# Re-Presenting Voices: Activism of Asian American Artists and Memories of Japanese American Wartime Internment

Aiko Takeuchi

> Much of the Asian American experience is what I call "negative history". . . Asians have been more celebrated for what has happened to them than for what they have accomplished. . . . Today, and for the last few decades, this is demonstrably no longer the case. This remarkable metamorphosis in the image and status of the Asian American since World War II offers dramatic evidence of how rapidly and selectively the supposedly glacial folkways can change.
>
> Roger Daniels, Asian America, 1988

> "You gotta keep the history yourself or lose it forever, boy. That's the mandate of heaven."
>
> Frank Chin, Donald Duk, 1991

The internment of Japanese Americans on the West Coast during World War II is undoubtedly one of the most crucial and traumatic events in American history. The ways in which such experience is memorized are not stable, nor monolithic, for past memories are often re-articulated and re-interpreted in order to match the contemporary social or political situations. This is particularly true of the memories concerning Japanese American resistance inside the internment camps. During and after the war, "resistance" exclusively referred to the "right-wing" opposition by a small group of militant pro-Japanese men. The resisters were "negatively" described as the victims of history, impaired by their fate as a minority group with the blood of an enemy country. Gradually since the 1970s, however, "positive" interpretations of Japanese American resistance have started to emerge in the internment narratives. Notably, a group of pro-American men who refused to be inducted into the military until their civil rights had been restored, later called the "left opposition" or the "draft resisters," suddenly attracted special attention in the 1990s—after the achievement of the Japanese American redress movement.[1] For about half a century, however, the draft resisters had been all but excluded, by scholars and many former internees alike, from the memories of internment as a whole. Then, how and why did these men suddenly emerge as heroes in American history after such a long period of silence?

[1] Roger Daniels first termed this pro-American resistance "left opposition," as distinct from the pro-Japanese "right-wing" opposition. See Roger Daniels, *Concentration Camps USA: Japanese Americans and World War II* (Hinsdale, Ill.: Dryden Press, 1971), 106–107, 128–129; Daniels, *Asian America: Chinese and Japanese in the United States since 1850* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988), 258–260, 266–274.

In this article, I will examine the changes in internment narratives across time. I argue that the variations in the narratives reflect the social situations surrounding Japanese Americans of each specific period as well as the changing self-images and expectations of the Japanese Americans themselves. In that respect, the Asian American Movement of the Civil Rights era contributed a great deal to the re-interpretation of internment memories by creating a new way of categorization: from an inclusive "Japanese America" to a hybrid "Asian America." The memories of internment no longer belonged solely to the internees; younger Japanese Americans and other Asian Americans actively took part in the story-telling process. The emergence of new historical narratives, however, does not mean that they have replaced the older ones. Instead, it has created a diversification and coexistence of different voices and memories, at times resulting in clashes and conflicts *inside* a supposedly coherent "collective memory."[2]

Another focus of my study is on the role of artists in presenting these new historical narratives and interpretations. The boundary between historical and fictional narratives has always been ambiguous although there have been constant efforts to separate them in the modern period. In the last few decades, under the tide of a postmodern "de-naturalizing" process—as a critique against structuralism and dualistic approaches—the distinction between history and fiction seems to have become increasingly blurred. History-writing is conceived as a parallel to fiction-writing, as the teller "constructs" the truths, "chooses" facts, and "speaks for" them. On the other hand, as cultural theorist Linda Hutcheon argues, postmodern art and literature are commonly perceived as historical and political acts.[3] Special attention is paid to minority cultural works, as Lisa Lowe argues in *Immigrant Acts*, as containing the power to represent historical and political alternatives to the mainstream society.[4] In tune with these current perceptions on history, my intention is to illuminate the influential roles of minority artists themselves and their aims in promoting political movements and subverting historical narratives.

## 1. Silent Memories in the Postwar Decades

After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, the war against Japan became inevitable and the anti-Japanese sentiment throughout the country reached its peak. With Lieutenant General DeWitt's recommendation for the Japanese American mass internment, President Franklin Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 on February 19, 1942 based on "military necessity" and "national safety."[5] Ultimately, 120,000 Japanese Americans, two-thirds of whom were citizens, were interned in ten internment camps.[6]

---

[2] For the concept of "collective memory" as a socially constructed notion, I have mainly referred to Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, ed. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

[3] Linda Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), 3, 58.

[4] Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 96.

During and shortly after the war, under the strict governmental surveillance, there were only limited information and images available to the general public concerning the Japanese Americans inside the camps. Research on the internment policy during this period was mostly restricted to social scientists hired by the War Relocation Authority (WRA). These studies, photographs, and other forms of information helped to promote the impression of "happy camps."[7] Some of them expressed the tragedy and injustice of internment; but this was possible only by stressing the obedience and loyalty of the internees and the benevolence of the administrators in the harshest situations. Common to these early internment narratives was the lack of stories about confusion and protests. Resistance, as described, came solely from a small number of "disloyal," pro-Japanese agitators.[8]

The leaders of the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), as the "representatives" of the community, actively took part in this effort to give positive interpretations to the gross injustice in order to promote favorable images of Nisei (second-generation Japanese American) citizens and their unrelenting spirit of Americanism.[9] The most ideal models for these images were the Nisei soldiers, who demonstrated their "loyalty" and "patriotism" on the battlefield with the "proof in blood."[10] Together with the government, the JACL leaders made every effort to give prominence to the "glorious achievements" and heroism of Nisei soldiers as

---

[5] This stance was clarified in the Tolan Committee, in which the final decision for evacuation was made.

[6] This could be seen as "a major event in the history of American democracy, without precedent in the past and with disturbing implications for the future," considering that the total number of Japanese on the U.S. mainland had been approximately 127,000. Gary Y. Okihiro, *The Columbia Guide to Asian American History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 104; Alice Yang Murray, ed., *What Did the Internment of Japanese Americans during World War II Mean?* (Boston: Bedford/Macmillan, 2000), 5.

[7] The images of the camps produced by "outside" photographers, notably Ansel Adams and Dorothea Lange, conveyed compelling messages of various aspects inside the barbed wire which written documents could not. Even so, their photographs were under the strict control of the government and selectively used to support the administration. For detailed analysis on this topic, see Elena Tajima Creef, "The Representation of the Japanese American Body in the Documentary Photography of Ansel Adams, Dorothea Lange, and Toyo Miyatake," Chap. 1 in *Imaging Japanese America: The Visual Construction of Citizenship, Nation, and the Body* (New York: New York University Press, 2004). The public media were also affected by the biased images promoted by the government. The best and most detailed example would be a photographic article by Carl Mydans in *Life* (March 20, 1944), which features the Tuke Lake camp—notoriously known as a "segregation center" for "disloyal" Japanese Americans.

[8] Dorothy Thomas and Richard Nishimoto, *The Spoilage* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1946) was particularly significant in stigmatizing the image of "disloyal" internees.

[9] At the national level in the early 1940s, the JACL claimed 20,000 members out of a total Nisei population between 70,000 and 75,000, but in fact they had less than 8,000 paid-up members. Paul R. Spickard, "The Nisei Assume Power: The Japanese Citizens League, 1941-1942," *Pacific Historical Review* 52, no. 2 (May 1983): 156.

[10] The spirit of the "proof in blood" has long been endorsed by many Japanese Americans. See the chapter, "Proof in Blood," in Bill Hosokawa, *Nisei: The Quiet Americans* (New York: William Morrow, 1969), 393-422.

symbolized in the Hollywood film, *Go for Broke* (1951).[11] The presence of "disloyal" Japanese Americans, therefore, was a threat that would harm their progressive view of Americanism, in which the goal was total assimilation to the American white society. In short, this selective process of constructing memories—promoting the image of Japanese American "loyalty" and suppressing "disloyalty"—came not only from such *outside* forces as the government officials, but also from *inside* the Japanese American community. This "WRA-JACL narrative" of internment remained dominant for decades, until younger generations under the influence of the Civil Rights Movement gradually started to question the assimilationist stance of the former generations.

## 2. Reviving Memories in the 1970s

Although the image of "quiet Americans" became fixed in the postwar decades, this did not mean that Japanese Americans never claimed their civil rights during that time.[12] In fact, the JACL, holding up its reputation as the "civil rights organization," made a series of legislative efforts including: the repeal of California's Alien Land Law (1946), the passage of the Evacuation Claim Act (1948), and the acquisition of naturalization rights for Issei (first-generation Japanese immigrants) as incarnated in the 1950 Internal Security Act.

Apart from these outward achievements, however, many younger Japanese American activists started to view the JACL policies as merely "obsequiously yield[ing] everything to the government."[13] Collisions among Japanese Americans gradually surfaced in the 1970s through such civil rights campaigns as the repeal of Title II of the Internal Security Act (achieved in 1971) and the pardon of Iva Toguri, better known as "Tokyo Rose" (achieved in 1977).[14]

Similar conflicts took place in the redress movement, one of the most prominent achievements for Japanese Americans. There are several possible origins of this movement, but Robert Shimabukuro's *Born in Seattle* shows that the first practical plan for redressing the internment—in the form of direct monetary compensation to individuals—came from the Nisei engineers at the Boeing Company in Seattle, later calling themselves the Seattle Redress

---

[11] Although the Nisei soldiers—physically portrayed as diminutive, exotic, and even feminine—remain secondary to the "true" hero, the athletic and masculine white lieutenant, the JACL leaders gave a positive response to the film as shedding light on the Nisei's bravery and heroism. I should also note that this film appeared in the political context of anti-communism; by promoting positive images of Japanese American loyalty, the film-makers aimed to prevent the United States from creating spies and sabotage. This anti-communist mentality concerning the film is revealed in *New York Times*, Sep. 17, 1950.

[12] The "quiet Americans" was a widespread stereotype even acknowledged by many Japanese Americans themselves, as evident in Bill Hosokawa's *Nisei: The Quiet Americans*.

[13] William Minoru Hohri, *Repairing America: An Account of the Movement for Japanese-American Redress* (Pullman, Wash.: Washington State University Press, 1984), 40.

[14] For detailed accounts on these campaigns, see Raymond Okamura, "Background and History of the Repeal Campaign," *Amerasia Journal* 2, no. 2 (Fall 1974): 73–94; Clifford Uyeda, "The Pardoning of 'Tokyo Rose': A Report on the Restoration of American Citizenship to Iva Ikuko Toguri," *Amerasia Journal* 5, no. 2 (1978): 69–94.

Committee (SERC).[15] The SERS members, with the support of the JACL Seattle Chapter, wrote a paper on the redress addressed to the National JACL, which uniquely identified the method of payment and was formally documented in November 1975. It also plainly criticized the JACL for its past accommodationist stance. However, since the National JACL showed little interest in their plan, the Seattle activists appealed to the local chapters on the grassroots level.[16]

On the national level, a group of convention delegates and observers made a presentation on the case for reparations at the 1970 JACL National Convention held in Chicago. One of the speakers, Edison Uno, then co-chair of the group fighting for the repeal of Title II, called upon the National JACL to seek congressional legislation to compensate for internment losses.[17] As a result of such growing pressure from activists throughout the country, the JACL finally created the National Committee for Redress (NCR) in 1976. In March 1979, however, the NCR altered its program from support of redress legislation to support of legislation for a study commission, owing to a "national mood of fiscal conservatism."[18] The ineffectiveness of the NCR's actions was largely due to the reluctance among older JACL leaders to "set a price on the priceless sacrifice of freedom." The redress, they argued, would be "self-defeating in terms of a backlash against what [they] as a people have accomplished."[19]

Meanwhile, the WRA-JACL narrative of internment was gradually being re-examined by historians influenced by the Civil Rights ethos. These revisionist scholars attributed the internment policy to the government's institutionalized racism—instead of "military necessity," wartime hysteria, or pressure from politicians and patriotic groups. They also criticized former internment narratives for perpetuating governmental euphemisms such as

---

15) The first compensation for property losses due to internment was authorized by the Evacuation Claims Act of 1948. The Act, however, was extremely limited; for example, property losses, loss of income owing to evacuation, and psychological damage were not appropriated for compensation. As the JACL Legislative Education Committee later noted, the Act was "never meant to be redress for injustices." See Yasuko I. Takezawa, *Breaking the Silence: Redress and Japanese American Ethnicity* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 33–34.

16) Senator S. I. Hayakawa, a Japanese American congressman, attacked the SERS's proposal, calling its authors "third-generation Japanese Americans eagerly conforming to the radical-chic fads of their non-Japanese college contemporaries." In reality, the plan was written by an Issei with the aid of two Nisei engineers. Robert Shimabukuro, *Born in Seattle: The Campaign for Japanese American Redress* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 29.

17) The efforts made by individual activists such as Uno prompted the JACL to adopt a resolution in 1970, for the first time, in support of redress. For a detailed account on Uno's activities, see Go Oyagi, "The Genesis of the Japanese American Redress Movement," *The American Review* 38 (Tokyo: The Japanese Association for American Studies, 2004): 199–217.

18) Hohri, *Repairing America*, 44–45. Hohri notes that this position—what the JACL called "political reality"—sounded hauntingly similar to "military necessity," the rationale of the wartime government for the internment plan.

19) Mike Masaoka, *They Call Me Moses Masaoka: An American Saga* (New York: Morrow, 1987), 321–322; Bill Hosokawa, *Rafu Shimpo*, Oct. 18, 1978. The JACL had always insisted on the establishment of a single trust fund rather than on individual compensations.

"evacuation," "assembly centers," and "relocation centers," and instead adopted the term "concentration camps." Furthermore, they questioned earlier depictions of camp protests as sporadic incidents caused by a small group of pro-Japanese agitators, and argued that resistance was actually a legitimate and widespread response of internees to the oppressive and racist WRA administration.[20)]

Still, it was mainly white scholars who challenged the existing interpretations of internment. Therefore, *Years of Infamy*, a book by a non-academic and childhood internee, Michi Weglyn, had a special, lasting impact on Japanese Americans. It later gave many Japanese Americans the courage to speak out publicly about their experiences. However, when Weglyn wrote the book—at the time of Vietnam War and of the Watergate scandal—her chief concern was to investigate "government duplicity" rather than to claim the rights of Japanese Americans.[21)] Therefore, the driving force behind the redress movement came from somewhere else; it came from the artists.

### 3. Artists Become Active

While the JACL had been struggling with dissent from the beginning, a group of artists in Seattle started to take decisive action on their own by creating the "Day of Remembrance (DOR)." Frank Chin, a Chinese American playwright, played a key role in mobilizing the artists towards the movement. By that time, Chin had already been active in forging a new artistic sensibility based on "Asian American integrity." In 1970, at a time when there were no "visible" Asian American writers, Chin managed to locate three other Asian American writers —Jeffery Chan, Shawn Wong, and Lawson Inada—and founded the Combined Asian-American Resource Project (CARP). CARP members searched for older Asian American writings in used bookstores, public libraries, attics and basements, and even went to interview some of the authors. In 1974, they published the first Asian American anthology, *Aiiieeeee!*.[22)] Chin also founded the Asian American Theater Workshop in 1973.

Chin's next project was directed towards the redress movement. When he heard in 1978 that the JACL convention had voted unanimously to seek redress for every internee, he thought: "Japanese America had recovered its conscience and was at last making a stand for

---

[20)] See Daniels, *Concentration Camps*; Gary Okihiro, "Japanese Resistance in America's Concentration Camps: A Re-evaluation," *Amerasia Journal* 2, no. 1 (1973): 20–34; Arthur A. Hansen and David A. Hacker, "The Manzanar Riot: An Ethnic Perspective," *Amerasia Journal* 2, no. 2 (Fall 1974): 112–157; Douglas W. Nelson, *Heart Mountain: The History of an American Concentration Camp* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1976).

[21)] Michi Weglyn, *Years of Infamy: The Untold Story of America's Concentration Camps* (New York: Morrow, 1976), 21.

[22)] In its preface, the editors claimed: "Asian America, so long ignored and forcibly excluded from creative participation in American culture, is wounded, sad, angry, swearing, and wondering, and this is his AIIIEEEEE!!! It is more than a whine, shout, or scream. It is fifty years of our whole voice." Jeffery Chan, et al. ed., *Aiiieeeee!: An Anthology of Asian-American Writers* (Washington D.C.: Howard University Press, 1974), xii.

Japanese American integrity and reclaiming its history."[23] He then called upon some founding members of the Asian American Theater Workshop, SERC members, and others who were all waiting to take action, and announced: "You lose redress, you lose Japanese American history. You lose history, you can kiss Japanese American art good-bye."[24]

The artists and activists organized a Thanksgiving weekend homecoming event that year, and named it the "Day of Remembrance."[25] This event, in which former internees and non-internees alike gathered to remember the camp experience, was planned not as a protest but as a family event, symbolized by its potluck meal, in order to defuse any political tension. A "homecoming" of internees itself was not a new idea; young activists working on the Civil Rights and educational activities had started "pilgrimages" to former camp sites in 1969. However, the DOR was quite different from these pilgrimages in terms of its purpose and scale. The DOR was designed to be a visual piece of public education for the news media specifically on the camp experience: "like a giant theatrical event." It was also meant to show Japanese Americans—particularly the "timid, sluggish JACL redress campaign"—that it was safe to stand for redress and that there would be no violence or white backlash.[26] The organizers themselves were in fact stunned to see so many people showing up to the event —approximately 2000 individuals—whereas previous camp pilgrimages had drawn at most a few hundred.[27] Thus, this "invented tradition," as anthropologist Yasuko Takezawa phrased it, served as an important spark to launch the campaign for popular support.[28] Pushed by this grand success, the artists continued to play crucial roles in promoting the movement from the grassroots to the national level.[29]

## 4. Re-Presenting the Draft Resisters

There had been three types of Nisei resisters. First, there were the Nisei who refused the curfew and evacuation order: Minoru Yasui, Gordon Hirabayashi, Fred Korematsu, and Mitsuye Endo. They were arrested and brought to the Supreme Court. With the exception of Endo, the

---

23) Frank Chin, "Forgive and Forget?," an article draft sent from Chin to author on Mar. 29, 2004. Frank Abe, "Frank Chin: His Own Voice," *The Bloomsbury Review*, Sep. 1991. Abe was one of the founding members of the Asian American Theater Workshop.

24) Abe, "Frank Chin"; Chin, personal e-mail to author, May 6, 2004.

25) Takezawa's *Breaking the Silence* and Shimabukuro's *Born in Seattle* depict this organizing process of the DOR in their investigative account on Seattle's redress movement. Making use of the comments I received from the DOR organizers, Frank Abe and Frank Chin, my main focus is on the role of Asian American artists in this event rather than on the redress movement itself.

26) Abe, personal e-mail to author, June 7, 2004.

27) Abe, "Frank Chin."

28) Abe, "Creating the 'Days of Remembrance,'" Jan. 29, 1997, an article sent from Abe to author on June 11, 2004. Since then, the DOR has been held annually in other cities as well on or close to February 19 to commemorate the issuance of Executive Order 9066.

29) They were, for example, the key figures behind the scenes in forming the National Council for Japanese American Redress (NCJAR), one of the major groups in carrying out the campaign. For details, see Hohri, *Repairing America*, 47–50.

Court upheld their convictions, claiming that the government's policies were based on "military necessity." Then, there were the internees who answered "no" to the two controversial questions in the "loyalty questionnaire."[30] These "disloyal" resisters, formerly referred to as "trouble-makers" or "pressure boys," were lumped together as the "no-no boys" or the "no-nos"—named after John Okada's novel—and represented the negative images of Japanese American resistance. Lastly were the "draft resisters," most of whom answered "yes" to the controversial questions but refused to be inducted into the military until their civil rights had been restored.[31] Although these men insisted on their patriotism to the United States, they were often labeled as "draft dodgers" or "pro-Japanese," and were confused with the "no-nos."

The reception of these resisters, however, has gradually changed since the 1970s. John Okada's novel *No-No Boy* (1957), which had been practically ignored by the general public, including Japanese Americans, was republished by CARP members in 1976. The novel soon became a canonical work of Asian American literature and the presence of the "no-nos" gained much wider attention. The curfew resisters also came to attract public attention in the 1980s, when historian Peter Iron urged Hirabayashi, Yasui, and Korematsu to reopen their test cases.

The draft resisters, on the other hand, were the last to come into the light. Although Douglas Nelson wrote a detailed story on the organized draft resistance in Heart Mountain and Roger Daniels evaluated this "left opposition" as providing an alternative image of Japanese Americans—other than that of patient resignation—these revisionist historians still concluded that the draft resistance had little national impact or lasting effect. Among Japanese Americans, particularly older JACL members and veterans, there were persistent objections to giving credit to the resisters' wartime actions. Such was the case chiefly because the draft resisters challenged the very proposal the wartime JACL leaders had made in order to prove their "loyalty" and "patriotism" to the United States: the Army recruitment plan for Nisei internees. Approving the draft resisters, therefore, meant admitting the fault in the decision made by the leaders, the supposedly best decision made "for the good of the great majority" of Japanese Americans.[32]

The inspiration of retelling the stories of the draft resisters came from the artists, notably

---

[30] The two controversial questions in the "Application for Leave Clearance," commonly called the "loyalty questionnaire," asked the internees: whether they were willing to serve in the U.S. armed forces (Question 27) and whether they would forswear any form of allegiance to the Japanese emperor (Question 28). The government's hidden aim of this questionnaire was to segregate the "loyal" Japanese Americans from the "disloyal" ones. Some 68,000 internees answered "yes-yes," approximately 5,300 answered "no-no," and about 4,600 refused or gave qualified answers. Murray, *Internment of Japanese Americans*, 15.

[31] 315 Nisei men were tried for draft refusal and 282 were sentenced to federal prison. Compared to the number of those who initially volunteered to the Army—only 1,181 out of eligible 20,000 men—the number of resisters was by no means negligible. Richard Drinnon, *Keeper of Concentration Camps: Dillon S. Myer and American Racism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 80.

[32] Quoted from a statement by Mike Masaoka, a "legendary" JACL leader, at the 27th Biennial JACL National Convention, Aug. 10, 1982.

Frank Chin. Chin notes that it was his encounter with Okada's *No-No Boy* that led him to the draft resisters, especially Frank Emi, former leader of the only organized draft resistance group, the Heart Mountain Fair Play Committee (FPC).[33] Obtaining detailed information from the National Archives and from researcher Aiko Herzig-Yoshinaga, Chin wrote a comprehensive article on the FPC in the 1981 Christmas edition of the *Rafu Shimpo*. In fact, Emi was astonished to read the article, which included a description of his leave clearance hearing, for he was not acquainted with Chin at that time. Shortly after this, Emi had a chance to talk about his experience at a presentation held by a former Heart Mountain internee, Bacon Sakatani, at California State University, Los Angeles. Until then, as Emi confesses, he had not given any thought to his experience after being granted a presidential pardon in 1947.[34] In other words, the presence of draft resistance had been erased from the resisters' own memories, not to mention the minds of the general public; it was the artists who exhumed it.

Even so, it was not until the 1990s that the draft resisters gained wider attention. Although some artists and activists were quick to seize on the stories of Japanese American resistance, the memories of internment among Japanese Americans in general, not to mention the American public as a whole, were quite different; the image of wartime Japanese Americans as voiceless and powerless victims persisted, as opposed to the image of them as vocal and aggressive resisters. The 1980s were, indeed, a decade of political conservatism under the Reagan presidency—the "winter of Civil Rights."[35] If the redress movement drew national attention to Japanese Americans, it was partly because they had been the "victims" of governmental racism—not "resisters." It was also because Japanese Americans—as a "model minority"—deserved such a reward for achieving social and economic success amidst adversity.[36] The delayed "discovery" of the draft resisters was, above all, due to the need to join forces as a community in order to achieve the unified campaign for redress beyond the dissents in its aim and methods; it was still not the time to cause extra turmoil inside the community.[37]

At the same time, however, it was through their involvement in the redress movement that many people "discovered" the resisters and their collision with the JACL.[38] The first decisive action towards bringing back the voices of the draft resisters came again from Seattle in 1988, the same year the redress movement achieved its goal, when the JACL Seattle Chapter submitted a resolution to the JACL National Council asking the JACL to apologize to

---

[33] Chin, "Forgive and Forget?"; Chin, personal e-mail.

[34] Frank Emi, personal e-mail to author, May 20, 2004.

[35] Glenn Omatsu, "The 'Four Prisons' and Movements of Liberation," *The State of Asian America: Activism and Resistance in the 1990s*, ed. Karin Aguilar-San Juan (Boston: South End Press, 1994), 36–42.

[36] The "model minority" myth proliferated in the press in the 1980s, most commonly referring to the growing power of young Asian American professionals or the educational success of Asian American students. Originally, this word had often been used as a distinct political message to the Black Power Movement, by contrasting the diligent and successful Asian Americans with the defiant and indigent blacks.

[37] Abe, personal e-mail.

the draft resisters and for the injuries it had inflicted on Japanese Americans during wartime (Resolution No. 7). As the resolution caused division among its members, the National Council decided to appoint a national committee to research the issue and to present a report at the next biennial convention. The committee hired Deborah Lim, an attorney and instructor in Asian Studies at San Francisco State University, to undertake the study and write a report on the JACL's wartime role and their position towards the Nisei resisters.

As it turned out, however, the JACL's official report ignored most of Lim's findings, reducing her 154-page report to a 28-page version. In other words, the original report was completely recast by the JACL presidential committee, who omitted the information seen as damaging to the JACL's image: for example, the parts containing some evidence of JACL's collaboration with the FBI to turn in the Issei and other "disloyal" internees, or details of their verbal attack on the resisters.[39] Overall, the JACL's revised report attributes the JACL's wartime decisions to war hysteria and antagonism as well as its own naiveté and weakness as a still young organization. It also underscores how the JACL was threatened not only by the government, but by "agitators" inside the camps—including the no-nos and the draft resisters—who turned their anger and frustration on the JACL leaders. Based on this "moderated" report, the 1990 National Convention unanimously passed Resolution No. 13, in which the JACL gave "recognition" to the type of patriotism demonstrated by the draft resisters and "regret[ted] any pain and bitterness" caused by its failure to do so earlier.[40]

However, the "amendment" of Lim's report, which appeared to many as merely another "cop-out" of the National JACL, ended up complicating and prolonging the discussion. Almost immediately after Lim had finished it, her original report came to life as "the Lim Report" and was copied and distributed informally, as William Hohri describes, "as though it were samizdat in some communist country."[41] There were many voices, both from inside and outside the JACL membership, demanding the National JACL to exhume the original report. The diminishing of Lim's report, some argued, was a "cowardly" and "immoral" attempt to continue the "cancerous moratorium" of concealing the past and yielding to the power of "the JACL

---

38) By this time, scholars began to challenge the "glorious and heroic" image of the JACL promoted by such JACL hagiographic accounts as Bill Hosokawa's *Nisei* and Mike Masaoka's *They Call Me Moses Masaoka*. These studies include Bob Kuramoto, "The Search for Spies: American Counterintelligence and the Japanese American Community, 1931–1942," *Amerasia Journal* 6, no. 2 (1979): 45–75; Spickard, "The Nisei Assume Power"; Yuji Ichioka, "A Study in Dualism: James Yoshinori Sakamoto and the *Japanese American Courier*," 1928–1942, *Amerasia Journal* 13, no. 2 (1986–87): 49–81; Drinnon, *Keeper of Concentration Camps*.

39) For details see Deborah K. Lim, *The Lim Report: A Research Report on Japanese Americans in American Concentration Camps During World War II* (Kearney, Nev.: Morris Pub., 2002). The report is also available on the Internet. See Frank Abe, "The Lim Report," June 23, 2000, <http://www.resisters.com/study/LimTOC.htm> (Mar. 20, 2004) and Japanese American Voice, "JAvoice.com: Lim Report," <http://javoice.com/limreport/LimTOC.htm> (Mar. 20, 2004).

40) *Pacific Citizen* (PC), July 6–13, 1990.

41) Hohri, introduction to *The Lim Report*.

mandarins."[42] Others claimed that they should not pass down to future generations the "shikataganai [it can't be helped] syndrome" that had permeated among Japanese Americans for so long.[43] Of course, the artists had been at the forefront of the JACL criticism. They insisted that the JACL "owes an apology to all of America for forcing Japanese America to submit to a white racist hysteria that did not exist."[44]

The supporters of the JACL's wartime actions, on the other hand, criticized the draft resisters—or the "draft-dodgers"—for suddenly "presenting their viewpoints too loudly and too often in recent years."[45] They were also discontented with what they saw as the young "activists" interpreting the internment in a self-serving manner based on "hearsay data."[46] They were offended by the situation in which historians and activists who had not experienced the wartime hardships were honoring the resisters as heroes. The "real heroes," these supporters insisted, were the Nisei soldiers, for without their "valor and sacrifice" Japanese Americans would not be enjoying the fruits they have today.[47]

While the JACL officially released Lim's original report at the 1994 National Council meeting, inviting former draft resisters, Frank Emi and Mits Koshiyama, as panelists, the controversy still continued to divide the community.[48] In 2000, the JACL National Convention finally adopted a resolution that made an "official apology" to the draft resisters. The issue did not entirely end with this resolution, but it was acknowledged as a "first step towards reconciliation."[49]

The controversy was not simply a quarrel between Nisei veterans and the draft resisters. Many veterans and resisters actually showed respect towards the action of their counterparts. Instead, it reflected the different visions of "Japanese America" and the different interpretations of its history and memories. Japanese America was no longer a fairly monolithic, insular community as it had been during the Issei and Nisei generations. Through the involvement in social movements such as the Asian American Movement and the redress movement, Japanese America has become closely connected with other subordinate groups in the United States. Moreover, the characteristics of Japanese America itself have been rapidly

---

[42] *The New York Nichibei*, Aug. 2, 1990.

[43] PC, Jan. 24-Feb. 6, 1997. "*Shikataganai*" was a widely used phrase in describing the resignation and patience of Japanese Americans in the internment.

[44] Chin, "JACL Owes Japanese America an Apology," PC, Aug. 13–19, 1999. Chin's radical comments on this editorial page provoked many other readers to respond and to express their own thoughts on the issue.

[45] A long debate between columnist George Yoshinaga and draft resister Frank Emi started from March 2, 1992 and continued until October 24 in *The Rafu Shimpo*.

[46] Yoshinaga, "A Hush-Hush Issue," *The Rafu Shimpo*, Sep. 8, Dec. 7, 1992. His criticism of young "activists" was particularly directed towards Frank Abe's article: "The Resistance in Me," *The Rafu Shimpo*, Sep. 1, 1992.

[47] Masaoka, *They Call Me Moses*, 179.

[48] In fact, Emi expresses dissatisfaction at the JACL's attitude, describing the JACL headquarters at the meeting as "just another Mike Masaoka clone." Emi, personal e-mail.

[49] *The Rafu Shimpo; Asian Week*, July 7, 2000.

changing through a number of social factors: the increase of out-marriage rates, the decrease of its ratio within the entire Asian American population since the 1965 Immigration Act, and the influence of new immigrants from Japan.[50] In sum, the draft resisters issue did not happen merely by chance; it was part of a necessary process Japanese America had to undergo, the momentum of which had been built up by a group of Asian American artists.

## 5. The Politics of Asian American Artists

The 1968 San Francisco State Strike marked a crucial point for “Asian America” as a politically and socially united group, instead of a group historically and culturally divided by national origins. It was the longest student strike in U.S. history, involving, for the first time, Asian Americans as a collective force. In examining the legacy of the Asian American Movement, it is essential to note that the struggles coincided with the Black Power Movement, not with the initial campaign for civil rights. In other words, the Asian American Movement has been, from its inception, characterized by aggressive and direct action, reclaiming a tradition of militant struggles by earlier generations of Asian immigrants. The movement involved not only college students but the community as a whole. In fact, it was a “cultural revolution” attracting a number of writers, artists, musicians, and other “cultural workers” actively taking part in building a community consciousness.[51]

The Asian American artists involved in the redress movement and the draft resisters controversy were indeed the product of this era. They were strongly against the “authority,” namely the government-JACL axis, and insisted upon a distinctive and powerful “Asian American consciousness”—something that was not merely a submission to the “white” mainstream.

It was not only racism that Asian Americans had to fight against; racial discrimination has often come hand in hand with gendered stereotypes. Historically, Asian Americans have commonly been burdened by a set of gender-biased representations. While Orientalist images —typically, the dangerous Dragon Lady or the submissive Lotus Blossom Baby images—have been attributed to Asian women, Asian men have also been described in certain, mostly less fantastic, ways: the fearful “yellow peril,” the servile coolies, the alien gooks, or the androgynous deviants.[52] Other than these peculiar images, Asian American men were practically “invisible” in American culture and society. This “lack of a recognized style of Asian American manhood” has been a big frustration for Chin and other Asian American male artists.[53]

---

[50] According to the 2000 census, Japanese Americans have the highest rate of outmarriage compared with other Asian American groups. The ratio of Japanese Americans within the Asian American population had been the highest from 1910 to 1970, but in 2000, it has fallen to the sixth (following the Chinese, Filipino, Indian, Korean, and Vietnamese). The new immigrants, called the *Shin-Issei*, have completely different characteristics from the Issei immigrants before the war; many Issei became farmers or gardeners, whereas many *Shin-Issei* are businessmen or professionals.

[51] Omatsu, “The ‘Four Prisons,’” 28–30.

Thus, for these artists, the draft resisters appeared to be an ideal evidence for both a tradition of distinct ethnic consciousness and that of courageous manhood in Asian American history. Not only did the resisters defy the government's racist policies, they also rejected their community leaders' version of "loyalty" which dovetailed with the stereotypes of Asian American men as submissive and even effeminate. The artists, therefore, re-presented the draft resisters with a special emphasis on their physical strength developed through their skills in martial arts.[54] By thus placing the draft resisters in the center of internment narratives, Asian American history could be expressed in voices of agency and strength, instead of victimization and resignation.

This "legacy of the Asian American Movement" also explains why it was mainly Asian Americans of the post-war generations who were involved in these issues and, more importantly, why a Chinese American writer, Frank Chin, could play such a central part in the series of social movements concerning Japanese Americans. Chin's interest in Japanese American history and its writing is directly connected with his own identity as a Chinese American writer. Chin blames the JACL for the massive change in Japanese American writing after the internment, which, he argues, was a result of the JACL's "betrayal" in rejecting anything Japanese in favor of "joyous acculturation" and "righteous white acceptance."[55] In order to prove this and to express what he had found to the wider public, Chin has actively undertaken various tasks on his own; he compiled his own research archives on Japanese Americans—which amount to 45 boxes;[56] he wrote articles in various newspapers and academic journals, taking part in the discussion on Japanese American history; he published a documentary novel, *Born in the USA* (2002), consisting of documents, newspaper articles, interviews, and works of art concerning Japanese America before and during the war. Chin's concern for Japanese American history has thus gone far beyond his supposed arena as a Chinese American playwright, often provoking the antipathy of conservative Japanese Americans.[57] As an outsider in relation to the Japanese American community, yet included

---

[52] These stereotypes for Asian American men are analyzed in Robert G. Lee, *Orientals: Asian Americans in Popular Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999). For detailed history of Orientalism in U.S. culture, see also John Kuo Wei Tchen, *New York before Chinatown: Orientalism and the Shaping of American Culture, 1776–1882* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1999); Mari Yoshihara, *Embracing the East: White Women and American Orientalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

[53] Chan, *Aiiieeeee!*, 14–15, 24, 35–37. The editors' stress on Asian American masculinity often sounded misogynist, causing conflicts with their female counterparts. The most widely-known controversy was over their denouncement of Maxine Hong Kingston's *Woman Warrior* (1976).

[54] Chin, "Forgive and Forget?"; Frank Emi, "Judo, Justice and Civil Rights," PC Holiday Issue, Dec. 1999.

[55] Chin, et al. ed., *The Big Aiiieeeee!: An Anthology of Chinese American and Japanese American Literature* (New York: Meridan, 1991), 52.

[56] They are now owned by the library of University of California, Santa Barbara.

[57] A number of letters were sent from JACL members complaining about the *Pacific Citizen* editors' carrying of Chin's articles in their organ. PC, Sep. 24–30, 1999; Oct. 15–21, 1999.

within the frame of "Asian America," Chin has provided the stories of resistance with rage and condemnation for Japanese Americans who were, as Chin phrases it, "trembling and chattering their teeth too much" to face their traumatic past.[58] He presented the stories of internment "like a Japanese American should have expressed it, but in a way that no Japanese Americans probably could."[59] Some Japanese Americans disliked him because, in draft resister Mits Koshiyama's words, "it was like looking into the mirror and they don't like what they see."[60]

Chin's interpretation of the resisters, and of the interment as a whole, has been shared by Asian American artists of the postwar generations, many of whom are seemingly successful and "assimilated" to the mainstream society. A CARP member, Lawson Inada, incorporated a story of a draft resister in his work of poetry: "Drawing the Line" (1995). In addition, Inada, like Chin, compiled various materials related to the internment into a book, *Only What We Could Carry* (2000). Sansei (third-generation) artist/activists Frank Abe and Emiko Omori each produced a documentary film on the draft resisters to express their rage and excitement at "discovering" these hidden stories of resistance and ethnic pride—not the tragic stories of resignation and shame that they grew up listening to.[61] These artists commonly felt compelled to retell these stories with their *own* voices, for the draft resisters appeared as their *own* "heroes" who had been "isolated" and "ostracized" for too long.[62]

The activities of these artists did not end with the JACL's apology to the draft resisters, which symbolized a formal recognition of the resistance narratives promoted by the artists—completely different from the orthodox JACL narrative of the "proof in blood." In spring 2004, Chin brought the artists and activists together and formed a panel on the topic of internment that "boldly [brought] to life issues of Japanese American art and literature, all tied tightly around the questions of loyalty, betrayal and resistance in WW2." For the conference, he created a series of scripts based on the stories of camp resistance, in expectation of having them read and performed by students in classrooms as well.[63] In September 2004, Chin again held a "long-planned gathering of 'actors, activists and artists'" at "The Mountain Bar" in Chinatown, Los Angeles, to celebrate "the legacy of the Heart Mountain Fair Play Committee."[64] As means of re-presenting their voices as Asian Americans, the artists

---

[58] Chin, "Forgive and Forget?"

[59] Frank Abe's words in Curtis Choy, *What's Wrong with Frank Chin?*, documentary video (Alhambra, Calif.: Chonk Moonhunter Productions, 2005).

[60] Koshiyama's words in ibid.

[61] Abe produced *Conscience and the Constitution* (Hohokus, N.J.: Transit Media, 2000) and won numerous awards. Inada is the narrator of the film. Emiko Omori, together with her sister Chizu, produced *Rabbit in the Moon* (Hohokus, N.J.: Transit Media, 1999) and received an Emmy Award.

[62] Chizu Omori, "The Life and Times of Rabbit in the Moon," *Last Witnesses: Reflections on the Wartime Internment of Japanese Americans*, ed. Erica Harth (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 217; Abe, "Resistance in Me."

[63] For details see Abe, "Conscious and the Constitution," April 12, 2004. The scripts are still available on the website's news archive.

[64] For the description of the event, see Abe, "Conscious and the Constitution," Oct. 6, 2004.

continue "re-inventing" traditions by reviving the past memories of internment for the future generations.

## Conclusion: The Internment as a Symbolic Memory

It is difficult to determine how directly influential the activities of these Asian American artists—based on the 1970s-activism model—continue to be in the present U.S. society. With increasingly diversifying national origins and stratifying social/economic status among Asian Americans, as Glenn Omatsu points out, there seems to be an ideological, as well as political, "vacuum" in Asian America today.[65)]

It is nonetheless obvious that, thanks to the efforts of these artists, the memories of internment continue to attract many young Asian Americans today as a source of inspiration of their ethnic roots and identity. Telling the internment stories had been a practical and effective strategy to heighten public interest towards the goal of winning redress.[66)] Nowadays, it has grown beyond such a political purpose, and exists on more personal and individual levels; there is an increasing demand for the internment to be understood as a "symbolic" memory. The "internment" has created a sense of belonging and a new awareness of ethnic heritage for Japanese/Asian Americans, many of whom have no direct memory of the event and are seemingly "assimilated" into mainstream society. Consequently, it is frequently used in various forms of artistic expression—novels, poems, paintings, or music performances such as jazz and *taiko* (Japanese drum).[67)] For many such performers and story-tellers, the "internment" is something more like a "symbol" that represents racism and rage on one hand, and ethnic pride and patriotism on the other. Telling the stories of internment thus becomes "a form of healing" and provides "a sense of liberation."[68)]

---

[65)] Omatsu, "The 'Four Prisons,'" 51.

[66)] In the 1970s and 80s, more and more Japanese Americans started to talk about their camp memories in literary pieces. As this tide coincided with the minority and the feminist movements, novels and poems written by Nisei women—Janice Mirikitani, Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston, Mituye Yamada, Hisaye Yamamoto, Wakako Yamauchi, etc.—who attempted to liberate themselves from the double oppression of racism and sexism attracted special attention from a wider public.

[67)] Sansei poet David Mura uses the internment as a metaphor that signified a "wall" that kept many Japanese Americans in shame, guilt, and silence—especially the "silencing around sexuality." David Mura, *Where the Body Meets Memory: An Odyssey of Race, Sexuality, and Identity* (New York: Anchor Books, 1996), 249. Sansei painter, Roger Shimomura, is famous for developing his unique artistic world based on his grandmother's diary during the internment. In recent years, Asian American jazz musicians have formed a non-profit Asian American arts organization: Asian Improv aRts. These artists have produced a number of internment-inspired works: for example, Francis Wong, *Legends & Legacies—with Lawson Fusao Inada* (Chicago: Asian Improv Records, c1997, 2004); Mark Izu, *Last Dance* (Santa Monica: Bindu Records, 1998). A Grammy-nominated CD album by the Asian American Jazz Orchestra, *Bing Bands Behind Barbed Wire* (Chicago: Asian Improv Records, 1998), was a collaboration between a jazz group and a *taiko* group. The internment is a common theme for many *taiko* performances as well, as *taiko* has recently developed into a popular folk-art expression of identity and strength among young Asian Americans/Canadians.

[68)] Mura, *Body Meets Memory*, 223; Abe, "Resistance in Me."

Indeed, there are still many of those who demur at this new perception of internment among younger generations. For them, "rewrite[ing] history in today's context" only trivializes the event and demeans the suffering and sacrifice of those who actually underwent the experience.[69] The re-discovery of narratives from such a "presentist" approach to history, critics contend, simply creates a lack of consistency and authenticity in Japanese American history.

It is the power of these younger generations, however, that revived the buried memories of internment in the present, enabling many Japanese Americans to fight against past injustice. This suggests that "collective memory" can be just as compelling and meaningful for those who did not experience the event as for those who actually did. It also tells us that the collective memory of internment is a multi-layered and fluid compound rather than a monolithic and stable entity, constantly re-shaped by those who take part in the story-telling process in changing social circumstances. Naturally, there are power dynamics and collisions *within* each collective memory—often between existing old memories and newly emerged ones. It is through this dialectical process of remembering that history becomes rich and appealing.

---

[69] PC, Aug. 13–19, Sep. 24–30, 1999.

# アジア系のアメリカ人芸術家の活動と日系アメリカ人戦時収容所の記憶再構築

## ＜要旨＞

竹 内 愛 子

戦後半世紀以上の間、第二次世界大戦中のアメリカにおける日系人強制収容所の語りは、時代の変化と共に様々な変遷を経てきた。なかでも本稿で取りあげる収容所内での抵抗者の歴史は、1990年代以降になって多く語られるようになった「新しい」歴史記憶である。

戦争直後の収容所を巡る語りは、主に政府や米国日系人市民協会（JACL）によって統制され、日系人の抵抗の記憶は抑圧された。こうして抵抗の記憶をアメリカに「非忠誠的」な一部の扇動的日系人に限る一方で、日系二世部隊に代表される「忠誠的」で献身的な日系人の記憶が前面に語られるようになった。ところが、1970年代のアジア系アメリカ人運動や1980年代に高まりをみせた収容所補償要求運動などに刺激を受けた若い世代らを中心に、それまで忘れかけられていた抵抗の記憶にも徐々に注目が集まるようになった。

さらに1990年代以降になると、様々なタイプの抵抗者の中でもとりわけ懲役拒否という形で抵抗した日系二世達が新しい英雄として脚光を浴びるようになった。アメリカ憲法と民主主義精神への忠誠を根拠に収容所政策に抵抗した彼らは、それまで主流であった寡黙で従順な日系人像とは異なる存在だった。この懲役拒否者の記憶の再発掘の裏には、アジア系アメリカ人芸術家の活動と奮闘があった。中国系アメリカ人劇作家のフランク・チンを中心とする芸術家仲間は、アジア系独自の芸術観と歴史観を求めて様々な活動に関わってきた。アジア系市民全体に科せられてきた沈黙とステレオタイプの重圧からの解放を求めてきた彼らにとって、懲役拒否者はアジア系アメリカ人としての固有の誇りと力強さをもった理想的なアジア系アメリカ人像の象徴となったのである。

こうして収容所を巡る新しい語りの出現は、歴史記憶の多元化と相対化をもたらし、直接体験者だけではなく若い世代や非日系人を含めたより広いアジア系アメリカ人の枠組の中でも記憶が共有されるようになった。それに伴い、収容所を巡る「集合的記憶」内部での多様な記憶同士の対立や衝突も生じた。戦争世代のJACL会員と若い世代の「活動家」の間での懲役拒否者の記憶に関する意見対立がその顕著な例である。しかし、現代の文脈の中での歴史記憶を巡るこのような議論を通して、歴史は常に再考され、蘇っていくのである。