would have severely limited what the GRIC could say in these testimonies. While “testimony of natives” was

¹²¹ Wilkins, 97.

¹²² Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 75.

permitted as a form of evidence (it was the fifth form of evidence listed), these testimonies had to be “corroborated by other evidence.”¹²³ This delegitimized the voices of the claimants, though as Wilkins points out: “Orality was the dominant means through which much indigenous history was retained. And while oral evidence could be introduced in claims proceedings, it had to be corroborated by documentary evidence, evidence which usually came from non-native sources.”¹²⁴ Not only did this undermine the legitimacy of a key source of knowledge in Indigenous nations, it also meant that the statements were limited to restating information that could be corroborated, and were likely shaped, guided and edited to conform to these policies by the GRIC attorney.

These limitations show why the lens of haunting is potentially useful when applied to Japanese Americans who were forced to leave the sites of their incarceration at the end of the war—often never to return. The haunting shows that though they have physically left these sites, the memory of their incarceration lives on in these places.

At Leupp, Redsteer writes,

The region of Leupp has long held a fascination for some Navajos, particularly since it once housed Japanese Americans. Some Navajos are convinced that there was more going on at Old Leupp than has been conveyed in history books. Legends abound about Japanese American imprisonment at Leupp, quite possibly because the Navajos, no

¹²³ Wilkins, *Hollow Justice: A History of Indigenous Claims in the United States*, 113.

¹²⁴ Wilkins, 114.

strangers to dominant society discrimination, empathize with the Japanese Americans' World War II plight.¹²⁵

Redsteer also describes the story of Japanese Americans at Leupp as being “exciting” and “intriguing” to Diné in the area. This fascination and the persistence of narratives around Japanese American incarceration among Diné show how Diné around Leupp have kept the memory of Japanese American incarceration alive there. At the same time, Redsteer also suggests that it might be easier for them to think about Japanese American incarceration than about the thirty years in which Leupp served as a place “where prewar Indian children were torn from their parents.”¹²⁶ In this way, Japanese American incarceration also serves as a way to cope with the ongoing intergenerational trauma that American Indian boarding schools caused. This gestures to the complex ways in which multiple traumas can become layered upon the sites at which they occurred.

Like at GRIC, Redsteer suggests that there were more explicit hauntings that related to those who died at Leupp. Redsteer explains:

An old-time Navajo resident of Leupp has identified a dirt road that led to a small graveyard in Leupp, where it is believed that two Japanese Americans were buried. Claims of the graveyard could not be investigated because of the Navajo affiliations with Chindi, a Navajo concept associated with death and ghosts.¹²⁷

¹²⁵ Debra Redsteer, “Leupp, Arizona: A Shared Historic Space for the Navajo Nation and Japanese Americans,” *Discover Nikkei*, June 28, 2008, <http://www.discovernikkei.org/en/journal/2008/6/28/enduring-communities/>.

¹²⁶ Redsteer.

¹²⁷ Redsteer.

At Gila River, the GRIC leadership knew that something had been buried on their site. As far as I know, it is still not clear what. The initial memorandum of understanding between the OIA and WRA included a provision for a cemetery:

A cemetery site shall be reserved permanently for the burial of Japanese. The location of said site shall be determined by the Project Director of the War Relocation Authority and the Superintendent of the Gila River Indian Reservation, subject to approval of the Pima-Maricopa Council provided the site selected is within the interior boundaries of the reservation.¹²⁸

Of course, while the Secretary of the Interior signed this memorandum on July 9, 1942, the GRIC Council was not party to this agreement and it is not clear whether this provision was included in the version they did eventually sign in October 1942. Given the confusion expressed by Alex Cannon, who was Governor in 1942 and Gee Gage, who was on the Council, it seems unlikely that they had lent their approval to this burial site.

What happened to the people who died at these sites? What do these burial mounds signify? These questions become yet another way in which the incarceration itself haunts. Beyond the graves, there is also the destruction of the site itself. GRIC member Sam Thomas explained in the ICC case, “The remains of the camp, as I describe it, is rubble, a dump. It is my opinion that it has decreased in value from the original desert. As it is, it is worse than valueless because it ruins the natural beauty of the surrounding area.”¹²⁹

¹²⁸ Memorandum of Understanding between the Director of the War Relocation Authority and the Secretary of the Interior, July 9, 1942; Internment; Box 3; E180H; RG75; NARA-DC.

¹²⁹ Sam Thomas Statement, undated; DKT236A; E11UD; RG279; NARA-DC, 19.

The word “remains” shows how the concrete foundations, removed buildings, and trash are also a form of haunting, and of the trauma that placing the camp on their land was for both the GRIC and for the land itself. While Thomas uses the language of “value” here to make the destruction of the site legible to the ICC and settler notions of property, he also reminds us that the “natural beauty of the surrounding area” holds its own value—albeit one unaccounted for in settler understandings of land. Thomas’ words—his juxtaposition of natural beauty with the concept of monetary value—show that this concept cannot do justice to the grievance the GRIC brought against the federal government.

The OIA and WRA did not merely sell the barracks and whatever else they could. One GRIC member told me that people came and razed the site to make sure that whatever was left behind was unusable. In particular, he mentioned that they removed the copper wiring so that the GRIC couldn’t use it. Arnold Allison said something similar in his interview, “They got all them garbage cans and stuff ... and just ran them all out. Then poured some more stuff over ... mostly dishes and stuff, well, they ran over them with the caterpillar.”¹³⁰ The caterpillar itself breaking the remains of the camp into the landscape poignantly demonstrates the violent nature in which the camps were buried by the settler state.

Two Bears said something similar happened at Leupp:

the government came in in like 1966 and totally bulldozed that whole area so it’s literally like they’re trying to erase history—the history of what they did to Native American children, separating them from their families for several decades. Children were not allowed to go home nine months out of the year. And then

¹³⁰ Allison, I-20.

capping that off with the internment of Japanese American citizens there at the school.¹³¹

Redsteer suggests that this burial of history was perhaps even more literal. She writes, “People of the area also believe that important documents are buried in their file cabinets beneath the bulldozed rubble.”¹³²

The bulldozings of the site—and the history—point to how much dominant narratives of the incarceration have to forcibly and violently bury in order to make their narratives of history cohere. But the graffiti, the bullet casings, the beer cans, and the litter brings the “rubble” and the “dump” that Sam Thomas described back to the surface.

More than just bringing “things” back to the surface, these sites bring the complex feelings held about them to the surface as well. I suggest that the ways these feelings are currently unresolved—as evidenced through the use of the term “Jap Camp”, the bullet casings and beer cans, the “graffiti” on site—also become a form of haunting.

I struggle with what to call these actions. There is a tendency both in the Japanese American community and in the GRIC to treat these acts as forms of graffiti, vandalism, and littering. Do you call it graffiti or is it street art or both? Both terms tend to elude definition.¹³³ Most analysis of street art and graffiti has focused on urban spaces. While the GRIC is less than an hour outside of Phoenix, the CRIC is at least four hours from any major metropolitan area. What role does the setting play in defining graffiti and street art? And what of the medium? One distinction that theorists seem to make between

¹³¹ Two Bears, Pease, and Johnson, “Japanese American Incarceration on Indigenous Lands,” 14:00.

¹³² Redsteer, “Leupp, Arizona.”

¹³³ Jeffrey Ian Ross makes this point in his introduction. Jeffrey Ian Ross, Ronald Kramer, and Taylor & Francis, *Routledge Handbook of Graffiti And Street Art*, Routledge International Handbooks (London & New York: Routledge, 2016). 1.

graffiti and street art is the role that letters play in each medium—graffiti is generally more focused on language than street art. At what point does graffiti become art? At what point does graffiti begin to hold meaning and memory? Likewise, at what point does littering stop being trash and start to hold meaning and memory? Or, has vandalism always shaped memory around space? What does it say about how we value space?

As a descendant of Gila River, I ached when I saw the bullet casings. But hearing Akimel O’odham talk about their relationships with that site, I also can’t help but think it must be really hard to have a site on your own land be so recognizable for something that feels completely unrelated to your Community.

If graffiti is a form of youthful rebellion, it is also a form of self-expression, of giving voice to something that society has repressed. At the very least, we can ask ourselves: why that site? Perhaps because it has already been “destroyed,” as Sam Thomas put it, because nobody lives there, there’s a strong chance they won’t be “caught,” and because the site isn’t being used by the Community. At CRIC, graffiti has also become iconic, particularly on the remains of the Poston school, which was later converted into a school for the CRIC. When I visited the site in fall 2017, I saw several examples of street art. One proclaimed “Native Pride.” Its elaborate and careful lettering were not haphazard. The intentional design put into the piece suggests that its location too might have received the same level of thought. It was beautiful and—as it exclaimed—proud.

Can we treat these ways of engaging with the sites as simultaneous engagements with the hauntings and the memory of these traumas? At Gila River, local Japanese

Americans have been organizing clean-ups for years. This tradition began with Mas Inoshita, a former incarcerated, who used to come back to the site to do these clean-ups all by himself. Over the years, they have grown. Local school groups come out as part of their service requirement. People fly in for the clean-ups. They are accompanied by a GRIC land-use officer.

While speaking about Leupp, Two Bears (Diné) illuminated the complex power dynamics that Japanese American and American Indian histories have at these sites: “I didn’t realize that the history of the school, it hadn’t been documented. ... the Navajo history ... was important for me because that’s the history that’s really not there. The history that is written about a little bit is the Japanese internment camp or the Leupp Isolation Center.”¹³⁴

The power dynamics of remembering and forgetting in which Japanese American and Indigenous histories have been intertwined are also in play at Poston and Gila River—and beyond. Desirée Valadares has similarly shown how Japanese American incarceration histories have similarly been used to brush over the significance of Honouliuli as a site for Kānaka Maoli in Hawai‘i by recognizing its significance as a site of Japanese American incarceration through its National Parks Service designation in 2015.

Though Japanese American history has often dealt with its own neglect in educational and public history institutions, both Two Bears and Valadares point to a dynamic of which Japanese Americans must be conscientious: that Japanese American

¹³⁴ Two Bears, Pease, Johnson, “Japanese American Incarceration on Indigenous Lands,” 6:00.

incarceration history has a very real capacity to make Indigenous histories on these sites less visible.

Attempting to clean up the site without understanding the residual anger and feelings of invisibility on their own land that they give voice to is just a recipe for more graffiti and more bullet shells the year after. Maybe, instead, we should see these as part of the site. Gordon writes, “the ghost is alive, so to speak. We are in relation to it...”¹³⁵ I wonder if we treated this ghost, this land, this event as our relation and as the resolving in and of itself how our approach to “preserving” the site might change.

Conclusion

Among the countless belongings Japanese American incarcerated left behind at Gila River, there was ceramic bust of a young girl, maybe nine or ten. She has a short black bob with bangs, solemn faded red lips, and blank eyes that gaze out in front of her. Carved into its base is a name: “Sayoko Kawamura.” The name is unmistakably Japanese. The girl depicted looks young, about 10 to 12 years old. The artist is identified only by their initials: “J.S.”

Today, the ceramic bust of Sayoko Kawamura is in the collections of the HHC. After the camps closed, a GRIC member wandered the site looking for things to salvage in the rubble. He found the bust and kept it in his garden for the next few decades. At some point, he gifted it to another Community member, who later donated it to the HHC.

¹³⁵ Avery F. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*, 2nd ed (Minneapolis: University Of Minnesota Press, 2008), 64.

According to WRA records, Sayeko Kawamura—the WRA likely misspelled her first name—was incarcerated at Jerome in Arkansas with her mother, father, and younger sister. After Jerome was converted into a Prisoner-of-War Camp in 1944, she and her family were transferred to Gila River. They only stayed at Gila River five months. Her father got a job at Seabrook Farms in New Jersey, and they left Gila River for Seabrook farms. Tracing Sayoko Kawamura in the archives was a challenge because her name was misspelled in the WRA records and because her file listed her as being from Jerome, not Gila River, since that is where she originally was. The Gila River tally of incarcerated eventually confirmed that she was there briefly. The artist is only known by their initials “J.S.” I could not determine who J.S. was with just those initials. Because of the misspelling of Sayoko’s name, the bust itself asserts her time at Gila River in a way that official records do not. For J.S., those initials are the only traces we have of the artist’s work—again reminding us of all of the unanswered questions surrounding the incarceration.

But in this case, the bust, which might have so easily been forgotten and buried at the site, was cared for and passed along by GRIC members. It is currently being cared for by their museum, included in their collections. The GRIC preserved this history in a way that Japanese Americans were not able to after they left. The bust of Sayoko Kawamura shows how the GRIC has become caretakers for the memory and history of the incarceration of Japanese Americans on their land.

Chapter 3

“The Land Is Fenced”:

The Use of Incarcerated Labor to Create Private Property Out of Indigenous Lands

The first time I went to Heart Mountain, I was 12 years old—the same age my grandmother was when she was first removed from her home in Fresno. She wouldn't come to Heart Mountain for another year or so, because the family was first sent to Jerome, in Arkansas, until it was converted into a prisoner of war camp in 1943.

We traveled down US-14. My brother, my grandmother and me stuffed into the backseat. We drove past fields, green, lush fields, and I wondered whether we were getting close. My parents were bickering. My dad kept saying, “Is that the turn?” And my mom kept reassuring him that she'd tell him when we reached it. I assumed that we still must be quite far off—this looked nothing like the Heart Mountain I'd read about. That Heart Mountain was a desert. Covered in sagebrush, prone to dust storms, the site itself was so bare, it reputedly made your heart sink just to look at it. The road we were driving down looked nothing like that. Cute one story houses lovingly painted all down the highway, fields all around them. While taking the Amtrak from my grandmother's house in Rochester to Montana, I had pictured what it would look like. I had pictured a landscape frozen in time. Barrack after barrack, surrounded by guard towers. I'd visited historical sites before. Williamsburg, Mount Vernon. They all looked just like they had looked back then. Or so I thought. I didn't quite know how “then” was determined—how we figured out when to freeze a place. I'd never really considered that.

As we drove the down the highway, I expected it to look like what Art Okuno described as his first impression: “It was a desolate place. I looked out, there’s nothing around. Just sagebrush and sand. It was very discouraging, let’s put it that way.”¹

Instead, my mom jolted me out of my musings when she suddenly announced “There. Turn there.” It snuck up on us so fast, I think we missed the turn and had to turn back around.

“Are you sure this is it?” my dad said dubiously as he came up on the turn. “That’s what the map says,” my mom retorted. The road didn’t even look like a road. It looked like it might end at any moment, more like a driveway to nowhere, unpaved and seeming to disappear over the hillside.

There was nothing there. The rubble of cement foundations remained. A few lone hospital barracks, littered with beer cans. There were farms all around. Fields I knew we weren’t supposed to cross even if they covered over my family history.

This was not a desolate place. This was farmland. These lush fields could be taken for a symbol of American pastoralism and Jeffersonian dreams of agrarian yeomanry. What had happened to the sand, the sagebrush?

My dad has said that when he was growing up, his mom and dad never talked about their childhood experiences of being incarcerated for being Japanese American during World War II. “No one talked about the camps,” he told me. “It was buried.”

¹ Art Okuno, Segment 13, interview by Kirk Peterson, Video, September 1, 2009, Manzanar National Historic Site Collection, Densho Digital Repository, <https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-manz-1-80-13/?tableft=segments>.

When I watched Tad Nakamura's *Pilgrimage*, I was struck by how many of the former incarcerated and descendants he interviewed evoked the same imagery of "burying." Robert Nakamura said, "Even though I was in camp, I really buried the experience." He recalled being asked by others, "Why are you digging up this old story that's better left buried?" In another unattributed quote, a former incarcerated said, of the experience of returning to the site years later, "It unlocked what I had buried because now all of a sudden I remember everything."²

Jim Matsuoka suggested why this burying was a violent experience: "People asked me, 'How many people are buried here?'" And I said, "A whole generation." The Nisei were reveling in the fact that they were seen as the Quiet Americans. And so I'm saying, "If you're that quiet, you're dead, because they had terrorized you into being silent." Using this metaphor, he illuminated the part of themselves that the Nisei had to shun in the process of burying their memories of the incarceration.

Looking over the site of my grandmother's incarceration that day in summer 2002, I also couldn't escape the feeling that our history had been buried too. I tried to act excited about this site I knew was important to my family. I tried to listen as my grandmother told me about the landmarks she recalled. That was where the water tower was, she said. I remember thinking: who cares about a water tower? There were no signs left on the landscape to tell us what I wanted to know: where her barrack was. Where her school was. Where the barbed wire fence. Where it had all gone. A small monument

² Tadashi Nakamura, *Pilgrimage*, 2006, <https://vimeo.com/41131994>.

extolled the school system and state of the art hospital at Heart Mountain. Someone had spray painted over it, “It was a concentration camp.”

Before we left, I stood with my grandmother looking at the mountain in the distance. She didn’t say much. She wasn’t the type to say much. What she said, or at least what I thought she said, was “The mountain is smaller than I remember.”

Later, she told me she thought the mountain was bigger than she remembered. Maybe I thought it was smaller. To be fair, the whole site felt small to me in that moment. Our history felt small to me in that moment. More than buried, it felt like it had been erased.

Located in the northwest corner of what is today known as Wyoming, Heart Mountain pokes out at an awkward angle and, if you get to the top, you can see that it has two peaks. One juts out over the land, the other steady and round. You can see it for miles around, even though it’s relatively small and unassuming. To talk about this mountain, both smaller and bigger in our memories, we should first talk about the people it belongs to.

Heart Mountain has not always been known by that name. The Apsáalooke (which has often been translated as Crow in English) call this mountain Ihkapíliish Iilapxe, which translates in English to Foretop’s Father.³ In the documentary Return to Foretop’s Father, Grant Bulltail told viewers, “It is a sacred place for my people.”

Bulltail was born in 1940. In the film, he talks about his relationship with his grandfather, He Comes Up Red. Bulltail says, “He was born a Buffalo Indian and died a

³ “[Apsáalooke Place Names Database | Library @ Little Big Horn College](http://lib.lbhc.edu/index.php?q=node/200&a=L),” accessed June 13, 2021, <http://lib.lbhc.edu/index.php?q=node/200&a=L>.

Reservation Indian.” He Comes Up Red was born in 1847, before the first treaty that confined the Apsáalooke to a portion of their land. Bulltail explained, “My people were nomads. Our food source was destroyed and we were put on reservations. The borders of the reservations kept us from our sacred landmarks.”⁴ His words show how reservations historically operated as carceral spaces for American Indians, used to confine them to a small portion of their lands and destroy their traditional ways of life, their access to their lands, and their traditional knowledge.

Bulltail noted the changes that he has observed to the land in his own lifetime. During the first five years of his life, a concentration camp—that became overnight the third largest city in Wyoming—was built and dismantled. In 1947, the Bureau of Reclamation began to distribute the land off to land was sold off to veterans who had come home from the war.

Bulltail said, “I remember being able to ride my horse from Pryor to Heart Mountain. But now those trails are gone. The land is fenced. There are ‘No Trespassing’ Signs. Now I move between fences in cars and I don’t see the wildlife anymore.” Within the lifetimes of a grandfather and his grandson, the area became the territories of Wyoming and Montana, turned from Native land into public land, then into a concentration camp, until finally being broken into pieces of individual property.

⁴ Preston Randolph, *Return to Foretop’s Father* | PBS (Cactus Pro Films), accessed February 11, 2021, <https://www.pbs.org/show/return-foretops-father/>.

Overview

In this chapter, I trace this progression as a site-specific example of how settler colonialism replaces Indigenous claims to the land through the creation of public land and private property. In chapter 1, I discussed how the conversion of Indigenous land into public land into private property occurred through land grants. Here, I argue that at Heart Mountain the War Relocation Authority (WRA) and the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) advanced a decades long process of Indigenous dispossession through incarceration and exploitation of racialized labor in order to facilitate the creation of private property. This chapter highlights the processual nature of the structure of settler colonialism and posits that the creation of public land out of Indigenous land plays a key role in facilitating the conversion of land into private property, as an intermediary that erases lingering Indigenous presence and claims to the land, naturalizes the settler state's claim to the land, and attempts to discipline the land into serving settler agricultural or capitalist purposes. At the same time, heeding American Indian and Indigenous Studies' scholars calls to pay attention to how land itself can assert agency, I show that the land fought back against this disciplining in ways that continually frustrated both settlers and the state. These moments also illuminate how the settler state facilitates white settler property by highlighting how the Bureau of Reclamation compensated settlers for the perceived wrongs to their land. I go on to examine the role that racialized incarcerated labor played at this site in this moment and consider what this suggests about the roles Asian labor was expected to perform and how.

Robert Wilson has analyzed the Klamath Project, which housed the Tule Lake concentration camp in Northern California from 1942-1946, through an environmental studies and settler colonial studies lens. He writes, “The Klamath Project was a deeply racialized landscape constructed by and for white settlers.”⁵ He puts this even more explicitly when he writes, “Through hard work and the support of a willing federal government, the settlers had developed a landscape where white settlers could prosper.”⁶ He draws our attention to how the BOR supported the success of white settlers in the region, or in his words “facilitated the development of a white landscape,” and how landscapes can themselves advance certain populations as desirable settlers and others as alien labor. Wilson calls on us to consider the role the Bureau of Reclamation played in the incarceration and how the incarceration assisted in its pre-existing goals for the region. Wilson’s points about Tule Lake resonate with Heart Mountain—also located on Bureau of Reclamation land.

In *Nature Behind Barbed Wire*, Connie Chiang “argues that the confinement of Japanese Americans was an environmental process, deeply embedded in the lands and waters along the coast and the camps further inland.”⁷ Using an approach grounded in environmental history and Asian American history, Chiang examines four sites to consider how the sites were selected, the role the sites played in shaping the experience of the incarceration, and how the incarcerated responded to and interacted with their

⁵ Robert Wilson, “Landscapes of Promise and Betrayal: Reclamation, Homesteading, and Japanese American Incarceration,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 101, no. 2 (2011): 424–44, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00045608.2010.545291>, 426.

⁶ Wilson, “Landscapes of Promise and Betrayal,” 426.

⁷ Connie Y. Chiang, *Nature Behind Barbed Wire: An Environmental History of the Japanese American Incarceration* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 5.

environments. Heeding her call, I consider how the experience of incarceration at Heart Mountain specifically was shaped by settler colonial ideas about how land should be used and how to convert land into property.

Mika Kennedy analyzes the incarceration through an environmental studies, literary studies, and settler colonial studies lens. She goes on to say, “Each World War II incarceration site represents a project of Western expansion intended to finish what previous histories of settlement had not.”⁸ She examines the appropriation of rhetoric about the frontier by the WRA and incarcerated Japanese Americans and their descendents, urging us to look for examples of literature and activism that push us beyond frontier frameworks. In this vein, she finds Japanese American expressions of allyship with American Indians in their activism at Wounded Knee in the 1970s and through poetry as an “outerstellar” that exists beyond U.S. settler colonialism.

I find these environmental studies approaches both generative because of how they start with the land but also frustrating: while often acknowledging Indigenous relationships with the land, these relationships—and indeed American Indian Studies theorizations of the environment—could be centered in ways that be extremely fruitful for environmental history but for whatever reason are not. Wilson, for instance, acknowledges that Modoc history is not his “primary concern” in the article—choosing instead to focus on the settler colonial impact of their dispossession. Chiang likewise acknowledges settler colonialism particularly insofar as it impacted the sites located on

⁸ Mika Kennedy, “Crossed Wires: Japanese American Incarceration and the Environmental Frontier” (Ph.D., United States -- Michigan, University of Michigan, 2020), <http://search.proquest.com/docview/2405598961/abstract/31D56F657F384374PQ/1, 7>.

American Indian reservations in Arizona. But shouldn't an environmental history on Gila River—one of Chiang's four sites—also consider the environmental impact of the camps on the people to whom those lands belong? As I show in chapter 2, this impact was substantial, impeding human relationships and access to the land. Chiang makes the choice to organize the book thematically rather than by site—which draws our attention to the many ways that the environment shaped the incarceration across sites. I hope to show the possibilities that are opened up in focusing on a single site and drawing throughlines within the environmental histories of that site. Kennedy's analysis of the frontier and the reproduction of U.S. settler colonialism in the space of an American concentration camp demonstrates that Japanese American incarceration was a settler colonial project through its focus on the narrative of the frontier to justify the incarcerations and incorporate Japanese Americans into the settler state.⁹ She acknowledges some discomfort with this and that this approach “risks replicating some critical omissions. . . . this project speaks a lot about Native land and Native presence, but dedicates little time to Native voices.”¹⁰ She writes that she intends to bring this into the next iteration of the project, and justifies this by stating that

before seeking out Native voices, I must first do the work of thinking through the ways they have been invisibilized in the landscape of Japanese American narratives—the constellations of power that must be undone in order to clear the way for new forms of relation, not at the level of the individual or literary allusion but at the level of structure and surround.¹¹

⁹ Kennedy, “Crossed Wires,” 18.

¹⁰ Kennedy, “Crossed Wires,” 26.

¹¹ Kennedy, “Crossed Wires,” 27.

The question then is: at what point in the research process do we incorporate American Indian voices into this work? Must we analyze the environment and the structure before we seek out American Indian voices? Must we seek out an outerstellar, or can we ground our visions for cross-community solidarity in the land itself as a site that pre-existed U.S. settler colonialism? Kennedy did in fact try to locate American Indian voices in her archival research, but instead found, as I did, that government agencies were not actually particularly concerned with recording American Indian responses to the incarceration. But I would argue that perhaps we should be doing research the other way around: we should start with American Indian voices if we want to theorize the world in a way that is not limited to settler colonial epistemologies.

Using an approach grounded in American Indian and Indigenous Studies, I discuss Apsáalooke history on the land, the use of Indigenous labor in constructing the camp as a tactic to reduce Indigenous people into racialized labor, the use of Japanese American racialized labor to turn Indigenous (public) lands into private homesteads, and the resurgence of Apsáalooke presence at Heart Mountain in recent years.

Where the first chapter examines structural connections across time and place at the broad structural level, this chapter takes one site and examines how settler colonialism and racial capitalism function in site specific ways to dispossess specific Indigenous nations. The juxtaposition highlights the adaptability of settler colonialism to its environment, but also pushes us to consider structure in context.

U.S. Restrictions of Apsáalooke Access to Heart Mountain

Historically, many Native nations migrated through the region around Heart Mountain, including the Eastern Shoshone and the Apsáalooke (Crow).¹² I focus on Apsáalooke history here because of the documented significance that Heart Mountain has to the Apsáalooke.¹³ This is not to say that the mountain is not significant to the Eastern Shoshone or to other Native nations—just that I have not thus far been able to find information about the specific significance it might have for them.¹⁴ In a talk to a Japanese American audience about Apsáalooke relationships with Heart Mountain, Janine Pease (Apsáalooke) explained how the Apsáalooke came to this area: “the Apsáalooke creator, Akbaatatdia, sought the people to find through a great migration of perhaps as many as thirty or forty years looking for the best place—exactly the right place—for the Apsáalooke people to live.”¹⁵ Joseph Medicine Crow has explained that Apsáalooke ancestors migrated from Wisconsin woodlands around 1500 and a “‘Land of Many Lakes,’ probably in the headwaters of the Mississippi or father north in the Winnepa Lake region, in the latter part of the sixteenth century.”¹⁶

In this section, I discuss how U.S. colonialism impacted Apsáalooke access to Heart Mountain, focusing primarily on treaties with the U.S. But these were not the only

¹² Alden Big Man, “Crow History 1700–1950: A Political and Social Battle to Retain Their Culture” (ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2011), 23, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/879045717?pq-origsite=primo>. For a brief mention of Eastern Shoshone history at Heart Mountain, see Henry E. Stamm IV, *People of the Wind River: The Eastern Shoshones, 1825–1900, Illustrated edition* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014), 10. I will look into this further when I convert this project into a book.

¹³ Two Bears, Pease, Johnson, “Japanese American Incarceration on Indigenous Lands.”

¹⁴ I intend to look into these further in future iterations of the project.

¹⁵ Two Bears, Pease, Johnson, “Japanese American Incarceration on Indigenous Lands.”

¹⁶ Joseph Medicine Crow, *From the Heart of the Crow Country: The Crow Indians' Own Stories* (Lincoln, NE: Bison Books, 2000), 1-2.

modes through which U.S. settler colonialism asserted itself in these spaces at these times. The biocolonialism of settler illness posed a major threat to them and other Plains Indian nations, inter-nation warfare continued to dominate their lives and movements, and the fur trades, gold rush, and railroads likewise impeded their movement throughout these regions particularly as the 19th century came to a close. My goal is not to provide an overview of Apsáalooke history. I focus on treaties to show how being confined by settler borders threatened their access to Heart Mountain.

In 1825, sixteen Apsáalooke leaders signed a treaty of friendship with the United States. No land was ceded in this first treaty. The signing was tense and became even more tense when Red Plume, a chief, was struck in the head with the butt of a pistol. Apsáalooke historian Alden Big Man Jr. has argued that the success of this first treaty in spite of these tensions was “a direct result of the Crow Kinship-System that was in place.” While some were tempted to fight the still weak Atkinson-O’Fallon expedition, Apsáalooke leaders had given their word and participated in gift-giving between the two nations. Big Man writes,

It is likely Red Plume may have requested other chiefs and their followers not to engage the Americans and to hold up the promise of peace. Because of the system utilized by the Crow, if Red Plumes’ wishes were not followed and warriors struck out on their own to avenge the disgrace of their chief, it would not only disgrace their family but also the chief himself.¹⁷

¹⁷ Big Man, “Crow History,” 5-6.

In 1851, the Treaty of Horse Creek, signed by 21 Native nations, imposed settler borders and land ownership to the Plains region. Hubert Two Leggins, former Tribal Historic Preservation Officer of the Apsáalooke, talked about this treaty in an educational video:

[The] Treaty of 1851 said we had over 38 million acres and it starts down around the Wind River Mountain Range. And there's an area down there that they call Poppootcháashe. [It] means the water [that] goes into the ground. The gurgling part of the water is what they named that area. ... [O]ur chief, Sits in the Middle of the Land, said ... that's one of the areas where our reservation starts ... and then up around the Three Forks area, and then up towards the Yellowstone, around Fort Buford area, and then the base of the Black Hills and that was the area that he claimed.¹⁸

The treaty attempted to secure peace for white settlers living in and passing through the area, although it was not successful. The Blackfeet, who had not participated in the 1851 treaty, continued to fight with the Apsáalooke. The Apsáalooke also came into occasional conflict with the Lakota and Cheyenne, who were being pushed westward by U.S. military and civilian encroachment on their lands.¹⁹ The U.S. delivered the agreed-upon treaty provisions in 1854 but thereafter used the purported threat from other Indigenous nations to demand that anyone desiring these annuities report to Fort Union.²⁰

The continued elusion of peace in the area gestured to ongoing disputes around the borders demarcated in these early treaties. Settler historians tend to focus on conflict among Native nations during this time, but Big Man has argued that the treaty nonetheless “brought a period of peace to the Crow,” with the Lakotas’ forced to turn

¹⁸ Hubert Two Leggins, “1851 Fort Laramie Treaty.”

¹⁹ Hoxie, *Parading Through History*, 87.

²⁰ Hoxie, *Parading Through History*, 87.

their attention to fighting the U.S. This allowed the Apsáalooke to focus on “their culture, including the Social and Kinship systems.”²¹

In 1868, a second treaty signed at Fort Laramie cut off the southern edge of the Crow Agency at the Montana-Wyoming border. Big Man explains,

The treaty clearly defined the Boundaries of the various reservations, but for the Crow it was not clear as to where the boundaries of the Crow reservation were. The government had been forced to recognize the southeastern portions of Montana and northeastern part of Wyoming as ‘unceded lands,’ which quickly became a problem for the Crow. Since it was unceded, the Sioux could hunt freely on these portions of land on or near the Crow reservation.²²

While the Apsáalooke retained the right to hunt south of that border, they were no longer allowed to make “permanent settlement” elsewhere, which limited access to Heart Mountain in northern Wyoming. The treaty also expropriated 30 million acres of their remaining lands, leaving the Apsáalooke with an eight million acre reservation in what we currently know as Montana. Still, this treaty brought about “relative peace” for the Apsáalooke, Big Man writes. He explains, “The focus of their lives was centered on living as Crows. They incorporated various aspects of Euro-American culture, while maintaining their own, to create a unique society as they headed into the tumultuous reservation period.”²³

A year later, in 1869, the OIA built Crow Agency headquarters around Mission Creek. Two Leggins said, “From the stories, you know that the government treated them bad in that area after a while, and so they left that area and they left the blankets that were

²¹ Big Man, “Crow History,” 6.

²² Big Man, “Crow History,” 99.

²³ Big Man, “Crow History,” 7.

given to them. They laid them out up there along the hillside and they left.”²⁴ This group went to the Absaroka mountain range. Two Leggins said, “It’s supposed to be Apsáalooke but they call it Absaroka.”²⁵ They continued to travel to maintain their lifeways, suggesting that the treaty at least initially failed to confine them to the reservation it mapped out.

In 1884, Captain Henry Armstrong, who had been temporarily assigned to the OIA, moved the Crow Agency office from Mission Creek to its current location on Montana prairies by the Little Bighorn River. He’d been pushing for the move for the last two years, on the grounds that this portion of the lands was best suited for farming. The underlying intention was to settle the Apsáalooke on a small portion of their lands and open the rest of these lands to white settlement. This threatened Apsáalooke lifeways and pressured assimilation into settler agricultural society. In fact, several Apsáalooke leaders, including notably Plenty Coups and Pretty Eagle, resisted this change—they “want[ed] the Crows to spread out and take up and hold all the valleys on their reservation,” Armstrong reported.²⁶ They likely intuited—correctly—the strong possibility that if they were not occupying all of their lands, a large portion would be taken from them for white settlers.

Though not technically confined to the reservation, Armstrong and army officials at nearby Fort Custer had begun to deter Apsáalooke travel. Armstrong repeatedly asked the commander at Fort Custer to head off Apsáalooke who left the area. In response, the

²⁴ Hubert Two Leggins, 1851 Fort Laramie Treaty and the Crow - Hubert Two Leggins, Video, February 18, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VbfTjXamQzY&t=10s>.

²⁵ Two Leggins, “1851 Fort Laramie Treaty.”

²⁶ Hoxie, *Parading through History*, 25.

Fort Custer commander asked that the department of the interior prohibit all travel by American Indians off the reservation.²⁷ The department of the interior did not directly respond to this request, but it shows a growing desire on multiple fronts to turn the Crow Agency into a space of confinement.

On September 8, 1883, former President Ulysses S. Grant drove the final spike into the ground in northwest Montana, completing the Northern Pacific Railway.²⁸ Billings would quickly become a booming nearby city, and the rapid influx of white settlers into the region exacerbated pressures to confine the Apsáalooke on the reservation, which were now coming from western politicians and white voters and not just from OIA employees. This led to the move to the present-day Crow Agency in 1884.

The treaties were just the start of their confinement. The OIA began to institute policies to treat the reservations as spaces to confine American Indians. On the Crow Agency, Armstrong used tactics that included the withholding of food, clothing, and tools promised under their treaties.²⁹ When one group refused to move south of the Yellowstone river, an agent threatened to take Apsáalooke children and hold them in a boarding school.³⁰ These tactics likewise pressured Apsáalooke to comply with their confinement on the reservation.

²⁷ Hoxie, *Parading through History*, 20.

²⁸ Hoxie, *Parading through History*, 18.

²⁹ Hoxie, *Parading through History*, 123.

³⁰ Hoxie, *Parading through History*, 105.

Public Land and Water Rights

The story of how Heart Mountain became public land, and how that facilitated the creation of white settler private property, is a story of Indigenous dispossession. Kim TallBear writes: “Whether the settler state wants to farm, build a mine or a city, pump oil, or cordon off a national park, the “resources” used to build these nation-states include the lands, waters, and other-than-human beings with whom Indigenous peoples are co-constituted.”³¹ TallBear’s inclusion of “cordon[ing] off a national park” with farms and mines and oil rigs hints at the role that public land plays in the alienation of American Indians from their lands. Public land is not separate from private property under settler colonialism. The transition period during which Indigenous land becomes public land is crucial to the alienation of American Indians from their lands by effacing Indigenous land claims and naturalizing ideas about unoccupied wildernesses. In addition, by divvying up public land among different federal and state agencies, these lands become further broken up, and alienated from core parts of their ecosystems, including the rights to water as well as the mining of resources. By converting these pieces into “property” to be sold off separately, the settler state “objectifies the land and water and other-than-human beings as potentially owned resources.”³² Reducing the land to its resources perpetuates settler colonialism not only through the alienation of Indigenous people from the land and by “undercut[ting]” of these relations, but also the alienation of land from water, minerals, and animals. Through this alienation of water, minerals and plants from the land, the settler state has turned present day Indigenous lands into deserts—as happened on the

³¹ TallBear, “Caretaking Relations,” 24.

³² TallBear, “Caretaking Relations,” 32.

Gila River Indian reservation—and has manipulated ecosystems to the detriment of the communities, both human and non-human that live on them.³³ This piecemeal approach additionally created a minefield of settler bureaucracy that made it extremely difficult for American Indians to advocate for themselves or their lands, while also overwhelmingly advancing white settlement.

The role of the public domain in constructing the settler state is underexamined and merits further consideration, but that is beyond the scope of this project. In this next section, I propose instead to examine how the settler state built up white settler property from the public domain, and how the land fought back. I suggest that the sand and sagebrush Japanese Americans encountered when they stepped off the train at Heart Mountain was not in fact a product of the natural landscape but rather yet another example of a desert artificially created by extractive settler agricultural practices.

In 1896, Buffalo Bill Cody arrived with the goal of founding a town, which he named after himself: Cody, Wyoming. In 1899, he acquired the right to use Shoshone River water to irrigated 60,000 acres in the “public domain.” One of the first things he did there was secure railroad support for his new town—a wise move that would later influence the War Department and the War Relocation Authority in their search for sites to confine Japanese Americans. Cody’s team built a small canal on the southside of the Shoshone river. However, as Shirley Higuchi writes, “Cody leveraged his show’s popularity to attract residents and investors, but he could not complete the irrigation

³³ For another example of how the settler state has done this, see Traci Brynne Voyles, *Wastelanding: Legacies of Uranium Mining in Navajo Country* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015).

projects, and disappointed investors sued him repeatedly.”³⁴ The Wyoming State Board of Land Commissioners asked the Reclamation Service (as it was known prior to 1923) to intervene in 1903.

In 1904, Higuchi writes, “Congress bailed out Cody’s failed investment.” As I showed in chapter 1, this is just one in a long line of ways Congress advanced individual white settler projects even as it sought to contain racialized and Indigenous populations. In 1903, the Wyoming State Board of Land Commissioners asked the Reclamation Service to take over the project and dam the Shoshone River under the Reclamation Act of 1902.³⁵ This act funded irrigation projects through land sales which were then to be repaid by homesteaders who benefited from the projects. Work on the Shoshone Dam (later known as the Buffalo Bill Dam) started in 1904 and was completed in 1910. Smaller dams in Ralston and Corbett were completed even earlier—in 1908.³⁶

The Garland division of the Shoshone project opened to settlement in 1908 and water was first delivered to homesteaders in the area in April of that year. The Frannie Division opened to settlement in 1917, and the Willwood Dam division opened in 1926. The fourth division, the Heart Mountain division, was stalled though. The site required a separate outlet from the reservoir and a long tunnel to distribute the water to the area.³⁷

³⁴ Shirley Ann Higuchi, *Setsuko’s Secret: Heart Mountain and the Legacy of the Japanese American Incarceration* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2020), 58.

³⁵ Higuchi, *Setsuko’s Secret*, 58; “Shoshone Project,” Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), accessed July 3, 2021, <https://www.usbr.gov/projects/index.php?id=422>, 3.

³⁶ “Shoshone Project,” BOR, 4-8.

³⁷ Robert E. Bonner, “The Dam and the Valley: Land, People, and Environment Below Buffalo Bill Dam in the Twentieth Century,” *Agricultural History* 76, no. 2 (April 2002): 273, <https://doi.org/10.1525/ah.2002.76.2.272>.

The Bureau of Reclamation continued to work on irrigation projects in the region up through the entry of the U.S. into World War II.

The dams caused environmental problems. The light, volcanic soil in the region was easily washed away in rain or snow melt and quickly filled the reservoir with silt. When the reservoir dried up—as it often did during the winters, but especially harshly in 1911 and 1912—the silt met with strong Wyoming winds that blew the silt across the farms. The silt blew piles of dirt and dust onto the homesteads, often destroying crops. The silt highlights how the land resisted the manipulative environmental tactics of settler land management and created unanticipated problems for settlers. In response, Reclamation offered damages to settlers or even bought farms outright in 1915, awarding as little as \$3,900 to William Cody for his undeveloped lands, and up to \$17,000 to Edward F. Grinder, and \$18,000 to Benjamin F. Martin.³⁸ In doing so, Reclamation protected settlers' interests, and affirmed the value of “developing” the land through the monetary settlements.

Reclamation was not the only party at fault in environmental problems caused by settler agricultural and irrigation practices: in 1910, Thomas Means, an expert from the University of California, was called in because of alkaline salts found in the soil. If alkaline water got into the roots, it would kill the crops and hurt the land for seasons to come.³⁹ Means found that the primary cause was over-irrigation—nearly two thirds of the irrigated acreage in the area was damaged from farmers' overirrigation. Farmers refused

³⁸ Beryl Gail Churchill, *Dams, Ditches and Water: A History of the Shoshone Reclamation Project (Cody, Wyoming: Rustler Printing, 1979)*, 18.

³⁹ Bonner, “The Dam and the Valley,” 279.

to use less water. Instead, Reclamation instituted a costly drainage system that moved the water from the farms into the ditches—they spent more money on the drains than on the dam itself.⁴⁰ This shows how western modes of agriculture rely on manipulating the land without understanding the consequences of those actions while also wasting resources unnecessarily, and again shows that the land resisted these artificial modes of irrigation.

Reclamation's early work in the area did displace some white settlers: as the Shoshone dam filled, Marquette, a nearby town consisting of about a dozen ranches, flooded.⁴¹ The mixing of animal waste and decomposing vegetable matter polluted the water and caused issues for residents in Cody.⁴² Reclamation also did not prioritize water access to Cody residents. Instead, the agency prioritized lands downstream that had yet to be settled, which would offer more of a return to the agency for its work in the region.⁴³ The bureau proposed that the town of Cody tax its residents to build a system to pipe the water from the dam to the town about 7.5 miles away. The work of Reclamation in the area shows the agency's interest in bringing more settlers to the area, rather than improving conditions for those already there.

Despite these challenges, the Shoshone Dam was the pride of the Reclamation Service: it was the "highest concrete arch dam in the world at 328 feet" when it was built.⁴⁴ In 1915, the agency used the Shoshone Project as a model for its ideas around reclamation at the Panama-Pacific Exposition in San Francisco.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Bonner, "The Dam and the Valley," 279-280.

⁴¹ Bonner, "The Dam and the Valley," 274.

⁴² Bonner, "The Dam and the Valley," 274.

⁴³ Bonner, "The Dam and the Valley," 274.

⁴⁴ Bonner, "The Dam and the Valley," 273.

⁴⁵ Bonner, "The Dam and the Valley," 272.

During the Great Depression, the Bureau sponsored several Civilian Conservation Corps projects, including one irrigation canal on what was known as the “Shoshone Project.” By 1938, Reclamation had opened 72,000 acres to settlement on three divisions of the Shoshone Project, and it had started construction on a tunnel and canal to carry water to the fourth—the Heart Mountain division.⁴⁶ But as the U.S. entered World War II, the canal was, according to Brian Cannon “useless; when water had been experimentally turned into the unlined canal in 1941, the seepage had been so heavy that the canal banks nearly gave in several vulnerable spots.”⁴⁷

Jimi Yamaishi, who worked as a junior engineer on irrigation while he was incarcerated at Heart Mountain, had heard this story too. As he told it, they finished the canal in the mid 1930s and they “turn[ed] the water on full blast and see how far they can go with this canal. Then there was one part that was lined with concrete, and then water disappeared. Great big gopher hole, the water just sank down and popped out five miles downstream there.”⁴⁸

This project came to a halt because of the war effort, but with the announcement of Japanese American incarceration and requests to submit sites for consideration to the war department, the Bureau of Reclamation saw an opportunity to use Japanese American incarcerated labor to finish building its irrigation system—enabling it to complete its project of converting Indigenous land to public land and public land into private property.

⁴⁶ Cannon, *Reopening the Frontier*, 39.

⁴⁷ Cannon, *Reopening the Frontier*, 40.

⁴⁸ Jimi Yamaichi, Segment 7, interview by Alice Ito and Steve Hamada, Video, July 4, 1998, Densho Digital Repository, <https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-densho-1000-106-7>.

Site Selection

The WRA, the War Department and many other federal agencies put significant work into proposing and selecting sites across the country that might be used to confine Japanese Americans. That spring and summer, these agencies reviewed more than 300 sites. A hundred sites underwent “careful field investigation by trained soil scientists, engineers, economists, geologists, and agronomists.”⁴⁹ An October 1942 report by the WRA listed the following requirements for the ten sites they had ultimately selected:

1. It contains not less than 5,500 acres in a single block;
2. It contains a substantial acreage capable of producing agricultural products;
3. It is located in a climate which is suitable for human habitation and the growing of agricultural crops;
4. It is provided with an adequate supply of pure water for all domestic and irrigation purposes;
5. It is close to an electric power line and good railroad and highway transportation facilities;
6. It is free from flood hazards;
7. It is located so that conditions are favorable for installing a sanitary sewage disposal system; and
8. It is free from any conditions that might adversely affect human health.⁵⁰

This list illuminates the priorities of the WRA. The first, of course, was for mass confinement. The rationale behind this was, as the first WRA director Milton S. Eisenhower put it, “Because of manpower needs in the armed forces and because the minimum guard unit can guard 5,000 persons as easily as a smaller group.”⁵¹ The second item on the list was specifically about agricultural production: “substantial acreage

⁴⁹ Untitled Report, October 10, 1942; Folder 1; Projects, Projects (General), Subject Classification 43.100 (SC43.100); Headquarters Subject-Classified General Files, Entry 16 (E16); RG210; NARA-DC.

⁵⁰ Untitled Report, October 10, 1942.

⁵¹ E.J. Utz, Chief, Operations Division, "Final Report Operations Division," March 1946 (E.J. Utz, "Final Report Operations Division," March 1946); Projects (General), Subject Classification 43.110 (43.110); E16; RG210; NARA-DC.

capable of producing agricultural products.” But this point is not abandoned in the third and fourth items on the list. While these are also about “human habitation” and “domestic” water needs, they also mention the “growing of agricultural crops” and “irrigation” water needs as well. Thus, of the first four concerns, three concerned themselves with agriculture; one was about human confinement; and two addressed the well-being of the incarcerated. The eighth item—the last—dealt with the requirement that the site be “free from any conditions that might adversely affect human health.”⁵² Of course, the list itself required all eight conditions be met, but the ordering of these items provides insight into the relative level of importance each held for the WRA.

The list—which was created under the tenure of Dillon Myer, the second and final director of the WRA—had actually changed since April, when Eisenhower first outlined the priorities. Notably absent from the list is Eisenhower’s first requirement: “All reception centers must be located on public land so that improvements at public expense become public, not private, assets. Any land required for this purpose must remain in public ownership.”⁵³ As discussed earlier, the public domain plays a vital role in the dispossession of American Indians, in part because of how it creates this notion of the “public” that is often implicitly about white settler interests at the expense of Indigenous and racialized people. At Heart Mountain, this requirement becomes particularly ironic because of how the placement of the camp on public land was not used to enhance public assets, but rather facilitate the conversion of public land into private property. This likewise suggests how the “public” is envisioned as white settlers, and white settler

⁵² Untitled Report, October 10, 1942.

⁵³ Utz, “Final Report Operations Division,” March 1946.

property. While Eisenhower's goal to ensure the work done by incarcerated benefited the public seems admirable, Col. E.F. Cress, who worked for the WRA as a deputy director, illuminated the more practical reasons behind this choice: "the requirement that the site either be on public land or that the land to be purchased must not displace any large group of private owners."⁵⁴ In other words, the public domain requirement also preserved settler property.

This is evident in the rare instances in which the site selection did impact white settlers. For instance, at Heart Mountain, the Rotter family lived on a homestead that they had acquired in 1904 through one of Reclamation's homestead auctions. Their land was surrounded by the proposed camp, so the WRA's initial plan was to buy the land from the Rotters. Mrs. Rotter wrote to Roosevelt to explain that they moved to Wyoming from Lincoln, Nebraska in March 1905 "bag and baggage and built our first shack." The couple felt that they had been wronged by the Reclamation Service, who had promised them water "within two years from the Shoshone Dam." Instead, Mrs. Rotter writes,

Much to our disgust and to the sorrow of the tax payers they/conceived the bright idea to put the Corbett dam in the river 8 miles below ... Have no water yet. They completed the Shoshone dam however it has lain idle these 37 years doing nothing except to make electric power for a small area.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ E. F. Cress, Colonel, Cavalry, Deputy Director, WRA, to Victor Wickersham, House of Representatives, May 22, 1942; Proposed Projects by State, Subject Classification 42.200; E16; RG210; NARA-DC.

⁵⁵ V. F. Rotter to Franklin D. Roosevelt, June 13, 1942 (Rotter to Roosevelt); Folder 1; Individual Projects, Exclusive Jurisdiction over Colorado River and Gila River, Subject Classification 41.100 (SC41.100); E16; RG210; NARA-DC.

Mrs. Rotter insisted that they did “not want to sell our land and home for ANY PRICE.” She said, “we have gone thru ---- (Not a nice word for a nice lady to say) and now---with the water in sight, are we supposed to have it taken from us as a Hitler would do?”⁵⁶ The comparison to Hitler shows how Mrs. Rotter saw the purchase of their property as akin to a threat upon their rights as Americans. She failed to note the special irony of this comparison given that her land was purportedly being purchased to forcibly remove and incarcerate 120,000 people of Japanese ancestry from the West Coast, writing, “all we ask is that they leave us alone and we will not interfere with their Jap camp or their farming activities.”⁵⁷ Mrs. Rotter also contacted Wyoming senator Joseph O’Mahoney, who contacted the WRA on her behalf. Ultimately, the WRA opted to exclude the Rotter property from the military area of the concentration camp. The best solution, the agency determined, “to give Mr. Rotter an access road from his land, which lies a few hundred yards from the highway, to the highway and provide any necessary permit, if required by the Army, to allow them free ingress and egress.”⁵⁸

At Granada, the WRA also purchased private property from the Crystal Sugar Company, some of which had been leased to individuals. There too the WRA went through extensive hoops to preserve the sanctity of private property:

We will buy this tract, including crops. Since no high value crops are still to be harvested, two or three other small privately owned tracts will be purchased on the same basis. The balance of the land will be purchases, allowing the present tenants to live in the buildings and to harvest their crops this fall. They will,

⁵⁶ Rotter to Roosevelt, June 13, 1942.

⁵⁷ Rotter to Roosevelt, June 13, 1942.

⁵⁸ Dillon S. Myer, Director, WRA, to Joseph O. Mahoney, U.S. Senator for Wyoming, August 12, 1942; Folder 1; SC41.100; E16; RG210; NARA-DC.

however, be required to release all possessions of the land on the date their regular leases expire with the American Crystal Sugar Company.⁵⁹

Again, the comparison with Japanese American farmers' experiences is noteworthy. Many Japanese American farmers were forced off their lands just as their crops were coming in. And though the War Department noted the importance of getting these crops harvested for the war effort, the decision they made was not to wait for the crops to come in or to purchase the crops from farmers, but rather to facilitate the transfer of land and the crops to come to others.

As Laura Fugikawa has shown, both Japanese Americans and American Indians have been constructed by the government as "moveable populations." While the WRA did end up moving the tenants of the Crystal Sugar Company, it waited until their lease was up and their crops had come in. The WRA did initially propose to move the Rotters—and a rancher by the name of Taggert whose land was also initially within the boundaries of the Heart Mountain relocation center. For Taggert, it opted to just move the boundary line of the camp. For the Rotters, it opted to build a road to the highway for them. The Rotters in particular felt confident that the government should not only advocate for their property rights (shown through their outreach to Roosevelt and O'Mahoney), but also that they should construct irrigation facilities to help them farm their land, as shown through Mrs. Rotter's narrative that the dam had lain idle for the last 37 years. Reclamation had in fact built the dam, it just hadn't built it in such a way as helped the Rotters—though it had been working toward this right up to the U.S.'s entry in the war. And Mrs. Rotter felt secure in her outrage despite the failure of Reclamation to

⁵⁹ Malcolm E. Pitts to Myer, July 31, 1942; Folder 1; SC41.100; E16; RG210; NARA-DC.

irrigate her land. Of course, trying to remove the Rotters from their land without their permission was not right. Nor do I want to invalidate the struggles they faced. Rather, I wish to highlight the differences in how Japanese Americans and American Indians were being treated on their lands, and how one party felt confident in reaching out to her representatives to defend their rights, while the vast majority of Japanese Americans felt that reaching out to their senators on their behalf would be futile.

We should also consider the federal government's drive to preserve settler property next to the assertions it had made repeatedly to American Indian nations that it could not restrict or contain settler populations from trespassing on their lands, or its tendency to suggest that the solution to this problem was not to penalize the settlers but rather to further contain and restrict American Indians. This shows how some populations have been constructed not just as moveable, but also as containable—while white settlers have been portrayed as uncontrollable, as in iconic image of the free roaming cowboy or frontiersman.

Indigenous Labor and the Carceral State

At Gila River and Poston, the Office of Indian Affairs negotiated jobs for several American Indians working on construction of the camps on their lands. But this was not limited to the sites that were on American Indian reservations. Janine Pease, a Little Bighorn Tribal College founder, professor, and former president, told an audience of Japanese Americans, "During the construction of the Heart Mountain Center, there were a number of Crow Indian men who were involved in the construction crews. My own

father was in the construction crew, and he said he didn't have any idea what they were building."⁶⁰ According to Pease, her father "felt really sad in his later adulthood that he had participated in building that center."⁶¹

While overseen by the Army Corps of Engineers, the project was contracted out and contractors hired 3,000 men to complete the project. Engineers bragged that a barrack could be built in just under an hour—58 minutes flat.⁶² They were all identical—"exactly alike."⁶³ Nelson writes, "Draftsmen reduced designs to their simplest and crudest forms. Maximum prefabrication was used and much shoddy work was simply overlooked."⁶⁴ The WRA wanted the site completed in under 60 days—and on August 10, 1942, 62 days after work began, the WRA declared the center fit for occupancy.

The project was a striking example of Marx's conceptions around alienation from labor: working not for himself but rather for a government contractor to produce an object which he not only would not benefit from but also did not understand and later would come to disagree with and view with shame. Marx asks, "How would the worker come to face the product of his activity as a stranger, were it not that in the very act of production he was estranging himself from himself?"⁶⁵ This intense level of estrangement from work to the extent that the work itself challenges one's values is evident in Pease's assertion that her father "didn't have any idea what they were building" and her

⁶⁰ Two Bears, Pease, Johnson, "Japanese American Incarceration on Indigenous Lands," 31:39.

⁶¹ Two Bears, Pease, Johnson, "Japanese American Incarceration on Indigenous Lands," 32:00.

⁶² Douglas W. Nelson, *Heart Mountain: The History of an American Concentration Camp* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin for the Dept. of History, University of Wisconsin, 1976), 17.

⁶³ Nelson, *Heart Mountain*, 18.

⁶⁴ Nelson, *Heart Mountain*, 17.

⁶⁵ Karl Marx, *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 and the Communist Manifesto*, trans. Martin Milligan, Second Edition (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1961), 72.

description of his later sadness. Pease reiterated the idea that he didn't understand what they were building again, showing the significance of that feeling: "he didn't realize as a 19 year old, what it was that they were building."⁶⁶

That Apsáalooke labor was being used on Apsáalooke homelands to which they no longer had access, except as laborers for the settler state, adds another dimension to Marx's theories around alienation, showing that the job simultaneously attempted to alienate these workers from their land (by reminding them that they could only access it as employees of the settler state), from their labor, and from their Indigenous sovereignty (because they were building a prison for the settler state). After the job was done, he had to leave again, evidence of the settler state's oversight of Indigenous presence on their own lands: "they'd go over there for a period of days and then they'd come home."⁶⁷ Of course, he was not to blame for what the settler state was doing, nor was he to blame for getting a job out of it. In fact, the sadness he felt could also be said to show the inability of the settler state to fully incorporate him and his labor into its processes: his feelings were proof that he was not just his labor.

Incarcerated "Pioneers"

Though white settlers were clearly envisioned as the dream American—the uncontainable pioneer always pushing past new frontiers and being rewarded for that, as I discuss in the introduction—WRA materials often used the language of the frontier to describe the incarcerated' experiences, telling them they were "colonists" who were part

⁶⁶ Two Bears, Pease, Johnson, "Japanese American Incarceration on Indigenous Lands," 32:08.

⁶⁷ Two Bears, Pease, Johnson, "Japanese American Incarceration on Indigenous Lands," 31:56.

of a “pioneer community.”⁶⁸ This narrative not only obfuscated the circumstances of their incarceration but also attempted to preserve their buy-in to the nation that had incarcerated them. As Kennedy writes, “Through this rehearsal of the Western frontier, Japanese Americans might claim their stake in America. The camps were framed as an invitation—however incomplete or insincere—into the settler state, by means of an imaginary white settlers had previously invented to welcome themselves.”⁶⁹

And yet, while the WRA might have urged the incarcerated to envision themselves as settlers, there was considerable opposition to this in other branches of government. At local, state, and national levels, officials were advocating against the permanent settlement of Japanese Americans in the area. They made it clear that Japanese Americans were not envisioned as the dream American, or even as settlers. And they were definitely not supposed to settle in Wyoming. This premise was actually written into the agreement between the WRA and the Department of the Interior, on behalf of the Bureau of Reclamation, which stated: “On the termination of rights of the Authority to any land made available to it under this agreement, it agrees to do all in its power to provide for the removal of the Japanese located thereon pursuant to this agreement.”⁷⁰ Harry Bashore, acting commissioner of the Bureau, reiterated this when providing feedback on a publication by the WRA: “Particular attention is directed to the desirability of stating that the evacuees will acquire no rights in the public lands made available by

⁶⁸ Kennedy, “Crossed Wires,” 7.

⁶⁹ Kennedy, “Crossed Wires,” 7.

⁷⁰ L.J. Windle, Superintendent, Shoshone Irrigation District, Bureau of Reclamation, to Guy Robertson, Project Director, Heart Mountain, WRA, April 21, 1943; Box 742; General - Protection of Structures - Shoshone - Heart Mountain, Subject Classification 386.01; General Administrative and Project Records, Entry 7 (E7); Bureau of Reclamation, Record Group 115 (RG115); National Archives Building, Denver (NARA-Denver).

the Bureau of Reclamation.”⁷¹ Clearly, he anticipated that this would be of some concern not only to the Bureau but also to the general public, which suggests how federal officials attributed this definition of the settler to public sentiment. Bashore was not wrong: many communities were opposed to Japanese Americans being located anywhere near them; others were ambivalent about the prospect or even sought out their labor.

Bashore’s response to the WRA’s draft mitigated the possibility of a public relations issue for the Bureau, while caving in on white settlers’ fears and insecurities around non-white labor. In doing so, he allowed these fears to propagate and persist unchallenged, all while benefiting from Japanese American labor.

This put immense pressure on Japanese Americans themselves to improve relationships with local communities. Mits Koshiyama, a Heart Mountain incarcerated, explained, “the people in Wyoming just hated us. Cody and Powell, Wyoming, they didn’t want anything to do with Japanese.”⁷²

But because of the war, there was also shortage of workers in the area. This, Wyomingites and WRA officials knew, was an opportunity. As the *Wyoming State Tribune* put it, “Wyomingites may help the relocated Japanese by meeting and treating them courteously, by providing them employment ... Japanese may help Wyomingites by eschewing bitterness and accepting the employment which is made available to them.”⁷³ This was little more than a “quid pro quo for Japanese stoop labor” as Douglas Nelson

⁷¹ H.W. Bashore, Acting Commissioner, Bureau of Reclamation, to John C. Baker, Chief, Office of Reports, WRA, August 11, 1942; Folder Evacuation of Aliens - Establishment of Concentration Camps (Evacuation); Box 747; National Defense - Establishment of Concentration Camps, Subject Classification 386.05 (SC386.05); E7; RG115; NARA-Denver.

⁷² Mits Koshiyama, Segment 4, interview by Alice Ito and Dana Hoshide, Video, July 14, 2001, Densho Digital Repository, <https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-densho-1000-130-4/>.

⁷³ Nelson, *Heart Mountain*, 38.

puts it: their treatment by local communities depended on how well they worked for farmers in the area.

In Fall 1942, more than 1100 incarcerated from Heart Mountain worked for Wyoming and southern Montana farmers to bring in their harvests.⁷⁴ Even with their temporary “release,” these individuals remained in many respects incarcerated labor. Governor Nels Smith insisted that all incarcerated who worked on the harvest in the area be returned to the concentration camp no later than December 1, 1942. Paul Tsuneishi said, “I worked in a farm in Worland and worked on a hothouse in Thermopolis and worked on a sugar beet ranch in Powell, and so they were glad to have labor available because most of the young men had been drafted to the war effort.”⁷⁵ Local sentiment about the incarcerated did improve during the harvest: “Although there were the predictable complaints about too many ‘Japs’ being ‘mollycoddled’ at Heart Mountain instead of out working, most Wyoming farmers appreciated appreciated the critical role played by the evacuees in saving the harvest.”⁷⁶

The positive sentiment from the harvest was shortlived, Koshiyama said. “After the crops were finished, again, the poor evacuees were labeled “Japs” again.”⁷⁷ Indeed, less than a year later, during the 1943 growing season and harvest, almost exactly the same thing happened: “In mid-1943, ... the councils of Powell and Cody resolved to discourage evacuee visitation to their town, only to relent as the need for harvest labor became acute. However, when the workers completed their task, the Powell council once

⁷⁴ Nelson, *Heart Mountain*, 38.

⁷⁵ <https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-densho-122-17-3/?tableft=segments>

⁷⁶ Nelson, *Heart Mountain*, 40.

⁷⁷ Koshiyama, Segment 4.

against asked for a restriction on evacuee passes.”⁷⁸ Nelson demonstrates that local sentiment about Japanese Americans fluctuated based on the demand for agricultural labor in the region.

Of course, anti-Japanese sentiment never really diminished, even when farmers accepted Japanese American labor temporarily into their midst. An undercurrent of anti-Japanese sentiment persisted both locally and at the highest levels of Wyoming government, particularly in Governor Smith. Smith wrote to Senator O’Mahoney that was “could not be party to ... any program which would permit the eventual establishment of permanent residences of the Japanese people within our state.”⁷⁹ This reveals an early and persistent anxiety among Wyoming leadership that while Japanese Americans might perform the role of confined labor while in their state, they were unfit to settle in Wyoming.

In November 1942, Smith was unseated by his more “liberal” opponent, Lester Hunt. Hunt worked with the WRA to facilitate Japanese American labor on Wyoming farms even as he, like his predecessor, advocated against Japanese American settlement in Wyoming. He wrote, “It is an obligation of the United States Government to eventually return all evacuees at government expense to their original homes.”⁸⁰ Though framed in a way that suggests concern for the “evacuees,” his insistence on “government expense” highlights an important underlying anxiety—he did not want Wyoming taxpayers to bear the burden of paying for incarcerated. He similarly refused to allow

⁷⁸ Nelson, *Heart Mountain*, 155.

⁷⁹ Nelson, *Heart Mountain*, 39.

⁸⁰ Nelson, *Heart Mountain*, 45.

incarcerees into Wyoming medical or penal institutions and attempted to charge the WRA for the cost of holding one incarcerated convicted of a felony in the state penitentiary.⁸¹ In August 1944, he expressed his feelings more candidly in a letter assuring the Powell mayor that he would “see that the Japs leave the Relocation Center and Wyoming immediately upon termination of the war.”⁸² He wrote this in response to rising concerns in the county about Japanese American post-war settlement in Powell. In late spring 1944, the Powell council had written to Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes, “Our country is sparcely [sic] settled. The retention of the Japanese in this country ... would prove damaging. ... We just don’t want them here.”⁸³

Clearly, the incarcerated were supposed to labor but not settle. In this, anti-Japanese advocates were fairly successful: the state’s Japanese American population declined from 643 in 1940 to 450 in 1950; the county’s Japanese American population decreased from 41 to 38.⁸⁴ This suggests that not only were Japanese American incarcerated successfully removed from Wyoming after the war, but that a portion of the pre-war Japanese American population in the area (who were not subject to the forced removal because they were outside the exclusion zone) also decided to leave the area during that time.

Wyomingites were not alone in this sentiment that Japanese Americans were unfit as settlers. An article from the Nevada newspaper, *Fallon Standard*, put it bluntly: Japanese American labor might be welcomed but only on the condition that the land was

⁸¹ Nelson, *Heart Mountain*, 49.

⁸² Nelson, *Heart Mountain*, 162.

⁸³ Nelson, *Heart Mountain*, 161.

⁸⁴ Nelson, *Heart Mountain*, 165.

“settled by white farmers after the war or after the development is completed.”⁸⁵ Note that while the Bureau was proposing to bring Japanese American workers specifically to the Newlands Project in Nevada—which was the subject of the article—the article itself took the opportunity to specify that only “white farmers” should be permitted to settle after the war. In doing so, they took the issue of anti-Japanese sentiment and used it to advance *white* settler colonialism.

Clearing and Irrigating the Land

Instead, Reclamation envisioned Japanese Americans as labor for its projects, first and foremost irrigation. Irrigation was to become such a defining part of life at these camps that at Minidoka, the incarcerated decided to call the camp newspaper the “Minidoka Irrigator.”

On July 28, 1942, Bashore from Reclamation wrote to Myer from the WRA to propose a joint project: “Congress recently decided to discontinue CCC activities. This leaves the Bureau with unoccupied camp buildings on some projects, which could be used by work battalions of Japanese evacuees to carry on the unfinished work of the Civilian Conservation Corps.”⁸⁶ In August, representatives from the two agencies met to discuss potential sites. The agencies agreed, in accord with the original suggestion in Bashore’s letter, that the “WRA would move the Japanese to the project and return them to the relocation center, pay the salaries and living expenses of the workers, including

⁸⁵ William D. Rowley, *The Bureau of Reclamation: Origins and Growth to 1945* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2006). 379, 382.

⁸⁶ H.W. Bashore, to Dillon S. Myer, July 28, 1942 (Bashore to Myer, July 28, 1942); Evacuation; Box 747; SC386.05; SC41.100; E16; RG210; NARA-DC.

mess and clothing; and operate the mess.”⁸⁷ The BOR did not just see Japanese American incarcerated as a replacement for CCC labor—it also saw them as free labor. Since the WRA would pay their salaries and living expenses, they would only be on the hook for providing housing for the workers (in already established CCC work camps) and supervise the work done. This was to be on top of the work that would be done at Heart Mountain, Tule Lake and Minidoka which were on Reclamation lands.

But Reclamation soon encountered an obstacle to these “labor battalions”: the 1902 Reclamation Act held “no Mongolian labor shall be employed thereon,” a rule that had been written into Reclamation contracts ever since. The rule had been created because of white labor movements’ opposition to Asian immigrants who were perceived as competing for their jobs.⁸⁸ Forty years later, contractors on Reclamation projects—in particular, the Morrison-Knudsen Company which was working on the Boise Project’s Anderson Ranch Dam—wanted to use incarcerated Japanese American labor under their contracts and questioned if “existing law prohibits the employment of Mongolians of Japanese descent who are American born citizens of the United States.”⁸⁹ In 1943, the Interior Department Appropriations Act sanctioned the Department of the Interior’s use of “labor and services of enemy aliens and of all American-born Japanese who are under the control of the War Department or other Federal agency exercising said control.”⁹⁰ In

⁸⁷ Bashore to Myer, July 28, 1942.

⁸⁸ William D. Rowley, *The Bureau of Reclamation: Origins and Growth to 1945* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2006). 380-381.

⁸⁹ L.J. Windle, Superintendent, Shoshone Irrigation District, Bureau of Reclamation, to District Counsel, Billings, MT, Bureau of Reclamation, February 17, 1943; Evacuation; Box 747; SC386.05; E7; RG115; NARA-Denver.

⁹⁰ William D. Rowley, *The Bureau of Reclamation: Origins and Growth to 1945* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2006). 381.

1944, the Appropriation Act included similar but not identical language, allowing now for the “Service or labor of prisoners of war, enemy aliens, and American-born Japanese who are in the control of the Federal Government.”⁹¹ When Reclamation officials asked whether that meant that the legislation was restricted to the fiscal year or might be used in perpetuity, they learned that it was restricted to the fiscal year unless it “state[d] specifically that the authorization is continuing.”⁹² The 1945 version of the bill changed this language to say that this “labor ... may be utilized hereafter in connection with the construction, operation, and maintenance of Federal reclamation projects.”⁹³ Through these efforts, the Bureau of Reclamation pushed against discriminatory laws but only for those who “are in the control of the Federal Government,” ensuring that Japanese Americans working for the Bureau would be in a highly exploitable position.

The first concern for the Bureau was the completion of the canal to the fourth division of the Shoshone Project (its title for the lands that constituted Heart Mountain). Because the WRA was focused on ensuring that the camps were as self-sufficient as possible particularly as it pertained to agriculture, this was important for the fulfillment of its goals as well.

Eiichi Sakaue, a Heart Mountain incarcerated who served as agriculture superintendent from 1943 onward, echoed this: “when the evacuee[s] went to Heart Mountain, that was the first job: The evacuee[s] must complete the irrigation project. They had canals set, but [it] wasn’t finished.” That fall and as soon as the ground began

⁹¹ Bashore, to Chief Engineer, Denver, CO, Bureau of Reclamation, December 1, 1943 (Bashore to Chief Engineer, December 1, 1943); Evacuation; Box 747; SC386.05; E7; RG115; NARA-Denver.

⁹² Bashore to Chief Engineer, December 1, 1943.

⁹³ Bashore to Chief Engineer, December 1, 1943.

to thaw in early spring, the construction crew was back at it because the WRA, Sakauye said, “had already planned that we gotta grow crops there.”⁹⁴

Cannon explains, “At Heart Mountain in the spring of 1943 nearly 200 camp residents per day labored for a pittance--\$16 to \$19 per month—to line the most porous portions of the recently constructed 26-mile main canal leading from Shoshone Dam to the division.”⁹⁵

Yamaishi, the junior engineer, said,

So winter of ‘42, [we] went out there and start working on this canal, filling, backfilling, compacting, get ready to line it with concrete so the water won’t disappear. So we worked that fall and the winter, except we had to shut down in the wintertime because it freezes. ... next spring went back out there. And it was March, everything was frozen, but we heat the water, we heat the gravel, we heat our sand, and then we poured concrete and got the canal all finished, ready for the summer crop. ... And that’s how that canal got fixed.⁹⁶

The work the incarcerated did on irrigation shaped the landscape of the region. As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the landscape looked nothing like the desert I had imagined. There was a reason for that. It was because of Heart Mountain incarcerated. But, as Yamaishi said, “That’s one of the jobs very few people knew about. Even the local people didn’t know about it.”⁹⁷ Only in recent years, with the creation of the Heart Mountain Interpretive Center, has the role of incarcerated Japanese Americans in shaping the settler colonial landscape that is present day Heart Mountain begun to emerge.

⁹⁴ Eiichi Edward Sakauye, Segment 23, interview by Jiro Saito, Video, February 8, 2005, Japanese American Museum of San Jose Collection, Densho Digital Repository, <https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-jamsj-2-7-23/>.

⁹⁵ Cannon, *Reopening the Frontier*, 40.

⁹⁶ Jimi Yamaichi, Segment 8, interview by Alice Ito and Steve Hamada, Video, July 4, 1998, Densho Digital Repository, <https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-densho-1000-106-8/>.

⁹⁷ Yamaichi, Segment 7.

This was strenuous work. Cannon explains, “The laborers lugged 100-pound bags of bentonite and wheelbarrow loads of native clay to cement mixers, blended the compound, and then pressed it against the bottom and sides of the 32-foot-wide and 9-foot-deep canal.”⁹⁸

The workers were under a strict schedule. Wyoming had a very short 109-day growing season, so the canals had to be ready to go by the time the agriculture department began planting. Because of that, they stopped working late into the fall, and resumed working early in the spring. At Minidoka, which being located in Idaho also dealt with harsh winters, Shosuke Sasaki described the conditions of this work: “it was mid-winter, the temperature was down around, what, oftentimes below zero, and we had all the pickaxes and shovels there but the ground was frozen solid. There wasn’t anything we could do.”⁹⁹

The incarcerated finished the canal in time for the spring growing season at Heart Mountain. Meanwhile, others were hard at work planning an agricultural program for the camp. Reflecting on the WRA’s agricultural policies, E. J. Utz, Chief of the WRA’s Operations Division, wrote in March 1946, “Since nearly one-half of the evacuees had been employed in some phase of agricultural production or distribution before evacuation, it was decided that a rather extensive agricultural production program should provide one of the major types of useful employment.”¹⁰⁰ The WRA used the expertise of

⁹⁸ Cannon, *Reopening the Frontier*, 40.

⁹⁹ Shosuke Sasaki, Segment 8, interview by Chizu Omori, Emiko Omori, and Paul Mailman, September 28, 1992, Emiko and Chizu Omori Collection, Densho Digital Repository, <https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-densho-1002-2-8/>.

¹⁰⁰ E. J. Utz, Chief, Operations Division, "Final Report Operations Division," March 1946 (Utz, "Final Report Operations Division," March 1946); Projects (General), Subject Classification 43.110; E16; War Relocation Authority, RG210; NARA-DC, 46.

the incarcerated to guide its activities in ways that shaped agriculture in northern Wyoming for decades to come.

Sakauye explained, “behind this barbed wire fence, we have all sorts of talent, and if we can only tap them and use them, which we did. ... we had seedsmen from Washington clear down to the Arizona border. We had farmers from north to south.”¹⁰¹ In particular, the agriculture program at Heart Mountain depended on “The experienced group of farmers are from Wapato, Washington, where the climate is almost similar to where we are staying in Heart Mountain, Wyoming.”¹⁰² The Wapato farmers showed them how to create hothouses and grow plants inside during the cold winters to ensure that the seedlings would be ready to plant come spring.

James Ito, a young college graduate who had majored in soil science and horticulture, was hired as the assistant superintendent of agriculture at Heart Mountain. He ran tests of soil in different parts of the camp to determine where to plant different crops based on the soil types he encountered on the site. He said, “I was told to feed twelve thousand people. So I had to decide what to do and (where) to put things.”¹⁰³

The incarceration had removed these incarcerated from the lands on which they had gathered this knowledge and shipped them off to a region where that knowledge could be extracted explicitly in service of the settler state, since they were now directly employed by the federal government. In addition, they could no longer work their own lands. As we discussed in chapter 1, Issei were not able to own land, but some purchased

¹⁰¹ Sakauye, Segment 22, <https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-jamsj-2-7-22/>.

¹⁰² Sakauye, Segment 9, <https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-jamsj-2-7-9/>.

¹⁰³ James O. Ito, Segment 9, interview by Martha Nakagawa, Video, November 9, 2010, Densho Digital Repository, <https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-densho-1000-308-9/>.

land in their children's names or entered creative lease agreements. Even if the lands were not technically their own, the enterprises and the profits of those enterprises were. Many had worked for decades as wage laborers to save up to purchase or lease their land. In the space of a few months, they went from practically being settlers to performing the same work they'd done when they first arrived in this country, without any of the freedom they'd had back then. The incarceration also rendered them hyper-exploitable: in camp, agricultural workers generally earned \$16 a month. To leave camp, they would put up with shoddy work conditions, discrimination, unpaid wages from employers. The WRA rarely protected these workers or enforced the provisions promised in their contracts. For the workers themselves, the option was to stay where they were or return to camp.

For those workers in camp, the first task was to "clear the land." Sakauye said, "First time we came there, we had anthill this high, sagebrush all around, rattlesnakes everywhere, short rattlesnakes. After we cleared the ground, we would stand there in the sun and the shade, we looked down, there's a rattlesnake."¹⁰⁴ Kennedy has analyzed the image of the rattlesnake in a Mitsuye Yamada poem as a symbol of persevering Indigeneity in non-human relations at Poston. At Heart Mountain, likewise, Sakauye's description of clearing the land—a settler colonial approach to agriculture—demonstrates how the arrival of the incarcerated disturbed habitats.

The WRA was careful not to disturb one community in the area though. Sakauye said, "we didn't grow the crops that Wyoming grew, other words, grain and sugar beets

¹⁰⁴ Sakauye, Segment 23.

and corn.”¹⁰⁵ These were the primary crops grown by Wyoming farmers, and the WRA didn’t want the incarcerated to come into competition with local farmers, rightly guessing that this would not improve relationships between Japanese Americans and the local communities. At the same time, it was also yet another instance of the federal government protecting white settler interests through its policy-making.

The Inefficient Minority

The WRA had high hopes for the work the incarcerated might do when it started making plans in spring and summer 1942. This assumption of efficiency in Asian workers was evident in the WRA’s agricultural section chief at Heart Mountain, Glen Hartman, assumption that “all able-bodied people would be eager to work hard.”¹⁰⁶ The language of efficiency has often been used to code Asian workers, and Japanese American workers had been stereotyped before the war as being too efficient—which was why farmers on the west coast reportedly wanted them gone.

In fact, incarcerated who volunteered to work were deemed “suckers” and, as workers at Tule Lake retorted when their supervisors chastised them for not working hard enough, “What in the hell do you expect for fifty cents a day?”¹⁰⁷ as Cannon tells it, “Those who did volunteer for farmwork faced caustic criticism from their neighbors, who branded them 'suckers' for working for so little money. At ever camp, worker morale plummeted. At Tule Lake laborers bristled with resentment at working 'for such small

¹⁰⁵ Sakauye, Segment 26, <https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-jamsj-2-7-26/>.

¹⁰⁶ Cannon, *Reopening the Frontier*, 43.

¹⁰⁷ Cannon, *Reopening the Frontier*, 43.

pay when the rest of the world was getting good [wartime]wages'; when supervisors reprimanded them for working slowly or quitting early they retorted, 'What in the hell do you expect for fifty cents a day?'"¹⁰⁸

I argue that this tendency to work inefficiently during their incarceration was a subtle form of resistance to American perceptions of them—both those that discriminated against Japanese Americans and those who advocated for their inclusion as model workers. As James Scott writes has explained, people without power have some ability to maneuver through the situations to voice their discontent, making “an intrusion sufficient to convey its meaning to the directors but not so egregious as to risk a confrontation.”¹⁰⁹ For Japanese American incarcerated, clearly expected to work in camp and, moreover, to work well, this inefficiency was a way of conveying their dissatisfaction with their circumstances, even as they understood that more overt resistance could be potentially dangerous. Though murders and injuries by guards were uncommon, they did happen. But this also fought against emerging stereotypes about the efficiency of Japanese labor—namely that they were good at stoop labor, considered highly unpleasant for white workers, and that they would work hard for less pay. Though likely unconscious at least to some degree, and also possibly motivated by the trauma and mental health issues that arose due to their incarceration, the inefficiency of Japanese American workers in the camps resists their alienation from their labor and highlights their humanity in the face of a stereotype that cast them as quasi-robotic.

¹⁰⁸ Cannon, *Reopening the Frontier*, 43.

¹⁰⁹ James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, ACLS Humanities E-Book (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 26.

It soon became clear that much of the work the Bureau and the WRA had planned would not get done. Particularly for projects like public works, there was little incentive to work hard for the incarcerated. Underpaid and knowing they would be forced to leave the area after the war, they had no reason to work hard to develop the region.

As Utz wrote in his final report in 1946,

It had become apparent before this time that there would not be very much labor available on the relocation centers for the carrying forward of a large public works program such as the large scale development of agricultural lands and the building of canals and laterals incident to the use of these lands for agricultural production.¹¹⁰

Instead, Utz estimated, incarcerated labor “varied anywhere from 25 percent to 100 percent as compared to outside labor paid prevailing wages.”¹¹¹ This finding did not account for the fact that incarcerated were paid a fraction of the price of outside labor. Taking that into account, Utz wrote, “the efficiency of the evacuee labor even at \$16.00 per month would vary between 40 and 50 percent.” He also noted that despite these inefficiencies, the projects undertaken cost considerably less than had they been accomplished by non-incarcerated workers.¹¹²

These problems were mitigated somewhat in agriculture, which Utz attributed to the leadership of some who “put in more than the required eight hours per day.”¹¹³ Utz’s point suggests that putting in more than the required eight hours per day was required to make the agriculture program successful, which points to the expectation the WRA had of hyperefficiency and exploitability of incarcerated labor. While he attributes this to

¹¹⁰ Utz, “Final Report Operations Division,” March 1946, 51.

¹¹¹ Utz, “Final Report Operations Division,” March 1946, 39.

¹¹² Utz, “Final Report Operations Division,” March 1946, 39.

¹¹³ Utz, “Final Report Operations Division,” March 1946, 52.

Japanese American leadership, there was also a significant difference between the two projects that Utz did not note: those who worked in agriculture were working to feed and benefit their community. Coming from the assembly centers, incarcerated had been subjected to months of army provisions—inadequate provisions and malnutrition, canned foods that went bad due to poor refrigeration and led to whole blocks coming down with food poisoning, meals that did not adhere to Japanese American dietary preferences. Their work in agriculture fed these individuals and their families. In contrast, there was no incentive to work hard on “large public works” or “large scale development” because they would never benefit from these projects.

While Utz did note and to some degree interpret the dissatisfaction of the incarcerated in his report—showing that conveyance of meaning that Scott describes—he also likely misinterpreted the reasons they did work. Perhaps he understood that they were discontented, but he did not understand why they might choose to put their labor in certain directions over others. They cared about more than just voicing their discontent—they were also investing in their community and choosing to spend their time as they wished.

This is clear in the story of Shosuke Sasaki, who was incarcerated at Minidoka and worked on the irrigation canal there. He explained, “they wanted me to get in and do some clerical work. I preferred to stay home and read.”¹¹⁴ He eventually decided to apply for a job on the ditch repair crew. But when the weather was too cold—and it was Idaho,

¹¹⁴ Sasaki, Segment 8.

it was often too cold—the engineer would get tired of watching and would get in his car and drive away. Those days, Sasaki said,

one of our group there would climb the banks of the canal and get up and when he saw that engineer's car go around the bend, he'd signal us. Then we just dumped all our tools and clambered up the side of the bank and the first thing we did was to gather sagebrush around, dead sagebrush, and build a fire, warm ourselves. ... The engineer would show up to take us out in the morning and he'd say, 'Gee whiz. This is the same as I saw here yesterday. What happened? What'd you guys do?' 'Well, there's nothing we can do. That ground is frozen solid. See if you can do anything with the pickaxe yourself, if you don't believe us.'¹¹⁵

Sasaki would spend this time reading, which was what he had wanted to do all along.

Incarcerees found other ways to advocate for their own interests through work as well. At Heart Mountain, the agriculture program prioritized growing Japanese crops so that the incarcerated would have access to familiar foods for the first time in a long time. Among the crops they grew were daikon, napa, and gobo (burdock).¹¹⁶ Some incarcerated sent back to California for stores of seeds they had left behind so that they could grow crops in victory gardens or get individual plots outside the fence.

Eiichi Edward Sakauye, one of the leaders of the Heart Mountain agricultural program, said that when he told the WRA that he wanted to buy gobo seeds, "The Caucasian personnel ... said 'Oh, we can get lot of burdocks along the railroad track, because they're growing wild and they don't want 'em.'" Japanese railroad workers had planted the burdock back when they were working on the railroads and the burdock had continued growing since. Sakauye attempted to convince them that the burdock he wanted was different from the burdock growing wild. One was cultivated; the other was

¹¹⁵ Sasaki, Segment 8.

¹¹⁶ Sakauye, Segment 23.

tough in order to survive the harsh weather conditions in the area. Sakauye ended up planting a few of both just to convince the administration that they were not the same—something he had known all along.¹¹⁷

In another instance where the WRA staff attempted to convince farmers that they knew better than the incarcerated did from a lifetime of experience: it ordered equipment that wasn't suitable for the landscape. The agriculture staff went on strike. "we struck because we just can't do it," Sakauye said. In response, the administration "sent high school kids to run these tractors. . . . we looked down from our administration building, the dust flying all over and they're having a ball of a time. So the administration just kept quiet and says, 'Get what you need.'"¹¹⁸

The incarcerated also found ways to claim the fruits of their labor: when the camp administration counted the Heart Mountain chicken population, they found that nearly 2,000 chickens were missing. The camp veterinarian—a Japanese American who lived outside exclusion zone in Powell, Wyoming and as such was not subject to the forced removal—informed them that the chickens had succumbed to "barracks sickness." The disease was fatal, Dr. Ota told the camp authorities. Mike Mackey writes, "Once a chicken contracted barracks sickness an internee would catch it and take the bird to his barracks where it would later die."¹¹⁹

The incarcerated also found ways to use their work on irrigation to their benefit. At Heart Mountain, the incarcerated diverted the irrigation water into what Shig Yabu has

¹¹⁷ Sakauye, Segment 23.

¹¹⁸ Sakauye, Segment 23.

¹¹⁹ Mike Mackey, *Heart Mountain: Life In Wyoming's Concentration Camp*, Second Edition (Powell, Wyo: Western History Publications, 2008), 135.

described as “a great big hole. The irrigation water will come in, go into the swimming hole, and then it would go out, continue with irrigation.”¹²⁰ During the summers, children could swim in the hole. By using their labor for recreational purposes and enjoyment, the incarcerated asserted the importance of their individual and communal well-being beyond their work.

Conclusion

Despite material and labor shortages that persisted after the war, the Bureau of Reclamation advertised the opening of the first portion of the Heart Mountain division on October 3, 1946—less than a year after the last Japanese Americans had left Heart Mountain. As requests for the application materials flooded in, the Bureau mailed out 4,000 applications.¹²¹ John K. Black, the Shoshone Project’s full-time settlement specialist, reviewed the applications with two clerks. They were responsible for ensuring that each applicant met three main criteria: “I had to determine if they had an honorable discharge from the U.S. Armed Services. Did they have two years of farming experience in their background? Did they have \$2,500 in assets in a truck or in farm machinery or in money?”¹²² These criteria did not mention race but the assets requirement as well as the required experience likely would have disproportionately affected non-white applicants with less generational wealth and lower rates of land tenure to assist them. On top of that,

¹²⁰ Shig Yabu, Segment 5, interview by Raechel Donahue, Video, 2010, Raechel Donahue and Garrett Lindemann Collection, Densho Digital Repository, <https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-densho-1011-10-5/>.

¹²¹ Churchill, *Dams, Ditches and Water*, 88.

¹²² Cannon, *Reopening the Frontier*, 50.

the pool of applicants suggests other factors that effectively shaped the pool of applicants, even if applicants were not technically restricted by these criteria. Cannon notes, "Forty percent of the applicants for farmland in northern Wyoming in 1946 were Wyoming residents, and an additional 19 percent lived in neighboring Montana."¹²³ Both states populations were overwhelmingly white. This may have been due to the way the Bureau advertised the land drawings, because of word-of-mouth knowledge of the land drawing, or because of the familiarity these applicants had with the region. Additionally, it might have been heightened by reluctance from potential non-white applicants who were deterred by the thought of moving to a place where they might be the only person of their race in their community. Another factor shaping the applicant pool—one that likely interplayed with the geographic bias to some degree—was that "a disproportionate number of applicants came from existing reclamation projects, not only because the Bureau's land openings were well publicized there, but because the children of those who had homesteaded in the area were familiar with irrigation and with the Bureau of Reclamation's policies."¹²⁴ Thus, any former racial inequities in the Bureau's selection process would have been replicated in post-war processes as well.

Those that met these basic requirements went to a board. In all, 212 veterans were selected for the first drawing of 82 homesteads on a unit totaling 7,720 acres.¹²⁵ Incarcerees had cleared, turned over, irrigated, and farmed at Heart Mountain and Minidoka each—those acres could be immediately planted with crops or leased out to

¹²³ Cannon, *Reopening the Frontier*, 49.

¹²⁴ Cannon, *Reopening the Frontier*, 49.

¹²⁵ Churchill, *Dams, Ditches, and Water*, 88.

local farmers. The irrigation potential of their work might have been even larger. At Tule Lake, incarcerated developed nearly three times as much land—despite agricultural strikes and much upheaval and turmoil in the camp when the site was converted into the segregation center for No-Nos who had been deemed “disloyal.” While these acres cleared and developed by incarcerated Japanese Americans made up a relatively small portion of the land that went up for homesteading after the war, Cannon notes that “the contributions of those internees to the prosperity of that fortunate subset of veterans were substantial.” At Tule Lake, “each of these farms developed by the ethnic Japanese was valued at \$20,000.”¹²⁶ Meanwhile, at Heart Mountain, “only 44 percent of the lands that were opened to homesteading in 1947 were actually farmed that year. The percentage would have been even lower were it not for the fact that some of the lands had previously been developed by Japanese American internees.”¹²⁷ In fact, Fred and Velma Robison selected their unit at Tule Lake *because* it had already been farmed by incarcerated from Tule Lake.¹²⁸ Reclamation experts noted that it generally took two or three years before the land could be farmed profitably. But homesteaders on sites previously farmed by Japanese American incarcerated could immediately begin farming or lease out their land to be farmed—instead of spending time and/or money clearing it—and turn their attention to building homes. To “prove up,” or get the title to the property, a homesteader had to build a dwelling and cultivate at least half of the acreage successfully within two years of acquiring the land, so this gave them a significant leg up in the process.¹²⁹

¹²⁶ Cannon, *Reopening the Frontier*, 45.

¹²⁷ Cannon, *Reopening the Frontier*, 66.

¹²⁸ Cannon, *Reopening the Frontier*, 56.

¹²⁹ Cannon, *Reopening the Frontier*, 61.

The BOR sold the barracks off a dollar apiece and however much it cost to move the barracks to the individual's homestead. Those barracks, once home to three families each, have been whitewashed and repainted. They still litter the landscape as individual homes if you know to look for them.

Today, much of the land around Heart Mountain is privately owned by individuals. Another 13,000 acres, including the mountain, are owned by the Nature Conservancy, a non-profit.¹³⁰ In 2007, 124 acres owned by the Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation were declared a National Historic Landmark. The foundation has since been gifted or has purchased additional land, including a root cellar from the original site. The Bureau of Reclamation owns a mere 71 acres.

This transition of Indigenous land into public land into private property might seem at first glimpse to mark the success of settler colonialism. And yet Bulltail's words in *Return to Heart Mountain* make evident its failure. At one point in the film, he says, "My people are survivors."¹³¹ The visuals move seamlessly between the fields and rivers and mountains of Crow Agency, Montana, and Heart Mountain, Wyoming, showing that this whole area is home for him and indicating the failure of the settler state to cut him off from his homeland. The sign for Crow Agency also lists the Apsáalooke name, Baaxuwaaashe. Bulltail worked relentlessly over the course of his life to restore Apsáalooke presence at Heart Mountain. He organized ceremonies at Foretop's Father for Apsáalooke and allies interested in learning about Apsáalooke history on the site. The

¹³⁰ "Heart Mountain Ranch," *The Nature Conservancy in Wyoming*, accessed July 4, 2021, <https://www.nature.org/en-us/get-involved/how-to-help/places-we-protect/heart-mountain-ranch/>.

¹³¹ Preston Randolph, *Return to Foretop's Father* | PBS (Cactus Pro Films), accessed February 11, 2021, <https://www.pbs.org/show/return-foretops-father/>.

film *Return to Foretop's Father* emerged out of his work. In summer 2021, the ceremony will go on, even though Bulltail passed away this past year.

Ten years after my first trip to Heart Mountain, the local Cody and Powell community and the former incarcerated and their descendants finished building a museum that looks like barracks, writing the history of our incarceration back into the landscape. Working for the Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation for two years, though, I learned that the marks of my family's incarceration are written all over the landscape in this area if you know where to look. For better or worse, they are written into the irrigation canals, the patchwork of lush green fields. These exist in part because of the work of incarcerated—incarcerated like my great-grandfather.

Initially, they received at best begrudging credit for their work, if they did at all. In 1979, Beryl Gail Churchill wrote, "Japanese evacuees did some work on the canals and laterals, but U.S. government forces working on the project from 1942 through 1945 were practically nil." In the next sentence, she used passive voice to erase them entirely: "Some land on the Heart Mountain Division was irrigated during the war."¹³²

More recently, the incarcerated's work in agriculture has recently more positive recognition from local settlers. When Sakauye, one of the leaders of the Heart Mountain agricultural program, returned to Heart Mountain, he met a woman in Cody who approached him to tell him, "You fellows did a wonderful thing here and opened our eyes as to what we can grow here."¹³³

¹³² Churchill, *Dams, Ditches, and Water*, 86-88.

¹³³ Eiichi Edward Sakauye, *Interview II, Segment 8*, interview by Wendy Hanamura, May 15, 2005, *Densho Digital Repository*, <https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-densho-1005-3-8/?tableleft=segments>.

During my time working for the foundation, a local family donated back a root cellar. Buried under the land, the root cellar was built by incarcerated and was used to store vegetables for the incarcerated's meals over the winter. Though it's falling apart now, it's big enough to hold a truck. The beams are still there. The little vents that brought fresh air into the cellar still peer out onto the landscape by the edge of the highway if you know where to look for them. The foundation is currently working to stabilize and restore the root cellar to its former condition so that it might be used for historical interpretation. Literally buried, that history is still there.

But there is still a ways to go. While Japanese Americans have a museum at Heart Mountain, Apsáalooke are still fighting to vacate a 1990s judgment in Wyoming federal courts that held that their treaty-protected hunting rights were extinguished when Wyoming became a state.¹³⁴ The Supreme Court upheld Apsáalooke hunting rights in 2019, but the judgment still remains on the books. What does it mean if we can see Japanese American history on the land, but we can't see Apsáalooke presence?

¹³⁴ “CROW TRIBE SEEKS TO VACATE OUTDATED HUNTING RIGHTS JUDGMENT.” Native American Rights Fund, January 27, 2021, https://www.narf.org/vacate_repsis/.

Chapter 4

“Something of a Problem”:

Archival Elimination, Racial Classification, and Indigenous Identity

Only Henry Ozawa could tell us why he left the logging camp in Rexburg, Idaho, that day in May 1943.¹ Still, his sheer determination to leave reverberates across the pages and halls and silences of even settler archives. He was in his early twenties when he was forcibly removed from Alaska, sent first to Puyallup Assembly Center, then on to Minidoka. In late September 1942, he left the concentration camp in Idaho through a series of temporary leave assignments. He had been working at the logging camp owned by E. L. Keppner on a seasonal leave permit since December. Six months later, he was determined not to spend one more night there. He left the camp on May 24, 1943 and was now, in Keppner’s words, in Rexburg “doing nothing so near as I know.”²

It began in late February when “I met him on the road walking out with his full pack. Upon questioning him on the matter he informed me that he was just leaving and did not desire to return. I finally got him straightened out, without ever having found his reasons for leaving, and he returned to camp.”³ This was Ozawa’s first attempt, but he tried again “once or twice” after that. That winter, while the logging operation was forced to stop due to snow, the men worked elsewhere until work could resume. Ozawa went to

¹ While most of the chapters begin with an anecdote relating to my family’s experiences, this chapter is not about me and does not relate to my experience, so breaks away from this tendency to instead center the story of Henry Ozawa.

² E.L. Keppner, Rexburg Abstract Company, to W.W. Palmer, War Relocation Authority Officer, May 25, 1943 (Keppner to W.W. Palmer, May 25, 1943); Henry Ozawa; Evacuee Case Files (ECF), Entry 22 (E22); War Relocation Authority (WRA), Record Group 210 (RG210); NARA-DC.

³ Keppner to Palmer, May 25, 1943.

work for a nearby farmer. In April, an employee of Keppner's went to take Ozawa back to the logging camp. Ozawa was no longer there. He was working on another farm in Sugar City, Idaho. Keppner's employee went to Sugar City and ordered Ozawa to return. Ozawa did not. On May 21, Keppner called up Ozawa's employer and informed him that Ozawa "had to be returned to the logging camp without further delay." The employer dropped Ozawa off at the logging camp on May 24. "The boy immediately packed up all of his belongings and left saying that he positively would not return," Keppner wrote.⁴ Now worried Ozawa's propensity for walking away would rub off on his other workers, Keppner urged the War Relocation Authority (WRA) "for the good moral effect it will have on other evacuees who are working in this district" to "have the man returned to his center."⁵

Why was Ozawa so determined to leave? Where was he going? What we do not know here is just as—if not more—significant than what we do know. How do I do justice to Ozawa when his own voice is painfully absent from settler archives? How do we hold the archives responsible for their silences and suppressions when we don't even know what they might be?

Overview

I begin with the story of Henry Ozawa because his is the story that guided me through the archives. These individuals and families have powerful stories and each of them is important in its own right. While a single chapter cannot hope to adequately

⁴ Keppner to Palmer, May 25, 1943.

⁵ Keppner to Palmer, May 25, 1943.

express this, my goal is that the reader will begin to understand the breadth of these stories.

Henry Ozawa was one of at least 55 incarcerated individuals with Alaska Native ancestry swept up in the forced removal of Japanese Americans during World War II. Very little has been written about these individuals. Mixed Alaska Native and Japanese American incarcerated individuals are at the nexus of two underexamined demographics in Japanese American incarceration history: those removed from Alaska, and those of mixed heritage. In 1983, Claus-M. Naske wrote an article about incarcerated individuals from Alaska that briefly discussed mixed Japanese and Alaska Native individuals. In 1986, Paul R. Spickard talked about some individuals with Alaska Native ancestry in an article about mixed incarcerated individuals. Aside from these two examples, very little has been published on them.

They make up a small fraction of the 120,000 people who were removed and incarcerated, but the fact that they were racialized as both Asian “enemy alien” and Indian “ward” meant that they experienced the incarceration in distinct ways from other Japanese Americans and even other mixed incarcerated individuals. In this chapter, I consider the stories of these 55 incarcerated individuals to show how settler archives further processes of Native elimination through their recordkeeping about Indigenous people, which I call archival elimination. I suggest that the WRA and other agencies used racial classification to erase these individuals’ nation-specific Indigenous identities and to enforce its ability to define and manage racialized bodies. I describe how a relational methodology helps challenge archival elimination.

I examine how racial formation occurred in this setting as a struggle between government officials who would impose racial classifications upon these incarcerated bodies and the incarcerated's own assertions of their identities. I posit that racial classification serves as a way to eliminate Indigenous nationhood in the archives by reducing Indigenous nationhood to an issue of race, as Jodi Byrd and Aileen Moreton-Robinson have shown. In perpetuating these logics of race, settler archives attempt to eliminate Indigenous sovereignty.

Of course, American Indians have been racialized by the settler state: I show that Alaska Native incarcerated were treated with a pretense of paternalistic care by white settlers that, rather than advocate for these individuals' autonomy, attempted to maintain governmental oversight and discipline their bodies into the role of alien labor. I hold that constructions of moveability often became proxies for the ways these agencies were racially classifying these individuals. Laura Fugikawa uses the resettlement of Japanese Americans post-World War II and the American Indian relocation policies of the 1950s to consider how the U.S. used the idea of containment to racially construct Japanese Americans and American Indians "as moveable and as assimilable only through relocation."⁶ Federal employees from different agencies made decisions about who was to be removed from Alaska and who would remain, the camps they were sent to, when they would leave, where they would go after they left, when they would be permitted to return home, and the extent to which the government would facilitate those returns.

⁶ Laura Sachiko Fugikawa, "Domestic Containment: Japanese Americans, Native Americans and the Cultural Politics of Relocation," 2011, 11.

Racial classification has fundamentally shaped how American Indians and Alaska Natives have been treated, and race as a mode of analysis cannot entirely account for American Indian experiences of colonization. I draw attention to the traces of Indigenous resistance and unruliness to racial classification within the archives to analyze how Alaska Native incarceratedees appropriated and redefined racial classifications to advocate for their needs and their families, and how they insisted on holding Indigenous identities alongside racial ones. I analyze the letters of three incarceratedees to argue that Indigenous incarceratedees used race to advance their own priorities as Indigenous people: returning to their homelands and maintaining kinship, survivance, and sovereignty in the face of their removal.⁷

In particular, I suggest that we can read against the archive to analyze not only incarceratedees' words but also their behaviors and their movements. Because of the way moveability figured into racial formation during this time, their mobility—the movements and behaviors they chose for themselves—can illuminate how they were constructing identity both in racial terms and in terms of Indigenous political sovereignty. In settler archives that often seem designed to exclude their voices, the traces of their movements behind the words of the archives tell us much about how they navigated settler agencies and structures of racial classification.

⁷ Gerald Vizenor, *Manifest Manners: Narratives on Postindian Survivance*, 1st edition (Lincoln, Neb.: Bison Books, 1999).

Archival Elimination

There was once a whole folder on Henry Ozawa in the Western Defense Command records. He was the only one; there was no similar record for the other 54 as far as I can tell. I know about the folder on Henry Ozawa because there is a cross-reference to that file in another folder. But that file is no longer in the location it refers to. According to the archivist I spoke with, this likely means that the folder was removed before it was even given to the national archives, back when army personnel were deciding how and where to file each document.⁸ The folder was originally filed under “Personnel.” Henry Ozawa did not work for the federal government, so it is possible that someone saw that folder and moved it elsewhere—but it is equally possible that someone decided it was not significant and got rid of it. We may never know which it was. But that folder on Henry Ozawa is no longer there.

This is just one of many examples of how the stories of these 55 individuals were erased or hidden within archival records. Patrick Wolfe wrote that “elimination is an organizing principal of settler-colonial society rather than a one-off (and superseded) occurrence.”⁹ He explained that elimination could take many forms, one of which is genocide, but eliminatory tactics can also include “officially encouraged miscegenation, the breaking-down of native title into alienable individual freeholds, native citizenship, child abduction, religious conversation, resocialization in total institutions such as

⁸ Conversation with Eric Van Slander, at the National Archives in College Park, MD, on December 31, 2019.

⁹ Wolfe, Patrick. “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native.” *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006): 388. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623520601056240>.

missions or boarding schools, and a whole range of cognate biocultural assimilations.”¹⁰

In keeping with that, I consider how settler archives further logics of Indigenous elimination within settler society. In particular, I hold that settler archives prioritized separation and categorization over relationality in Japanese American incarceration such that they rendered Indigenous histories piecemeal and illegible within those archives.

In the introduction, I discuss my understanding of a relational methodology. I tell the story of how I learned that Henry Ozawa was related to his half-brother Paul Henry Ozawa, through a few documents mistakenly placed in Henry’s folder. I only realized that they were different people because Henry was single as far as I could tell, and Paul had a wife and two kids. Paul was also born five years before Henry, although Henry himself had conflicting birthdates. Was Paul another name Henry had gone by? Was it possible that Henry had a wife and kids I did not know about? Or was Paul completely unrelated to Henry—was it just a random clerical error? In time, I realized these documents belonged to a completely different individual: Paul Ozawa, his elder half-brother on his mother’s side. I knew Henry had one brother, Joseph, from the roster of Minidoka incarceratedees. But Paul wasn’t mentioned there or in Henry’s individual record. The only reason I learned about their relationship—and Paul’s existence—was because documents from his case were placed in his brother’s folder. This is both proof of the potential of a relational methodology in settler archives and also of the harms of archival elimination: the erasure of one Indigenous relationship (Henry’s relationship with his brother) also led to the erasure of Henry’s relationship with his two young nephews and

¹⁰ Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism.” 388.

his sister-in-law. The elimination of Indigenous relationships as a way of undermining Indigenous survivance is evident not just in the forced removal of Indigenous children to boarding schools; the elimination of those relationships within archives constitutes another form of archival elimination.

These relationships are rendered even more piecemeal due to the lack of a comprehensive list of Alaska Native incarcerated. The earliest list created was assembled by J. J. McGovern, the Puyallup Assembly Center Manager, on August 14, 1942, and included 28 names. He sent this list to Major Herman P. Goebel, Jr., who had been tasked with drafting the mixed-marriage policy. Focused on creating a policy that would allow families to leave Puyallup and “secure employment outside of the Western Defense Command area,” Goebel saw men as the lynchpins in the formation of racial identity in families.¹¹ The list, similarly concerned primarily with men, includes the names of only two women and three minors. The list exemplifies how certain parts of the incarceration are channeled into unexpected places in the archives. As far as I know, there is no copy of this list in the War Relocation Authority records. The copy I found is located in the Western Defense Command records in another NARA facility in College Park, Maryland. At least one of the names had not been included in any WRA records on Alaska Native incarcerated I had found up to that point, showing how archives can erase the traces of whole people through their categorizations. William Kawata, 10 years old, had been separated from both his parents and was living with the Miyagawa family at

¹¹ Herman P. Goebel, Jr., Major, to Manager, Puyallup Assembly Center, August 24, 1942 (Goebel to Puyallup Manager); Mixed Marriage Policy; Unclassified General Correspondence, Entry A137 (EA137); Western Defense Command, Record Group 499 (RG499); National Archives, College Park (NACP).

Puyallup. The omission or at least difficulty in tracking down this list in WRA records illustrates how archival processes for categorizing documents could further impede research on certain individuals, in particular a relatively small group of people who were already at extreme risk for marginalization both in Japanese American incarceration history and in American history more broadly.

In October 1942, Carl Sandoz, a case worker at Minidoka, compiled a more comprehensive list of 41 incarcerated with Alaska Native ancestry at Minidoka to help get these individuals and families out of camp. His list excluded at least 12 names of Alaska Native incarcerated—that I know of. As a Minidoka employee, he did not concern himself with those who had already left Minidoka, been sent to other camps, or had been released before their transfer from Puyallup to Minidoka. Paul Henry Ozawa had left Puyallup after 6 days in the camp on seasonal leave in Montana with his wife, Ivy, a Haida woman. The family never spent time at Minidoka but Minidoka was still the camp to which they had been assigned, according to their case file.

Harvey Shirai, Sr., was included on this list but his wife, Minnie, and their four children, Harvey, James, Rachel, and Gerald were not. Gerald Shirai, their infant son, had been born earlier that year. He died on May 22, 1942. Minnie, who was Tsimshian, had been removed to a tuberculosis sanatorium less than a month after she arrived at Puyallup, four days after her infant, Gerald, died. Gerald was mentioned nowhere in the family's WRA files. The only reason I was able to connect him to the Shirai family is that Ancestry.com listed Minnie and Harvey on a digitized summary of his death certificate. The cause of death was not listed. Nor was Gerald's death certificate included in the

microfilms of the death records for Puyallup. His existence both in his family and in Japanese American incarceration had been entirely erased by WRA recordkeeping.

In the upheaval of the move from Puyallup to the longterm camps, Harvey, Jr., James and Rachel were separated from their father and sent to Manzanar Children's Village. Since they were not at Minidoka, they were beyond the scope of Sandoz's list too. Created in October 1942, the list necessarily excluded anyone born in camp after that date. The list was not interested for posterity; it was created to navigate bureaucracy. Anyone who fell beyond the scope of that assignment was not of interest, and thus erased.

It was not uncommon for the stories of women to be erased. The gender and race dynamics of how Japanese American incarceration was applied in Alaska meant that several Alaska Native wives accompanied their even if they had no Japanese blood, even if they could have been exempted from the incarceration. Amelia Kito, Minnie Shirai, Ivy Inez Cogo Ozawa are just a few of the women who accompanied their husbands and children to camp as "voluntary evacuees." Despite the label, this cannot have felt like much of a choice to them. They were dependent financially on their husbands. Amelia, whose husband had been arrested after Pearl Harbor, had been left to singlehandedly parent her young children on only welfare. Because they were "voluntary," they sometimes—like Ivy—did not have WRA files, making their movements that much harder to trace.

These were the most overt forms of archival elimination, but there were more subtle ways in which the siloing of records from different periods of the incarceration

impede the analysis of these cases. The WRA and the Census, both hyper-focused on racial classification, used checkboxes, forms, and letters to racially classify these individuals that erased the specifics of their Indigenous identities. They reduced racial classification to short acronyms and numbers so that they would fit into a box. But this did not mean that their systems of racial classification were coherent or even consistent. The problem for these race-making agencies was that people do not always behave in ways that are predictable.

Racial Classification and the Incongruencies of Race

Henry Ozawa had never met his Tlingit mother or his Japanese father. His mother, Francis Sumdum, died of tuberculosis shortly after giving birth to Henry. Henry was the youngest of her three children: Paul, the oldest, was born in 1915; Joseph was born three years after Paul. After Francis's death, Henry's father, Henry Ozawa Sr., abandoned his three sons, and Paul, Joseph, and Henry were raised by the matrons at Bethel Beach Home in Juneau, AK. Growing up, the brothers had little to no exposure to the Japanese American community in Alaska. This does not give us much information about how Henry Ozawa might have understood and constructed his identity—but still it tells us more than census, WRA, and draft records do.

As Aileen Moreton-Robinson puts it, “Race was not invented by Indigenous peoples and we are not reducible to the ways it is used to confer particular identities on us. ... However, we would be naive to think our social and cultural identities are beyond

racialized discourse.”¹² Racialization is a process of meaning-making through the “signs” of race.¹³ It is indicated primarily through skin color, but “racial difference is not dependent on visual observation alone.”¹⁴ As will become evident in this chapter, other associations—someone’s name, the policies that target them as a demographic, their gender, among other things, also shape our understandings of someone’s race.¹⁵

Michael Omi and Howard Winant depict racialization as two processes: “The social identities of marginalized and subordinate groups ... are both imposed from above by dominant social groups and/or state institutions, and constituted from below by these groups themselves as expressions of self-identification and resistance to dominant forms of categorization.”¹⁶

To fully detangle that which is imposed in race from that which is resistant is impossible, but by detangling our analysis of these processes, we can begin to understand how power asserts itself against certain people through racial classification. In fact, such an endeavor is crucial to understanding the experiences of mixed-Alaska Native and Japanese American individuals in the camps because of how their “race” was open to

¹² Aileen Moreton-Robinson, “Race Matters: The ‘Aborigine’ as a White Possession,” ed. Robert Warrior, *The World of Indigenous North America*, 2013, 470.

¹³ I view racialization as subject to the processes of encoding and decoding meaning through matrices of power as described by Stuart Hall. Race is “a concept that signifies and symbolizes” meaning onto bodies; as such it makes sense that race would be created through the encoding and decoding of different meanings into its signifiers. See Stuart Hall, “Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse,” in *Essential Essays, Volume 1: Foundations of Cultural Studies*, ed. David Morley (Durham, NC: Duke University Press Books, 2019), 347–62.

¹⁴ Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, 3rd edition (New York: Routledge, 2014), 111.

¹⁵ Other common associations include the place where someone grows up and lives or the dialects they speak. Those who phenotypically have characteristics associated with a certain race likely encounter racialization and racism more overtly in their day to day lives. But there are a variety of ways of experiencing racialization, and though different they should still be recognized.

¹⁶ Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation*, 106.

interpretation at every turn. I refer to race to the extent that it is dictated by the U.S. government and other hegemonic forces including the market and society as “racial classification.” While there is a tendency to talk about race in terms of “identity,” a person’s identity is internal to the self and cannot be defined by the state or any hegemonic entity. Racial classifications are imposed to discipline an individual’s body into certain roles, and the ways those classifications are deployed at times create common experiences that lead to new identity formation, but the classifications themselves are not sufficient for that purpose. I use “racial classification” to refer to processes of imposing and encoding racial meaning and value onto bodies.¹⁷ Classification is meant to evoke both “scientific” processes of classifying people and individuals and the archives’ own impetus to classify different files under different subject settings. I also wish to emphasize the constructedness of these classifications—they do not exist, they are created and recreated as they are reapplied. Here, I use racial classification to refer specifically to the process of how settler colonialism diminishes Indigenous political struggles into an issue of race.¹⁸

I argue that the bodies of mixed Alaska Native and Japanese American incarceratedees unsettled the racial logics of the settler state and reveal the incoherences of these logics through the paradoxical rigidity with which they were imposed and the inconsistency with which they were applied at different points in individuals’ lives and among different individuals of similar backgrounds. Federal employees had racialized Henry Ozawa and other Alaska Native incarceratedees at numerous points in their lives—and

¹⁷ Hall, “Encoding and Decoding.”

¹⁸ Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation*, 109.

had reached drastically different conclusions throughout. In the 1930 census, Thomas J. S. Sheam initially classified Henry Ozawa as “Jap” but later crossed it out and wrote in “Mxd” (Mixed) instead. Ten years later, in 1940, Lilly F. Manca classified him as “Ind.” These classifications were left entirely up to the discretion of the individual enumerator collecting the census data. While Ozawa was never officially recorded as Japanese, this was not always the case. Three brothers by the name of Foode were “Jp” (or Japanese) in 1920, “Mxd” in 1930, and back to “Jp” in 1940. “Mxd” was not in fact one of the approved abbreviations for the “color/race” category, but it was used repeatedly.¹⁹ Enumerators crossed out and wrote over answers they later decided to be incorrect on numerous occasions in these individuals’ census records. Moreover, an enumerator could “enter...the correct answer as nearly as you can ascertain it” if they thought a statement was false. The ways the U.S. imposed race—far from being fixed—changed over time and through individuals’ interpretations.

These designations erased Indigenous identities in several ways: the most overt of these was by listing an Alaska Native person as Japanese. But even a “Mxd.” or “Ind.” does not tell us about the Alaska Native nation to which an individual belonged. This is another form of archival elimination that reduced Indigeneity to an issue of race.

¹⁹ Census instructions specified that mixed individuals were supposed to be interpreted according to the non-white parent’s race. If there were no white parents, the individual was supposed to be listed according to the father’s race, except that “Negro-Indian should be reported as Negro,” according to the 1940 “Instructions to Enumerators.” Thus, anyone who was listed according to their mother’s race was also technically incorrect. Because the vast majority of Japanese immigrants to Alaska were men, this essentially meant that the vast majority should have been interpreted as Japanese. Ancestry.com interpreted this to mean “Mexican” but I have not found any evidence to support that interpretation, and given that the individuals were often “Mixed” and were not Mexican, find this to be more plausible. “Instructions to Enumerators: Population and Agriculture 1940” (U. S. Department Of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1940), <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/programs-surveys/decennial/technical-documentation/questionnaires/1940instructions.pdf>.

Two years after the 1940 census, S. Kusumi, an interviewer for the WRA, was also tasked with racially classifying Henry Ozawa. He recorded Ozawa's race as $\frac{1}{2}$ Japanese and $\frac{1}{2}$ Other, with Indian written on the dotted line. This fails to acknowledge the complex ways in which an individual might understand and engage with his ancestry. And his record was actually more accurate than some: Kusumi also completed George Miyasato's form. Miyasato was Tlingit on his mother's side, but Kusumi only checked the box for Japanese. C. Matsumoto classified George and Costia Yoshida as "Japanese" and "Other (Russian)." And whoever completed Ivy Inez Cogo Ozawa's form filled it out too quickly—she was not Japanese at all but was still recorded as "Japanese" on her own individual record, even though she was listed as "Alaskan Indian" on her husband's. The WRA would continue to racially classify these individuals—in their individual records, their family "face sheets," and their medical records.

Though these classifications were completely inconsistent, they were imposed in ways that rigidly preserved the authority of the state to dictate racial classification and attempted to reduce identity construction to a mathematical equation. Despite their best efforts, these individuals' case files prove the futility of such an endeavor. Historically, biological formulations of race have tended to treat race as static and unchangeable, but these individuals' stories suggest that racial classification was anything but. Clearly, these classifications say very little about how the individuals themselves understood race and how it factored into their own constructions of their identities, but on top of that these records could tell vastly different stories about one individual's race or about different individuals of the same "race" depending on who wrote them or when. As such, these

individuals embodied the limitations of the state to actually enforce its own criteria for racial classification and challenge the state's preconceptions around the coherence of race through their very existence.

As these examples indicate, racial classification often privileges one "race" over another, though it may change which one it privileges over time. Even a "mixed" label did this: it foregrounded the hybridity of a person's race rather than those identities that coexist with one another. Unlike racial classifications, identities are plural—they can hold multiple, overlapping and inseparable senses of self that the individual negotiates every day that crosses axes of race, class, gender, sexuality, and more as Kimberley Crenshaw has shown. This is how someone can be both Japanese American and Asian American, American Indian and Tlingit, Japanese American and Tlingit—and that doesn't even begin to cover how gender, sexual, class, and disability figure into identities. Racial classification cannot capture the multiplicity of identity formation—even when, as in the case of the census takers who used the made-up "Mx" or "Mxd" descriptor, the people attempted to make these classifications encompass these nuances. Racial classification prioritizes bureaucratic legibility—the ability to turn someone's "race" into an abbreviation that can fit into a box and a prescribed list—over nuance. The refusal to accept a singular identity resists the idea that racial classifications can in fact help us to understand people and that different parts of an identity can be separated neatly one from the other. Of course, individuals may bring forward one part of their identity at any given time, but this does not erase or negate the existence of the other parts.

General John L. Dewitt of the Western Defense Command (WDC) and Lieutenant General Simon Bolivar Buckner, Jr. of the Alaska Defense Command (ADC) swept aside the nuances of individuals' identities in using their Japaneseness to decide how much of a "threat" they posed to national security. By late March, Dewitt had committed to a course of forced removal and incarceration of people of Japanese ancestry on the West Coast. On March 30, he refined the scope of who was subject to restriction within the military areas—giving exemptions to the families of German and Italian servicemen among others—but made no mention of people of mixed ancestry. In Alaska, Buckner attempted to define Japaneseness through a complex matrix consisting of the individual's fraction of Japanese ancestry, their gender, and their age. Dewitt would not create the mixed-marriage policy until July of that year, making Buckner's the first policy on how mixed Japanese Americans should be treated. He proclaimed, "All persons being of Japanese race of greater than half blood and all males of the Japanese race over sixteen years of age of half blood shall be excluded from such military area."²⁰

Buckner's files in the ADC say nothing about his role in Japanese American incarceration or how he formed decisions about how to implement the removal. But the files do reveal that Buckner, the son of a Confederate general, harbored racist ideas of Japanese people and was concerned about racial mixing in Alaska. He wrote to Dewitt, "I am firmly convinced that the only way to solve the Japanese problem is to Christianize the Japs and the only way of successfully Christianizing them is to give them a Christian

²⁰ Jacobus TenBroek, Edward Norton Barnhart, and Floyd W. Matson, *Prejudice, War, and the Constitution* (University of California Press, 1954), 134-135. See also, Public Proclamation No. 1, April 7, 1942. Office of the Commanding General; Entry 40; RG210; NARA-DC.

burial.”²¹ He later repeated the sentiment in a draft of a message to the U.S. Military Academy on its 141st anniversary and called for “the extermination of slant-eyed vermin.”²² Someone crossed out that part of the message. The language of “vermin” evokes how he saw Japanese immigrants as some sort of invasive species that needed to be removed from Alaska altogether—and permanently, as suggested by the word “extermination.”

By late June 1942—after Japanese Americans in Alaska had been removed from the territory, but more than two years before they would be permitted to return to Alaska—Buckner also quite possibly became aware that Japanese Americans posed no threat to national security. On June 23, 1942, Curtis B. Munson sent Buckner a letter referencing a meeting they had had recently in Anchorage. In November 1941, Munson had authored a report on Japanese American communities on the West Coast in which he found that “There is no Japanese ‘problem’ on the Coast. There will be no armed uprising of Japanese.”²³ While the White House buried the report during the war, it is possible that Munson discussed his findings with Buckner during his visit. In his letter to Buckner, Munson thanked Buckner for his “calm, good humor under trying circumstances, not omitting being pestered by myself when you were so busy and faced so many responsibilities.”²⁴ While he did not mention what he was “pestering” Buckner about,

²¹ Simon Bolivar Buckner, Jr., Alaska Defense Command (Buckner), to John L. Dewitt, Commanding General, Western Defense Command (Dewitt), February 10, 1943 (Buckner to Dewitt); Box 2; Miscellaneous Correspondence of General Buckner, Entry P2 (EP2); Records of U.S. Army Forces in Alaska, Record Group 547 (RG547); National Archives at College Park (NARA-CP).

²² Buckner to Dewitt, undated; Box 1; Official Correspondence of Commanding General Simon B. Buckner, Entry P1 (EP1); RG547; NARA-CP.

²³ Weglyn, Michi.

²⁴ Curtis B. Munson, Special Assistant to the Secretary of Commerce, to Buckner, June 23, 1942; Box 1; EP1; RG547; NACP.

Buckner's reply suggests that it might have been about Japanese Americans. He wrote, "While the situation insofar as the Japanese is concerned is well in hand, nevertheless I shall never be satisfied so long as any of them are on Alaskan soil ... I shall be very happy when we have wiped them out to the last man."²⁵

Buckner expressed opposition to miscegenation more generally. When he was offered Black troops to assist in the war effort in Alaska, Buckner turned down the offer. He explained to Dewitt, "The presence of negroes in Alaska will result in a serious and lasting race problem, since they will interbreed with the Indians and many of them will probably settle here."²⁶ While he does not refer to Japanese immigrants specifically, mixed Japanese American and Alaska Native families may have heightened his fears of Black and Alaska Native "interbreeding."

Buckner clearly used his position to advance his personal understandings of race. On April 7, 1942, Buckner issued Public Proclamation No. 1 which defined the terms of the exclusion of people of Japanese ancestry from Alaska. Buckner's proclamation may have seemed transparent, but it soon became clear it was anything but. Alaska Native and Japanese American families challenged notions of the rigidity of race through their bodies and their families.

Paul Ozawa, Henry's oldest brother, was not Japanese at all. He did not know who his father was. "I just know that he was an Indian too," he said.²⁷ He had been

²⁵ Buckner to Munson, June 23, 1942; Box 1; EP1; RG 547; NACP.

²⁶ Buckner to Dewitt, February 4, 1942; Box 1; EP2; RG 547; NACP.

²⁷ Ozawa, Paul. #38. Ozawa, Paul. Interview by Charles Kikuchi, April 10, 1944. Japanese American Evacuation and Resettlement Study. Bancroft Library.
<https://oac.cdlib.org/ark:/28722/bk0013c5871/?brand=oac4>, 5.

adopted by Henry Ozawa, Sr., as an infant and given the Ozawa surname. He had been abandoned by Ozawa at a young age and spent most of his childhood in an orphanage or with his mother's family. He did not have a birth certificate though, and as such could not prove his ancestry. Would they take him at his word? Or would he have to leave too? That question remained unanswered up until 24 hours before the ship left—when he and his family were abruptly notified that he would have to leave, in yet another assertion of the government's ability to impose a certain racial classification that did not in fact exist even according to its own understandings of racial classification.

The correspondence between the governor's office and Buckner attempting to iron out the wrinkles in his Alaska mixed-race policy reveals the impossibility of ever creating a totally coherent policy on the matter. As Buckner decided who to remove and who exempt from the exclusion orders, he was constructing processes of racial classification. These documents demonstrate how governmental policy is made through the minutiae of telegrams, letters, memos, and meetings and not just in public proclamations.

Gender was instrumental in shaping Buckner's understanding of race. The fact that Amelia Kito, Minnie Shirai and their families were subject to the removal at all was due to imposed settler colonial gender roles. The ADC explicitly exempted "Japanese women legally married to Eskimo or Indian, as well as white men," while three Alaska Native women, Amelia Kito, Minnie Shirai, and Ivy Cogo Ozawa, were only given the option to be separated from their spouses.²⁸ Jennifer Ann Ho has shown that this was

²⁸ Untitled, ca. April 14, 1942. Alaska State Archives.
<https://vilda.alaska.edu/digital/collection/cdmg41/id/880/>.

based on assumptions about how gender defines race—that the husband was more likely to determine the racial makeup of the house over all, and therefore his race mattered more than his wife’s for their family’s overall racial classification.²⁹ Buckner also saw men as more dangerous—as seen by his inclusion in the forced removal of mixed men ages 16 and up—and used these gendered logics to refuse to grant exceptions for them. The ways gender was deployed to subject Alaska Native women and their husbands to the exclusion order ignores how Indigenous women married to men with Japanese ancestry shaped the cultures and traditions of their households—implicitly casting them as less Indigenous than men and denying their role in the survivance of Indigenous people. The loss of the family’s primary breadwinner presented a severe hardship for them and their young children and as such the refusal to grant their husbands leniency meant that the women and children were more likely to accompany their husband/father into camp.

Amelia Kito, Minnie Shirai, Ivy Inez Cogo Ozawa are just a few of the women who prioritized their relationships and accompanied their husbands to camp. Kito had a Japanese father and an Alaska Native mother but as a woman could have been exempted from the Alaska forced removal, although it is unclear if her children would have been exempted as well. Minnie Shirai and Ivy Ozawa were both Alaska Native with no Japanese ancestry. While the WRA called them “voluntary evacuees,” this cannot have felt like much of a choice to them. Whether they decided to go with their families to camp or they decided to stay in Alaska, there was no choice that avoided the severance of important relationships, either with their families or with their homelands. Because they

²⁹ Jennifer Ann Ho, *Racial Ambiguity in Asian American Culture*, None Edition (New Brunswick, New Jersey ; London: Rutgers University Press, 2015).

were “voluntary,” they sometimes—as in the case of Ivy Ozawa—did not have WRA files, making their experiences that much harder to trace. Again, this reveals the priorities of settler archives—of men over women, of forced vs. coerced.

On April 8, Leonard C. Allen of the Indian office in Ketchikan inquired with the governor’s office—at Harvey Shirai’s behest—whether there were plans to care for Minnie and the children while he was gone since he was subject to the order but they were not. Harvey was mixed Japanese American and Tsimshian and had been ordered to leave by the army. Minnie, who was Tsimshian, had tuberculosis and was entirely dependent on Harvey to care for her and their four young children all under the age of five. Deputy governor E. L. Bartlett wrote to Buckner a day later that he “WISH[ED] TO PRESENT TYPICAL CASE” of a “MAN HALF JAPANESE HALF ALASKA INDIAN.” He specifically wanted to know whether Minnie Shirai would be allowed to accompany her husband. He suggested that this case would “PROBABLY WOULD BE DUPLICATED [IN] MANY OTHER PLACES[.]” Buckner was unsympathetic. As Bartlett later reported to Wrangell mayor Lew Williams, “IF INDIAN WOMAN IS MARRIED TO PERSON OF JAPANESE BLOOD ... SHE APPARENTLY MAY NOT ACCOMPANY HIM.”³⁰ Bartlett’s use of the word “APPARENTLY” seems to imply that he disagreed with Buckner’s decision.

Bartlett went further with the case of Amelia Kito and explicitly recommended that she be permitted to accompany her husband. Amelia Kito, mixed Tlingit and

³⁰ Bartlett, E.L. Letter to Lew Williams. “Governor Ernest Gruening’s File on Japanese Internment in Alaska during World War II, 1942-1945,” April 13, 1942. Alaska State Archives. <https://vilda.alaska.edu/digital/collection/cdmg41/id/880/>.

Japanese, was not technically subject to the exclusion orders but asked to accompany her husband, who was Japanese, and children (who had “more than half Japanese blood” and would have been subject to the removal at least in theory) because of the “EXTREME HARDSHIP ON HER IF LEFT HERE.” When her husband was arrested, she was pregnant and now had to singlehandedly care for three young children. The family was dependent on assistance from the Alaska department of public welfare. Would they have to go? Would she be allowed to accompany them? If they were left behind, what would they live on without her husband’s income? Did it matter that she had married a Japanese immigrant instead of an Alaska Native man, a Japanese American, or another mixed individual? At some point, Buckner changed this part of his policy because both Kito and Shirai accompanied their husbands to Puyallup.

Bartlett wanted to revise the exclusion policies for Minnie Shirai and Amelia Kito—but only to remove more people. And he framed this as care for these wives, the state of Alaska had a clear stake in their removal: both Minnie and Amelia would be dependent on public welfare if left in Alaska on their own. By removing them, Bartlett prevented some of the fracturing of the families that would occur during their removal and incarceration, but also ensured that any responsibility for them would fall upon the WRA—not the state of Alaska.

These gendered racial logics facilitated the separation of mixed Alaska Native and Japanese American families. Sisters could stay in Alaska; brothers 16 and up were sent away. Wives would remain with the minor children, while their husbands and older sons had to leave. Issei fathers were placed in Department of Justice internment camps far

away, unable to look after their children who were incarcerated with either one parent or none. The disintegration of the family structure is a common theme in Japanese American incarceration, but it took on even more ominous undertones for Alaska Native and Japanese American families because of how this separation chiseled away at kinship ties foundational to Indigenous identities.

The only time Bartlett would ask that someone be excluded outright from the incarceration was for a man who was caring and providing for his Indigenous parents. On April 24, Alice Stuart wrote to the Alaska Governor's office asking that an exception be made for Henry Hope, who had been adopted by an Alaska Native couple as a baby, had no relationship with his biological father growing up, and in 1942 was his adoptive parents' primary provider. He had "NEVER SEEN A JAP NOR DOES HE WISH TO."³¹ Bartlett and Gruening explicitly asked for an exception to be made for Hope: "WHERE LETTER OF EVACUATION COULD WELL BE WAIVED WITHOUT POSSIBILITY OF HARM TO COUNTRY."³² Gruening asked about Hope when he met with officials from the Western Defense Command in San Francisco in late April, but reported back to Bartlett that the "WDC REGRET[TED] THAT NO EXCEPTIONS CAN BE MADE."³³ Bartlett felt the injustice of this. In his reply to Stuart, he wrote, "In this case I very definitely wish an exception could have been made. ... This is one of the cruel things

³¹ E.L. Bartlett, Alaska Governor's Office, to Ernest Gruening, Governor of Alaska, April 27, 1942 (Bartlett to Gruening, April 27, 1942). Alaska State Archives.

<https://vilda.alaska.edu/digital/collection/cdmg41/id/880/>.

³² Bartlett to Gruening, April 27, 1942. Alaska State Archives.

<https://vilda.alaska.edu/digital/collection/cdmg41/id/880/>.

³³ Gruening to Bartlett, April 28, 1942. Alaska State Archives.

<https://vilda.alaska.edu/digital/collection/cdmg41/id/880/>.

about war which really hurt.”³⁴ Why did this one hurt more than that of Henry Ozawa or any of the other 54 incarcerated? In part, it had to do with how well Hope performed (at least in Alice Stuart’s recounting) the roles the settler state dictated for him. As a man, he was the head of a household, self-sufficient, and a caretaker for others. As a mixed individual raised by Alaska Native adoptive parents, he was entirely disconnected from his Japanese heritage.

The theme of individual exceptions recurs in how government officials and civilians talk about the Indian racial classification under Japanese American incarceration. Rarely did anyone actually seek to advocate for all 55 Alaska Native incarcerated as a group. Instead, they pushed forward seemingly arbitrary cases, while erasing the visibility of others. One of the key components that impacted whether these officials sought to make an exception or did not was a personal interest in that individual’s story by either local government officials or civilians and whether those stories managed to evoke interest in state and national government officials. For example, James Condit, a solicitor who had worked at the Sheldon Jackson School for ten years, wrote to the WRA on the Ozawa brothers’ behalf in December 1942. Condit’s letters prompted responses from Alaska Territorial Senator Anthony J. Dimond and WRA Director Dillon Myer, among others. By using exceptions and interest in individuals, these state actors could express a personal level of care for Alaska Native incarcerated, while also upholding the structures that enabled their removal. These exceptions were rarely implemented in any way that actually helped the incarcerated. Instead, in deploying

³⁴ Alice Stuart, General Delivery in Fairbanks, Alaska, to E.L. Bartlett, April 29, 1942. Alaska State Archives. <https://vilda.alaska.edu/digital/collection/cdmg41/id/880/>.

their authority to decide which exceptions to make and which rules they could not break, these government officials used bureaucracy and paperwork to shape the lives of these families for the next four years. They got to decide who was worthy of an exception and why and in making those decisions, they advanced certain understandings of the “right” way to be Indian. But as long as Buckner and the rest of the ADC enforced a “no exceptions” policy toward Japanese Americans in Alaska, these exceptions were bound to fail.

Despite their best efforts, Buckner and the ADC were also unable to regularly enforce their notions of race on mixed Alaska Native and Japanese Americans, or even on non-Native Japanese people in Alaska. Paul Ozawa expressed anger and frustration that he was removed while “a lot of the half-Japanese and even full-Japanese are up there yet and they didn’t get evacuated.”³⁵ He explained that, “They changed to Indian names ... The dirty skunks who evacuated me didn’t know what they were doing at all.” Paul asserted the limitations of state agents to actually interpret state racial logics consistently. He felt keenly the unfairness of being removed while others were not. The inventedness of race is evidence in the joint rigidity of the “no exceptions” policy and inability to enforce that policy.

While the ways government employees determined race might seem arbitrary, there was more to it than that. WRA and OIA employees used racial classification to advance their agencies’ interests and to discipline incarcerated bodies into the roles those employees envisioned them serving for the state.

³⁵ Ozawa, Paul. Interview by Charles Kikuchi, April 10, 1944, 5.

Paternalism, Control, and the Downsides of Visibility

Bartlett and Gruening's early interest in Henry Hope, Amelia Kito, and Harvey and Minnie Shirai falls under a pattern of paternalistic performances of concern and "care" by government employees toward Alaska Native incarcerated. This "care" distinguished how the WRA employees racially classified Alaska Natives from how they racialized Japanese Americans during the incarceration. In a list of "the persons who are from Alaska and who are residents of this Project," Carl Sandoz only included mixed families, excluding around 150 non-Native Japanese American incarcerated from Alaska who were also for the most part incarcerated at Minidoka. This erasure from a document entitled "List of Alaskan Evacuees at the Minidoka Project" advanced tropes of the Asian perpetual foreigner by suggesting that they could not be "from Alaska."³⁶ Sandoz justified his concern by noting "these people do not consider themselves persons of Japanese ancestry and in general are not accepted in the community here."³⁷ To Sandoz, their lack of affinity with their Japanese heritage made them more deserving of the WRA's attention.

As Laurel Shire explains, "Paternalism is white patriarchy wearing a sentimental mask to illustrate, once again, why white men should hold all the power: because they

³⁶ Of course, they could not be from Alaska in the sense that Indigenous people are from Alaska, but such an exclusion suggests they could not even be from Alaska in the sense of a settler from Alaska.

³⁷ Carl V. Sandoz, Counselor at Minidoka, to Dillon Myer, National Director of the War Relocation Authority, October 17, 1942; Entry 16; RG210; NARA-DC.

used it to care for all those ‘dependents’ incapable of caring for themselves.’³⁸ But as we’ll see shortly such “care” did not translate into a “better” experience of the incarceration in relation to non-Native Japanese American incarceratedees. This paternalism often aimed at getting Alaska Native incarceratedees out of camp—but did not make any real effort to keep families together, get them back to Alaska, give adequate treatment for health problems, or generally heed the priorities of the families themselves. In fact, these performances of paternalistic care by WRA employees maintained settler state oversight of Native bodies and attempted to dictate to them the roles they should serve within it.

While we have a tendency to use paternalism to humanize settlers, white paternalism toward American Indians helped justify white settler sovereignty, as I discuss in chapter 1. It is crucial that we remember that the only reason that these individuals were in concentration camps to begin with was because of the policies of the settler state—it created the problem of dependency that allowed federal employees to express this paternalistic “benevolence” toward these individuals.

One recipient of the WRA’s unsolicited paternalistic “care” was 10-year-old Johnny Heyano. His father, John Heyano, Sr., had been arrested along with other Issei men from Alaska and was eventually sent to Lordsburg, New Mexico, and Santa Fe internment camps. His father’s wife had not come with them to camp, and by some accounts, may have been deceased. His older brother, 17-year-old Peter Heyano, left early on to get work outside of camp and wrote to the WRA as early as October 1942,

³⁸ Laurel Clark Shire, “Sentimental Racism and Sympathetic Paternalism: Feeling Like a Jacksonian,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 39, no. 1 (February 28, 2019): 111–22, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jer.2019.0009>. 114.

asking them to send Johnny to live with him and saying that he had received permission from his boss to make such a request. The WRA apparently refused as Johnny did not go live with Peter. Johnny's case is complicated somewhat by the fact that he was a child and he had no guardian in camp to make decisions for him. But it shows how such care was not so much for the individual it purported to serve as it was about maintaining control over Indigenous bodies and allowing settlers to congratulate themselves on their benevolence.

Struggling in an unstable living situation far from home with no family around and facing prejudice from his classmates' parents who would not let their children play with him, Johnny acted out against his foster parents—first being “neglect[ful] in matters of cleanliness.” Things came to a head when Mrs. Yamamoto reported to the WRA and to Johnny's father that he stole money from Mr. Yamamoto's pants pocket and her sewing machine.³⁹ Mr. and Mrs. Yamamoto were “not greatly concerned over the money,” but “felt that such habits could get Johnny get into serious trouble.” Minidoka associate counselor Vernon P. Shook concurred and reprimanded Johnny. In recounting the event to Johnny's father, Shook reported,

This was done, we believe in the correct manner as Johnny now holds no grudge against Mrs. Yamamoto nor Mr. Yamamoto, but feels that he has learned a lesson which will be valuable to him. We have, therefore, stopped worrying about this particular habit and have given Johnny our continued friendship and support which we felt he needs even more than a home with some other advantages.⁴⁰

³⁹ Vernon P. Shook, Associate Counselor, Minidoka, WRA, to John Heyano Sr., September 17, 1943, Hunt, Idaho; John Heyano Jr. Folder; Individual Case Files, Entry 22 (E22); RG210; NARA-DC.

⁴⁰ Shook to Heyano Sr., September 17, 1943.

We never hear from Johnny himself so it is impossible to know what he really felt of this. Shook's letter reveals far more about himself and his interpretation of the relationship between a child and his guardian, or an Indigenous person and state employees, than it does about Johnny. Shook clearly felt that reprimanding Johnny was the best course of action. He does not say exactly how he achieved this without creating a grudge, but seems to have been proud of himself for focusing on "a lesson which will be valuable to" Johnny over the punishment itself.

But Shook's concern for Johnny had limits. Shook's last line—that we "have given Johnny our continued friendship and support"—shows the extent to which he prided himself on his own generosity toward this child. Rather than affirm his commitment to Johnny, the idea that friendship and support was given to Johnny and continued in spite of his actions draws our attention to the implied possibility that such care might easily be taken away and highlights the precarity of Johnny's situation in camp. It also suggests that his continued care was dependent on Johnny's good behavior.

Forced to listen from afar to secondhand accounts of his child being disciplined by WRA employees, John Heyano, Sr., reached out to family friends at Minidoka: "Johnny is very young and parentless. . . . It hurt me as a knife cut my flesh, so please call Johnny in your home and ask him all about this, whether he will make a true confession or not and let me know as soon as possible."⁴¹ Because of his love for and familiarity with his son, Heyano was much better positioned to say whether such a thing was in fact a "habit"—as Shook called it—or a traumatized child seeking out help in the only way he

⁴¹ John Heyano Sr. to Katsuyo Kimura; John Heyano Jr. Folder; Individual Case Files, Entry 22; War Relocation Authority, Record Group 210; NARA-DC.

knew how from a system all too eager to forget him. The expression that it hurt him as “a knife cut my flesh” suggests a feeling far stronger than shame for his son’s behavior, rather it suggests outright pain. John Heyano, Sr.’s depiction of his pain for his son suggests his understanding that this “problem” behavior at its core was a plea for help from his child, not a “habit” to be broken. The fact that Heyano, Sr., sought out his friends’ assistance also implies a certain mistrust for Shook’s handling of the situation.

Johnny’s father was not the only family member looking out for him. At 17, Johnny’s older brother, Peter, was Johnny’s sole guardian after his father’s arrest and their forced removal. While Peter left Minidoka early to get a job, he did so in order to make a life for himself and Johnny outside of camp. He asked for Johnny to join him in October 1942, provided financial support for Johnny’s care when the WRA would not release him, and continually asked for updates on Johnny’s wellbeing.

Johnny’s misbehavior gives him voice in a way the settler archival record cannot—it reveals his pain and trauma at the upheaval and familial separations that had occurred within the last year. Unfortunately, the settler archives offer little insight into Johnny’s understanding of the situation beyond the fact that he clearly needed to be with his father. Shook provides a clue: “There are some problems related to Mrs. Yamamoto’s difference of race, and the mixed marriage in the home where he is staying. It seems to us, however, that these problems are over-shadowed by Johnny’s satisfactory development.”⁴² It is mind-boggling how someone who had just finished describing Johnny’s “bad problems” could turn around and—in the same letter—call his

⁴² Shook to Heyano Sr., September 17, 1943.

development “satisfactory.” Shook’s brushing aside of these problems might indicate a wider pattern of not listening to Johnny’s expressed needs, let alone the ones he was not able to verbalize. It further highlights the absence of any adult who could in fact advocate for Johnny’s interests. Heyano, Sr., in requesting that Mr. and Mrs. Kimura check in with Johnny, attempted to find people who might serve this role in his absence. Shook acknowledged that the Kimuras might perform an “inspection” of Mrs. Yamamoto’s care should they wish, but finished by saying that he felt the Kimuras were “willing to have Johnny continue under the [Yamamotos’] care” even though “we have not consulted the Kimuras regarding such planning.”⁴³ The assumption that he knew what was best for Johnny without even consulting the people John Heyano, Sr., had explicitly tasked with his care shows that the paternalism Shook felt toward Johnny extended in such a way that it undermined his father’s and his brother’s ability to care for him or make their own decisions about what was best for him. This was not merely the oversight of an adult for a child; it carried strong undertones of settler paternalism.

Johnny was a somewhat exceptional recipient of this “care” since he was a child who had no immediately present guardian to care for him. But his case shows how this care failed to take into account the perspectives of the family or their appointed advocates even when they offered clear alternatives—his brother Peter wanted Johnny to join him on his work site, and his father wanted the Kimuras to be given a say in Johnny’s housing. It also lays bare the precariousness of that care even for a child. Children misbehave—even when they haven’t been wrenched from their family and placed in a

⁴³ Shook to Heyano Sr., September 17, 1943.

concentration camp far from home. Johnny's misbehavior should have been treated as a plea for help. Instead, Shook treated it as a bad habit to be reprimanded—and then forgotten. As we shall see later on, behavior continued to impact the cases in which paternalistic care was offered and those in which it was withdrawn.

This “care” also comes into direct contrast with the care Johnny's father and brother demonstrated from afar. Peter Heyano took responsibility for his brother while they were shifted from Puyallup to Minidoka, and had to decide whether it was better to remain in camp with Johnny or to leave to build a life outside of camp in the hopes that they would both be able to leave faster. His father did his best to remain an involved parent despite the many miles between them, and tried to ensure that Johnny would have someone to speak up for him when his father could not. They remind us what real care looks like, and the severe shortcomings of the “care” offered by the WRA.

The WRA's paternalistic care not only dismissed the authority of Indigenous people to know what was best for themselves and their families, but actually served primarily to advance the agency's own goals and their notions of the racial roles these incarcerated were expected to serve. In July 1942, before most Japanese Americans had left the assembly centers, E.R. Fryer wrote to OIA Commissioner John Collier about four “half-breed Sitka Indians.” Henry Ozawa was one; the other three were Costia, George, and Walter Yoshida.⁴⁴ Fryer worried that being in camp would “do much damage to them and go a long way to ‘un-Americanizing’ them,” foregrounding their Indianness to get

⁴⁴ While they are listed as brothers in the WRA records, census records suggest that Costia and George were raised together by their father while Walter was raised at an orphanage and was not listed in Census records with George and Costia's family. No documents I found link them before 1942.

them released from the camps.⁴⁵ Fryer attempted to maintain the guardian-ward relationship with Ozawa by crafting a complex bureaucratic solution that would maintain the state's control over their bodies instead of using preexisting policies or arguing for more expansive policy shifts to release the four men.

By proposing to turn them over to the OIA, Fryer attempted to preserve government oversight of these four men. There is no evidence that Fryer asked these four men if they wanted to go to a reservation or if they preferred to continue working on seasonal labor. Instead, he used paternalism to assert his authority to make decisions about their lives for them. In doing so, he also positioned them as wards of the government, not just as Japanese American incarcerated but also as Alaska Native people, advancing the U.S.'s claim to jurisdiction over American Indian bodies and attempting to eliminate Indigenous sovereignty.

While Fryer's concern over "the continued confinement of the Indians" might initially appear to be a recognition of Alaska Native Indigeneity, I suggest that it in fact serves to racialize them as a homogeneous "Indian" and to maintain governmental supervision of them. Fryer's racial classification of these men as "Indians" homogenized Ozawa and the Yoshidas. They were actually from different Indigenous nations: Yoshidas were Unangax and Ozawa was Tlingit.

The Indian racial classification denies how indigeneity is connected to specific homelands—an assumption that is also evident in Fryer's proposal to send them to any reservation anywhere. At the very least, he did not recognize the cultural differences

⁴⁵ Henry Minano Hope. Fourth Registration Draft Cards (WWII). Alaska State Headquarters ca. 1942. NAI: 4504983. The National Archives at St. Louis, Missouri. c40048

between indigenous nations. By racializing Ozawa and the Yoshidas as “Indian,” Fryer denied the specifics of their indigeneity, and in doing so erased those parts of their indigeneity that exceed their racial classification.

This is evident in Fryer’s proposed solution to the problem of Henry Ozawa and the Yoshida’s “un-Americanization.” He explained, “My purpose in writing is to learn from your Office whether or not they could be placed, for the duration of the war, on a reservation, under the jurisdiction of a Superintendent.”⁴⁶

He didn’t acknowledge how the U.S. often treated reservations as spaces of “continued confinement” for Indigenous nations. He assumed that the fact that they were Alaska Native meant they would suddenly be able to adapt to living on a reservation—a giant leap since they had never lived on one before—and that they would feel more at home amongst the languages, cultures, and traditions of those reservations even if they were also unrelated to their own.⁴⁷ There was also no guarantee that the Indigenous nation(s) of the undetermined reservation where they were supposed to be placed would be amenable to being forced to host these individuals on their lands. None of that mattered to Fryer.

These consolidations relied on the premise that all Indians were the same—and specifically that they were all dependent wards to the “benevolent guardian” that was the settler state and white settlers. Sending them to a reservation was essentially a way of transferring—but not lessening—governmental oversight over their bodies. Instead of

⁴⁶ E.R. Fryer, WRA, to John Collier, OIA Commissioner on July 25, 1942 (Fryer to Collier, July 25, 1942); SC123; Alaska Superintendency (AKS); E121; RG75; NARA-DC.

⁴⁷ The U.S. was no longer making reservations by the time Alaska became a U.S. territory.

confining them for their Japaneseness, Fryer proposed to confine them for their Indianness, and thus tried to discipline them into the role of American Indian ward.

Indian reservations were very much in the minds of WRA officials at the time. As Dillon Myer explained in his memoir, "...I was fearful we would have something akin to Indian reservations to deal with if steps were not taken soon to move the Japanese Americans back into the mainstream of American life."⁴⁸ He was not alone in this—after her visit to Gila River, Eleanor Roosevelt would similarly compare Japanese American incarceration to American Indian reservations. They were drawing on a deeply embedded association of American Indian reservations with what Cathleen Cahill has explained was a narrative of "dependency." By the late 1800s, Cahill writes, "policy makers placed the blame squarely on the 'pauperizing reservation system' for creating and exacerbating dependency."⁴⁹

Given how deeply embedded this association of reservations with American Indian "dependency" was in American culture and politics and the WRA's focus on resettling Japanese Americans so it did not create "another Indian problem," Fryer's urge to send these four men to a reservation seems counterintuitive.⁵⁰ It forces us to pause and ask ourselves about the stake the settler state holds in American Indian dependency, even if it is purportedly trying to combat it.

Cahill examines how federal employees began a de facto policy of attempting to replace treaty obligations with social programs to "uphold the spirit of the treaties but

⁴⁸ Dillon S. Myer, *Uprooted Americans: The Japanese Americans and the War Relocation Authority during World War II* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1971), 132.

⁴⁹ Cahill, *Federal Fathers and Mothers*, 29.

⁵⁰ Fryer to Collier, July 25, 1942.

solve the problem of dependency.”⁵¹ Shifting to social programs altered the discourse with American Indian nations from one of nation-to-nation diplomacy to a discussion internal to the U.S. Dependency narratives helpfully “forgot” how the issue had been created by the failures of the settler state to uphold treaty obligations. It also created a moral justification as the U.S. tried to weasel its way out of these treaties: “Dependency” served as a sleight of hand to turn the fact that the U.S. had knowingly and often from a position of relative power signed onto the “in perpetuity” parts of treaties into a racial shortcoming of “Indians.” Dependency narratives allowed the U.S. to cast itself as a caring—and even necessary—guardian for people who could not care for themselves and, as such, could not be sovereign nations.⁵²

Fryer’s assertion of care simultaneously racially classified these four men as Indian and depicted them as dependent on the federal government for their moral and patriotic development. Fryer explained in his letter to the OIA that he worried that “continued confinement of the Indians with Japanese will do much damage to them and go a long way toward ‘un-Americanizing’ them.” His statement asserted the federal government’s power as the arbiter of Americanness and positioned white settlers as fundamentally more “American” and capable of defining and creating what was “American” than those native to this land. Fryer explained that they “have never associated with Japanese, do not speak the language and should not, in my opinion, be

⁵¹ Cahill, *Federal Fathers and Mothers*, 30.

⁵² Byrd, *The Transit of Empire*, 2011.

held in Assembly Centers or Relocation Centers, even though they did meet the Military definition of persons of Japanese ancestry.”⁵³

Fryer was not the only WRA employee to racially classify Henry Ozawa as Indian to treat him with this toxic combination of paternalism and care. In June 1943, W.W. Palmer, a relocation officer tasked with finding a job for Ozawa, described Ozawa to a future employer: “HE IS A GOOD BOY ... HE IS INDIAN AND SHOULD NOT BE REFERRED TO AS JAPANESE.”⁵⁴ The reference to Ozawa—who was 23 by that time—as a “good boy” highlights the condescending nature of U.S. paternalism toward American Indians. Palmer’s instructions attempted to define Ozawa’s racial classifications even beyond governmental bureaucracy.

He also encouraged the new employer to “MEET BUS IF POSSIBLE.”⁵⁵ The recommendation implies that Ozawa either could not or would not reach the worksite if left to get there on his own, and that increased surveillance might prevent that. This surveillance though is not portrayed as surveillance, but rather as care. Meeting the bus is something a parent would do for a child who would get lost. Ozawa’s leave permit allowed him to travel around the county, so this oversight was not necessary. Palmer dictated Ozawa’s movements to and from Smith’s farm—not as a Japanese American but rather as an “INDIAN” who should “NOT BE REFERRED TO AS JAPANESE.” His telegram demonstrates how restricting movement assisted the settler state in racially

⁵³ Fryer to Collier, July 25, 1942.

⁵⁴ W.W. Palmer, War Relocation Authority Officer, to Edwin M. Smith, Smith Lumber Company, June 4, 1943 (Palmer to E.M. Smith); Henry Ozawa; E 22; RG 210; NAB-DC.

⁵⁵ Palmer to E.M. Smith, June 4, 1943.

classifying Indigenous bodies, and specifically, as we shall see in the next section, in racially classifying those Indigenous bodies as alien labor.

Palmer expressed care, but he was really just doing his job. By October 1942, the WRA had adopted the policy of trying to “resettle” Japanese Americans as quickly as possible through leave permits.⁵⁶ Fryer, too, was just trying to “resettle” some incarcerated—he just tried to do that by sending Henry Ozawa and the Yoshidas to a reservation under the jurisdiction of the OIA instead of through seasonal labor. On an individual level, both Fryer and Palmer’s gestures may have been well-intentioned, and this does not negate that. Their goal was not to end centuries of racial classification—it was to get these men out of camp, and fast. They likely took the routes they felt were going to encounter the least resistance. But in doing so, they relied on racist tropes. The ease with which these tropes can be deployed in the name of “care” inevitably sustains those tropes as well. They never challenged the racial assumptions the army had made about Ozawa. They never fought for these individuals to be permitted to return home, beyond the occasional request to the ADC which was inevitably denied. They never even asked Henry Ozawa if he preferred to go to a reservation or to work elsewhere until he could return.

Alien Labor and Governmental Shirking of Responsibility

Unfortunately for Fryer, Fred Daiker of the OIA did not approve of his plan. The agency, Daiker explained, did not have the resources necessary for Henry Ozawa and the

⁵⁶ Myer, *Uprooted Americans*, 134.

Yoshidas' supervision, and therefore could not take responsibility for these four men. His assumption that they would require "some form of restriction or confinement" that exceeded that which the OIA was equipped to provide suggests that he considered them Japanese. Daiker used the pretense that Ozawa and the Yoshidas were Japanese people needing a specific kind of supervision—the supervision of enemies as opposed to the supervision of wards—to avoid taking responsibility for them and to deny the OIA's obligation to them.

Instead, Daiker wrote, "the question presents itself why it is necessary that they be established on a reservation. If they are capable of earning a living and their status is such as to permit their release or parole so to speak, would it not be better to follow this procedure than to place them on an Indian reservation. After all, work opportunities on most reservations are limited..."⁵⁷ The WRA had actually already used seasonal leave permits to get Ozawa and the Yoshidas out of Puyallup Assembly Center. But Daiker's response affirmed that the only way for them to leave camp was by becoming alien labor.

As I discuss in chapter 3, the forced removal and incarceration attempted to revert Japanese immigrant and Japanese American bodies into the role of alien labor—they could not reap the benefits of their work because they were laborers, they would be forced to return to camp and leave when the job was done so they could not build lives in those areas, they were underpaid, and they supplemented labor in areas where the war had caused shortages. Leave permits continued to position incarcerated as moveable, exploitable labor even after they left camp. Employers often relied on the incarcerated's

⁵⁷ Fred Daiker, OIA, to E.R. Fryer, WRA, August 6, 1942; Box 49; SC123; AKS; E121; RG75; NARA-DC.

desperation to leave camp to exploit their labor. Many employers did not actually satisfy their sides of the contracts, which included providing adequate housing for the incarcerated, or paying them so little they could not make a significant profit were easy ways to make already precarious labor even more exploitable. Referring to his work farming sugar beets in Montana, Paul Ozawa said, “By golly, that sugar beet work was sure hard for me. I worked on it for 2 months and I only made \$7 profit.”⁵⁸

When the “alien labor” role is placed upon Indigenous bodies, the word “alien” becomes loaded with even more meaning as it demonstrates how becoming alien labor in the case of Indigenous people foreclosed their indigeneity—it suggests that alienating them from their homelands and from their labor could make them alien. Japanese American incarceration allowed settlers to simultaneously remove Alaska Native incarcerated from their homelands, foreground their alienness over their Indigeneity, and exploit their labor in service of the settler state.

The WRA estimated that 10,000 had left camp during 1942 for seasonal leave.⁵⁹ The total population of the camps on January 1, 1943 was 110,240.⁶⁰ This meant about 9% of the total population left during that time. Of the 55 individuals with Alaska Native ancestry in camp, at least 23 left either Puyallup or Minidoka at some point in 1942—a rate of 41%. The rate may have been even higher since I only looked at 35 case files. Some of this discrepancy can be accounted for by the demographics of both groups. The

⁵⁸ Ozawa, Paul, interview by Charles Kikuchi, April 10, 1944, 27.

⁵⁹ J. A. Krug and Dillon S. Myer, *WRA: A Story of Human Conservation*. (Washington, D.C.: United States Department of the Interior, 1946), <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015002213968>, 32.

⁶⁰ J. A. Krug and Dillon S. Myer, *The Evacuated People: A Quantitative Description* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1946), <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/000816072>, 96.

primary demographic for seasonal labor passes were American-born men ages 16 and up. This accounted for 19% of the total camp population.⁶¹ In the Alaska Native community in camp, 27 individuals were men ages 16 and up, accounting for half of those incarcerated. It is also possible that they applied to leave at higher rates than the average incarcerated—a hypothesis that is supported by the ostracization they experienced in camp. Still, Fryer and Palmer’s efforts to get and keep these individuals out of camp, suggests that settler paternalism played at least some role in this discrepancy.

Seasonal leave was not inherently a step up. Despite the contracts signed, the WRA often did not often enforce the housing conditions the employers stated they would provide. Most were separated from their families. Wages, while higher than they were in camp, were still too low to actually save money after the incarcerated paid rent and other household expenses. As Paul Ozawa noted, the work was hard, the pay was low, and what pay they did make often went toward paying for rent and other living expenses. Paul said, “All we bought with the money we made was grub to eat.”⁶² He might have actually saved more money in camp where the wages were a small fraction of what he could earn on the outside because at least there housing and food would have been provided.

Daiker’s response demonstrated that what mattered to the OIA was not the well-being of Indigenous peoples but their ability to work. And by implicitly racially classifying Henry Ozawa as Japanese, Daiker used the association of Japanese people with foreignness to portray him and the other incarcerated with Alaska Native ancestry as foreign to their own lands. Fugikawa suggests that the federal government depicted

⁶¹ 21,239 is the number I came up with using Table 36 of the Evacuated People.

⁶² Ozawa, Paul, interview by Charles Kikuchi, 27.

moveability as a path to assimilation for these groups—and assimilation also furthered their alienation from their cultures and communities. *Alienation* shows that alienation from labor does not occur in a vacuum—it is deeply interconnected with attempts to alienate people from land, community, and culture, as well.

The Ozawa brothers worked in farming, logging, and railroads over the course of the war. All three are central to settler colonialism and the growth of the settler state. This was evident in how Henry Ozawa’s boss in Rexburg, Keppner, had come to own the land: Originally, Eastern Shoshone land, the land had become part of the public domain when the Treaty of Fort Bridger 1868 confined the Eastern Shoshone to the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming. Keppner had purchased the land from the General Land Office in 1934, which was sold in accord with the 1862 Homestead Act that aimed “to secure homesteads to actual settlers on the public domain.”⁶³ As I discuss in chapter 3, the public domain was not necessarily the final status for land—instead it served as a stepping stone to convert Indigenous lands into privatized homesteads and property. Keppner—and many others—used his mixed Alaska Native and Japanese American employees’ labor to assist in that settler colonial process, and disciplined them to serve the role of alien labor for the settler state.

As alien labor, these incarcerated were moveable, and would perform whatever work was required of them without regard to their experience or expertise. Henry Ozawa, for instance, specialized in boat carpentry. He had expressed a preference for working in

⁶³ Land Patent for Elvin Lorenzo Keppner, October 24, 1934, General Land Office. <https://glorerecords.blm.gov/details/patent/default.aspx?accession=1072820&docClass=SER&sid=zc4prshe.hkm>.

house carpentry in camp and was instead assigned to do work in logging, which is related to carpentry only to the extent that they both work with wood.

Laura Fugikawa considers how the federal government constructed Japanese Americans and American Indians as “moveable” during the 1940s and 1950s. Fugikawa points out that movability operates differently for the “alien” and American Indians: the Asian “alien” needs to be moveable to extract labor; the American Indian needs to be movable to extract land.⁶⁴ Part of the hyper-exploitability of Asians came from the fact that they were supposed to not have connections to the land—they could be moved from job to job, and could not work for themselves. But the flipside to American Indian termination was to put American Indian bodies in menial jobs in big cities. In other words, termination irrevocably linked the extraction of land with the extraction of labor. A decade earlier, the OIA’s suggestion for releasing Henry Ozawa and other Alaska Native incarceratedees was to make them movable to alienate them from both their labor and their lands. Given that both American Indians and Japanese Americans were being constructed as “moveable,” it would be a mistake to attribute Alaska Native incarceratedees’ moveability solely to their Japanese ancestry. How did their Indigeneity contribute to the federal government’s understanding of and depiction of these individuals and families as movable?

The OIA’s urging of the WRA to convert Indigenous people into alien labor foreshadowed wider OIA policy of the 1950s, when the OIA would begin to use “relocation” as a tactic to send American Indians from reservations into cities to work as

⁶⁴ Fugikawa, Laura Sachiko. “Domestic Containment: Japanese Americans, Native Americans and the Cultural Politics of Relocation,” 2011.

menial labor. This policy—which likewise alienated American Indians from both land and labor—was implemented under OIA Commissioner Dillon Myer who, from 1942-1946, was the Director of the WRA. It also suggests that American Indian racialization was not just about alienation from their lands but also alienation from their labor. The OIA's turn to relocation as a tactic suggests that while demonstrations of "care" assuage white settler guilt, it was not meant to be long term. This is another maneuver of dependency narratives: they suggest that enough care can eliminate dependency, and thus treaty obligations. By making benevolence temporary, these narratives assist in the dismantling of treaty and diplomatic obligations to Indigenous nations.

This did not occur without resistance. Harvey Shirai, Minnie's husband, pushed back against the assumption that he would just do whatever work the WRA asked of him and against the expectations of settler-imposed gender roles, much like Minnie. He had left camp early on but returned to Minidoka and fought to be released into an area where he could go back into fishing. After a conversation with Harvey, Helen K. Shipps, a medical social consultant for the WRA, reported, "He has always been a fisherman and wants now to get a fishing job" which was "the only thing he knows how to do."⁶⁵

The state of Alaska, the ADC, the WRA, and the OIA never challenged the authority of the U.S. government to remove Alaska Native people from their homelands or even—beyond the occasional failed request for one or a few individuals—the assumption under racial logics that they should be removed from their homelands.

⁶⁵ Helen K. Shipps, "Interview with Mr. Shirai December 21, 1942, in company with Mr. Carl Sandoz, Counselor at Minidoka Relocation Center"; Jimmy Shirai Folder; Individual Case Files, Entry 22; War Relocation Authority, Record Group 210; National Archives Building, Washington, D.C.

Rather, they made these incarcerated moveable for their labor without regard to their Indigenous identities or citizenships. The settler state did not wish for Indigenous independence; these agencies' handling of Alaska Native and Japanese American incarcerated' cases suggests that the goal for Indigenous people was alienation. In this context, alienation appears through the WRA's treating Indigenous bodies as moveable in the name of labor for the war effort, whether it be through logging or food production. Since the importance of land to Indigenous identities was at least in part erased through the Indian racial classification, the classification itself also assisted in creating a hyper-exploitable Indigenous labor force, a notion that is supported by other histories of labor extraction from racialized people. This moveability for labor extraction would develop into a wider policy for American Indians during relocation and termination in the 1950s, but, several years before the policy was implemented, this desire for American Indian movability as a way to extract both land and labor was already evident in the treatment of Alaska Native and Japanese Americans.

Both the OIA and the WRA were trying to unload responsibility for Ozawa onto the other agency's shoulders by racially classifying him in whatever way suited their needs. For Henry Ozawa, read as Japanese by the OIA and Indian by the WRA, both racial classifications were essentially different maneuvers to eliminate the specifics and nuances of his Tlingit indigenous identity. If he was Japanese, the OIA could deny its obligations to him as an Indigenous person. But the "Indian" racial classification also neglected how indigeneity is tied to specific lands and the heterogeneity of Native cultures.

Constructing Ozawa as movable, both as an Indigenous person as and as a Japanese American, highlights that one of the challenges that Indigenous people pose to the settler state is in the specificities of their relationships to their homelands. It also suggests how the racial classification of Indian might be connected to that of alien labor could both assist with the development of capitalism and, in theory, with the weakening of Indigenous relationships with their homelands—as Myer would later attempt through Termination. In the early 1940s, the settler state was already beginning to use the Indian classification to designate Indigenous people as labor for capitalism—and this racial classification and its associations with labor operated as a tactic of assimilation and elimination. Still, the persistence of the Indigenous relationship to the land—in spite of forced removal, dispossession, confinement, and other tactics to spatially discipline Indigenous people—demonstrates the failure of the settler state to convert Indigenous bodies into alien labor.

17-year-old Peter Heyano would actually use the settler state's desire for his labor to advocate for his return to Alaska. Mixed Inuit and Japanese American, Peter used a telegram from his former employer that stated his job was waiting for him when he returned to advocate for being permitted to return to Alaska early. While it did not work, his use of the telegram suggests that he—accurately—saw employment as the WRA's priority for incarcerated and attempted to mobilize those priorities to advance his own interests. By using his ability to work not to accept his alienation from the land but rather to advocate for his return to the land, Peter Heyano provides an example of how Indigenous people negotiate the demands of the settler state in ways that may at face

value seem to accept those demands, while in reality using them to advocate for his own needs. As we see in the next section, several of these incarcerated individuals would also use racial logics to similarly push forward their own goals.

Racial Identity and Indigenous Kinship Ties

Clearly, the WRA and other government agencies imposed racial classifications upon these individuals, but racialization was not a unidirectional process. These incarcerated individuals also adopted and manipulated race to serve their own needs—and in doing so, demonstrate how race can become enmeshed in identities. Nonetheless, Indigenous identities cannot be reduced to a racial framework—race may be a factor in Indigenous identity construction but it is by no means the only axis through which Indigenous identity is created.⁶⁶ Indigenous identities are also national and political identities. The origins of Indigenous identity formation precede the arrival of Europeans; race as a site of identity formation is generally constructed as a response to enslavement, colonization, forced removal and incarceration because it was originally imposed.⁶⁷ Tlingit, Unangax, Tsimshian, and Inuit are Indigenous national identities that originate from how they describe themselves and create their community; the “Indian” racial classification originated from a mythologized mistake imposed by Christopher Columbus.

⁶⁶ Byrd, *Transit of Empire*, 125.

⁶⁷ Nancy Shoemaker has shown how the racial classification “red” emerged through the negotiation of different American Indian nations and white settlers. While this would become a racial classification, it did not necessarily originate as one since it was originally used by Indigenous people to denote specific nations and not all American Indians. See Nancy Shoemaker, “How Indians Got to Be Red,” *The American Historical Review* 102, no. 3 (1997): 625–44, <https://doi.org/10.1086/ahr/102.3.625>.

In this section, I first consider how race becomes a site of identity formation when people and communities engage with racial classifications—through manipulation, reappropriation, resistance, and outright rejection. I then show how they insisted on the limitations of race in their constructions of identity through assertions of their Indigenous identities. Where hegemonic understandings of race tend to define it according to blood quantum, these incarceratedees coupled these racial classifications with their Native nations and their assertions of kinship ties, a reworking that highlights the importance of human relationships over “objective” or “scientific” understandings of race.

I focus on the cases of Paul Ozawa, Peter Heyano, and Minnie Shirai in this section in part out of necessity. We hear very little of the voices of the incarceratedees in the National Archives, except when they wrote to government officials. These three were the most prolific writers in the files I examined.⁶⁸ Paul’s file had 29 letters from the three years he was excluded from Alaska, making him far and away the most prolific of the individuals whose case files I have examined. By way of comparison, Peter Heyano, who wrote the second highest number of letters in a WRA case file, wrote ten. Minnie Shirai’s file contained four letters.

Both Minnie Shirai and Paul Ozawa wrote letters in which they described themselves as “Alaskan Indian” or “Indian.”⁶⁹ This was likely in part because the term

⁶⁸ I looked at a total of 36 Alaska Native incarceratedee files. NARA policy only allows researchers to look at WRA files after the death of the incarceratedee because the files contain potentially sensitive medical information.

⁶⁹ Minnie Shirai, September 22, Mountain View Sanatorium; Minnie Shirai Folder; E22; RG210; NARA-DC; Paul Ozawa to Harry L. Stafford, Minidoka Director on January 1, 1945 (P. Ozawa to Stafford, January 1, 1945); Paul Ozawa; E22; RG210; NARA-DC

“Indian” would be more understandable to the people to whom they were writing. But they also used it to advocate for themselves and their own needs.

On January 29, 1945, Paul Ozawa wrote to Minidoka Director Harry Stafford, “I class myself an Indian and also a[n] all American.”⁷⁰ He did not go so far as to tell Stafford what was common knowledge back home—that his biological father had also been Alaska Native. Still, his letter demonstrates that he claimed the right to determine his own racial identity, even if he couldn’t prove that his father hadn’t been Japanese. He used the Indian racial classification to advocate for himself and his family, likely because it would be more familiar to a reader unacquainted with Alaska’s Indigenous nations than affiliations with specific Indigenous nations.

Paul also paired the Indian racial classification with an assertion that he was also “all American.” By claiming affiliation to the U.S. in a national and cultural sense, he was likely hoping to convince the WRA of his loyalty in the hopes that they would allow him to return to Alaska. The WRA had after all depicted the issue of Japanese American incarceration as an issue of loyalty, and pressured all incarcerated to prove their loyalty by first complying with the exclusion orders, then by signing the infamous “Loyalty Questionnaire” and then by sending off Japanese American troops to fight in the war in a segregated unit. At face value, Paul’s assertion of loyalty seemed to accept his own inferiority to the settler state. But it’s not clear whether he actually means “American” to refer to the state or the land. The ambiguities of the term allowed him to satisfy the demands of the settler state for his loyalty, while also being broad enough to stay true to

⁷⁰ P. Ozawa to Stafford, January 1, 1945.

his own understandings of his identity. Furthermore, it could have been a way to further his own goals: to return to his homelands as soon as possible.

Minnie Shirai wrote, “I’m Alaska indian my self. Please do help me will you if you have time I know the war comes first.”⁷¹ Like Paul Ozawa, she uses the acknowledgment that the “war comes first” to imply her loyalty. Her request shows how she used the Indian racial classification—and the settler “care” that came with it—to advocate for herself and her family.

Minnie also tried to prove her loyalty to the US by expressing anti-Japanese sentiment. In a letter to an unnamed “Sir,” she exclaimed, “Why no body gonna force me to like them japs. If my husband wasn’t part indian I would hate him too.” By reminding her reader that her husband was “part indian” and therefore not deserving of her hate, she suggests that the part of his racial classification that mattered was the Indian. By using her own hatred for Japanese people as a gauge of her husband’s relative Indianness and Japaneseness, she also claimed the authority to racially classify herself and her family rather than accepting the racial classifications the federal government imposed on them.

Her anti-Japanese rhetoric is complicated. On the one hand, she clearly had anti-Japanese prejudice—she referred to the people taking care of her children at Manzanar as “dirty japs.” But she was also married to a man who was part Japanese, and her children also had Japanese ancestry. She was also constantly being encouraged toward such prejudice, and being taught to feel shame about any connection to Japanese people. She was also clearly in an extremely stressful situation—she was in a tuberculosis sanitorium,

⁷¹ G.D. Carlyle Thompson, WRA Chief Medical Officer, to Minnie Shirai, September 22, 1943 (Palmer to E.M. Smith); Minnie Shirai; E 22; RG 210; NARA-DC.

separated from her three young children who were alone in an orphanage, and her husband who was unreliable in his communications with her.

Peter Heyano did not describe himself as Indian or Alaska Native but he did use racial terms—most notably that of “half blood”—to describe himself to WRA officials. In May 1943, he requested that he be allowed to return to Alaska. Peter used racial logics to make the argument that he should be allowed to return to Alaska: “Do you think a half blood should have more chance [to return to Alaska] than a fool [sic] blood Jap.” Interestingly, he used logics around blood quantum to advocate against being treated as Japanese, rather than asserting his Indigeneity. Peter also used the slur “Japs” to distinguish himself from other people with Japanese ancestry. He asked to be sent to the Pacific where he might “get a crack at the Japs,”⁷² as he was quoted saying by a WRA officer. The slur and his willingness to fight the Japanese show his attempts to distinguish himself from other Japanese Americans. Like Minnie Shirai, Peter Heyano used racial stereotypes about and slurs for Japanese people to distinguish himself from the enemy, showing how Americans at the time were constructing the idea of belonging and loyalty as being anti-Japanese.

Through their use of racial logics to both assert their Indigenous heritage and their prejudice toward Japanese people, Paul Ozawa, Minnie Shirai, and Peter Heyano show how deeply entwined racial classifications can become with an individual’s identity while also acknowledging the limits of race to describe Indigeneity.

⁷² Chester L. Mink, WRA Relocation Officer, to O. Leon Anderson, WRA Relocation Officer, April 24, 1944 (Mink to Anderson, April 24, 1944); Peter Heyano; E22; RG210; NARA-DC.

Paul explicitly paired his use of the Indian racial classification with an insistence that the WRA recognize his Indigenous identity. While state-imposed racial classification tends to erase Indigenous identities through the “Indian” classification, he was careful to include, “My mother was an Alaskan Thlingit Indian. My father I don’t remember. I speak the Alaskan Thlingit language.” His words subtly refuse settler logics around blood quantum to define Indigenous belonging. Instead, he suggests that kinship and cultural belonging (as seen through his proficiency in Tlingit) determine Indigenous identity. Clearly, it was important to him to tell the WRA that the Indian racial classification was not the be-all-end-all of his identity: He was Tlingit. He also paired Indigenous and racial identities when describing his wife, Ivy, who was “Full blooded Alaskan Hyda Tribe American Indian.”⁷³

Paul’s letters showed his commitment to maintaining his Tlingit identity. The topic he discussed most was his return to Alaska. He clearly saw Alaska as tied to his sense of self. In his interview with the Japanese Evacuation and Resettlement Study (JERS), Paul explained to the interviewer that, “In the Alaska wilds I never lost my way like I was in Montana. ... By golly, I used to go deer hunting in Lost Valley where white men never dared to go and I never got lost once. I never used a compass because I only trusted my eyes when I looked at the sun. In Idaho I hardly knew where north was from south as I didn’t know any familiar landmarks. It was all a flat country.”⁷⁴ While working in Montana was preferable to him to being in Puyallup, Paul was very clear that Montana was not home to him, and it was not the land he knew. The fact that he says “I never lost

⁷³ P. Ozawa to Stafford, January 1, 1945.

⁷⁴ Ozawa, Paul. Interview by Charles Kikuchi, April 10, 1944, 28.

my way like I was in Montana” as opposed to “like I did” in Montana implies a much more long term sense of being lost—and suggests how being lost in Montana was not just a matter of not knowing the routes, but rather of not being on the lands where he “only trusted my eyes” and “never got lost once.” The phrase “I only trusted my eyes” takes on special meaning because of how much his sight had deteriorated during the war. His words show how his removal from Alaska ungrounded him (literally and figuratively) and the havoc that separation from his homelands wreaked on his body. In addition, his phrasing of “Lost Valley where white men never dared to go and I never got lost once” suggests his claim to a deeper relationship to that land than white men could claim. In the interview, he also made it clear that he intended to return to Alaska as soon as he was able. His words demonstrate how his ability to navigate and move across his homelands freely was a crucial part of his Indigenous identity. He also compared the lands he visited in Montana to different regions in Alaska to explain whether he liked them or not. In their own ways, both brothers used the land and their movements to voice their own constructions of their identities.

The forced removal had been a strain on his marriage. At one point, he asked the WRA to let him and his family return to Alaska because “If we don’t return soon my wife will have to ask for a divorce, so she could return to see her blind dad and ailing aged mother. Things like this might make a man desparate.”⁷⁵ Clearly he saw returning to Alaska as being key to preserving his relationships as well. Paul also regularly asked the WRA for updates on his brothers’ addresses—it was the thing he asked about most in his

⁷⁵ P. Ozawa to Stafford, January 1, 1945.

letters, with the exception of being permitted to return to Alaska.⁷⁶ He generally asked about Joe, but occasionally asked for Henry's address as well. His letters prove the difficulty of maintaining relationships when people were constantly moving from job to job. On February 3, 1943, he wrote, "Please notify me of the Present address of Mr. Joe Ozawa. I've written to the last address you sent me at Hazelton Idaho. The letter was returned marked Unknown."⁷⁷ Another time, he wrote, "I went to his room ... but was told he had left for the Army Camp." The incarceration had also strained his relationship with his brothers. In his JERS interview, he explained, "They won't talk to me any more because I think they are ashamed that [Henry Ozawa, Sr.] was their dad."⁷⁸ There was likely more to it than that, but it is clear that the brothers' relationship suffered due to their removal. Still, Paul continued to ask for information on their whereabouts, demonstrating his strong desire to stay connected with them.

In the interview, Paul also pointed to the importance of kinship ties in his Indigenous identity formation. After his mother died and he and his two younger brothers were abandoned by their Japanese father (who was not Paul's biological father but did adopt him), he grew up in orphanages and schools. At 15, he ran away from the school and went to meet his grandfather in Clark, Alaska. Paul's grandfather "taught me a lot of the Indian things I had forgotten when I was in that orphanage. He only spoke Indian to

⁷⁶ Paul Ozawa to William Moore, Assistant Relocation Officer, WRA, February 10, 1945, Hingham, MT; Paul Ozawa Folder; E22; RG210; NARA-DC. See also Paul Ozawa to Harold S. Jacoby, WRA, July 23, 1944; Paul Ozawa to Carl Sandoz, Counselor, Minidoka, WRA, May 17, 1943; Paul Ozawa, February 3, 1943; Paul Ozawa to J. J. McGovern, Puyallup, WCCA, June 29, 1942. These letters are all located in Paul Ozawa's individual file.

⁷⁷ Paul Ozawa, February 3, 1943; Paul Ozawa Folder; E22; RG210; NARA-DC.

⁷⁸ Ozawa, Paul. Interview by Charles Kikuchi, April 10, 1944, 5.

me and I understood him after a while because it was in the back of my head.”⁷⁹ He later explained that Tlingit was his first language and while he had forgotten it to some extent he “didn’t forget all of the Indian dialect because I used to use the Thlingt dialect with my half brothers and some of the other Indian boys.”⁸⁰ Paul associated his Tlingit identity with his grandfather’s teachings, but he also suggested that his brothers and the “other Indian boys” helped him maintain language even when he was in the orphanage. Paul formulated his Tlingit identity around kinship. At one point in the interview, he exclaimed madly, “By golly, after all this, they said I was a Japanese. That makes me so mad. I only remember the Indian things I was taught.”⁸¹ In emphasizing what he remembered over what “they said,” he preserved his authority to determine his identity. He suggested that identity had more to do with what one remembered and was taught, and connected his Indigeneity to lived experience with his grandfather, not to blood quantum. While he used the term Indian, he clearly meant Tlingit customs. He used the term Indian interchangeably but, unlike the racial classification, did not deploy it to homogenize or collapse the differences between Indigenous nations.

Minnie and Peter were also greatly concerned with reunification with and updates on family members. Minnie, who had been separated from her children upon her hospitalization, wrote two of her four letters pleading for updates on her children. She began one letter, “What’s this all about? I never hear from my children for quite a while now! Will you please let me know why? I am very much worried about my children.”

⁷⁹ Ozawa, Paul. Interview by Charles Kikuchi, April 10, 1944, 7.

⁸⁰ Ozawa, Paul. Interview by Charles Kikuchi, April 10, 1944, 7.

⁸¹ Ozawa, Paul. Interview by Charles Kikuchi, April 10, 1944, 15.

She later pleaded, “I’m going to be kicked out for crying to[o] much. How can any person get well when they are worried [and] lonesome.”⁸² She had also written additional letters not included in her files to the matron at the Children’s Village: She reported that she had “written to Mrs. Matsumoto four or five times begging her to tell me how mine children [are] getting along.”⁸³ A third letter was to get an update on her husband whom she had not heard from in a while, and asked for permission for a photo of him and the children. She received a couple of updates, but generally the WRA replied to her letters with an assurance that “any lack of correspondence from Mrs. Matsumoto at Manzanar is due only to the full program she is carrying in caring for the sixty-odd children at the Village.”⁸⁴

She did not ask about returning to Alaska—such a request might not have been advisable or realistic given her health problems—but did seek out more freedom of movement when she felt up to it in the sanatorium and challenged the extent of the power the WRA held over her movements. In a letter that reads almost tragicomic, she asked the WRA for permission to go get a perm. “Here I am again asking you for permission,” she began. She pleaded, “may I go in to town to have a permanent wave? You could trust me can you can you?”⁸⁵ Even with the grammatical mistakes and typos, her tone balances the obsequiousness the WRA demanded from her with the sarcasm and ridiculousness

⁸² Minnie Shirai, May 17, 1943; Jimmy Shirai Folder; Individual Case Files, Entry 22; War Relocation Authority, Record Group 210; National Archives Building, Washington, D.C.

⁸³ G. D. Carlyle Thompson, Chief Medical Officer, WRA, to Minnie Shirai, September 22, 1943 (Thompson to M. Shirai, September 22, 1943); Minnie Shirai Folder; E22; RG210; NARA-DC.

⁸⁴ Thompson to M. Shirai, September 22, 1943.

⁸⁵ Minnie Shirai, July 27, 1943; Minnie Shirai Folder; E22; RG210; NARA-DC.

she likely felt of having to make such a request. It also shows the ways she bent over backwards to shape her life around the WRA's requirements of her.

Peter Heyano, as we saw earlier, was greatly concerned about his brother Johnny's welfare in camp. Peter had left camp to work and to build a life outside of camp. In early October 1942, Peter asked Minidoka Director Harry Stafford to send Johnny to live with him at the labor camp where he worked. He wrote, "So if you send him I will be very glad to have him. ... I am worrying about him all the time."⁸⁶ There is no reply for Stafford in either file, but Johnny did not go to his brother. He spent a few months living with Amelia Kito, another mixed Alaska Native incarcerated, and was later transferred to live with a mixed white and Japanese couple, the Yamamotos. Peter regularly asked for updates on his little brother.

Peter shifted to asking for his father, who was Issei, to be reunited with his brother at Minidoka. The Minidoka staff were much more helpful with this. Carl Sandoz, the counselor at Minidoka, actually drafted a letter for him to sign requesting that "a parole be considered for my father, John Heyano, Sr., now interned at Lordsburg, New Mexico. My mother is deceased and my little brother, Johnny, ten years old ... needs a parent's care."⁸⁷ Peter—by way of Sandoz—noted that he had not signed a petition and that he could not care for Johnny himself because he was "employed on a farm." The

⁸⁶ Peter Heyano to Harry L. Stafford, Project Director, Minidoka, WRA, October 6, 1942; John Heyano, Jr. Folder; E22; RG210; NARA-DC.

⁸⁷ Carl V. Sandoz, Counselor, Minidoka, WRA, to Peter Heyano, April 17, 1943; John Heyano Jr. Folder; Individual Case Files, Entry 22; War Relocation Authority, Record Group 210; National Archives Building, Washington, D.C.

inclusion of these details shows how he and Sandoz highlighted his “good” behavior in advocating for his brother and his father.

Peter also expressed interest in joining the army, but was concerned about doing so while Johnny was still on his own. On October 23, 1943, relocation officer Chester Mink again noted that the Heyano family “would like to have your consideration on the matter of transferring Mr. Heyano to the Minidoka Relocation Center” because Peter “has made application for induction into the United States Army” and John would have no one to care for him if Peter left.⁸⁸ On October 28, Harry Stafford, Minidoka director, assured Mink that “If Peter wishes to join the Army, we believe that he can do so with a feeling that his young brother will be taken care of” because “Mr. Heyano is likely to be paroled to this Project soon.”⁸⁹

Peter, like Paul, also asked repeatedly about when he and Johnny would be allowed to return home. Peter attempted to negotiate this system by highlighting his compliance with the WRA in his letters. In spring 1943, he had gotten written evidence that he had a job waiting for him upon his return to Alaska to also request that he and John be permitted to return early. The reply the WRA received was brief: “No persons of Japanese ancestry may be authorized to travel to Alaska.” When he asked again about returning to Alaska in February 1944, he followed this up by expressing his concern with getting in touch with his Selective Service board. He leveraged his willingness to serve to

⁸⁸ Chester L. Mink, Relocation Officer, WRA, to Camp Commander, Santa Fe Detention Camp, October 23, 1943, Twin Falls, ID; John Heyano Jr. Folder; E22; RG210; NARA-DC.

⁸⁹ Harry L. Stafford to Chester L. Mink, October 28, 1943, Hunt, Idaho; John Heyano Jr. Folder; E22; RG210; NARA-DC.

make the case that he might be trusted to return to Alaska and that his father should be reunited with his little brother.

Stafford did not bother to check in with the ADC this time. He wrote, “In regard to your question about returning to Alaska or the West Coast, we would like to say that we have no immediate answer to this matter. It is still impossible for persons who were evacuated to return as under present circumstances.”⁹⁰

On April 24, 1944, Chester Mink, a relocation officer in Twin Falls, wrote to a coworker in Montana to follow up on how to get Peter Heyano into the army since “over six months elapsed ... he has still never been called.” Mink urged a fellow relocation officer to look into the matter, saying, “Americanism of any minority race depends entirely upon the extent to which they are discriminated against.”⁹¹ He explained Peter’s case “interested us most because it showed the disastrous effect of segregation or discrimination against any one race of people.”⁹² He showed more sustained interest in pursuing this cause than that of Peter Heyano’s return home.

In suggesting that the delay in Peter Heyano’s service threatened his “Americanism,” Mink showed how paternalism and care toward Indigenous people existed primarily to discipline them into performing the roles the settler state envisioned for them—not their own interests and concerns—and, as such, only served them to the extent that they assimilated to it. This is reinforced by what WRA paternalism was successful in pushing for: getting mixed Alaska Native incarcerated out to work on

⁹⁰ Harry L. Stafford to Peter Heyano, February 25, 1944; John Heyano Jr. Folder; E22; RG210; NARA-DC.

⁹¹ Chester L. Mink, to O. Leon Anderson, Relocation Officer, WRA, April 24, 1944, Twin Falls, ID (Mink to Anderson, April 24, 1944); Paul Ozawa Folder; E22; RG210; NARA-DC.

⁹² Mink to Anderson, April 24, 1944.

seasonal leave and getting Peter sent off to war. Even reuniting Johnny with his father suited the WRA's goals. The staff at Minidoka would be able to spend less time and money caring for Johnny Heyano if he could be dispatched into a parent's care.

While Mink saw Peter Heyano's desire to serve as a sign of his "Americanism," Heyano's use of his service to advocate for his and his family's needs show that his motivations were not that simple.⁹³ Heyano—and other incarcerated—chose to serve for nuanced reasons that ranged from defining and shaping their identities, to negotiating for family reunification, and better treatment more generally. As John Little has shown, Native Vietnam War veterans reinterpreted ideas of citizenship and service to express loyalty not to the nation-state but to their communities and their lands. This, coupled with the fact that he wrote a total of 29 letters to the WRA the vast majority of which were asking when they would be allowed to return to Alaska, provide some clues into how Heyano interpreted his Indigenous Inuit identity.

Paul Ozawa, Minnie Shirai, and Peter Heyano had similar priorities: returning home to their lands or at the very least regaining freedom of movement and maintaining kinship ties. Their priorities suggest that the basis of their Indigenous identities was in relationships both to other human beings and to the land. In contrast, the basis of the Indian racial classification is blood quantum. Rather than assert a purely "biological" connection, relationality emphasizes the ability to teach culture and language through

⁹³ John Little explained this to me in the context of Dakota veterans, which informed my interpretation of Paul Ozawa's words. See John A. Little, "Vietnam Akičita: Lakota and Dakota Military Tradition in the Twentieth Century" (Minneapolis, MN, University of Minnesota, 2020), 9.

one's relationships. Furthermore, it acknowledges the complexities of family beyond biological ties.

All three used letter-writing to advocate for themselves—with limited effect. The letters drew some attention to their cases, particularly for Minnie and Paul, who contacted WRA officials in Washington. In contrast, Henry Hope—the adoptee whose story had been so compelling to Bartlett—wrote one letter to his local WRA relocation officer asking for permission to return to his foster parents in Alaska on February 14, 1945.⁹⁴ The relocation officer in Idaho Falls gave a standard reply informing him “it will be necessary for you to get permission from them to return to your home.”⁹⁵ Nine months later, he received notice that the WRA could arrange boat reservations back to Alaska. By that point, all incarcerated from Alaska were being permitted to return.⁹⁶ As these letters traveled (and did not travel) from one desk to the next, they helped the incarcerated navigate some of the maze of government bureaucracy. Inevitably, the requests ended up being denied by the army and none of the three were able to return to Alaska before Spring 1945, which is when the ADC generally began approving cases for return. Governmental bureaucracy undermined the building of human relationships by distancing the decision-makers from the people about whom decisions were being made.

There is a significant difference between how Peter Heyano's letters were received and how Paul Ozawa and Minnie Shirai's letters were received. Peter Heyano,

⁹⁴ Henry Hope to Ernest J. Palmer, Relocation Officer, WRA, February 14, 1945, Boise, ID; Henry Hope Folder; E22; RG210; NARA-DC.

⁹⁵ Ernest J. Palmer to Henry Hope, November 26, 1945, Boise, ID; Henry Hope Folder; E22; RG210; NARA-DC.

⁹⁶ Ernest J. Palmer to Henry Hope, February 17, 1945, Boise, ID; Henry Hope Folder; E22; RG210; NARA-DC.

working on a seasonal leave permit, eager to serve in the U.S. Army and only trying to make sure his little brother was cared for before he left, continued to receive WRA paternalism throughout the war. But Minnie Shirai and Paul Ozawa would come to be treated as “problems” by the WRA and other agencies.

Misbehavior

On April 11, 1944, Vernon R. Kennedy, a relocation supervisor, wrote to R. B. Cozzens, WRA Assistant Director, of Paul Ozawa: “This young man’s emotional stability is being seriously disturbed by reason of his living in this unfamiliar setting and he has become something of a problem.”⁹⁷ He did not elaborate further. But he had a solution: he wanted the WRA to ask the ADC to allow Paul Ozawa to return to Alaska. While Paul Ozawa undoubtedly wanted to return to Alaska and this might easily be construed as a form of care, the term “something of a problem” suggests that Paul had become a nuisance to the WRA and this was the easiest way to end its responsibilities to him. Paul Ozawa’s and Minnie Shirai’s refusals to conform to the WRA’s expectations of good behavior resisted the WRA’s paternalism. Of course, these behaviors may not have actually risen to the level of conscious resistance. They may have been acting out against the paternalism of the WRA or attempting to rebuild lives for themselves under trying circumstances in the best way they could. Even so, I argue that their “problem” behavior helped them advocate for themselves and their families.

⁹⁷ Vernon R. Kennedy, Relocation Supervisor, WRA, to R. B. Cozzens, Assistant Director, WRA, April 11, 1944, Chicago, Illinois; Paul Ozawa Folder; E22; RG210; NARA-DC.

The desire to be rid of responsibility for an incarcerated could spur officials to take special action on their cases, in ways that both served and harmed the incarcerated. In the end, neither being a “problem” nor attempting to navigate the WRA by excelling at its demands actually helped these incarcerated get back to Alaska any faster. The bureaucracy of the settler state managed to flatten out and neutralize any attempts to create policy exceptions for individuals, and upheld settler colonial logics.

What had Paul Ozawa done to be designated “something of a problem”? He had health problems—blindness in one eye and an injury to one of his arms. He was constantly in and out of jobs because of this and requested grants and loans from the WRA to care for his family. He also received at least one personal loan from a WRA officer. Murray E. Stebbins, a relocation officer in Havre, Montana, wrote to Paul Ozawa on November 30, 1943, “I exceeded by authority in making a personal loan, but I know you so well that I felt I could do it. I do hope that you will make a special effort to clear this obligation at an early date as possible.”⁹⁸ While Stebbins’ willingness to give Paul Ozawa a personal loan even though it exceeded his authority might easily be read as a form of care, he—like many of his colleagues—used this loan to assert paternalistic control and settler power dynamics over Paul.

In November 1944, Stebbins wrote to an agent at the Great Northern Railway, “Will you kindly pass the enclosed envelope to Mr. Paul Ozawa at the time you send him his December 1 paycheck?” He specified, “My wish is that Paul will receive the enclosed

⁹⁸ Murray E. Stebbins, Relocation Officer, WRA, to Paul Ozawa, November 30, 1943, Havre, MT; Paul Ozawa Folder; E22; RG210; NARA-DC.

letter at the same time he receives his check. Please do not give it to him before.”⁹⁹

Stebbins use of the railway agent as a go between and his specific instructions about when to send the letter to Paul show his mistrust that Paul would in fact pay the loan, and the timing especially implies that he believed Paul was not good at managing his money—a stereotype that is often applied to Native Americans.

His tone in the enclosed letter did away with any pretense of care. He stated, “Upon receipt of your December 1 paycheck, I am expecting you to immediately purchase express office money order from Mr. E. E. Pierce in the amount of \$7.00 and promptly forward it to me. ... Your account with this office is now 14 months old and your promise was that you would take care of it within 30 or 60 days.” He did not ask whether Paul was in a position to pay this at the time. He did not even frame this as a request. He essentially ordered Paul to immediately use his paycheck to pay off this debt. In addition, he suggests that the account was not with him but with the office itself, even though he stated in an earlier letter that it was a personal loan. He used his authority with the WRA to put added pressure on Paul to pay back the loan.

Stebbins added ominously: “Taking care of this account at this time, Paul, may save you considerable embarrassment.”¹⁰⁰ His chiding tone and his use of embarrassment as a threat inadvertently reveal the low stakes of the loan and Stebbins’ inability to do much other than paternalistically demand the money. Paul acknowledged the loan and stated that he intended to pay it back, but his subsequent letters do not make clear

⁹⁹ Murray E. Stebbins, Relocation Officer, WRA, to Paul Ozawa, November 28, 1944, Havre, MT (Stebbins to P. Ozawa, November 28, 1944); Paul Ozawa Folder; E22; RG210; NARA-DC.

¹⁰⁰ Stebbins to P. Ozawa, November 28, 1944.

whether he paid the check or why he could not or would not. He did pay back a loan with Havre General Finance for \$19.80, so this was irregular for him. He was not well paid and was likely barely making ends meet in Chicago. He may have prioritized his family's wellbeing over paying back the loan.

The loan was not the only reason Stebbins was upset. A month earlier, he had written reproachfully, "You have greatly disappointed me, Paul, in not complying with our request in regard to completing your indefinite leave card." He continued, "You complain in regard to people doubting your identification as a citizen of the United States and yet you fail to take minor steps to cloth yourself with proper identification by the War Relocation Authority to prove that you are a citizen." It is not clear why Paul did not complete the forms. It is possible his health issues and the difficulty of taking time off work to get his photograph taken, his fingerprints stamped, and filling out the forms made it difficult to complete the forms. He—like many incarcerated—may have been frustrated with the presumption that he needed to prove his loyalty. He may have also resented the regular scolding he was receiving from Stebbins. We may not know why he didn't fill out the indefinite leave card, but he must have had his reasons for it.

Stebbins continued, "You are travelling without identification which is not the proper thing to do."¹⁰¹ The word "proper" highlights how this was not so much a matter of legality for him as it was of etiquette and behavior. Could Stebbins' loan or the indefinite leave application be what Kennedy was referring to when he said Paul had become "something of a problem"? It seems unlikely that Stebbins would have brought

¹⁰¹ Murray E. Stebbins to Paul Ozawa, August 28, 1944, Havre, MT; Paul Ozawa Folder, E22; RG210; NARA-DC.

the loan to the attention of his supervisors at the WRA, given that he wasn't supposed to make the loan to begin with. It may have also been the delay in filling out the indefinite leave form, although there is no evidence that Stebbins discussed this with the WRA administrators in Washington.

Kennedy wasn't proposing to send Paul Ozawa back to Alaska because he cared about Paul. His request did not break from the WRA's pattern of treating Alaska Native incarcerated as moveable: he used moveability to designate the limits of the WRA's responsibilities to Paul. But Paul's "problem" behavior masterfully forced his and the WRA's goals into alignment. He longed to return to Alaska. The WRA had tried to "resettle" Paul in Montana first, then Chicago, then back to Montana. The jobs the WRA found never seemed to work out, he was always living paycheck to paycheck, he forwarded hospital bills to the WRA, and on at least four other occasions asked for loans or grants from the agency. He held the WRA responsible for him and his family up until he was allowed to return to Alaska, effectively making it so the only place where they might be relieved of responsibility for him was Alaska. His letters made the WRA prioritize him and his family. Though Paul was not permitted to return earlier to Alaska than any other incarcerated, he and his family were among the earliest Alaska Native incarcerated to do so. They also returned via plane, while the other incarcerated were sent home by steamer.

Paul Ozawa was not the only person the WRA sought to usher back to Alaska because of their "problem" behavior. By January 1944, Ross E. McPhail, a doctor at Pierce County's Mountain View Sanatorium, wanted Minnie Shirai gone. He wrote to the

WRA on January 18, “She is in condition to travel, and I would like to have her removed from this sanatorium. Mrs. Shirai is having a love affair with a man who is not a patient in the institution and has threatened to leave.”¹⁰² McPhail used her relationship—which went against white settlers’ behavioral expectations of proper behavior—to foist Minnie Shirai off on the WRA. We do not have any information about Minnie and Harvey’s marriage or about her relationship at Mountain View. The relationship itself undermined settler colonial norms around gender and women’s sexuality and McPhail’s concern with stopping this relationship shows how much it challenged his personal assumptions about how women should behave.

Interestingly, Minnie’s relationship—which undoubtedly helped her to survive the isolation of a period in her life that was testing all of her relationships—also led McPhail to ask for her to be sent to Manzanar, where her children were. Unfortunately, Minnie’s health deteriorated soon after, making such a reunification impossible. At one point, it seemed like her affair might actually help her be reunited with her children. But in other ways, the affair would also help these agencies justify not caring for her.

The illusion of settler care toward Minnie Shirai had begun to collapse a year earlier. The WRA was fiscally responsible for Minnie Shirai’s care in the sanatorium—or so it seemed. On January 23, 1943 when Joy Barragrey Stuart, a nursing consultant for the WRA, realized Minnie Shirai had no Japanese ancestry. Stuart asked if Minnie had ever actually signed a “non-evacuee waiver.” She had not but she had “verbally requested” to accompany her husband. Stuart determined that “we are not authorized to

¹⁰² Ross E. McPhail, Physician, Mountain View Sanatorium, January 18, 1944, Lakeview, WA; Jimmy Shirai Folder; E22; RG210; NARA-DC.

pay for her hospitalization or to effect her transfer to the Minidoka or Manzanar project when such transfer is approved by Doctor Thompson.”¹⁰³ Stuart used the fact that she was not Japanese to deny the WRA’s obligation to her.

The WRA did not go so far as to stop paying for her medical bills, but this would not be the end of the agency’s attempts to shrug its way out of its responsibilities to Minnie Shirai. In 1944, the WRA sought out permission from the Office of the Commanding General in Alaska for Minnie and the children to return to Alaska. Her husband and children’s ability to return would “be governed by Proclamation #1.” For Minnie, Colonel Leo J. Ohman of the ADC replied, “this headquarters has no objection to the return of Mrs. Shirai to Alaska provided that by so doing she will not become a Public Charge.”¹⁰⁴ Like McPhail’s to foist Minnie Shirai off on the WRA and the WRA attempt to foist her off on the state of Alaska, the ADC too sought to avoid responsibility for her. These agencies were playing bureaucratic hot potato with people’s lives.

There was no legal ground on which Minnie Shirai could be excluded from Alaska per Ohman’s request. Still, Robert A. Leflar from the WRA solicitor’s office pointed out, “it is equally true that [the] WRA is under no obligation to return her at Government expense.”¹⁰⁵ By agreeing not to fund Minnie Shirai’s return, the WRA created a de facto barrier to entry for her.

¹⁰³ Joy Barragrey Stuart, Nursing Consultant, WRA, to G.D. Carlyle Thompson, M.D., Medical Officer, WRA, January 26, 1943; Minnie Shirai Folder; E22; RG210; NARA-DC.

¹⁰⁴ Leo J. Ohman, Major, Assistant Adjutant General, Alaska General Defense, to Philip J. Webster, Field Director, WRA, February 22, 1944; Jimmy Shirai Folder; E22; RG210; NARA-DC.

¹⁰⁵ Robert A. Leflar, Assistant Solicitor, WRA, to Helen K. Shipps, Medical Department, WRA, March 9, 1944, Washington, DC; Jimmy Shirai Folder; E22; RG210; NARA-DC.

Harvey Shirai, who may have been informed of his wife's relationship by the mother of the man involved, had disappeared and was not responding to Minnie's messages. In spite of this, on March 9, 1944, Cozzens wrote, "I think that we should attempt to locate the husband, find out when Mrs. Shirai can leave and see if we can reunite the wife, husband and children in an area outside of a relocation center and be relieved of further responsibility."¹⁰⁶ Cozzens laid out starkly the limits of the WRA's responsibilities to those it had incarcerated. On its face, the goal was to "resettle" the family, but in reality this applied primarily to relieve the WRA of further responsibility. Cozzens, suggesting that Harvey Shirai was failing in his responsibilities as husband because he could not provide for his family, used settler colonial gender roles to discipline him into performing a certain role within the racialized settler state—just as he and McPhail had attempted to use Minnie Shirai's failure to perform settler gender roles as justification for dismissing their own responsibilities to her. Cozzens wanted Harvey Shirai to once again take on the role of primary wage earner, and the path the WRA provided for him to do that was through the alienation of his labor.

Harvey Shirai, separated from his three surviving children at Puyallup, had arrived at Minidoka on September 1, 1942. He left soon after to work on a Farm Security Administration labor camp in Burley, Idaho. Helen K. Shipps, in the WRA medical department, and Carl Sandoz, a counselor at Minidoka, interviewed Harvey on December 21, 1942 to figure out when and how he planned to regain his role as provider and caretaker for his family. Shipps reported, "He does not know why his family was so

¹⁰⁶ R.B. Cozzens, Assistant Director, WRA, to Philip J. Webster, March 1, 1944, San Francisco, CA; Jimmy Shirai Folder; E22; RG210; NARA-DC.

widely scattered at evacuation and hopes they may be reunited some day.” Harvey, Jr., and Jimmy both had tested positive for tuberculosis, which complicated any plan for their care. He turned down the option of being sent to Manzanar to be with his children because “he thinks it would be too difficult to get out of there for work.” Instead, he proposed, as Shipps recounted it, “He asked about having children mov [sic] to Minidoka but his only plan would be to have them taken care of by friends. As he expects to go out fishing, and as the children need special care, that did not seem advisable.”¹⁰⁷ I was unable to look at his file, so it is difficult to know whether he expressed more of his perspective there.¹⁰⁸ He may have seen leaving camp as the best possible option for reuniting his family in the long run. Being sent to Manzanar would not have resolved his problems. He would have either been stuck in camp caring for his three children and unable to rebuild a life outside of camp for them, or would have had to leave them in camp again to do work. Moreover, he would have not had the Alaska Native community at Minidoka. In this light, having the children cared for at Minidoka by friends may have been his best option. Unadvisable though it was from Shipps’ perspective, Shirai’s solution shows that he felt they would be well cared for by his friends at Minidoka, likely in the small Alaska Native community there. Shipps and Sandoz failed to account for Indigenous understandings of kinship, relationality, and community. Unilaterally deciding the children were better off in the care of a matron responsible for 60-odd children, they also dismissed the importance of culturally sensitive education in

¹⁰⁷ Helen K. Shipps, "Interview with Mr. Shirai December 21, 1942, in company with Mr. Carl Sandoz, Counselor at Minidoka Relocation Center"; Jimmy Shirai Folder; E22; RG210; NARA-DC.

¹⁰⁸ Rachel Shirai, who may be surviving, has medical records in his file. As such, I would need her permission to look at his records.

Indigenous children's wellbeing—something Sandoz's office had also done in the case of Johnny Heyano.

The veil of care toward the Shirai family devolved further when the WRA asked Minnie's doctors whether she was well enough to be reunited with her children. McPhail noted, "She does not cough a great deal, has no temperature and has had none for some time. ... Sputum examinations have been repeatedly negative for tubercle bacilli."¹⁰⁹ Moreover, he wrote, "her chest X-ray reveals no infection of right lung."¹¹⁰ Despite his earlier eagerness to get her off his hands and the apparent lack of a medical threat, he issued a chilling warning, "I do not think her children would ever be safe around this woman, even though she has negative sputums. Her children, in my opinion, would be much better off if they were kept from her forever."¹¹¹

His admission that he made this recommendation "even though she has negative sputums" suggests that this was not a medical opinion but a personal one—likely shaped by her recent affair. By folding it into a paragraph on her x-rays and her lungs, he portrayed it as a professional medical opinion. He used his authority as a medical official to separate a mother from her children.

There is no evidence that Minnie Shirai was anything but devoted to her children. As we saw in her letter earlier, she cared for them immensely and worried about them while she was at Mountain View. In keeping her from her children, he was participating in a multi-generational and ongoing trend in which the settler state has used coercive

¹⁰⁹ Ross E. McPhail, Physician, Mountain View Sanatorium, to Philip J. Webster, Assistant Field Director, WRA, January 27, 1944, Lakeview, WA; Jimmy Shirai Folder; E22; RG210; NARA-DC.

¹¹⁰ McPhail to Webster, January 27, 1944.

¹¹¹ McPhail to Webster, January 27, 1944.

tactics, like boarding schools and more recently the foster care system, to separate Indigenous children from their parents.

Together, the WRA, the OIA, and the ADC paint a vivid picture of agencies trying to avoid responsibility for Alaska Native incarcerated in any way they could—even as they purported to care about them. Clearly, when care for an Indigenous incarcerated began to conflict with the need to “be relieved of further responsibility,” care gave way to other priorities.

Over the course of the war, the veneer of the WRA’s paternalistic care wore thin, revealing the limits of its employees’ care. Paternalism, after all, is not in fact about care so much as it is about control. Minnie Shirai and Paul Ozawa’s problem behavior highlighted the limits of that control. It was arguably more effective at advocating for Paul and Minnie’s interests than such care. The WRA was more proactive in seeking out permission from the state of Alaska for both of these individuals to return to Alaska than for others. By February and March 1944, the WRA had initiated correspondence with the Alaska Defense Command about whether Minnie and Paul might return to Alaska. While “problem” behavior did not get them home any faster, it put added attention on their cases, resisted attempts to successfully discipline Indigenous bodies—and as we shall see in the next section, became a way of challenging the sovereignty of the settler state over Indigenous bodies.

Movement and Indigenous Identity

Earlier, we saw that the federal government used moveability to racially classify mixed Alaska Native and Japanese American families: removing them from Alaska by classifying them as Japanese, trying to send some to a reservation by classifying them as American Indian, separating family members from one another, releasing them on seasonal leave permits, deciding when and on what terms they would be permitted to return to Alaska. The WRA constructed these individuals as moveable not just as Japanese Americans but also as Indigenous people. Still, as the letters and behaviors of Paul Ozawa, Minnie Shirai, and Peter Heyano demonstrate, incarcerated individuals adopted, altered, appropriated, and manipulated these racial classifications to advocate for their own needs. Because moveability figured so centrally in the racial classifications of both Japanese Americans and Indigenous people, I hold that movement itself becomes a field on which the struggle over these individuals' racial classifications and identities. In the introduction to this chapter, we encountered Henry Ozawa, Paul's youngest brother, who walked off from his job at the logging camp multiple times—even though his leave permit forbade it. Because the settler state continually circumscribed Ozawa's movements, his mobility—the movements he chose for himself—can tell us a lot about his priorities, even without any words. Where possible, he not only disregarded any authority the WRA claimed over his movements, but also repeatedly asserted his right to move, and preserved the limited freedom he had to do so. I analyze Henry Ozawa's mobility as an assertion of his own identity and his Indigenous sovereignty.

Asians and American Indians have been stereotyped as polar opposites around labor. While Asians tend to be stereotyped as the good laborer—even as they were also

being racialized as the enemy alien, the WRA used their reputation as good farmers to guide how it put them to work—Indigenous people tend to be stereotyped as lazy when it comes to settler-approved modes of work. Before we make the mistake of reading Ozawa’s actions as fulfilling this dangerous and inaccurate stereotype, we should take into account his references. Keppner himself described Ozawa as a model employee in February 1943.

Ozawa filed for his indefinite leave permit on January 8, 1943. The request for references was sent out in February, probably right around the time when he walked off for the first time. He listed four references. Keppner’s reference declared that Ozawa was a “Neat workman. Dependable in all matters. Good carpenter and gen. Handy man at present logging for me.”

Andrew Hope was Henry’s boss for nearly four years from May 1938 through April 1942. He also praised Henry’s work ethic: “While Henry was still in the Sheldon Jackson School, he started to work in my boat building shop, learning the trade. He learned very fast, in two years he was getting regular carpenters pay. He was stil[l] working for me when he was moved to the consentration camp.”

Henry Ozawa was a hard worker—when he wanted to be. With this context, the fact that he walked off so many times is one of the loudest assertions of his voice and his bodily autonomy that settler archives have to offer. Through his movements, we see how he challenged Keppner’s and the WRA’s ability to tell him where and what work he should do, as well as how he prioritized the preservation of his limited freedom of movement by following WRA regulations just enough.

Henry never left Madison County, as was mandated by his leave permit, but he also did not report his change of address, which was another requirement. And he definitely did not comply with the spirit of the permit, which implied that he had been released specifically to work for Keppner. He broke the permit just enough to assert his freedom of movement, but not enough for the WRA to send him back to Minidoka. He acknowledged the WRA's ability to dictate his movements to him only insofar as he had to in order to preserve the limited mobility he did have. If he hadn't complied with the removal orders, he would have been sent to jail instead. He went Puyallup but left as soon as he was able. He went to Minidoka, but left as soon as he was able. He left Keppner, but stayed in the county, and thus avoided being sent back to Minidoka.

After Henry left for the last time on May 24, 1943, Keppner reported, "He is now in Rexburg doing nothing at present so near as I know." Keppner's priority was the effectiveness of his alien labor force—and Henry Ozawa was proof that it was possible to just up and leave. His value to Keppner rested on his willingness to labor for the settler state. Keppner urged the WRA "for the good moral effect it will have on other evacuees who are working in this district" to "have the man returned to his center [Minidoka]." He attempted to use the threat of confinement to discipline Ozawa—and by extension his other employees—into alien labor. Somewhat ironically, he saw sending Henry Ozawa back to be among Japanese Americans—who earlier were threats to his "Americanization"—as a way to discipline him into the alien worker.

Instead, by "doing nothing," Ozawa refused to fulfill the role of alien labor for the settler state. Ozawa's actions demand that we turn the "bad worker" stereotype on its

head: what would it mean to read Indigenous people who refuse to “work” in ways that neatly align with settler standards of work as refusals to serve that role?

Ozawa did not ask for permission to leave; nor did he recognize the authority of the WRA or of Keppner to limit his movements. He also refused to give a reason for leaving. The first time he left, Keppner wrote, “there was never any apparent reason for the trouble. He just would not talk.”¹¹² His refusal to explain himself upset Keppner, who mentioned it repeatedly in his letter. On May 24th, Ozawa again gave “no good reason for quitting.”¹¹³ Whether intentional or not, Ozawa’s refusal to give any reason—let alone a “good” one—gestures to his unwillingness to make his decisions legible both to the settler state and its archives. Not explaining himself asserts a sovereignty beyond the U.S.

W.W. Palmer, a relocation officer based in Idaho Falls, did not send Ozawa back to Minidoka. Instead, he found Ozawa a new work assignment with Edwin M. Smith in Soda Springs. In a letter from Ozawa dated June 15, 1943—one of the few examples of Ozawa’s voice that I have found in the archives—Ozawa thanked the unidentified recipient (likely Palmer) for finding him the new job, and said that he is “satisfied” with it. We should read past the gratitude Ozawa expressed. He may very well have been grateful to Palmer, but his thankfulness also helped him maintain a relationship with a contact who could advocate for Henry Ozawa and help him navigate federal bureaucracy. Palmer had done a lot to make sure that Henry would not go back to Minidoka. After he pretty overtly broke WRA policy by “up and leaving” his job with Keppner, Palmer still found a way to keep him from having to return to Minidoka. He may have also given

¹¹² Keppner to W.W. Palmer, May 25, 1943.

¹¹³ Keppner to W.W. Palmer, May 25, 1943.

Henry a loan in the process—he mentioned a loan he was repaying in the letter. Henry could have been grateful, but he could have also been trying to stay on Palmer’s good side—or some combination of the two. Still, his insistence that he be “satisfied” with his job shows that he was not willing to just go anywhere and do any work. In other words, he was unwilling to be alienated from his labor and would walk off the job to ensure that that did not happen.

Interestingly, Henry Ozawa was never treated as a “problem” like his eldest brother or Minnie Shirai. It is not possible to say with any certainty why that is, but one striking difference between Henry and the other two is that Henry’s file only had one letter, and it was a thank you note to a local WRA employee that repaid the loan. Both Minnie and Paul tended to correspond with officials at the regional or national level, and wrote more frequently as well. In addition, neither of them were Japanese American, which may have helped lessen WRA employees’ sense of obligation to them. By the end of July 1943, Palmer wrote to Henry Ozawa that he had “decided to approve you for Indefinite Leave and I am quite sure that you want it.” The application still listed him as working for Keppner, which had not been true since late April. Apparently, Palmer did not feel it important to update the forms.¹¹⁴

In fact, Palmer told Henry, “Even though I am going to send in for your Indefinite Leave if you return the papers which I am enclosing, I still feel that if you are getting well settled that you should remain in Soda Springs rather than return to the Rexburg

¹¹⁴ It is interesting to consider how and when government officials were willing to bend in their requirements for paperwork and how and when they were not.

section.”¹¹⁵ The slippage of the term “well settled” takes on new meaning because Henry Ozawa was Indigenous to Alaska. This suggests how “resettlement”—as the WRA called it—for Alaska Native incarcerated, translated into a way to turn these individuals into potential settlers, and thus yet another tactic to eliminate their indigeneity, by “resettling” them to places other than their homelands.

But Henry Ozawa could not be “well settled” by the WRA—it was a temporary stop for him. In early June 1944, he left Idaho for Chicago. He may have verbally informed the WRA of his intent to leave, but he only provided written documentation after the fact. Given that a WRA employee seemed to be under the impression on June 7, 1944 that Ozawa was “planning to get a job in timber somewhere,” it seems unlikely that the WRA knew anything about his plans to go to Chicago before he wrote to them to tell them he had moved. Again, Henry refused to recognize the WRA’s “authority” over him and his movements.

How did mobility fit into Henry Ozawa’s Indigenous identity? Without an explanation, it is impossible to ascribe with complete certainty any motivation to his movements. WRA correspondence suggests that Henry went to Chicago at least in part to find his brother Joseph. His desire to maintain his relationship with his brother—a symbol of his Indigenous kinship ties—was yet another way he resisted being converted into alienated labor and the elimination of his Tlingit identity. Though Henry Ozawa did not talk explicitly about his relationship with the land or with his family in the archives,

¹¹⁵ W.W. Palmer to Henry Ozawa, July 29, 1943; Henry Ozawa Folder; E22; RG210; NARA-DC.

his movements and even his silence challenged settler state claims to authority over him and attempts to “resettle” him.

Conclusion

Paul Ozawa and his family flew to Juneau on May 1, 1945.¹¹⁶ Joseph also returned to Alaska. It is unclear when or for how long Henry returned. Still, it would be dangerously simplistic to depict the lack of evidence of a return merely through the lens of elimination.

Evidence of eliminatory tactics by the settler state—some far more extreme than archival elimination—litter these folders. The general policies of the WRA in many ways became eliminatory when they were applied to Indigenous bodies. The forced removal excluded more than fifty people Indigenous people from their homelands. As I discuss in Chapter 1, the removal and incarceration destabilized Japanese American property and exerted pressure on these families and individuals to sell their property. Such a destabilization of property also served as a mode of elimination when used against Alaska Native individuals: Costia Yoshida, for instance, was forced to sell his cabin in Alaska during the war for a price “not less than 500 dollars.”¹¹⁷

Many families were separated from one another either in different camps or back in Alaska. Beyond the hardship that family separation presented for the families involved, the practice challenged Indigenous kinship ties. Sent to Minidoka at just sixteen, George

¹¹⁶ This was unusual—most incarcerated took ships, not planes. It is not clear to me why Paul and his family were given plane tickets instead.

¹¹⁷ Costia Yoshida to Kodiak First National Bank, September 15, 1942; Costia Yoshida Folder; E22; RG210; NARA-DC.

Miyasato was separated from both his father, who had been taken to Lordsburg, New Mexico, and his mother Mary and sister Harriet, who were not subject to the removal and remained in Alaska.¹¹⁸ In the case of the Foode family, the four eldest brothers were forced to leave while the sisters and younger siblings were permitted to stay in Alaska. The Shirai siblings from their parents. Johnny and Peter Heyano from one another and from their father. The Ozawa brothers lost touch. The constant movement forced families to make difficult decisions to either stay together or to separate temporarily to get out of camp faster.

The stakes of Indigenous elimination are also death. Three Alaska Native infants—Georgiana Okegawa, Harry George Okegawa, and Gerald Shirai—died in the camps. Georgiana developed pneumonia after her eczema got infected. Harry George also died from pneumonia. The close proximity in which incarcerated were living in camp heightened the risk of contagion—particularly for infants. Their deaths should have been preventable. The reason for Gerald Shirai’s death was not listed in his death record, and was not included in the records of Puyallup deaths—in yet another example of archival elimination.

Still, the records about this small community reveal—sometimes without a single word—a constant refusal to grant the WRA or the settler governments more generally the power to define their identities, both in terms of race and beyond. From the willingness to just up and walk away from the logging camp, to their “good” behavior and their misbehavior, to the letters they wrote, to the community they built as Alaska Native

¹¹⁸ Paulette Moreno, *Keeping an Eye on Family*, Digital Storytelling Workshop, 7th Annual Heart Mountain Pilgrimage, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VIC362QUunc&app=desktop>.

incarcerees displaced by the incarceration, they continually struggled against the settler state's eliminatory tactics and advocated for themselves, their families, and their Indigenous nations.

Conclusion

Looking from overhead at Japanese American incarceration sites today, you can still see the rigid grid of the blocks etched into the land with each step taken by people living behind barbed wire. The trauma of cement foundations that no one ever bothered to remove because they couldn't be sold off—that is what remains on the site today.

From the reclamation of land owned and leased by Japanese Americans toward white settlers, to the placement of Japanese Americans on American Indian reservations without the consent of the councils, to the use of Indigenous and Japanese American labor to build the settler state and convert “public” lands into private homesteads for by and large white settlers, to the forced removal and incarceration of 55 people with Alaska Native ancestry, this dissertation has shown that the settler state consistently exploited its World War II incarceration of Japanese Americans to advance its deeply embedded and foundational settler colonial imperatives. These entanglements did not end with the war itself. The ethnic studies movement, the American Indian Movement, and the Japanese American redress movement would go onto bring these entanglements back to the fore. At least seven former incarcerated were among the 17 Japanese Americans who visited

Alcatraz in February 1970 to express their solidarity with the American Indian activists there.¹¹⁹ While these individuals were certainly in the minority, their activism complicates narratives of Nisei silence.

The Unangax forced removal and incarceration during World War II led to the death of one in ten of those subjected to it. Efforts for reparations for both Japanese Americans and Unangax led to a complex politics of recognition and simultaneous erasure of the extreme neglect that the Unangax faced at the hands of the U.S. government.

It amazes me that when I started my project back in 2016, I had been thinking about these mostly as strange poetic coincidences, an obliviousness evident throughout much American popular culture and an education system that continues to erase how white supremacy, racial capitalism, and settler colonialism undergird U.S. nation-building. What's striking to me now is not that these entanglements exist—but rather that we are at all surprised by them, that we have ever been able to kid ourselves into thinking about them as coincidences.

Analyzing these themes through and against settler archives reveals a level of state planning that is not poetic but rather culturally created. So many individuals across so many different agencies uncritically held a varying yet similar set of beliefs: that Japanese American incarceration should irrigate the land, should settle the land, should use incarcerated Japanese American labor to implement settler land management, should

¹¹⁹ The names of Japanese Americans who went to Alcatraz that I was able to confirm were incarcerated were Isao Isago Tanaka (Gila River, Tule Lake); Marlene Tanioka (Merced, Granada); Raymond Okamura (Gila River); Ko Ijichi (Rohwer); Joseph Morozumi (Topaz); Mary Ann Takagi; Lloyd Wake (Poston).

redistribute that land to white settlers, should be used to push American Indians into settler land management practices, should proceed without permission of American Indians to whom those lands belong, should sweep up mixed Alaska Native men and their spouses and children, should try to release them earlier than other Japanese Americans, should put them in the custody of the Office of Indian Affairs. These beliefs in all their different permutations reveal the deep embeddedness of settler colonial assumptions in American governance.

There is still much to do in terms of analyzing Japanese American incarceration through the lens of settler colonialism—I hope that others will do longform site-specific analyses that can show the potential of a sustained engagement with one site. As I began writing each of these chapters, it was clear to me that each one could be expanded into its own book. Still, I believe that there is value in looking across the sites to show the structural impact that settler colonialism had on Japanese American incarceration.

By this point, engagements with settler colonialism in Asian American studies are nothing new. And yet, the field would benefit immensely from a more sustained engagement with American Indian and Indigenous Studies. While to some degree this is happening in Hawai‘i and Guam in particular, I believe that American Indian and Indigenous Studies has much to offer in terms of understanding how to further our own commitments to de-centering the field and to doing community-centered research. In addition, the field challenges us in salient ways to differentiate the legacies of colonialism and race, and allows us to see past dominant narratives of settler colonialism.

Settler colonialism relies on a narrative about the inevitability of the settler state that continues to marginalize and eliminate American Indians and Indigenous people and presents the settler state as a done deal. In contrast, I find American Indian and Indigenous studies to be profoundly hopeful in its challenges to confront the traumas and wrongs of the past, to center the survivance of Indigenous people today, and to work actively toward decolonization. American Indian and Indigenous Studies taught me to understand structure through the people it impacted and to center their experiences wherever possible. This approach enables us to see what settler colonialism would obscure: the ways American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Japanese Americans have interacted with one another, even as the settler state attempted to keep them separated—literally—on different sides of the barbed wire fence. These interactions were—are—fraught and maddening and cringeworthy at times, even when handled with the best of intentions. But there is something beautiful not in the result but in the effort to refute hegemonic narratives and center the communities’ voices—especially given the ways that they have been separated from one another on the land, in settler archives, and in history. From the Colorado River Indian Community Council’s narrative that what was happening to Japanese Americans on their land was both a repetition of government disrespect for their sovereignty and a source of their empathy for Japanese Americans, to the Gila River Indian Community’s preservation of the bust of Sayoko Kawamura, to the inefficient labor of Japanese Americans, to the walking off of Henry Ozawa, there is also something beautiful that has come out of the resistance to and preservation of these shared experiences in our communities—something that remains in spite of the razing of

the sites and the hegemonic narratives of redress that seek to paint this as a closed chapter.

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