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Promoting Americanism and Patriotism during WWII**

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ABSTRACT

120,000 individuals of Japanese heritage (2/3 of whom were American citizens by birth) were forcibly removed from the West Coast of the United States and incarcerated in concentration camps established in isolated areas of the country. Surrounded by barbed wire fences and controlled by guard towers with machine guns pointed in at the internees, the daily life of the inhabitants was largely organized by self-governance. Central to creating a community that would become as close to normal as was possible under the circumstances, the internment camps organized and published their own newspapers to provide information on work opportunities, social activities, sports, and issues of patriotism and Americanism. The analysis focuses on two camp newspapers: Tulean Dispatch (Tule Lake Relocation Center); and Topaz Times (Topaz, Utah). How did these camp newspapers tell the story of forced relocation during WWII? Two central themes are apparent in the internment camp newspapers. The first theme explores what sociologist Gregory Stone terms the announcement and placement of identity. Are individuals born and raised in the United States Americans or are they Others who threaten the security of their birth country? How could the Nisei prove they were American? The second common theme explores patriotic obligations. Despite being incarcerated in violation of Constitutionally guaranteed due process, camp newspapers routinely stressed the importance of engaging in patriotic American activities (from farming to military service). In reporting daily life, the internment camp newspapers create a sense of community, minimizing some political arguments while publicly reinforcing a narrow definition of acceptable American identity.

Keywords: Japanese American Internment, camp newspapers, identity, patriotism

Introduction

120,000 individuals of Japanese heritage were forcibly removed from the West Coast of the United States and incarcerated in one of ten concentration camps established in isolated areas of the country for the duration of World War Two. Not knowing where they were being sent or for how long, they arrived to camps not yet completed, to crowded conditions with few amenities, and little privacy. Life as they knew it changed radically for Japanese Americans and their Issei parents. Each camp was expected to create its own civic organization that would bring order to the new residents, provide necessary services, and communicate the expectations of civil behavior among residents and with camp administration and guards. Schools, hospitals, police, recreation, stores, and other basic units of a community were organized and staffed.

Central to creating a community that would become as close to normal as was possible under the circumstances, the internment camps published their own newspapers to provide information on work opportunities, social activities, sports, births, marriages and deaths. The newspapers explained restrictions and opportunities afforded the internees, tried to explain policies imposed on them, and sought to prove that the internees were as American in their values, ambitions, and actions as any other American community. This analysis focuses on two camp newspapers: the *Tulean Dispatch* from the Tule Lake Relocation Center in Northern California, and the *Topaz Times* from the internment camp in Topaz, Utah.

On June 15, 1942, the first issue of the *Tulean Dispatch* is distributed, two days late because the camp mimeograph machine is broken. The *Topaz Times* distributes its first pre-issue September 17, 1942. The second pre-issue, September 26, explains that regular publication of the camp newspaper awaits the arrival of “certain necessary supplies and equipment.”¹ The mandate to create a newspaper that would facilitate cooperation and build morale came before the arrival of machinery and supplies for publication. Early issues explain the structure of the community, introduce the administrators of the camp, and clarify the democratic process by which rules and regulations, facilities, activities, and decision-making will be agreed upon by the residents.

Once they become operational, how did these camp newspapers tell the story of forced relocation during WWII? How did they display an American identity for those interned? Two central themes that cross various modes of representation for telling the internment story are also apparent in the internment camp newspapers. The first theme articulates what sociologist Gregory Stone terms the announcement and placement of identity. Are individuals born and raised in the United States *Americans* or are they *Others* who threaten the security of their birth country? How might the Nisei prove they were American? In reporting daily life, the internment camp newspapers create a sense of community, minimizing some political arguments while publicly reinforcing a narrow definition of acceptable American identity. The second common theme explores patriotic obligations.

¹No author. 1942. Untitled boxed announcement. *Topaz Times* (Pre-issue September 26, 1942), 1.

Despite being incarcerated in violation of constitutionally guaranteed due process, camp newspapers routinely stress the importance of demonstrating patriotism to prove their loyalty and thereby distance themselves from the Japanese enemy. Announced and placed identities and demonstrations of patriotism change significantly in newspaper stories as the war is ending and decisions about relocation challenge earlier newspaper coverage of life in Tule Lake and Topaz.

Literature Review

A number of scholars have explored journalism in the internment facilities. Takeya Mizuno focuses on the newspapers that emerged in the Assembly Centers, the interim relocation centers following the evacuation of Japanese and Japanese Americans that existed until the ten internment camps were completed. Routinely censored, Mizuno argues that the newspapers nonetheless were deemed an important way for information to be distributed to large numbers of internees. Pre-approval was required before the newspapers were mimeographed and post-publication review was conducted by the Wartime Civil Control Administration (WCCA).² The high degree of censorship made it difficult to serve the intended purpose of the paper, proposed by evacuees, which was to improve morale. Mizuno provides examples of significant stories, such as the shooting of a young man who was too close to the boundary, that never appeared in the paper. Censorship makes it difficult to analyze whether the content of stories that do appear accurately reflects the attitudes and intentions of those writing the stories. Importantly, Mizuno argues, the press censorship in the Assembly Centers was inconsistent with Roosevelt's "overall restrained press policy"³ toward Italian and German media outlets. The censorship violates American principles of press freedom from prior restraint.

John Stevens' seminal essay on newspapers in the ten relocation centers concludes that although there were significant differences in the quality of the papers, the frequency of their publication, and the amount of freedom or censorship editors were given, the camp newspapers were important for communication of basic information and morale.⁴ With respect to censorship, Stevens concludes, "Few readers over-estimated the amount of freedom the editors enjoyed; more probably under-estimated it. Most editors insist in print that they had complete freedom. . . . But in the end, policies set in Washington probably did far less to shape the papers than did the rapport between the camp officials and editors."⁵ Lauren Kessler argues that censorship of the internment newspapers was sometimes overt, but always present, even in the selection of editors and reporters. Because the newspapers were mandated by the WRA as a way to communicate

²Mizuno, T. 2003. Journalism under military guards and searchlights. *Journalism History* 29, 3 (Fall 2003), 100.

³Ibid., 105.

⁴Stevens, J. D. 1971. From behind barbed wire: Freedom of the press in World War II Japanese centers. *Journalism Quarterly*, 48 (Summer 1971), 279-287.

⁵Ibid., 287.

with camp residents and as a way to control morale, they selected newspaper personnel willing to adopt what Kessler terms an *accommodationist* perspective – Nisei who “would see the camp newspaper as a way to aggressively prove the Americanism of the ‘evacuee community,’ keep morale as high as possible and promote normalcy – all goals that meshed nicely with the WRA’s attempts to manage the camps.”⁶ Camp directors did not select inmates who were *left oppositionists* who focused on civil rights restoration or *right oppositionists* who were loyal to Japan.

Other scholars similarly have focused on issues of censorship including examining the degree of censorship in the editorials. Jay Friedlander concedes that many of the papers had limited editorials, at times written by the camp administrator. A notable exception, Friedlander claims, comes with the *Denison Tribune* whose editor, Paul Yokota, wrote editorials frequently that were critical of camp morale and the actions of major figures, including Gen. John L. De Witt.⁷

Very little has been written about Japanese-Language Press in the United States. Mizuno addresses this neglected area in a 2007 essay in *Journalism History*.⁸ Although there were proposals for suppression of Japanese-language press, legislation to suppress failed. Within the camps, however, the newspapers had to make the case that some information, in Japanese, needed to be provided. Their most compelling argument focuses on the opportunity it would afford to Americanize the Issei who could not read English. This argument appears in the *Tulean Dispatch* about two months after the camp opens.

Closer in approach to the questions addressed in this essay, Catherine Luther’s work on press reflections of cultural identity argues that cultural identity for Japanese American internees changes over the course of their incarceration. She argues that in the early phase of the internment, American identity was privileged over Japanese identity. During the middle phase of incarceration, with the introduction of the loyalty questionnaire, cultural identity became a blend of American and Japanese components, and by the end of the incarceration a blended identity was more apparent in the camp newspapers. She concludes:

Thus, it appears the Japanese Americans who eventually left the camps did not leave with the same cultural identities that they had brought with them into the camps. . . .they withstood the hardships brought on by the crisis and forged a new identity.⁹

⁶Kessler, L. 1988. Fettered freedoms: The journalism of World War II Japanese internment camps.” *Journalism History*, 15, 2-3 Summer/Autumn 1988), 72.

⁷Friedlander, J. 1985. Journalism behind barbed wire, 1942-44: An Arkansas Relocation Center newspaper.” *Journalism Quarterly*, 62, 2 (Summer 1985), 243-271.

⁸Mizuno, T. 2007. The federal government’s decisions in suppressing the Japanese-language press, 1941-42. *Journalism History*, 33, 1 (Spring 2007), 14-23.

⁹Luther, C.A. 2003. Reflections of cultural identities in conflict: Japanese American internment camp newspapers during World War II. *Journalism History*, 29, 2 (Summer 2003), 79-80.

Methodology

This essay reflects a close reading, drawing on identity, narrative and rhetorical theory, of the newspapers written and distributed to internees in two of the ten internment camps. The *Tulean Dispatch* (later changed to the *Newell Star*) was issued from June 15, 1942- October 1943. During a four-month period at the end of 1943 the camp was under martial law following the transfer of trouble makers from the other camps to Tule Lake and the relocation of accommodationists at Tule Lake to other camps. This research does not focus on the *Center Information Bulletin*, a temporary publication, or the *Newell Star* which continued until February 15, 1946. The *Topaz Times* was issued from September 17, 1942 through August 31, 1945. Although Stevens is not impressed with the professional quality of these two papers, calling the *Topaz Times* “not a very interesting publication” and the *Tulean Dispatch* “the least interesting paper,”¹⁰ these two papers reflect very different examples of announced and placed identities when compared to other camp newspapers, and hence were selected for study. With the exception of the Japanese-language pages, all stories in the full run of these papers were analyzed for issues of identity and patriotism.

Theoretically the analysis of news accounts draws on Kenneth Burke’s definition of rhetoric:

For rhetoric as such is not rooted in any past condition of human society. It is rooted in the essential function of language itself, a function that is wholly realistic, and is continually born anew; the use of language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols.¹¹

Burke assumes that “rhetorical language is inducement to action (or to attitude, attitude being an incipient act).”¹² Language carries with it a program of action. Hence, the language that is chosen to symbolically announce or place a group conditions the response to the individual or group whose identity is being shaped. Key terms for announced and placed dimensions of identity were located and recorded along with how they were clustered to make arguments about the identity of Japanese Americans. The first pre-issue of the *Topaz Times* includes a telling note on page 2 entitled “Words”: “You are now in Topaz, Utah. Here we say Dining Hall and not Mess Hall; Safety Council, not Internal Police; Residents, not Evacuees; and last but not least, Mental Climate, not Morale.”¹³ The act of naming, the incipient attitudes and implicit actions, and the framing of acceptable and unacceptable arguments are given salience in the stories these newspapers circulate to the residents of the camps. The identity of Japanese Americans is molded by this visible, shared public discourse.

¹⁰Stevens, 286.

¹¹Burke, K. 1969. *A Rhetoric of Motives*. University of California Press, Berkeley, CA, 43.

¹²Ibid., 42.

¹³Words. 1942. *Topaz Times* (Pre-issue, September 17, 1942), 2.

Identity in social interactions is a way of locating oneself, of giving the self a meaning. Symbolic interactionist Gregory Stone argues that identity in interpersonal interactions comes about when there is agreement, even if only temporarily, on the identity of a particular person or group: “identity establishes what and where the person is in social terms.”¹⁴ One cannot simply assert an identity for oneself, and others, similarly, cannot create an identity for another individual or group without their assent. A person’s identity is situated through symbolic interaction.

One’s identity is established when others place him as a social object by assigning him the same words of identity that he appropriates for himself or announces. It is in the coincidence of placements and announcements that identity becomes a meaning of the self.¹⁵

In identity-making one is joined with some and set apart from others:

identity is established as a consequence of two processes, apposition and opposition, a bringing together and setting apart. To situate the person as a social object is to bring him together with other objects so situated, and, at the same time to set him apart from still other objects. *Identity is intrinsically associated with all the joinings and departures of social life.*¹⁶

Identity is an agreement between what the individual or group announces as its preferred identity and an identity into which others place oneself or one’s group. A Japanese American in 1942 can announce him/herself as a patriotic American, but if the nation does not accept that announced way of locating members of that group, it is not an identity. The public response on the West Coast of the United States to Japanese Americans was to place anyone of Japanese heritage, alien or born citizen, as Japanese, as the enemy. When Japanese Americans contest this naming the attempt to place this identity is rejected. The negotiation of identity takes more time when the placement and announcement are highly disparate. Even if consensus is reached on an identity, over time the identity may change and the process of symbolic interaction continues.

As communities announce or counter the placement of their identity they employ multiple modes of representing identity, including newspapers. Luther argues that newspapers “may empower the creation and evolution of cultural identity. Therefore, critically examining the meanings in printed texts should provide illumination on the identity or identities being promoted or reflected.”¹⁷

¹⁴Stone, G. P. 1970. Appearance and the self. In *Social Psychology Through Symbolic Interaction*. Eds. G. P. Stone and H. A. Farberman. Xerox College Publishing, Waltham, MA, 399.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Luther, 72.

The Announcement and Placement of Identity in Internment Camp Newspapers

When we attempt to place a group in a particular way we name them with words that Kenneth Burke argues tell us who they are but also who they are not. Ironically, a US Army propaganda film, *Know Your Enemy Japan* (1945), tries to *place* all Japanese as “alike as photographic prints off of the same negative,” and as “a nation hell-bent to rule the world or commit national suicide.”¹⁸ To name one Japanese is, in this instance, to name them all. The act of naming announces or places one in a particular relationship. Burke explains, “Speech takes its shape from the fact that it is used by people acting together, it is an adjunct of action – and thus naturally contains the elements of exhortation and threat which guide and stimulate action. It thus tends naturally toward the use of implicit moral weightings, as the names for things and operations smuggle in connotations of *good* and *bad*.”¹⁹

The names we give in announcing or placing are a form of symbolic warfare. Burke notes, “But speech in its essence is not neutral. Far from aiming at suspended judgment, the spontaneous speech of a people is loaded with judgments. It is intensely moral – its names for objects contain the emotional overtones which give us the cues as to how we should act toward these objects.”²⁰ For example, consider the change in attitude and incipient action when one names the camps to which West Coast Japanese were sent as *relocation centers* (the preferred term the government used), *internment* camps (the most neutral term) or *concentration* camps (the term currently preferred by Japanese Americans). All three terms exhort us to view the incarceration of a group of people, two-thirds of whom were US citizens by birth, in distinctive ways – justified action to enhance security or a gross violation of civil rights. Names reflect and reinforce power relationships.

The internment camp newspapers reflect the symbolic warfare of announcing and placing identity in the initial months of Japanese American incarceration in the camps, when their loyalty as Americans is questioned. Several different issues of identity appear in the newspapers: what labels should be applied to residents of the camps and to the process of confinement; are they Japanese, American or both; and should they be compliant or challenge their displacement?

At the most basic level we understand identity from the words used to identify one’s age, gender, and community; these forms of naming refer to the groups one belongs to rather than specifics of the individual within that group. Stories about Red Cross meetings, Boy Scouts, Girl Scout Christmas seal sales to “help the yearly tuberculosis drive,”²¹ American sports, 4th of July and Labor Day activities and columns on freedom of religion all contribute to an announced and placed

¹⁸Capra, F. Dir. 1945. *Know Your Enemy: Japan*. U.S. War Department. Prod.

¹⁹Burke, K. 1965. *Permanence and Change: An Anatomy of Purpose*. The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., New York, 191-192.

²⁰Ibid., 176-177.

²¹Activities in other centers. 1942. *Topaz Times* quoting the *Granada Pioneer* (November 17, 1942), 4.

identity of the camps as American cities with residents who embody the characteristics of patriotic Americans, engaged in American activities, and sharing an interest in the war and American successes. Japanese organizations, traditional ceremonies, or topics of Japanese heritage less frequently appear in the papers. One's activities and organizations announce one's identity.

Building an educated and active community is extended beyond appeals to Nisei; it also appeals to Japanese who immigrated to the U.S. As early as August 21, 1942 the *Tulean Dispatch* calls for a Japanese language paper to reach the Issei: "By banning the Japanese language, a powerful medium to teach democratic ideals to the older generation is completely lost. American history, customs, and literature could be greatly clarified to the older generation by means of the Japanese language."²² Within a couple of weeks, approval is given and one page in Japanese is added to the Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday papers each week. The Japanese American Nisei also organize Americanization opportunities for the older generation. The *Topaz Times* prints the lectures from Americanization classes that focus on American laws, foreign policy, history, geography, and literature. These efforts announce a commitment to extending an American identity to Issei.

One of the earliest contestations of identity centers on how to label those incarcerated in the camps and the purpose of the camps – detention centers or pioneer colonies to support the American war effort. Camp newspapers report the government's attempt to place Japanese Americans sent to the camps as *colonists* or *pioneers*. On June 20, 1942, Project Director C.E. Rachford is given the lead story in the *Tulean Dispatch* to remind internees that the city that is growing by several thousand each week will succeed or fail depending on the efforts of the colonists; if they cooperate and communicate the welfare and happiness of the residents will be assured.²³ In Utah, the first pre-issue of the *Topaz Times* associates the colonization of Japanese Americans with the Mormon colonists early in the state's history: "We are not the first to establish a collective home in this great hospitable State of Utah."²⁴ The greeting to new arrivals at the camp given by Rev. Toro Goto proclaims, "Topaz is born of the great Mother America."²⁵ Intended to put a positive spin on incarceration and imply that Japanese Americans volunteered to become settlers in isolated parts of the country, the naming hides the barbed wire fences surrounding the camps, and the guard towers manned by soldiers with guns pointing inward. This placement also carries with it properties that facilitate the announced characterization of Japanese Americans; the labels exemplify core American values such as Puritan and pioneer morality, the importance of hard work, and the potential for internees to embody the fundamental narrative of westward expansion that is central to America's foundational story. Accepting and announcing this designation could foster the internees' announcement of themselves as Americans, as sharing properties that

²²Watanabe, G. T. 1942. A vital need. *Tulean Dispatch* (August 21, 1942), 2.

²³Rachford, C. E. 1942. No title. *Tulean Dispatch*, II, 3 (June 20, 1942), 1, Densho Digital Archive, 2008. <http://archive.densho.org/main.aspx>.

²⁴Ernst, C. F. 1942. Welcome to Topaz. *Topaz Times* (Pre-issue September 17, 1942), 1.

²⁵Goto, T. 1942. Welcome to Topaz. *Topaz Times* (Pre-issue September 17, 1942), 1.

allow them to be identified with the majority of Americans, and eschew the association of being Japanese and hence the enemy. The properties of the enemy – stealth, fanaticism, unswerving loyalty to the emperor, and a dedication to eradicating anyone who opposes them – can be elided by an identity closer to the mainstream identity Japanese Americans sought.

How did the newspapers report the announcement and placement of internees as American rather than enemy? The early editions of the *Tulean Dispatch* identify the administrative structure of the camp, block managers, layout of the facility, employment opportunities, procedures for new colonists, dining times and what to do when sick. The first bulletin welcomes the new “pioneers” to “a great undertaking”²⁶ thereby announcing the government’s placement of the internees. But *colonist* and *pioneer* fade from use fairly quickly. In its place, detainees focus on their announced American attitudes and identity. The August 7, 1942 issue of the *Tulean Dispatch* announces that members of a temporary judicial committee are charged to develop a plan of self-governance,²⁷ and a long story talks about Co-Op principles established in England in 1844 that could serve as a model for cooperatives planned for the camp.²⁸ Stories on voting, governance meetings, forums, and even oratorical competitions with topics such as “Our American Heritage” announce the camp identity as American. On November 2, 1942, the *Topaz Times* reported that 200 residents who were American citizens had voted through absentee ballots and special provisions had been made to allow more to vote the following day.²⁹ A second chance to vote only added an additional 68 voters, for a total of approximately 10% of eligible voters. An editorial on November 6, 1942 critiques subtly this low voter turnout, reminding residents, “Voting is the duty of all Americans.”³⁰ The placed identity of colonists or pioneers fails when newspapers adopt the more traditional announced identity of typical American by virtue of shared activities, organizational membership, and values

Three months after the camp is populated, an editorial reminds the viewers that when problems arise, “It is up to the residents themselves to iron out the difficulties. . . It is imperative that such problems be solved intelligently, through orderly negotiations.”³¹ Peaceful, cooperative, negotiators are attributes of American democratic ideals that are announced as the Japanese American identity. Not everyone appreciates the cooperative, in many ways passive, approach implicit in early announcements of identity. By early 1943 several stories in the *Tulean Dispatch* express concern over actions that counter the model American city image the newspapers report. One Issei writes, “Looking over the present situation, it makes my blood run cold when I see the many problems of gambling, vice and theft which confront this community now. . . We must not forget this is

²⁶Shirrell, E. L. 1942. Welcome. *Information Bulletin* (May 27, 1942), 1. Densho Digital Archive, 2008. <http://archive.densho.org/main.aspx>.

²⁷Self gov’t planned. 1942 *Tulean Dispatch* (August 7, 1942), 1.

²⁸Co-op information. 1942. *Tulean Dispatch* (August 7, 1942), 3.

²⁹Bed time: National election. 1942. *Topaz Times* (November 2, 1942), 1.

³⁰Beckwith, Sr., F. 1942. An editor’s comment. *Topaz Times* (November 6, 1942), 3.

³¹It’s up to us. *Tulean Dispatch* (August 19, 1942), 2.

war and we as Japanese and Japanese Americans must solve these problems ourselves.”³² A second story promises that the paper will “take no compromising attitude toward those men who knowingly or through lack of common sense and good taste disrupt the community well-being.”³³ These disruptions include protests over incarceration without due process. Raising this challenge of the constitutionality of imprisonment brings out attitudes and behaviors that the larger camp community feels challenge their announced identity as patriotic, dutiful American citizens. Dissent within the Tule Lake Relocation Center over how to define one’s American identity increases after the first year of incarceration.

The anniversary issue of the *Tulean Dispatch* includes a letter from the Project Director, Harvey M. Coverley, on the first page. He writes, “It is my privilege to extend to each of you in a personal and individual way my most sincere congratulations. You have done a fine job. You are a real credit to yourselves and to America.”³⁴ Page 2 counters the anniversary celebration. Consider the extended argument of one editorial:

The occasion is not one which calls for boisterous celebration for the events of the past year, the mental anguish and heartache experienced by the evacuees do not make a proper theme for celebration. The word anniversary connotes some sort of an accomplishment over a given period of time. It usually implies success. This term then is not a fitting one for us since we are not accomplishing anything by our isolated existence here. A second anniversary would be tragic for it would be an indication that we are gradually becoming accustomed to this purposeless life.³⁵

While rejecting the placed identity of enemy, a year into incarceration Tule Lake voices challenge the appropriateness of announcing an identity of Americanism without demanding simultaneously the rights afforded American citizens. The challenges to a passive announced and placed identity that Tule Lake expresses publicly is not as common in the news accounts of the other camps. The example is a reminder that our announced and others’ placed identities change over time. The internees did not know what to expect when they arrived at the camps, and their values, traditionally American but also Japanese, privileged cooperation over confrontation.

It is important to note that the inmates in Tule Lake differ from those incarcerated at the other nine camps. The Tule Lake Relocation Center became the place where resisters from other camps were sent along with those who were identified as potentially disloyal to the United States. Those individuals who answered no to either of two questions on a loyalty questionnaire (willingness to serve in the military; willingness to swear allegiance to the U.S. and forswear

³²Yamashita, M. 1943. Issei speak: We aim to make Newell a model W.R.A. project. *Tulean Dispatch* (January 1, 1943), 3.

³³Imazeki, H. M. 1943. City heads take strong stand against criminal offenses. *Tulean Dispatch* (January 1, 1943), 3.

³⁴Coverley, H. M. 1943. Greetings. *Tulean Dispatch* (May 27, 1943), 1.

³⁵Not a Way for Celebrating. 1943. *Tulean Dispatch* (May 27, 1943), 2.

allegiance to the Emperor of Japan) were also sent to Tule Lake. At its peak Tule Lake housed 18,789 people; “One of the most turbulent camps – prisoners held frequent protest demonstrations and strikes.”³⁶ Stories chastising those who protest or question the legality of the internment threaten the announced *American* identity that camp officials and Nisei who answered yes-yes to the loyalty oath prefer as the camp identity.

In stark contrast to the tendency to protest and challenge both the government’s placed identity and the announced identity of accommodationists on the part of internees at Tule Lake, Topaz stories are more likely to encourage internees to work hard to make the general public accept them as Americans. An editorial in the *Topaz Times* announces that the evacuees need to work to build trust outside of the camps. They should do so by first being successful inside the camps:

it stands to human reason that successful people are more welcome than failures. If the residents can contribute to the success of the projects, they will be acclaimed as persons who have the ability to contribute well to the building of a community and therefore will find readier welcome in the communities of the United States. But if the WRA projects should fail dismally, the residents will be branded with the failure, and no U.S. community will be particularly eager to have them.³⁷

Not all issues at Topaz reflect an accommodationist perspective on announced identity, however. Beyond issues of resettlement, once the military accepts Nisei for a segregated combat team, the internees in Topaz push back on the government’s placement of them. The *Topaz Times* reports a resolution by citizens asking for freedom of movement and the choice of returning to their homes along with public confirmation of their loyalty: “we request President Roosevelt to give us assurance that he will use his good office in an endeavor to secure all constitutional and civil rights as American citizens. . .we ask President Roosevelt to use his good office to bring favorable impression to the public regarding the loyal citizens.”³⁸ The argument suggests a form of metonymic proof – if a representative part of the group has proven their American identity, the rest of the group should be regarded as American: 1) since the government clearly recognizes the loyalty of Japanese American citizens because they are allowed to enlist in an all Japanese unit in the military; 2) since that unit is the most highly decorated fighting unit in the American military, it is apparent that Japanese American soldiers are highly patriotic; 3) since the soldiers volunteered from the internment camps, the remaining West Coast Japanese Americans left behind in the camps are similarly loyal, patriotic Americans. Consequently, the government should convince the American public that Japanese Americans are loyal Americans.

³⁶NJAHS (National Japanese American Historical Society). List of detention camps, temporary detention centers, and Department of Justice Internment camps. <http://www.momomedia.com/CLP/EF/camps.html>.

³⁷Relocation. 1942. *Topaz Times* (December 5, 1942), 2.

³⁸Text of Resolution. 1943. *Topaz Times* (February 15, 1943), 2.

Several months after the resolution, the WRA modifies its placement of Japanese American identity when it issues a pamphlet to communities in the Midwest that discusses the loyalty of Japanese Americans and suggests that these communities be open to the contributions Japanese Americans can make:

All together, the Japanese American population evacuated from the West Coast comprise less than one-tenth of one percent of our total population. Dispersed throughout the interior of the country, only a few families to any one community, they should be able, with their wide diversity of skills, to contribute notably to the civilian and wartime needs of the nation. . .³⁹

In so naming the Japanese Americans and their potential inclination to resettle with other Japanese Americans as the *problem*, the WRA does little to facilitate the integration of the Japanese American community into mainstream society. The racial prejudice at the outbreak of the war is not addressed. Responsibility for changing the majority's opinion still remains with how Japanese Americans behave, including not congregating after the camps are shut down. Arguments based on similar premises reaffirm assumptions that Japanese Americans really are *Others* who must prove their loyalty before they will ever be accepted as equal.

Patriotic Obligations: Countering the Image of Enemy; Affirming American Identity

The second major theme in press coverage characterizes the internees as patriotic to American ideals. Stories appealing to Issei and Nisei patriotism reinforce the internees' identity as American citizens and refute the identity of *Other* that was attributed to them following the attack on Pearl Harbor that brought forward latent racism toward Asians. At a very basic level agricultural projects in the camps and in surrounding areas are linked to patriotism. One of the early stories in Tule Lake notes, "Our country is at war and we must raise food. This is our assignment in the war effort."⁴⁰ When the WRA arranged for internees to take leaves to harvest crops in other parts of the West, these too were labelled as part of one's patriotic duty. The August 24, 1942 front page of the *Tulean Dispatch* begins its lead story, "The harvest season is at hand for agricultural crops which are vital to the success of our county in the war. . . . The harvest season calls for the service of all who are available to do this work."⁴¹ Harvesting the crops was extended from the agricultural projects inside the camp to communities throughout the West Coast facing labor shortages. Authorized leaves to harvest crops were organized through the War Relocation Authority. A demonstrated early commitment to agricultural work begins to wane in 1943. The placement Office in Tule Lake reports that approximately 6,800 people were employed in the project January 1, 1943, but that left many

³⁹WRA issues leaflet relocating a people. 1943. *Topaz Times* (April 27, 1943), 2.

⁴⁰Shirrell, 1942. Welcome, 1.

⁴¹Harvest season calls for laborers. 1942. *Tulean Dispatch* (August 24, 1942), 1.

who refused to cooperate and do their duty to both feed those in the camp and export food to other camps and to be sold locally.

To be an American patriot or the enemy? At the beginning of the internment and periodically throughout the years of incarceration, this is the either-or choice the newspapers offered the internees. There was no middle ground; patriotism had to be enacted by internees. The Director's message in the *Tulean Dispatch* August 1, 1942 urges pride in the city that comes about by patriotic commitment to the "American way of life," manifest in assuming important roles in organizing the camp which, consequently, "from now on may be considered thriving, busy American city."⁴²

The newspapers tie patriotism to democratic processes, especially the self-government that residents in all of the camps are expected to create and live by. The *Topaz Times* lead story October 3, 1942 reports the election of the first members of the Community Council – the democratic governing body inside the camp. Ironically, the pledge that newly elected member take, preceded by the Pledge of Allegiance and a violin rendition of "The Star Spangled Banner," asks Japanese Americans "to uphold the Constitution of the United States and the related laws thereof. I further pledge my ideals, devotions and energy to the common welfare of all residents of this community; and to insure that my efforts will not be contrary to the basic principles of human rights."⁴³ Despite the expectation that they would create and abide by democratic principles, it would take more than forty years for the US government to admit that internment violated the civil rights of Japanese Americans. In a story October 28, 1942, Victor Abo writes, "Freedom in a relocation project is a right to be treasured and preserved. Along with independence in religious belief, the privilege of self-government is a cardinal freedom. Though not absolute, self-government in Topaz is an invaluable means of expressing opinions and preserving the dignity of the individual."⁴⁴ He argues that they have more freedom in the camps than many of them felt living in their home communities, simply because they feel free to express their opinions. In effect, not challenging one's incarceration, making the most of the camp experience is to act as a patriot.

Patriotism is also touted on national holidays. The *Tulean Dispatch*'s 4th of July front page contains a story on the gala planned for the day, a note about 450 Japanese-American boys signing up for the draft, a poem about the American flag and importantly, an editorial that opines,

On July 4, 1776, American freedom was born. Freedom which today the nation, the people welded in a single common front are fighting to preserve. Democracy to be sure is not dead. It still lives and burns in the lives of millions of mankind, confident in the hope that a world of tomorrow will bring peace and understanding and tolerance.⁴⁵

⁴²Shirrell, E. L. 1942. Proud of our city. *Tulean Dispatch* (August 1, 1942), 1.

⁴³Eight representatives take Council oath Wednesday. 1942. *Topaz Times* (October 3, 1942), 1.

⁴⁴Abo, V. 1942. Government. *Topaz Times* (October 28, 1942), 3.

⁴⁵Nakamura, J. 1942. An editorial. *Tulean Dispatch* (July 4, 1942), 1.

Patriotism can also be defined as cooperating with others in the camp. A major story in the *Tulean Dispatch* in late August 1942 changes the focus to race consciousness that “has been made more intense by the act of evacuation. Candidly speaking, this consciousness has been forced upon us.”⁴⁶ But race consciousness, the account argues, should be understood as pride in what the Issei have accomplished since coming to America, especially their efforts to “instill in us the sense of loyalty to one master (the Stars and Stripes), and to plant in us the strong love for kindness, politeness, and discipline.”⁴⁷ The second half of the story cautions readers to be tolerant of differences, especially amidst crowded conditions and trying times: “The Japanese people in America and everything that goes to sustain their feeling of pride in their own race are on trial in these relocation centers. The issei, the nisei and kibe are well to remember this constantly so that they will never have the occasion to spit in their own racial face.”⁴⁸ To fight among themselves, then, is contrary to the patriotism and sense of American identity that they collectively seek.

The most obvious manifestation of patriotism comes with military service. On November 11, 1942, the *Topaz Times* announces the government’s decision to admit Nisei into the military,

in response to urgent requests from Nisei circles pleading that men of Draft age be granted the opportunity to prove their loyalty by enlisting in the Armed Services of the United States, the War Department has now inaugurated a plan whereby such an opportunity is now provided to qualified Nisei personnel.⁴⁹

Like Caucasian enlistees, the Nisei seek the opportunity to prove that they are patriotic Americans. Logically, if they are willing to die for their country their identity should be seen as *American* and not as *enemy*. On December 1, 1942, the *Tulean Dispatch* front page headline reads, “34 Buck Privates Answer Army Call to the Colors.” The ultimate expression of patriotism, of American identity is service to country. Regular notation of volunteers, those home on leave, and deaths among service personnel are part of the vital statistics recorded in the camp papers. A columnist for the *Tulean Dispatch* lamented the fact that new soldiers left the camp without much fanfare: “What’s the matter? Most of those fellows are leaving their loved ones, even wives and children behind, in their willingness to instill a richer concept of American democracy. What more can a man give up?”⁵⁰ The *Topaz Times* reinforces the link between loyalty, citizenship, and military service. A front page editorial opines, “The sacrifice of life is the supreme test of one’s loyalty to his country. Following the War Department’s announcement of last week that Japanese American citizens will be accepted in the United States

⁴⁶Imazeki, H. M. 1942. The Japanese people. *Tulean Dispatch* (August 24, 1942), 2.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹The city reveal plan to enlist nisei in army. 1942 *Topaz Times* (November 11, 1942), 1.

⁵⁰Star Dusting. 1943. *Tulean Dispatch* (May 26, 1943), 2.

Army, youths stand ready to undergo that test to prove they are loyal to the land of their birth.”⁵¹

The camps respect and honor Nisei who are proving that Japanese Americans are loyal to the United States. In mid-March the *Topaz Times* dedicates a whole page to a summary of the reasons why so many Nisei enlisted, including that it is a way of supporting all Japanese Americans, “That they may have a better chance of returning to the normal life of America, that their reception by the outside world will be as cordial and friendly as possible.”⁵² The announced identity as loyal Americans is confirmed by the placement of Nisei as loyal by Caucasian officers and soldiers: “Captain Arthur W. Clausen, company officer, revealed that the skepticism apparent upon arrival of the Japanese a year ago, was eliminated quickly and that “they speedily won the high esteem of their Caucasian buddies, and have been completely accepted.”⁵³ As 1944 progresses, stories report the success of the Nisei unit in Europe and the irony of periodic stories reaching the front saying things like, “the only good Jap is a dead one.”⁵⁴ Even dedicated military service cannot fully remove the public’s racist attitude toward Japanese Americans.

Relocations Plans: Changing Announced and Placed Identities

Once WRA officials acknowledge that internment was a mistake, plans for relocation (reintegration of Japanese Americans) emerge as a major topic in the camp newspapers. Consider a story in the *Tulean Dispatch* reporting a change in attitude on the part of the War Relocation Authority. The director, Dillon S. Meyer admits that the “establishment of relocation centers as a mistake” and had resulted in many loyal citizens “embittered by what they consider unfair treatment” who will likely stay in the U.S. and “generally are considered loyal.”⁵⁵ The Government’s adjustment of placed Japanese American identity is ahead of public placement. A story on the front page of the *Tulean Dispatch* May 31, 1943 indicates that public perception believes “Japanese in relocation centers are being pampered” and public opinion polls in Oregon, Washington and California express concerns about the loyalty of Japanese Americans and the advisability of letting them return to those areas, except for agricultural work.⁵⁶

The *Topaz Times* offers a front page story requesting that churches aid the Committee on Resettlement of Japanese Americans. “The government has asked the churches to help. We dare not refuse.”⁵⁷ More controversial in the debate over resettlement is a news account of the JACL (Japanese American Citizens League)

⁵¹ A test – editorial. 1943. *Topaz Times* (February 6, 1943), 1..

⁵² Yoshino, J. 1943. Reasons for volunteering given. *Topaz Times* (March 17, 1943), 2. Western Oregon University Archives, MSS 16, Box 2, Folder 1.

⁵³ Japanese American soldiers praised. 1943. *Topaz Times* (April 29, 1943), 2.

⁵⁴ Nisei soldiers in Italy lauded for splendid fighting ability. 1944. *Topaz Times* (February 29, 1944), 3.

⁵⁵ Establishment of war centers mistake – Meyer to speed resettlement. 1943. *Tulean Dispatch*, (May 28, 1943), 1.

⁵⁶ Centers to be investigated. 1943. *Tulean Dispatch* (May 31, 1943), 1.

⁵⁷ Church aid asked for resettlement. 1943. *Topaz Times* (January 16, `943), 1.

position on resettlement. The argument is that it is better to voluntarily find resettlement destinations, despite hardships that early camp resettlers have discovered, because “Those who chose to retain the comparative security of relocation centers rather than to rebuild their homes in the outside world are exposing themselves to the breaking down of their ambition, initiative, moral standards and family bonds.”⁵⁸ The speaker claims current evacuees are more fortunate than their parents who did not speak the language or know the customs of Americans. In essence, internees are blamed by their own citizens league for not embracing moves to the Midwest and East for the sake of their children. “Scoring the ‘deplorable lack of interest in their future shown by the Japanese American people before the war,’ Masaoka emphatically urged that the people of Japanese ancestry organize themselves so that ‘never again will they become victims of ruthless pressure and anti-minority groups,’”⁵⁹ The argument assigns past and future blame on the evacuees, not on the government’s illegal and immoral incarceration of Japanese Americans. The WRA argues that the internment camps were always thought to be temporary, and it is the duty of all internees to move out of the camps and into areas of the United States where there are few Japanese. Meyers, director of the WRA notes, “Undoubtedly you recognize that the public generally will judge all other American residents of Japanese ancestry by what it sees of you, and that the success of the relocation program depends to a great extent upon you and the others who move from relocation centers into new communities.”⁶⁰ A patriotic American will take responsibility for the past— their evacuation and relocation, and the present need to abandon plans to return to their homes and face migration to other parts of the country where they are likely to find hostile communities, a lack of employment opportunities, and limited housing. Internees are cautioned against buying land or businesses, speaking Japanese or calling attention to themselves until they are accepted into new communities.

By May 1943 concerns about relocation become pronounced. Those who have gone through relocation talk about their experiences, but cautions remain, such as in an editorial May 28, 1943:

Let’s keep in mind that relocation entails the making of serious and important decisions. So let’s not let any high pressure salesman stampede us into making hasty and ill-thought-out moves. Let’s think clearly and realistically about what we will face, investigate our job offers carefully – and then make our decisions.”⁶¹ About 12,000 Japanese Americans had been relocated from the camps to new communities. As the relocation increases, so do letters and editorials about problems such as “the double handicaps of broken promises and negative community acceptance.”⁶²

⁵⁸JACL leader speaks on resettlement. 1943. *Topaz Times* (January 18, 1943), 1.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Meyer, D. C. 1943. Meyer gives advice on resettlement. *Topaz Times* (January 23, 1943), 1.

⁶¹Watanabe, W. 1943. Make sure before you go. *Topaz Times* (May 22, 1943), 2.

⁶²Watanabe, W. and Takahashi, H. 1943. Look before you leap. *Topaz Times* (June 12, 1943), 2.

The New Year's Day issue of the *Topaz Times* in 1944 reports a survey of residents and their plans for relocation. For many reticence to leave the camps is attributed to "low cash reserve and high cost of living, and difficulty in finding jobs or starting private businesses. Apprehensions about finding housing difficulties were another deterrent."⁶³

In February, the *Topaz Times* reports a guest speaker, a professor of anthropology encourages Japanese Americans to join larger groups (e.g. labor organizations) and minimize their dependence on minority organizations if they want to be accepted by American communities.⁶⁴ Comments like these place Japanese Americans in a power down relationship where they must learn to take responsibility for the attitudes communities will show toward them in the future. The debate over relocation makes it apparent that early placement of Japanese American *Otherness*, while temporarily suppressed at the Government level, reemerge with plans to close the camps at the end of the war and relocate the internees to other parts of the country rather than be returned to the West Coast.

Conclusion

Phillip Hammack argues that all participants in conflict construct their daily experiences, raw with emotion, into a personal narrative of identity. Over time and alongside these personal identities, a social identity emerges "through the integration of not just individual experience but also the *stories of collective experience*."⁶⁵ If we are to understand a culture, in this case the actions of government official and Japanese Americans under internment, we must examine the public discourse in which they engage and *name* the incarceration. The stories told in the camp newspapers, even censored, reflect the collective narratives from which internees may order and make sense of the personal and social identities that they announce or accept from others' placement of them in a particular narrative. The naming is important as it carries with it a program of action toward the named individual or group.

The first theme apparent in stories in the *Tulean Dispatch* and *Topaz Times* deals with conflicting announced identities of Americanism and placed identities by government officials. I have contended that one way to name oneself and announce an identity is to argue for commonality with other Americans – sharing values, belonging to the same kind of social, religious, and political organizations. Newspaper stories use characters and their implicit motivations, and actions that share characteristics with non-Japanese Americans. If a typical American narrative identifies early pioneers as essential to the development of the nation, links in newspaper stories between the American pioneer and the internees as pioneers make internees consubstantial with Americans by drawing a clear demarcation

⁶³Survey of relocation resident opinion. 1944. *Topaz Times* (January 1, 1944), 6.

⁶⁴Japanese should join larger groups to be effective, Embree. 1944 *Topaz Times* (February 12, 1944), 1.

⁶⁵Hammack, P.L. 2011. *Narrative and the Politics of Identity*. Oxford University Press, New York, NY, 13.

between internees as citizens, consubstantial with American master narratives, and the Japanese enemy who blindly follows the dictates of the Emperor and threatens the safety of the United States.

A second theme in the news stories revolves around patriotism as an announced and placed identity for internees. Agricultural work to support the war effort, participation in democratic decision making, cooperation, and military service contribute to a shared patriotic identity. One of the strongest links between the desire for an American identity and patriotic actions to prove one's worthiness is apparent in a letter from a volunteer for enlistment in the army:

I believe that it is the desire of every Japanese American today to have his children and his children's children live as respected citizens in a democratic America, and not as a hated people, destitute of hope, courage and contentment.

Yet we cannot have this desire realized unless we are willing now – when the war department offers us the chance to fight for America on the battlefield – to devote the utmost of ourselves to this cause, and to let not the darkness of our present situation or our grievances prevent us from proving our worth before the eyes of the American public.⁶⁶

Identities are established when there is agreement on announced and placed characteristics. The discussion surrounding camp closure and relocation of internees challenges the two forms of identity discussed in this essay. Although fairly consistently announcing Japanese Americans as loyal, when talk about relocation (reintegration) into communities heats up, the *Topaz Times* issues a warning. In the confines of an all-Japanese American camp, touting one's American identity may not have negative consequences, but entering the public, "whether we like it or not, we have been placed in the position of being 'doubtful' members of American society, persons, at first glance at least, to be regarded with mistrust."⁶⁷

For West Coast Japanese Americans interned during World War II, it matters how one's identity is established as an American, as a patriot, as one who blends in or as one who protests the violation of civil rights. The two newspapers examined in this essay differ in the coverage of announced and placed identities for internees. They offer us a glimpse of the battle over how one is named and the subsequent program of action that such language carries with it.

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