

STRANGERS FROM A DIFFERENT SHORE: A HISTORY OF ASIAN AMERICANS
By Ronald Takaki

CHAPTER 10
THE WATERSHED OF WORLD WAR II
DEMOCRACY AND RACE

One Sunday afternoon in Los Angeles, while sitting in a bar, Carlos Bulosan was suddenly stunned by a blaring newsbreak on the radio: "Japan bombs Pearl Harbor!" He rushed outside, trembling and looking for a familiar face. "I has come, Carlos!" his brother Macario shouted. The two men walked aimlessly in the streets. Memories of home and then apprehensions of the future swept through Bulosan like waves. "We had been but little boys when we left the Philippines," he thought. "And my mother! What would happen to her and my two sisters?" A few months later, Macario enlisted in the army, and as he watched his brother ride away on the bus, Bulosan sensed the significant impact the war would have on their lives and American society. "If I met him again, I would not be the same," he thought. "He would not be the same, either. Our world was this one, but a new one was being born."¹

The war, Bulosan could see, would be a watershed, a crucial dividing line in the history of Filipinos as well as other Asians in America. Representing a new "necessity," the war came crashing down on Asian-American communities from Hawaii to New York: large international forces and developments were pulling Filipinos, Koreans, Asian Indians, Chinese, and Japanese into a whirlpool of chaos and change. The conflagration would require the immigrants and their offspring to determine more sharply than ever before their identities as Asians and as Americans. They had been viewed and treated as "strangers from a different shore," but now they would be asked to support their country in crisis and serve as Americans in the armed forces. The war would also challenge America's image of itself as a democracy. As the United States confronted the threat of Fascism in Asia and Europe, the nation would be asked to extend its democratic ideals to immigrants of color and acknowledge its diversity. The task would prove to be difficult, for it would require a critical scrutiny of American society and would expose the contradictions within.²

"On to Bataan"

The Japanese Zeros swooped down on Pearl Harbor, shattering the calm of this Sunday morning in Hawaii. "The airplanes looked like toys but they were shooting and dropping bombs on us," recalled Apolinaria Gusman Oclaray, who had left the Philippines with her husband Santiago in 1928. "I thought it was play, you know practice, and I asked my husband, 'How come the airplanes are firing?' And he said, 'Because this is a real war and a real war is like that.'" Seven hours later, Japanese forces invaded the Philippines. There, on the Bataan Peninsula, they encountered determined resistance from American and Filipino troops.³

Four long months later, on April 9, correspondent Frank Hewlett described the fall of Bataan: "The gallant United States and Philippine forces in Bataan peninsula surrendered today after enduring the tortures of hell. . . . They were beaten, but it was a fight that ought to make every American bow his head in tribute. . . . The Americans fought for everything they loved, as did the Filipinos, WITH THEIR FIERCE LOVE OF LIBERTY." Four days later, in her tribute to the brave men of Bataan, Eleanor Roosevelt highlighted the interracial brotherhood forged on the bloodstained battlefield: "Fighting in Bataan has been an excellent example of what happens when two different races respect each other. Men of different races and backgrounds have fought side by side and praised each other's heroism and courage." Carlos Bulosan conveyed in poetry the meaning of Bataan for Filipinos:

*Bataan has fallen.
With heads bloody but unbowed, we yielded to the
enemy. . . .
We have stood up complaining.
Besieged on land and blockaded by sea,
We have done all that human endurance could
bear. . . .
Our defeat is our victory.*⁴

At Bataan thousands of Filipinos had fought beside American soldiers, and the stories of Filipino military gallantry forced whites to view Filipinos in the United States more respectfully. Suddenly there was “something intangible in the air” that said America had learned to respect Filipinos, Manuel Buaken noticed. “No longer on the streetcar do I feel myself in the presence of my enemies. We Filipinos are the same – it is Americans that have changed in their recognition of us.” A Filipino working in a Pullman car was pleasantly surprised by the abrupt change in the attitudes of white travelers. “I am very much embarrassed,” he remarked. “They treat me as if I have just arrived from Bataan.”⁵

Meanwhile, Filipinos in America worried about the Philippines and the loved ones they had left behind. They wanted to defend their homeland, and they immediately rushed to the recruiting offices to volunteer. They were refused, however, for they were classified as “national” and hence ineligible for service in the U.S. Armed Forces. When he learned his village of Binalonan had been crushed by Japanese tanks racing from Tayug toward Manila, Bulosan went to the nearest recruiting office: “As I stood in line waiting for my turn, I thought of a one-legged American Revolutionary patriot of who I had read. But Filipinos were not being accepted.”⁶

They had to get into this war, Filipinos insistently protested. President Franklin Roosevelt promptly changed the draft law to include Filipinos, and on February 19, 1942, Secretary of War Henry Stimson announced the organization of the First Filipino Infantry Regiment: “This new unit is formed in recognition of the intense loyalty and patriotism of those Filipinos who are now residing in the United States. It provides for them a means of serving in the armed forces of the United States, and the eventual opportunity of fighting on the soil of their homeland.”⁷

Filipinos eagerly responded to the call to arms. In California alone 16,000 – 40 percent of the state’s Filipino population – registered for the first draft. In 1942, the First Filipino Infantry Regiment and the Second Filipino Infantry Regiment were formed. Altogether more than 7,000 Filipinos served in these two regiments. “Their enthusiasm and discipline are far superior to any I have seen in my army career,” declared their commander, Colonel Robert H. Offley. “The minute you put one of these boys in uniform he wants a rifle. The minute he gets a rifle he wants to get on a boat. He can’t understand why we don’t ship him out right away, so he can start shooting Japs.” “To these pint-sized soldiers,” states the *American Legion Magazine* describing Filipinos, “this war is a personal grudge.” Filipino-American soldiers had, as Doroteo Vite put it, “a personal reason to be training to fight the invaders.” They wanted to defend their country. “My home and my family and all the things that were dear to me as a boy,” explained Vite in 1942, “are there in the path of the Japanese war machine.” A Filipino soldier said he met white men who were “thrilled” to see representatives of those “little fellows who were showing them dirty Japs how to fight.”⁸

Filipinos wanted to get back to the Philippines to fight for the liberation of their homeland. “We wanted to be there” – in the Philippines, they later declared. The regimental song of the First Filipino Infantry was “On to Bataan.” Shipped to the Pacific for duty, they were anxious for action. “After we came from Australia by submarine we went to the Philippines,” said Magno Cabrerros. “We trained in Australia under General MacArthur . . . learned how to roll parachutes, jump in combat . . . how to kill people noiselessly.” Filipino soldiers made unique and valuable contributions to the war effort in the Pacific. They operated behind enemy lines, engaging in sabotage to destroy Japanese communications. The military intelligence gathered by Filipino soldiers, reported Lieutenant General R. K. Sutherland, proved to be “of the greatest assistance to impending military operations. By their loyalty, daring, and skillful performance of duty under hazardous conditions, they materially accelerated the campaign for the recapture of the Philippine Islands.”⁹

But many Filipino-American soldiers were also fighting for their freedom on the home front. Their very wearing of a uniform was a political statement. “In a few months I will be wearing Uncle Sam’s olive-drab army uniform,” said a Filipino. “I am looking forward to that day, not with misgiving but with a boyish anticipation of doing something which up to now I have never been allowed to do – serving as an equal with American boys.” The war, noted the wife of a Filipino soldier, gave Filipinos the chance to show themselves to America as “soldiers of democracy,” as “men, not houseboys.” To Filipinos, enlistment in the army gave them membership in American society. “In all the years I was here before the United States went into the war,” a Filipino soldier observed, “I felt that I did not belong here. I was a stranger among a people who did not understand and had no good reason to understand me and my people. . . . In other words, it was a pretty difficult business to be a Filipino in the United States in the years preceding Pearl Harbor.”¹⁰

But in many places it was still “difficult business” even after Pearl Harbor, for they continued to be viewed as “strangers.” Stationed at Camp Beale, soldiers of the First Filipino Infantry found they were unwelcome in Marysville, California. Dressed proudly in their U.S. Army uniforms, several Filipino soldiers went into the nearby town during their first weekend pass to have a good dinner and see the sights. They entered a restaurant and sat down, but no one came to serve them. After waiting for half an hour, one of them got up and asked for service and

was told: “We don’t serve Filipinos here.” Filipino soldiers were turned away from theaters or were forced to sit in a segregated section, and their visiting wives were refused accommodations at the hotels. Informed about the discriminatory treatment his men were receiving, Colonel Robert H. Offley met with the Marysville Chamber of Commerce. “There,” as Private First Class Manuel Buaken put it, “he laid down the law of cooperation with the army – or else. Then the merchants and the restaurant proprietors and the movie houses changed their tune,” and opened their places to Filipinos. But the “soul of enjoyment” was gone for Buaken and his brothers. They knew that in their hearts those people were hating and ridiculing the Filipinos, laughing at their brown skins. And they hoped they would soon be gone from “these towns which hate built” and this land of double-talk.”¹¹

But the war began to open the way for Filipinos. As members of the U.S. Armed Forces, they were allowed to become citizens, and on February 20, 1943, on the parade ground of Camp Beale, twelve hundred Filipino soldiers stood proudly and silently in V formation as citizenship was conferred on them. During the ceremony, the colonel in charge declared: “Officers who returned from Bataan have said there are no finer soldiers in the world than the Filipinos who fought and starved and died there shoulder to shoulder with our troops. I can well believe it as I look at the men before me. On those faces is quiet determination and a consciousness of training and discipline with a definite end in view. I congratulate them on their soldierly appearance and on their approaching citizenship.” In the concluding speech, a judge welcomed the Filipinos: “Citizenship came to us who were born here as a heritage – it will come to you as a privilege. We have every faith you will become and remain loyal, devoted citizens of the United States.”¹²

During the war, the California Attorney General reinterpreted the land laws and decided that Filipinos would be allowed to lease lands and encouraged them to take over holdings of the Japanese. “There were some Japanese children in our school,” Liz Megino remembered, “and all of a sudden they weren’t there.” Manuel Buaken welcomed the interment of Japanese Americans and the changes in discriminatory laws against Filipinos. The laws allowed Filipinos to buy farms and become farmers. In the Imperial County alone there were five hundred Filipino farmers “stopping” on the “vacated farms of the Japs.” Comparing Filipino qualities to what he viewed as the unassimilability of Japanese, Buaken declared that Filipinos always wanted nothing more than to learn from America, to become “good Americans.” They had developed no great banks here in the United States, their savings going instead into American banks. They had patronized American stores, “not stores devoted to the selling of products from across the seas.” They strove to learn English, not to perpetuate foreign-language schools and to teach foreign ideas to their children. Unfortunately Buaken based his own Americanism on anti-Japanese sentiments rather than on the democratic ideals of America.¹³

Facing Fascism abroad, the United States felt compelled to make good its claims to democracy. In 1941 President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802, prohibiting racial discrimination in employment: “It is the duty of employers and labor organizations . . . to provide for full and equitable participation of all workers in defense industries, without discrimination because of race, creed, color, or national origin.” The war opened employment to Filipinos as war industries clamored for their labor. The employment of Filipinos in the defense factories prompted Fernando Taggaoa to remark shortly before he left for the Pacific front in 1942: “In the United States, the war is doing wonders for the resident Filipinos.”¹⁴

Four years later, seeking to demonstrate American democracy to people of color around the world, Congress passed a law that extended citizenship to Filipino immigrants and permitted the entry of one hundred Filipino immigrants annually. “It took a war and a great calamity in our country to bring us [white and Filipinos] together,” observed Carlos Bulosan. Shortly after the war, sociologist R. T Feria assessed the impact of the war on the status of Filipinos. He noted that as the Japanese left Los Angeles, Filipinos purchased homes from them in the more desirable neighborhoods. Many Filipinos also bought small farms from the Japanese in the San Fernando Valley and the Torrance-Gardena districts. Employment opportunities expanded for Filipinos as they entered the shipyards of Wilmington and San Pedro and the plants of Lockheed, Douglas, and Vultee. “The majority became welders, technicians, assembly or office workers, and a few became engineers.” Most importantly, Feria observed, the war had forced Filipinos to make a decision – “to go home and help in the reconstruction of their homeland” or “to spend the rest of their days in America.” Thousands of Filipinos, granted citizenship and feeling a sense of greater acceptance, chose to make America their permanent home. But would whites forget Bataan when the economic prosperity of the war began to slacken, Feria wondered, and would they invoke another “interminable era of dishwashing and asparagus cutting”?¹⁵

Filipinos had reason to be doubtful. They had been granted citizenship finally, but they knew the new political status did not mean acceptance. “What good would it do to become citizens of America,” asked Private First Class Jose Trinidad, “if we are still brown-skin inferiors?” Filipinos could not change their complexions. Liz Megino recalled how Filipinos had to distinguish themselves from Japanese shortly after the beginning of the war: “My mother told me to make sure you say you’re not Japanese if they ask you who you are. Filipinos wore buttons

saying, 'I am a Filipino.'" Even before the end of the war, Filipinos in the Santa Maria Valley were reminded of their subordinate place in society. After Filipino farm laborers went on strike, the Economic Council of Santa Maria warned in an advertisement published in local newspapers that the wartime honeymoon for Filipinos was over: "At best, Filipinos are guests in the United States. . . . While Americans are dying to free their countrymen from Japanese slavery, the lavish expenditures of money by Filipinos on white women instead of assisting their countrymen is not promoting good-will among Americans. . . . Filipinos want America to build up their homeland and protect them, while their people conduct themselves as strikers in the Santa Maria Valley. . . . If the Filipinos act as they have recently, they should be classified with the Japanese; denied renting of land and such, as the Japanese were who also did not act properly as guests in America."¹⁶

"I Am Korean"

On the morning of December 7, 1941, several Koreans in Los Angeles were rehearsing for a play to be presented in the evening at a program sponsored by the Society for Aid to the Korean Volunteer Corps in China. The event was organized to raise funds for the relief of 200,000 refugee Korean families living in China and for the support of Korean volunteers engaged in armed struggle against the Japanese in China. During the rehearsal, they were suddenly interrupted by an electrifying announcement: "The Japanese have attacked Pearly Harbor." Then, spontaneously, everyone on the stage exploded: "*Taehan Toknip Manse!*" – "Long Live Korean Independence!" "No Korean, old and young alike, could control his emotions of joy," one of the players, Bong-Youn Choy, recalled movingly. "Some old Korean immigrants had tears in their eyes and kept silent. Every Korean felt that the long dream for national independence would soon become a reality." In the evening, the play was presented to an "enthusiastic and happy" audience of Koreans, Chinese, and whites.¹⁷

Also that night, Koreans gathered at the Korean National Association in Los Angeles and resolved:

1. Koreans shall promote unity during the war and act harmoniously.
2. Koreans shall work for the defense of the country where they reside and all those who are healthy should volunteer for national guard duty. Those who are financially capable should purchase war bonds, and those who are skilled should volunteer for appropriate duties.
3. Koreans shall wear a badge identifying them as Koreans, for security purposes.¹⁸

Korean nationalists welcomed the war, hopeful it would lead to the military destruction of Japan and the restoration of Korean Independence. Even before the attack on Pearl Harbor, Syngman Rhee had recommended that America should initiate a war against Japan: "The United States should employ all her power, economic, moral, and military, now to check Japan in order to prevent an ultimate conflict with her." Rhee pictured Japan as a young bully. "Is it not equally clear, then, that your true policy should be to act quickly and keep him down by force before he grows too big, so that he can never get out of hand?" Koreans had been fighting Japan for decades in their homeland, and on April 20, 1941, the United Korean Committee, composed of representatives of nationalist organizations in the United States, issued the Declaration of the All-Korean Convention: "Hundreds and thousands of our brothers and sisters have died in the past on the battle fronts for the cause of national independence, and their sacrifices have become a living symbol for our guidance today. . . . We Koreans in America should unite together as one body and should support the Allied Powers until they bring a final victory of the present war against the Axis powers." When the war came, Koreans in America were excited. "Korea for Victory with America," they shouted. The *Korean National Herald-Pacific Weekly* declared the "fact" that "every Korean born" was "an enemy born for Japan."¹⁹

Actually, for Koreans in America, the war years were also times of painful confusion. "When World War Two broke out," Jean Park remembered, "we were still living in Reedley." A few months after the attack on Pearl Harbor, she began to hear stories that the Japanese were being evacuated to interment camps. "People said that the Japanese were treated very cruelly and that they were dragged to unknown destinations." The evacuation of the Japanese opened opportunities for Koreans: her stepfather decided to move the family to southern California, where "the Japanese lost all their farms and many of the farms were being sold for very cheap prices." But when Jean and her family arrived at their new home, they found whites staring at them and shouting, "Japs go home!" "They were ready to stone us with rocks and descend on us because they had that evil look in their eyes."²⁰

Government policies also failed to distinguish the Koreans from the Japanese. In 1940, the Alien Registration Act classified Korean immigrants as subjects of Japan; after the United States declared war against Japan, the government identified Koreans here as "enemy aliens." In February 1942, the *Korean National Herald-Pacific Weekly* insisted the government classify Koreans as Koreans. "The Korean is an enemy of Japan," the

editorial declared, underscoring the torturous irony of the situation. “Since December 7, the Korean here is between the devil and the deep sea for the reason that the United States considers him a subject of Japan, which the Korean resents as an injustice to his true status. . . . What is the status of a Korean in the United States? Is he an enemy alien? Has any Korean ever been in Japanese espionage or in subversive activities against the land where he makes his home and rears his children as true Americans?” In Hawaii Koreans were classified by the territorial government as enemy aliens. Korean immigrants employed on defense projects in the islands experienced an even more painful insult: they were classified as Japanese. “For years we’ve been fighting the Japanese and now they tell us that we’re Japs,” Koreans snapped angrily. “It’s an insult!” Placed in a restricted category, these Koreans had to wear badges with black borders. “Why in the hell do they pull a trick like this on us,” the Korean workers screamed, “when we hate the Japanese more than anyone else in the world.” After their protests, they were only allowed to have printed on their badges the statement “I am Korean.”²¹

Some young Koreans, however, sympathized with Japanese Americans. “It made me feel sad to hear that their land was taken away from them [Japanese Americans on the West Coast],” said Jean Park, “and that they were imprisoned.” Similarly second-generation Koreans in Hawaii did not see the local Japanese as the enemy. “It didn’t make me feel any differently toward the Japanese,” explained a Korean young man shortly after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. “We’ve lived with them all along and know them well and it didn’t occur to me that they were responsible [for the attack].”²²

But there were Korean nationalists who viewed the matter very differently. Kilsoo Haan, leader of the Sino-Korean People’s League, charged in early 1941 that 35,000 to 50,000 Japanese in Hawaii were ready to assist Japan in a war against the United States. In 1942, Haan went to California, where he agitated for the forced evacuation of the Japanese from the West Coast. He claimed that the Japanese were engaged in military intelligence operations for Japan. “It is our conviction,” Haan argued, “that the best way to prepare against the Japanese is to let the American people know the Japanese plans and what the Japs and the Japanese Americans are doing in this country.”²³

Like the Filipinos, Korean immigrants were anxious to become involved in the American war effort against Japan. Many Koreans possessed an invaluable weapon that the country needed: they knew the Japanese language. They were employed as Japanese-language teachers and as translators of Japanese secret documents; they served as propaganda broadcasters in the Pacific front and agents for underground activities in Japanese-occupied areas of Asia. An instructor in Oriental Languages at the University of California at Berkeley, Bong-Youn Choy also taught college-extension Japanese-language courses in Oakland and San Francisco two nights a week and worked for the Office of War Information in San Francisco on Saturdays and Sundays as a broadcaster to Korea. “I delivered lectures on Korean and Japanese politics to the Office of War Information for three months,” he recalled. “In addition, I was asked to teach Japanese to the special Army Training Program classes.” Commissioned as navy interpreters, Yi Jong-gun and Pak Yong-hak were sent to the Solomon Islands and participated in the Guadalcanal campaign.²⁴

In Los Angeles, 109 Koreans – one fifth of the city’s Korean population – joined the California National Guard. Ranging in ages from eighteen to sixty-five, they were organized into a Korean unit called the Tiger Brigade, *Manghokun*. They drilled regularly on Saturday and Sunday afternoons for three to four hours in Exposition Park, preparing to defend California against an enemy invasion. Congratulating them, an army official declared: “I myself have learned the real meaning of patriotism during my participation in this Tiger Brigade, and I cannot find adequate words to describe your contribution in winning this war.” Meanwhile, elderly Korean women served in the Red Cross, and old Korean men volunteered as emergency fire wardens. Koreans everywhere bought defense bonds: between 1942 and 1943, they reportedly purchased more than \$239,000 worth of defense bonds – an immense sum for a population of only ten thousand. Korean involvement in the war effort generated white-American respect for Koreans. At the celebration of the Korean national Flag Day on August 29, 1943, for example, the Los Angeles mayor raised the Korean flag to honor the uniformed men of the Tiger Brigade as they marched past City Hall. A year later, Hawaii territorial delegate Joseph R. Farrington introduced in Congress a bill for Korean immigration and naturalization. Farrington’s bill did not pass, but Koreans had gained greater acceptance and had also helped to defeat Japan and free their homeland.²⁵

Confronting Contradictions: Nazi Nordic Superiority and American Exclusion of Asian Indians

On the eve of American’s entry into World War II, Asian Indians were struggling for the right to become naturalized citizens, and the war to defend democracy buoyed their demand for equality on the home front. They had been denied eligibility to naturalized citizenship by the Supreme Court in the 1923 *Thin* decision and had been turned

away from federal relief programs during the Great Depression because they were aliens ineligible to citizenship. Under the leadership of Mubarak Ali Khan, the India Welfare League denounced the discriminatory treatment accorded to Asian Indians and asked Congress to address the problem. In 1939, a bill was introduced providing citizenship to all Asian-Indian immigrants in residence since 1924. Leading an attack on the bill was Paul Scharrenberg of the American Federation of Labor. "First, it will be the people who are here in our country now, the Chinese, Japanese, and Hindus, who want to be naturalized," he warned in his testimony before Congress. "Then they will find some other means of breaking some other little hole in the immigration law here and there or elsewhere." Unwilling to wait for congressional action, Khairata Ram Samras decided to seek remedy in the courts. In 1940, he filed a petition in the federal court of San Francisco challenging the *Thind* decision. "Discrimination against Hindus in respect to naturalization," Samras argued, "is not only capricious and untenable but in violation of constitutional provisions."²⁶

A year later, in August 1941, U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill issued the Atlantic charter, a broad statement of principles including the right of peoples to choose their own form of government. Asian Indians realized that the Atlantic Charter offered them an opportunity to press for their rights in the United States. Mubarak Ali Khan of the India Welfare League along with Sirdar Jagit Singh of the India League of America demanded both independence for India and naturalization rights for Asian Indians in the United States.

During the war, the American policymakers were forced to recognize the U.S. need for Indian cooperation in the war effort against Japan. They saw that India was strategic militarily, for Japan could push its campaign westward and try to join forces with Germany in the Near East. Japan could exploit Indian disaffection with British rule, create political chaos in Calcutta, and drive its military machinery across India. This Japanese military strategy and the necessity of Indian support prompted Congress to give attention to Indian-American demands: in March of 1944, the legislature considered a bill that would provide a quota for immigrants from India and naturalization rights for Asian Indians. A leading supporter of the proposed legislation, New York congressman Emmanuel Celler argued that oppressed people throughout the world looked to the United States for justice and equality and that "our breaking down of immigration and naturalization barriers" would "dull the edge of Jap propaganda."²⁷

Four months later, in the *Far Eastern Survey*, S. Chandrasekhar of the University of Pennsylvania emphasized another reason for bill's passage – the need to combat Nazi ideology:

Today, more than ever, the United States is vitally interested in attitudes of Asiatic peoples toward this country. Hitler's justification of Nazi oppression in Europe is supposedly based on the right of the mythically superior Nordic to superimpose his *Kultur* on the other so-called inferior peoples of Europe. If the United States is successfully to combat such dangerous ideas, it can ill afford to practice racial discrimination in its relations with Asiatic countries. The immigration policy of this country now excludes nearly a quarter of the human race. America cannot afford to say that she wants the people of India to fight on her side and at the same time maintain that she will not have them among her immigrant groups.

Clearly, the United States could not have it both ways. It could not oppose the racist ideology of Nazism and also "practice" racial discrimination. America had to put its "principle of equality" into its laws and policies, Chandrasekhar concluded, in order to reaffirm the faith of the millions in India looking to America for "just and fair play."²⁸

Two years later, Congress permitted India to have a small immigration quota and granted Asian Indians naturalization rights. During the next eighteen years, 12,000 Indians entered the United States. "Many of the older immigrants brought wives from India," wrote historian Gary Hess. "Had not immigration and naturalization laws changed in 1946, the East Indian community would almost certainly have eroded significantly perhaps to the point of extinction." The new law enabled Puna Singh, whose life we have been following, to become a naturalized citizen for the second time.²⁹

Altogether 1,772 Asian Indians became U.S. citizens between 1947 and 1965. One of them was Dalip Singh Saund, a Punjabi Sikh who had come to California in 1919 and who had become a successful farmer in the Imperial Valley. For decades Saund had wanted to become a citizen. "I had married an American girl, and was the father of three American children," he explained in his autobiography. "I was making America my home. Thus it was only natural that I felt very uncomfortable not being able to become a citizen of the United States." Citizenship was more than a matter of political rights for Saund. It would also "nullify the effect of California's Alien Land Law, and thus eliminate one of the most oppressive handicaps to the workaday business life" of Asian Indians. Frustrated, Saund and his compatriots petitioned Congress to grant them eligibility to citizenship. To gain support

for their proposal, they directed war-bond drives among Asian Indians, hoping to “earn” the “confidence” of Americans. “I saw that the bars of citizenship were shut tight against me,” Saund remarked. “I knew if these bars were lifted I would see much wider gates of opportunity open to me, opportunity as existed for everybody else in the United States of America.” Three years after he had helped to lobby their proposal successfully through Congress, Saund became a naturalized citizen. He went on to be elected to the House of Representatives in 1956, serving for three terms. The war had opened the door of democracy to Asian-Indian Americans.³⁰

The Repeal of Chinese Exclusion

“I remember December 7th so clearly,” said Lonnie Quan of San Francisco four decades later. “I was living at Gum Moon Residence Club on Washington Street. It was Sunday. I didn’t have a radio in the room.” When her boyfriend arrived, he exclaimed: “This is it. Pearl Harbor was attacked!” The news was overwhelming: “I just couldn’t believe it – it was a shock. I remember going to work in a restaurant, Cathay House, and everybody was just kinda glued to the radio.”³¹

The next day, the United States and the Republic of China declared war on Japan, and the two countries became allies. Two weeks later, on December 22, *Time* magazine explained to its readers how they could distinguish the Chinese “friend” from the Japanese “enemy”:

HOW TO TELL YOUR FRIENDS FROM THE JAPS: Virtually all Japanese are short. Japanese are likely to be stockier and broader-hipped than short Chinese. Japanese are seldom fat; they often dry up and grow lean as they age. Although both have the typical epicanthic fold of the upper eyelid, Japanese eyes are usually set closer together. The Chinese expression is likely to be more placid, kindly, open; the Japanese more positive, dogmatic, arrogant. Japanese are hesitant, nervous in conversation, laugh loudly at the wrong time. Japanese walk stiffly erect, hard heeled. Chinese, more relaxed, have an easy gait, sometimes shuffle.

Two photographs – one of a Japanese and another of a Chinese – were used as illustrations. Previously maligned as the “heathen Chinese,” “mice-eaters,” and “Chinks,” the Chinese were now friends and allies engaged in a heroic common effort against the “Japs.”³²

For a long time the Chinese had been viewed with scorn. “Then came Pearl Harbor, December 7,” said a congressman in 1943. “All at once we discovered the saintly qualities of the Chinese people. If it had not been for December 7, I do not know if we would have ever found out how good they were.” But the information distributed in *Time* and the chorus of praises for the Chinese gave them little assurance they would not still be mistaken for the enemy. They remembered how they had previously been called “Japs” and how many whites had lumped all Asians together. Fearful they would be targets of anti-Japanese hate and violence, many Chinese shopkeepers displayed signs announcing, “This is a Chinese shop.” In the Chinese community thousands of buttons were distributed: “I am Chinese.”

*When World War II was declared
on the morning radio,
we glued our ears, widened our eyes.
Our bodies shivered. . . .
Shortly our Japanese neighbors vanished
and my parents continued to whisper:
We are Chinese, we are Chinese.
We wore black arm bands,
put up a sign
in bold letters.*³³

The outbreak of the war sharpened the attachment of Chinese immigrants to their homeland. They had been faithfully supporting the defense of their ancestral country against Japanese imperialism. Portland’s Chinese community had sent a contingent of thirty-three trained Chinese-American pilots to Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek. For years before the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Chinese in America had been deeply concerned about the war in Asia, especially China. They worried about loved ones they had left behind. A letter sent to America stated:

Uncle, Venerable One, I write to you with respectful greeting:

I received ten dollars from Hong Kong money from you lately. I thank you very much. How I would like to see you come home and be with us in the near future, too.

Now Canton is captured by the Japs, our commodities here cannot be shipped to the village. For this reason, the prices of foodstuff in the village are high, very high. One bag of rice costs from eight to nine dollars. How can the poor families back home manage to live!

However, everybody at home is well. I hope you are well, too, in America.

Nephew

In a touching short story entitled, "One Mother's Day," published on May 15, 1941, in the *China Daily News* of New York, Lao Mei described the feelings of a Chinatown restaurant worker. Living as a "wanderer" in America, the worker suddenly one day is seized with nostalgic thoughts of home, thinking about his "invaded home village," especially his seventy-year-old mother. He anxiously wonders what had become of her as he walks the streets of New York City. "How about a fresh flower for your mother on Mother's Day?" asks an old woman with a basket full of fresh flowers. He is startled, "as if someone had discovered his inner secrets." He pauses momentarily, then takes out two dimes for a red one and a white one. And in the end of the story, he pins them together on his lapel and walks toward the park.³⁴

Like this homesick restaurant worker, Chinese in America were reminded by the war of their deep family ties to their homeland, and America's entry into the war ignited patriotic explosions in Chinatowns across the country. In "A Memo to Mr. Hitler, Hirohito & Co.," the San Francisco Chinese community warned:

Have you heard the bad news? America is out to get you. America has a grim, but enthusiastic bombing party started, and you're the target in the parlor game.

San Francisco Chinatown, U.S.A., is joining the party. Chinatown is proud to be a part of Freedom's legion in freeing all the decent people of the world from your spectacle.

Chinatown's part of the party will cost \$500,000. Admission price to the fun is purchase of a U.S. War Bond. We're all going to buy a War Bond for Victory.

P.S. More bad news. Everyone in Chinatown is going to this party. We're NOT missing this one.

In San Francisco, the Chinese contributed generously to the defense of America. "San Francisco has gone over the top in its recent Red Cross drive," proudly announced K. S. Jue, president of the Shiu Hing Benevolent Society. "We raised \$18,000 for the campaign. In the Defense Bond Drive, we bought over \$30,000."³⁵

In New York's Chinatown, excited crowds cheered themselves hoarse when the first draft numbers drawn were for Chinese Americans. According to a New York City survey, approximately 40 percent of the Chinese population were drafted, the highest of all national groupings. "The reason," historian Peter Kwong noted, "was an ironic one: because of the Exclusion Act, most Chinese had no dependents and according to the law were the first called." Actually, many had dependents, but they were in China. Still most Chinese here were male and of draft age, and many of them were eager to get into the fight against Fascism. Chinese boys, too young for the armed services, tried to enlist by giving the authorities their "Chinese age," which was usually a year or two older than the age indicated on their birth certificates.³⁶

Everyone in the Chinese community, including women and children, participated in the war effort. In an essay published in the *Chinese Press* in 1942, teenager Florence Gee proudly described the total involvement of her family in the war effort: "I am an American. . . . The war has hit home. I have an uncle in the army and one in the shipyard. My sisters are members of the civilian defense. My mother is taking first aid. I belong to a club where I learn better citizenship." Like many fellow Chinese young people, Florence collected tin cans and tin foil for war materials. In Minneapolis, the proprietor of the city's only Chinese gift shop closed his business during the height of the busy Christmas season to join his wife as a worker in a war-industry plant. Actress Anna May Wong signed up as an air-raid warden in Santa Monica. "As an American-born Chinese," she said, "I feel it is a privilege to be able to do my little bit in return for the many advantages bestowed upon me by a free democracy." In New York, Mrs. Emily Lee Shek became the first Chinese woman to join the WAACS. "She tried to join up right in the beginning [of the war]," the *Chinese press* reported in September 1942, "but the 105-pound weight minimum barred her. When the requirement was dropped five pounds, she drank two gallons of water and lived on a special Chinese diet, and made it – yes, with one pound to spare."³⁷

young Chinese Americans wanted to be in U.S. military uniforms. "To men of my generation," explained Charlie Leong of San Francisco's Chinatown, "World War II was the most important historic event of our times. Fr

the first time we felt we could make it in American society.” The war had given them the opportunity to get out of Chinatown, don army uniforms, and be sent overseas, where they felt “they were part of the great patriotic United States war machine out to do battle with the enemy.” Similarly, Harold Liu of New York’s Chinatown recalled: “In the 1940s for the first time Chinese were accepted by Americans as being friends because at that time, Chinese and Americans were fighting against the Japanese and the Germans and the Nazis. Therefore, all of a sudden, we became part of the American dream. We had heroes with Chiang Kai-shek and Madame Chiang Kai-shek and so on. It was just a whole different era and in the community we began to feel very good about ourselves. . . . My own brother went into the service. We were so proud that they were in uniform.” Altogether 13,499 Chinese were drafted or enlisted in the U.S. Armed Forces – 22 percent of all Chinese adult males.³⁸

Confined for decades in a Chinese ethnic-labor market composed mainly of restaurants and laundries, Chinese workers suddenly found the doors of employment opportunities opening to them, especially in the defense industries, where labor shortages were acute. Waiters left the restaurants and rushed to the higher-paying industrial jobs. In 1942 four restaurants in New York’s Chinatown had to shut down because of lack of waiters, and the proprietor of Li Po, a restaurant in Los Angeles, said: “I was just ready for another venture. But I can’t now. No men to run it.” In Los Angeles some three hundred Chinese laundryworkers closed their shops to work on the construction of the ship *China Victory*. “At Douglas, home of the A-20 attack planes and dive bombers,” the *Chinese Press* noted in 1943, “there are approximately 100 Chinese working at its three plants – Santa Monica, Long Beach, and El Segundo.” Chinese workers constituted 15 percent of the shipyard work force in the San Francisco Bay Area in 1943. Chinese also found employment in the defense industries at the Seattle-Tacoma Shipbuilding Corporation, the shipyards of Delaware and Mississippi, and the airplane factories on Long Island.³⁹

One of these new defense-industry workers was Arthur Wong. After arriving in New York’s Chinatown in 1930 at the age of seventeen, he found himself confined to the Chinese ethnic-labor market: “I worked five and a half days in the laundry and worked the whole weekend in the restaurant. And then came the war, and defense work opened up; and some of my friends went to work in a defense plant, and they recommended that I should apply for defense work. So I went to work for Curtiss-Wright, making airplanes. I started out as an assembler, as a riveter.” Thousands of laundrymen and waiters like Wong were finally given opportunities to break away from the Chinatown economy. Describing the situation in New York City, the *Chinese Press* reported: “It is estimated about 30 percent of the Chinese-American young men here are employed in defense plants.” Many college-educated Chinese were also now able to find employment in their fields of training, such as architecture and engineering. Between 1940 and 1950, the percentage of Chinese men in service occupation remained high, decreasing slightly from 38 to 36 percent (compared to only 6 percent for white men). But progress was evidenced elsewhere. Chinese men employed in craft occupations increased from 1.3 percent in 1940 to 3.5 percent in 1950 (compared to 23.3 percent for white men) and in professional and technical occupations from 2.5 percent in 1940 to 6.6 percent in 1950 (compared to 9.3 percent for white men).⁴⁰

The war also opened employment opportunities for Chinese women. After she had graduated from college, Jade Snow Wong found that she could not find suitable employment because she was Chinese, but then the war industries began to demand workers. “By this time the trek to the shipyards was well underway,” wrote Wong. “The patriotic fever to build as many ships as possible, together with boom wages, combined to attract people from all types of occupations.” Wong was hired as a typist-clerk in a shipyard in Marin County. Several hundred “alert young Chinese-American girls,” the *Chinese Press* reported in 1942, “have gone to the defense industries as office workers.” The paper proudly presented a partial roster of these workers in the Bay Area – including Fannie Yee, Rosalind Woo, Jessie Wong of Bethlehem Steel and Anita Chew, Mildred Lew, and Evelyn Lee of Mare Island’s Navy Yard: They’re part of the millions who stand behind the man behind the gun.” A year later, in an article on “Women in the War,” the *Chinese Press* informed its readers about Alice Yick, Boston Navy Yard’s only Chinese woman mechanical trainee, who could run light lathes, grinders, shapers, planers, and other machine tools. “Helen Young, Lucy Young, and Hilda Lee,” the paper continued, “were the first Chinese women aircraft workers in California. They help build B-24 bombers in Sand Diego.”⁴¹

Writing for *Survey Graphic* in 1942, sociologist Rose Hum Lee happily recorded the ways the war was changing the lives of the Chinese on the home front: “They have gone in the army and navy, into shipbuilding and aircraft plants. Even the girls are getting jobs.” But while the Chinese were participating in the war effort as Americans, Lee noted critically, they were not fully equal because of the exclusion laws and the denial of naturalized citizenship. The Chinese should be accorded the same treatment as European immigrants, she argued. Lee then linked the problem of Chinese inequality in the United States to the war, exposing America’s hypocrisy: “Surely racial discrimination should not be directed against those who are America’s Allies in the Far East and are helping her in very way to win the war. . . . To be fighting for freedom and democracy in the Far East, at the cost of seven million lives in five years of hard, long, bitter warfare, and to be denied equal opportunity in the greatest of

democracies, seems the height of irony.” The contradiction was too evident to be ignored and too embarrassing for the United States to be allowed to continue.⁴²

The war abroad required reform at home, many Americans began to realize. In 1942, the California League of Women Voters of San Francisco launched an educational campaign to remove racial discrimination from the immigration laws. A year later, Congress began considering a bill to repeal the Chinese exclusion laws and to allow a quota for Chinese immigration. But the proposed legislation also fanned the embers of anti-Chinese fear and hostility. The America Federation of Labor again raised the specter of an invasion of a laboring army from China. An immigration quota for the Chinese, the union warned, would lead to pressures to open the gates even wider: if England with a population of less than 100 million had a quota of 65,000, then China and India, with populations of 400 million each, could demand and get annual quotas of over a million.⁴³

Meanwhile, pressures for repeal mounted. In the spring, Madame Chiang Kai-shek toured the country and gave an eloquent speech on the war in Asia to a joint session of Congress. At a dinner party on May 15, she told several key congressmen that the repeal of the Chinese exclusion laws would boost Chinese morale and buttress her country’s war effort. Chinese-American lobbying activities in support of the bill were widespread and intense. As president of the Chinese Women’s Association of New York, Mrs. Theodora Chan Wang wrote a letter to Mrs. Franklin Roosevelt. What Chinese Americans wanted, wrote Mrs. Wang, was an immigration quota so that the Chinese would be accorded the privileges enjoyed by “our companions in ideology and arms.” The reference to the war effort was clear and calculated. The Chinese consolidated Benevolent Association of New York asked Congress to repeal the exclusion legislation, calling it a most serious violation of the fundamental principles of equality and friendly cooperation between the two nations. In Hawaii, Chinese Americans raised money to finance the campaign for repeal. At a conference in San Antonio in September 1943, more than seventy Chinese young people condemned the Exclusion Act as the stumbling block between China and America and urged their American friends to repeal it immediately, not to wait till the end of the war.⁴⁴

Support for the repeal of the Chinese exclusion laws also came from the Korean and Asian-Indian communities. At a congressional committee hearing on the repeal bill, Kilsoo K. Haan of the Korean National Front Federation argued that Asians desired political and economic equality. In his testimony, Dr. Taraknath Das, an immigrant from India and a professor at the College of the City of New York, underscored the contradiction between American racist practices at home and proclamations of principles abroad: “As long as Anglo-American powers would continue to practice racial discrimination against the peoples of the Orient, a vast majority of the orientals will not have any genuine confidence in the professions of promotion of world democracy and world brotherhood.” Plainly, America could not have it both ways.⁴⁵

President Roosevelt felt the pressure, and sent Congress a message favoring the repeal bill. “China is our ally,” Roosevelt wrote on October 11, 1943. “For many long years she stood alone in the fight against aggression. Today we fight at her side. She has continued her gallant struggle against very great odds.” Aware the act would be essential to the war effort in Asia, the president urged Congress to “be big enough” to acknowledge an error of the past: “By the repeal of the Chinese exclusion laws, we can correct a historic mistake and silence the distorted Japanese propaganda.”⁴⁶

Japan had been appealing to Asia to unite in a race war against white America. Japanese propaganda had been condemning the United States for its discriminatory laws and for the segregation of the Chinese in ghettos where they had been relegated to “the most menial of occupations, despised and mistreated and at best patronizingly tolerated with a contemptuous humor.” Tokyo broadcasts aimed at China described how the Chinese in the United States suffered from “a campaign of venomous vilification of the character of the Chinese people.” “Far from waging this war to liberate the oppressed peoples of the world,” Tokyo argued on the airwaves, “the Anglo-American leaders are trying to restore the obsolete system of imperialism.” In June 1943, after the House committee delayed action on the repeal bill, Japanese radio in Manila editorialized: “Agitation in the U.S. for the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act met an early death due to the opposition of anti-Asiatic congressmen, which bears out the fact it was never meant to be sincere, that it was only a gesture, empty words.”⁴⁷

Defeat of the repeal bill would have meant certain ridicule of America by Japan before a watching audience of millions in Asia. Alarmed by the Japanese strategy, many U.S. policymakers felt the need to “spike” the propaganda guns of Japan. A retired Navy officer told a congressional committee holding hearings on the repeal bill that the Chinese exclusion laws were worth “twenty divisions” to the Japanese Army. Supporters of the bill argued: “It is time for us to realize that if nations cannot be gracious to each other, cannot respect each other’s race, all talk of democracy is in vain.” They also expressed fears of the war turning into a racial conflict. “The Japanese have been carrying on a propaganda campaign seeking to align the entire oriental world behind Japanese leadership, seeking to set the oriental world against the occidental world,” one congressman predicted, “then all Asia is apt to go with her. Then you will have a race struggle in which we are hopelessly outnumbered that will last, not for 1 year

or 5 years, but throughout generations to come.” The handwriting seemed to be on the wall. The Chinese exclusion laws had to be repealed, for the “salvation of the white race” depended significantly on continued Chinese friendship and military cooperation. China, a Chicago newspaper declared, was America’s “white hope” in the East.⁴⁸

Shortly afterward, congress repealed the exclusion acts and provided an annual quota for Chinese immigration. Actually the law did not open even a trickle of immigration. Actually the law did not open even trickle of immigration: only 105 Chinese would be allowed to enter annually, and only an annual average of fifty-nine Chinese came to the United States during the first ten years of the law’s operation. The law also extended the right of naturalized citizenship to Chinese immigrants. But it required applicants to present documentation of their legal entry in the United States and to pass tests for English competency and knowledge of American history and the Constitution. Between 1944 and 1952, only 1,428 Chinese were naturalized. Nevertheless Chinese immigrants could finally seek political membership in their adopted country. One of them was Jade Snow Wong’s father. “At the age of seventy plus, after years of attending night classes in citizenship, he became naturalized,” his daughter joyfully reported. “He embraced this status wholeheartedly. One day when we were discussing plans for his birthday celebration, which was usually observed on the tenth day of the fifth lunar month by the Chinese calendar, he announced, ‘Now that I have become a United States citizen, I am going to change my birthday. Henceforth, it will be on the Fourth of July.’”⁴⁹

The Myth of “Military Necessity” for Japanese-American Internment

“One morning – I think it was a Sunday – while I was working at Palama Shoe Factory I heard, ‘*Pon! pon! Pon! pon!*’” recalled Seichin Nagayama. He was only a few miles away from the navy base at Pearl Harbor. “I was drinking coffee and I thought, ‘Strange. Are they having military practice?’ At the corner of Liliha and Kuakini streets, a bomb fell in the back of a cement plant. We felt like going to see what happened, the noise was so loud. We found out that the war had started.” The reverberations of the bombs falling near the Palama Shoe Factory and on Pearl Harbor were heard across the ocean; in a small Japanese farming community in California, Mary Tsukamoto was in church when she also suddenly felt the shocks of the explosions. “I do remember Pearl Harbor,” she said years later as if had happened that morning. “It was a December Sunday, so we were getting ready for our Christmas program. We were rehearsing and having Sunday school class, and I always played the piano for the adult Issei service. . . . After the service started, my husband ran in. He had been home that day and heard [the announcement] on the radio. We just couldn’t believe it, but he told us that Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. I remember how stunned we were. And suddenly the whole world turned dark.”⁵⁰

As it turned out, Nagayama and Tsukamoto faced very different futures during World War II. Nagayama quit his job at the Palama Shoe Factory because the pay was too low and started work at Primo Beer. His life, like the lives of most of the 158,000 Japanese in the islands representing 37 percent of Hawaii’s population, was not dramatically interrupted by the war. But Tsukamoto and 94,000 fellow Japanese in California, representing only one percent of the state’s population, had their lives severely disrupted: along with some 25,000 Japanese from Washington and Oregon, they were forcefully placed in interment camps by the U.S. government. Everyone was given short notice for removal. “Signs had been nailed to the telephone poles saying that we had to report to various spots,” Tsukamoto recalled. “They told us to register as families. We had to report to the Elk Grove Masonic Building where we were given our family number, No. 2076.” While the Japanese in the islands had become “locals,” members of the community in Hawaii, their brethren on the mainland had been forced to remain “strangers.” Different histories were coming home to roost in Hawaii and in California.⁵¹

* * *

Shortly after inspecting the still-smoking ruins at Pearl Harbor, Navy Secretary Frank Knox issued a statement to the press: “I think the most effective fifth column work of the entire war was done in Hawaii, with the possible exception of Norway.” Knox’s assessment turned out to be inaccurate, for investigations by naval intelligence and the Federal Bureau of Investigation agreed that in fact no sabotage had occurred. But Knox’s alarming announcement fueled rumors of sabotage committed by Japanese Americans in the islands – Japanese plantation laborers on Oahu had cut swaths in the sugar cane and pineapple fields to guide the Japanese bombers to the military installations, Japanese had parked cars across highways to block the traffic, and Japanese had given

signals to enemy planes. At a cabinet meeting on December 19, Knox recommended the interment of all Japanese aliens on an outer island.⁵²

But in a radio address aired two days later, General Delos Emmons, as military governor of Hawaii declared: "There is no intention or desire on the part of the federal authorities to operate mass concentration camps. No person, be he citizen or alien, need worry, provided he is not connected with subversive elements. . . . While we have been subjected to a serious attack by a ruthless and treacherous enemy, we must remember that this is America and we must do things the American Way. We must distinguish between loyalty and disloyalty among our people."⁵³

A schism in policy was developing between Washington and Honolulu. Pursuant to Secretary Knox's recommendation, the War Department sent General Emmons a letter on January 10, 1942, asking for his view on the question of evacuating the Japanese from Oahu. Emmons replied that the proposed program would be dangerous and impractical. Such evacuation would require badly needed construction materials and shipping space, and would also tie up troop resources needed to guard the islands. Moreover, the mass evacuation of Japanese would severely disrupt both the economy and defense operations of Oahu, for the Japanese represented over 90 percent of carpenters, nearly all of the transportation workers, and a significant proportion of the agricultural laborers. Japanese labor was "absolutely essential" for the rebuilding of the defenses destroyed at Pearl Harbor. A shrewd bureaucrat, General Emmons probably realized his analysis would fall on deaf ears in Washington and concluded his report by offering an alternative policy: if the War Department should decide to evacuate the Japanese from Oahu, it should remove them to the mainland.⁵⁴

In early February, Emmons informed Washington that he did not want to evacuate more than a few hundred Japanese until some 20,000 white-civilian women and children had first been transported to the mainland. He also estimated that 100,000 Japanese would have to be evacuated in order to remove all potentially disloyal Japanese, implying such a program would be impractical. On February 9, the War Department ordered General Emmons to suspend all Japanese workers employed by the army. But the order was rescinded after Emmons argued that the Japanese workers were indispensable and that the "Japanese question" should be handled "by those in direct contact with the situation."⁵⁵

General Emmons was hoping his bureaucratic foot-dragging and his resistance against orders from Washington would wear down the War Department. His strategy seemed to be paying off: Washington agreed to scale down the number to be evacuated. On March 13, President Franklin Roosevelt, acting on the advice of his Joint Chiefs of Staff, approved a recommendation for the evacuation of 20,000 "dangerous" Japanese from Hawaii to the mainland. Two weeks later, General Emmons reduced the number drastically to only 1,550 Japanese who constituted a potential threat. But, on April 20, Secretary Knox again insisted that "all of the Japs" should be taken out of Oahu. The War Department then circulated a report received from the Justice Department warning of dangerous conditions in Hawaii. In a letter to Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy, Emmons angrily dismissed the report as "so fantastic it hardly needs refuting" and then directly attacked the credibility of the War Department and the Justice Department: "The feeling that an invasion is imminent is not the belief of most of the responsible people. . . . There have been no known acts of sabotage committed in Hawaii."⁵⁶

The bureaucratic pushing and shoving between the War Department in Washington and the Hawaiian Department under the command of General Emmons continued. On October 29, Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson informed President Roosevelt that General Emmons intended to remove approximately 5,000 Japanese from Hawaii during the next six months as shipping facilities became available. "This, General Emmons believes, will greatly simplify his problem, and considering the labor needs in the islands, is about all that he has indicated any desire to move although he has been given authority to move up to fifteen thousand." Irritated by Emmons, President Roosevelt wrote to Stimson four days later: "I think that General Emmons should be told that the only consideration is that of the safety of the Islands and that the labor situation is not only a secondary matter but should not be given any consideration whatsoever."⁵⁷

In the end, General Emmons had his way. He had seen no military necessity for mass evacuation and ordered the internment of only 1,444 Japanese (979 aliens and 525 citizens). Emmons saw that martial law had given the military government the authority to control Hawaii's Japanese population. But Emmons's success in resisting pressures from Washington depended not only on his administrative savvy and his ability to wage a waiting war of bureaucracy but also on widespread local opposition to mass internment.

In an article on "Hawaii's 150,000 Japanese" published in *The Nation* in July 1942, journalist Albert Horlings questioned whether the military authorities in Hawaii made their decision against mass internment based on their trust for the Japanese. He suspected "pressure" had been brought on the military, warning that the economic life of the islands would collapse without the Japanese. Horlings argued that businessmen appeared to favor "a liberal policy" toward the Japanese simply because they favored "business as usual."⁵⁸

Indeed, economic pressure groups in Hawaii were advising General Emmons to resist relocation. A few isolated local businessmen favored mass internment. "At least 100,000 Japanese should be moved to inland mainland farming states," John A. Balch of the Hawaiian Telephone Company wrote to Admiral Chester Nimitz in August 1942. "If such a step as this was taken . . . not only the danger of internal trouble could be avoided, but the future of Hawaii would be secured against the sure political and economic domination by the Japanese within the next decade." But most of Hawaii's leading businessmen and *kamaaina haoles* (old-timer whites) opposed the proposal for mass internment. The president of the Honolulu Chamber of Commerce called for just treatment of the Japanese in Hawaii: "There are 160,000 of these people who want to live here because they like the country and like the American way of life. . . . The citizens of Japanese blood would fight as loyally for America as any other citizen. I have read or heard nothing in statements given out by the military, local police or F.B.I since December 7 to change my opinion. And I have gone out of my way to ask for the facts." The *kamaaina* elite, possessing a sense of genteel paternalism and a long history of interaction with the Japanese in the islands, were unwilling to permit their mass uprooting. They also knew the evacuation of over one third of Hawaii's population would decimate their labor force and destroy the economy of the islands.⁵⁹

Politicians and public officials also urged restraint and reason. Hawaii's congressional delegate, Sam King, advised the military that nothing should be done beyond apprehending known spies. Honolulu Police Captain John A. Burns refuted rumors of Japanese snipers firing on American soldiers during the attack on Pearl Harbor. "In spite of what . . . anyone . . . may have said about the fifth column activity in Hawaii," stated Robert L. Shivers, head of the FBI in Hawaii, "I want to emphasize that there was no such activity in Hawaii before, during or after the attack on Pearl Harbor. . . . I was in a position to know this fact. . . . Nowhere under the sun could there have been a more intelligent response to the needs of the hour than was given by the entire population of these islands." When schools were reopened in January 1942, the Superintendent of Public Instruction sent a directive to all teachers:

Let us be perfectly frank in recognizing the fact that the most helpless victims, emotionally and psychologically, of the present situation in Hawaii will be the children of Japanese ancestry and their parents. The position of loyal American citizens of Japanese ancestry and of aliens who are unable to become naturalized, but who are nonetheless loyal to the land of their adoption, is certainly not enviable. Teachers must do everything to help the morale of these people. Let us keep constantly in mind that America is not making war on citizens of the United States or on law-abiding aliens within America.⁶⁰

The press in Hawaii behaved responsibly. Newspaper editors like Riley Allen of the Honolulu *Star Bulletin* and Mrs. Clarence Taylor of the Kauai *Garden Island* expressed confidence in the loyalty of the local Japanese and criticized the federal government's treatment of the Japanese on the mainland. "It was an invasion of the rights of the Japanese citizens on the Pacific coast to be picked up and shipped to the interior," editorialized the *Garden Island*. Newspapers also cautioned their readers not to spread or be influenced by rumors generated by the war situation. Within days after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Honolulu *Star Bulletin* dismissed reports of Japanese subversion in the islands as "weird, amazing, and damaging untruths." "Beware of rumors always," urged the *Paradise of the Pacific* magazine in February 1942, "avoid them like a plague and, when possible, kill them as you would a reptile. Don't repeat for a fact anything you do not know is a fact."⁶¹

The reasons behind Hawaii's refusal to intern the Japanese were complex and did include the self-serving economic concern of the business community for the uninterrupted maintenance of its labor force. Still, in this moment of crisis an image of what Hawaii represented began to take a more definite form and content, drawing from the particular history of the islands and defining more sharply Hawaii's identity as a multiethnic community. Political and economic circumstances had provided an occasion for cultural development. In his radio message broadcast two weeks after the attack on Pearl Harbor, General Emmons declared: "Hawaii has always been an American outpost of friendliness and good will and now has calmly accepted its responsibility as an American outpost of war. In accepting these responsibilities, it is important that Hawaii prove that her traditional confidence in her cosmopolitan population has not been misplaced." While what Emmons described was a myth, it nonetheless also contained within it the possibility of an ideological counterpoint to the reality of racial hierarchy in the islands.⁶²

The actions of the Japanese gave concreteness to the idea of Hawaii as a cosmopolitan community. During the morning of the attack, two thousand Nisei serving in the U.S. Army stationed in Hawaii fought to defend Pearl Harbor against enemy planes. Everywhere Japanese civilians participated in the island's defense. They rushed to their posts as volunteer truck drivers for Oahu's Citizens' Defense Committee. They stood in long lines in front of Queen's Hospital, waiting to give their blood to the wounded. Many of these civilians were Issei. "Most of us have

lived longer in Hawaii than in Japan. We have an obligation to this country," they declared. "We are *yoshi* [adopted sons] of America. We want to do our part for America."⁶³

Then that night, as the people of the islands tensely waited in the darkness for the expected invasion, thousands of Nisei members of the Hawaii Territorial Guard – youngsters from the high schools and the University of Hawaii ROTC program – guarded the power plants, reservoirs, and important waterfronts. For them, there was simply no doubt how they viewed the event: Japan had attacked their country. "As much as we would hate to see a war between the United States and Japan," Nisei Shigeo Yoshida had explained in 1937 during the hearings on statehood for Hawaii, "and as much as we would hate to see the day come when we would have to participate in such a conflict, it would be much easier, for us I think, if such an emergency should come, to face the enemy than to stand some of the suspicion and criticism, unjust in most cases, leveled against us. It is extremely difficult to bear up under the gaff of suspicion and expressions of doubt which have been leveled at us. It would be easier for me to pack a gun and face the enemy." Four years later, on December 7, that day did come and thousands of Nisei stood tall in defense of their country.⁶⁴

"Japan's dastardly attack leaves us grim and resolute," declared Shunzo Sakamaki of the Oahu Citizens Committee for Home Defense on December 11. "There is no turning back now, no compromise with the enemy. Japan has chosen to fight us and we'll fight." The Japanese of Hawaii fought wholeheartedly. On June 5, 1942, more than seventeen hundred Japanese presented a check to the federal government for "bombs on Tokyo." In January 1943 General Emmons issued a call for fifteen hundred Nisei volunteers for the U.S. Army. "OK Tojo – you asked for it," announced a newspaper advertisement published in the Honolulu *Star Bulletin* on January 23 and signed by Akagi, Fukushima, Hiyama, Isoshima, Kanda, Kataoka, Kawashima, Komenaka, Musashiya, Ogata, Nagao, and Yamamoto. "You dished it out with a head start by treachery – now we're going to see how you can take it." In response to Emmon's call, 9,507 Nisei men volunteered for service. Many of them were sent to Camp Shelby, Mississippi, where they became members of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team and gave their unit the slogan, "Go for Broke," a pidgin-English phrase from the plantation gambling experience. "I wanted to show something, to contribute to America," explained Minoru Hinahara, who served as a Japanese-language interpreter in the U.S. 27th Army Division and participated in the invasion of Okinawa. "My parents could not become citizens but they told me, 'You fight for your country.'"⁶⁵

If the Japanese in Hawaii were not interned, why were their brethren on the mainland evacuated and imprisoned in internment camps? Why did the mainland do "things the American Way" differently?

On the day after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Representative John M. Coffee declared in Congress: "It is my fervent hope and prayer that residents of the United States of Japanese extraction will not be made the victim of pogroms directed by self-proclaimed patriots and by hysterical self-anointed heroes. . . . Let us not make a mockery of our Bill of Rights by mistreating these folks. Let us rather regard them with understanding, remembering they are the victims of a Japanese war machine, with the making of the international policies of which they had nothing to do."⁶⁶

Perhaps Coffee was overly hopeful and naïve, but there were reasons to think Japanese Americans would not become victims of hysteria unleashed by the war. A confidential report on the question of Japanese-American loyalty had already been submitted to President Franklin Roosevelt. The president had secretly arranged to have Chicago businessman Curtis Munson gather intelligence on the Japanese in the United States and assess whether they constituted an internal military threat. After Roosevelt received the Munson report on November 7, 1941, he asked the War Department to review it. In his discussion on sabotage and espionage, Munson informed the President that there was no need to fear or worry about America's Japanese population: "There will be no armed uprising of Japanese [in this country]. . . . Japan will commit some sabotage largely depending on imported Japanese as they are afraid of and do not trust the Nisei. There will be no wholehearted response from Japanese in the United States. . . . For the most part the local Japanese are loyal to the United States or, at worst, hope that by remaining quiet they can avoid concentration camps or irresponsible mobs. We do not believe that they would be at least any more disloyal than any other racial group in the United States with whom we went to war."⁶⁷

A month later the assessment of the Munson report was tested at Pearl Harbor. In his investigation of the Japanese in Hawaii and on the mainland, Lieutenant Commander K. D. Ringle of the Office of Naval Intelligence found that the large majority of them were at least passively loyal to the United States. In late January 1942, Ringle estimated that only about 3,500 Japanese could potentially be military threats and stated there was no need for mass action against the Japanese. Meanwhile, the FBI had also conducted its own investigation of the Japanese. On December 10, Director J. Edgar Hoover informed Washington that "practically all" suspected individuals whom he had initially planned to arrest were in custody: 1,291 Japanese (367 in Hawaii, 924 on the mainland), 857 Germans,

and 147 Italians. In a report to the Attorney General submitted in early February, Hoover concluded that the proposed mass evacuation of the Japanese could not be justified for security reasons.⁶⁸

Despite these intelligence findings, Lieutenant General John L. DeWitt, head of the Western Defense Command, behaved very differently from his counterpart General Emmons in Hawaii. Within two weeks after the attack on Pearl Harbor, General DeWitt requested approval to conduct search-and-seizure operations in order to prevent alien Japanese from making radio transmissions to Japanese ships. The Justice Department refused to issue search warrants without probable cause, and the FBI determined the problem was only a perceived one. In January, the Federal Communications Commission, which had been monitoring all broadcasts, reported that the army's fears were groundless. But the army continued pursuing plans based on the assumption of Japanese disloyalty. General DeWitt also wanted to be granted the power to exclude Japanese aliens as well as Americans of Japanese ancestry from restricted areas. On January 4, 1942, at a meeting of federal and state officials in his San Francisco headquarters, DeWitt argued that military necessity justified exclusion: "We are at war and this area – eight states – has been designated as a theater of operations. . . . [There are] approximately 288,000 enemy aliens . . . which we have to watch. . . . I have little confidence that the enemy aliens are law-abiding or loyal in any sense of the word. Some of them yes; many, no. Particularly the Japanese. I have no confidence in their loyalty whatsoever. I am speaking now of the native born Japanese – 117,000 – and 42,000 in California alone."⁶⁹

The Western Defense Command ignored the Munson report as well as the information from the FCC and shunned Lieutenant Commander Ringle. Serving under DeWitt, Major General Joseph W. Stilwell had an insider's view of the situation at the Command's headquarters in San Francisco. In his diary, Stilwell described how DeWitt was responding irrationally to rumors: "Common sense is thrown to the winds and any absurdity is believed." But Stilwell did not understand the reasons for DeWitt's conduct. FBI director Hoover was more perceptive: while he also saw that the WDC's intelligence information reflected "hysteria and lack of judgment," he noticed that the claim of military necessity for mass evacuation was based "primarily upon public and political pressure rather than on factual data."⁷⁰

Immediately after the press had been told by Navy Secretary Knox about Japanese subversive activity at Pearl Harbor, West Coast newspapers gave his claim attention: "Fifth Column Treachery Told" and "Secretary of Navy Blames 5th Column for Raid." Nonetheless, newspapers were initially restrained, advising readers to remain calm and considerate toward the Japanese. But in early January, press sentiments began shifting suddenly. On January 5, John B. Hughes of the Mutual Broadcasting Company began firing a month-long salvo against the Japanese in California. The Japanese were engaged in espionage, he charged, and their dominance in produce production and control of the food supply were part of a master war plan. On January 19, *Time* reported Japanese fifth-column activities in Hawaii in an article entitled: "The Stranger within Our Gates." The next day, the *San Diego Union* stirred anti-Japanese hysteria: "In Hawaii . . . treachery by residents, who although of Japanese ancestry had been regarded as loyal, has played an important part in the success of Japanese attacks. . . . Every Japanese . . . should be moved out of the coastal area and to a point of safety far enough inland to nullify any inclination they may have to tamper with our safety here." Meanwhile the *Los Angeles Times* editorialized: "A viper is nonetheless a viper wherever the egg is hatched – so a Japanese American, born of Japanese parents – grows up to be a Japanese, not an American." On January 29, Henry McLemore blasted the Japanese in his syndicated column for the Hearst newspapers: "I am for immediate removal of every Japanese on the West Coast to a point deep in the interior. I don't mean a nice part of the interior either. Herd 'em up, pack 'em off and give 'em the inside room in the badlands." Two weeks later, in a *Washington Post* article entitled "The Fifth Column on the Coast," prominent columnist Walter Lippmann called for the mass removal of Japanese Americans: "The Pacific Coast is in imminent danger of a combined attack from within and without. . . . The Pacific Coast is officially a combat zone. . . . And nobody ought to be on a battlefield who has no good reason for being there. There is plenty of room elsewhere for him to exercise his rights."⁷¹

As the press mounted its campaign for Japanese removal, it was joined by patriotic organizations. In January the California Department of the American Legion began to demand that all Japanese known to possess dual citizenship be placed in "concentration camps." Shortly afterward American Legion posts in Washington and Oregon passed resolutions urging the evacuation of all Japanese. In the January issue of their publication, *The Grizzly Bear*, the Native Sons and Daughters of the Golden West told their fellow Californians: "We told you so. Had the warnings been heeded – had the federal and state authorities been 'on the alert,' and rigidly enforced the Exclusion Law and the Alien Land Law . . . had the legislation been enacted denying citizenship to offspring of all aliens ineligible to citizenship . . . had Japan been denied the privilege of using California as a breeding ground for dual-citizens (Nisei); – the treacherous Japs probably would not have attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, and this country would not today be at war with Japan."⁷²

Beginning in January and early February, the anti-Japanese chorus included voices from farming interests such as the Grower-Shipper Vegetable Association, the Western Growers Protective Association, and the California Farm Bureau Federation. "We've been charged with wanting to get rid of the Japs for selfish reasons," the Grower-Shipper Vegetable Association stated in the *Saturday Evening Post* in May. "We might as well be honest. We do. It's a question of whether the white man lives on the Pacific Coast or the brown man. They came into this valley to work, and they stayed to take over. . . . If all the Japs were removed tomorrow, we'd never miss them in two weeks, because the white farmers can take over and produce everything the Jap grows."⁷³

Meanwhile, local and state politicians were already leading the movement for Japanese removal. The boards of supervisors of sixteen California counties, including Los Angeles County, passed resolutions urging removal. California Attorney General Earl Warren pressed federal authorities to remove Japanese from sensitive areas on the West Coast. The Japanese in California, he warned, "may well be the Achilles heel of the entire civilian defense effort. Unless something is done it may bring about a repetition of Pearl Harbor." On January 16, Congressman Leland Ford of Los Angeles wrote to the secretaries of the departments of War and the Navy and the FBI Director, insisting that "all Japanese, whether citizens or not, be placed in concentration camps." Two weeks later, several House members from the Pacific Coast states asked President Roosevelt to grant the War Department "immediate and complete control over all alien enemies, as well as United States citizens holding dual citizenship in any enemy country, with full power and authority" to evacuate and intern them.⁷⁴

The Western Defense Command operated within the context of this clamor for Japanese removal. The situation was very different from Hawaii's. Economic interests in California did not need Japanese labor, and many white farmers viewed Japanese farmers as competitors. Representing a small, rather than numerically significant racial minority, the Japanese were more vulnerable to xenophobic attacks. Furthermore a mythology of California as a "cosmopolitan" society did not exist to protect its Japanese residents. In fact, the state's image as projected by politicians in the 1920 vote on the alien land law was "Keep California White." On February 1, in a telephone conversation with Provost Marshal General Allen Gullion, General DeWitt said he had "traveled up and down the West Coast," talked to "all the Governors and other local civil authorities," and decided to press for mass evacuation. Protection against sabotage, he said, "only can be made positive by removing those people who are aliens and who are Japs of American citizenship." On February 5, after he had received DeWitt's views in writing, Gullion drafted a War Department proposal for the exclusion of "all persons, whether aliens or citizens . . . deemed dangerous as potential saboteurs" from designated "military areas."⁷⁵

But a decision on evacuation still had not been made in Washington. During lunch with President Roosevelt on February 7, Attorney General Francis Biddle said "there were no reasons for mass evacuation." In his diary on February 10, Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson wrote: "The second generation Japanese can only be evacuated either as part of a total evacuation . . . or by frankly trying to put them out on the ground that their racial characteristics are such that we cannot understand or trust even the citizen Japanese. This latter is the fact but I am afraid it will make a tremendous hole in our constitutional system to apply it."⁷⁶

President Roosevelt was willing to make such a tremendous hole in the Constitution. In fact, he had been considering the internment of Japanese Americans for a long time. On August 10, 1936, President Roosevelt had written a memorandum to the Chief of Naval Operations: "One obvious thought occurs to me – that every Japanese citizen or non-citizen on the island of Oahu who meets these Japanese ships or has any connection with their officers or men should be secretly but definitely identified and his or her name placed on a special list of those who would be the first to be placed in a concentration camp in the event of trouble." Thus, five years before the attack on Pearl Harbor, Roosevelt was already devising a plan for the imprisonment of Japanese aliens and citizens in a "concentration camp" without due process of law.⁷⁷

On February 11, 1942, Roosevelt met with Stimson, and shortly after the meeting, Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy telephoned the Provost Marshal General's office in San Francisco. "We talked to the President," McCloy said to Karl Bendetsen, chief of the Aliens Division, "and the President, in substance, says go ahead and do anything you think necessary. He says there will probably be some repercussions, but it has got to be dictated by military necessity. . . ." Three days after he had received his signal from Washington, General DeWitt sent Stimson his formal recommendation for removal, buttressing it with a racial justification: "In the war in which we are now engaged racial affinities are not severed by migration. The Japanese race is an enemy race and while many second and third generation Japanese born on United States soil, possessed of United States citizenship, have become 'Americanized,' the racial strains are undiluted. . . . It, therefore, follows that along the vital Pacific Coast over 112,000 potential enemies, of Japanese extraction, are at large today."⁷⁸

Three days later, Attorney General Biddle wrote a memorandum to President Roosevelt, opposing DeWitt's recommendation for evacuation: "My last advice from the War Department is that there is no evidence of imminent attack and from the F.B.I. that there is no evidence of planned sabotage." Biddle tried to exercise reason

and restraint, and his efforts to derail DeWitt's recommendation angered Congressman John Ford. "I phoned the Attorney General's office," said Ford, "and told them to stop fucking around. I gave them twenty-four hours notice that unless they would issue a mass evacuation notice I would drag the whole matter on the floor of the House and of the Senate and give the bastards everything we could with both barrels."⁷⁹

The next day, February 18, Secretary of War Stimson met with Attorney General Biddle and several others from the Department of Justice and the War Department. In his autobiography, Biddle described the meeting: "The decision [for evacuation] had been made by the President. It was, he said, a matter of military judgment. I did not think I should oppose it any further." The following morning, President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which directed the Secretary of War to prescribe military areas "with respect to which, the right of any person to enter, remain in, or leave shall be subject to whatever restrictions the Secretary of War or the appropriate Military Commander may impose in his discretion." The order did not specify the Japanese as the group to be excluded. But they were the target: a few months later, when President Roosevelt learned about discussions in the War Department to apply the order to Germans and Italians on the East Coast, he wrote to inform Stimson that he considered enemy alien control to be "primarily a civilian matter except in the case of the Japanese mass evacuation on the Pacific Coast." Unlike the Germans and Italians, the Japanese were "strangers from a different shore."⁸⁰

President Roosevelt had signed a blank check, giving full authority to General DeWitt to evacuate the Japanese and place them in assembly centers and eventually in internment camps. And so it happened, tragically for the Japanese and for the U.S. Constitution, for there was actually no "military necessity."

Under General DeWitt's command, the military ordered a curfew for all enemy aliens and all persons of Japanese ancestry and posted orders for evacuation: "Pursuant to the provisions of Civilian Exclusion Order No. 27, this Headquarters, dated April 30, 1942, all persons of Japanese ancestry, both alien and non-alien, will be evacuated from the above area by 12 o'clock noon, P.W.T., Thursday May 7, 1942." The evacuees were instructed to bring their bedding, toilet articles, extra clothing, and utensils. "No pets of any kind will be permitted." Japanese stood in silent numbness before the notices. Years later, congressman Robert Matsui, who was a baby in 1942, asked: "How could I as a 6-month-old child born in this country be declared by my own Government to be an enemy alien?" But the order applied to everyone, including children. An American birthright made absolutely no difference. "Doesn't my citizenship mean a single blessed thing to anyone?" asked Monica Sone's brother in distress. "Several weeks before May, soldiers came around and posted notices on telephone poles," said Takae Washizu. "It was sad for me to leave the place where I had been living for such a long time. Staring at the ceiling in bed at night, I wondered who would take care of my cherry tree and my house after we moved out."

Notice of evacuation
One spring night
The image of my wife
*Holding the hands of my mother.*⁸¹

Believing the military orders were unconstitutional, Minoru Yasui of Portland refused to obey the curfew order: "It was my belief that no military authority has the right to subject any United States citizen to any requirement that does not equally apply to all other U.S. citizens. If we believe in America, if we believe in equality and democracy, if we believe in law and justice, then each of us, when we see or believe errors are being made, has an obligation to make effort to correct them." Meanwhile Fred Korematsu in California and Gordon Hirabayashi in Washington refused to report to the evacuation center. "As an American citizen," Hirabayashi explained, "I wanted to uphold the principles of the Constitution, and the curfew and evacuation orders which singled out a group on the basis of ethnicity violated them. It was not acceptable to me to be less than a full citizen in a white man's country." The three men were arrested and convicted; sent to prison, they took their cases to the Supreme Court, which upheld their convictions, saying the government's policies were based on military necessity. Most Japanese, however, felt they had no choice but to comply with the evacuation orders.⁸²

Instructed they would be allowed to take only what they could carry, evacuees had to sell most of their possessions – their refrigerators, cars, furniture, radios, pianos, and houses. "I remember how agonizing was my despair," recounted Tom Hayase, "to be given only about six days in which to dispose of our property." "It is difficult to describe the feeling of despair and humiliation experienced by all of us," said another evacuee, "as we watched the Caucasians coming to look over our possessions and offering such nominal amounts knowing we had no recourse but to accept whatever they were offering because we did not know what the future held for us."⁸³

At the control centers, the evacuees were registered and each family was given a number. "Henry went to the Control Station to register the family," remembered Monica Sone. "He came home with twenty tags, all numbered '10710,' tags to be attached to each piece of baggage, and one to hang from our coat lapels. From then on,

we were known as Family #10710.” When they reported at the train stations, they found themselves surrounded by soldiers with rifles and bayonets.

*Like a dog
I am commanded
At a bayonet point.
My heart is inflamed
With burning anguish.*

From there they were taken to the assembly centers. “I looked at Santa Clara’s streets from the train over the subway,” wrote Norman Mineta’s father in a letter to friends in San Jose. “I thought this might be the last look at my loved home city. My heart almost broke, and suddenly hot tears just came pouring out. . . . “They knew that more than their homes and possessions had been taken from them. “On May 16, 1942, my mother, two sisters, niece, nephew, and I left . . . by train,” said Teru Watanabe. “Father joined us later. Brother left earlier by bus. We took whatever we could carry. So much we left behind, but the most valuable thing I lost was my freedom.”⁸⁴

When they arrived, the evacuees were shocked to discover that they were to be housed at stockyards, fairgrounds, and race tracks. “The assembly center was filthy, smelly, and dirty. There were roughly two thousand people packed in one large building. No beds were provided, so they gave us gunny sacks to fill with straw, that was our bed.” Stables served as housing. “Where a horse or cow had been kept, a Japanese American family was moved in.” “Suddenly you realized that human beings were being put behind fences just like on the farm where we had horses and pigs in corrals.”

*If you live in a
Horse stable
The wind of cities
Blow through.*

Conditions were crowded and noisy. “There was a constant buzzing – conversations, talk. Then, as the evening wore on, during the still of the night, things would get quiet, except for the occasional coughing, snoring, giggles. Then someone would get up to go to the bathroom. It was like a family of three thousand people camped out in a barn.” Everywhere there were lines. “We lined up for mail, for checks, for meals, for showers, for washrooms, for laundry tubs, for toilets, for clinic service, for movies.” There were curfews and roll calls, and “day and night camp police walked their beats within the center.”⁸⁵

After a brief stay in the assembly centers, the evacuees were herded into 171 special trains, five hundred in each train.

*Snow in mountain pass
Unable to sleep
The prison train.*

They had no idea where they were going. In their pockets, some carried photographs of themselves and the homes they had left behind, and they occasionally turned their gaze away from the landscape whizzing by them and pulled out their pictures.

*Falling asleep with
A photograph,
Awakened by a dream,
Cold snowy wind of
Missoula.*

The trains took them to ten internment camps – Topaz in Utah, Poston and Gila River in Arizona, Amache in Colorado, Jerome and Rohwer in Arkansas, Minidoka in Idaho, Manzanar and Tule Lake in California, and Heart Mountain in Wyoming.⁸⁶

Most of the camps were located in remote desert areas. “We did not know where we were,” remembered an internee. “No houses were in sight, no trees or anything green – only scrubby sagebrush and an occasional low cactus, and mostly dry, baked earth.” They looked around them and saw hundreds of miles of wasteland, “beyond

the end of the horizon and again over the mountain – again, more wasteland.” They were surrounded by dust and sand. At Minidoka, Monica Sone recalled, “we felt as if we were standing in a gigantic sand-mixing machine as the sixty-mile gale lifted the loose earth up into the sky, obliterating everything. Sand filled our mouths and nostrils and stung our faces and hands like a thousand darting needles.”⁸⁷

In the camps, the internees were assigned to barracks, each barrack about twenty by 120 feet, divided into four or six rooms. Usually a family was housed in one room, twenty by twenty feet. The room had “a pot bellied stove, a single electric light hanging from the ceiling, an Army cot for each person and blanket for the bed.”

*Birds,
Living in a cage,
The human spirit.*

The camp was linear, its barracks lined in orderly rows; barbed-wire fences with guard towers defined space for the internees. Some tried to resist the strictures of the new form of “necessity” by creating rock gardens with bonsai outside their drab barracks.⁸⁸

Their little gardens provided relief in a world of military-like routine. “Camp life was highly regimented and it was rushing to the wash basin to beat the other groups, rushing to the mess hall for breakfast, lunch and dinner.” Every morning at 7 A.M., the internees were awakened by a siren blast. After eating breakfast in a cafeteria, the children went to school, where they began the day by saluting the flag of the United States and then singing “My country, ‘tis of thee, sweet land of liberty.” Looking beyond the flagpole, they saw the barbed wire, the watchtowers, and the armed guards. “I was too young to understand,” stated George Takei years later, “but I remember soldiers carrying rifles, and I remember being afraid.”⁸⁹

Most adults went to work. Shopkeepers and farmers suddenly found themselves working as wage earners for the government, forced to abandon the virtues of self-reliance and independence that had enabled them to survive in society. Government employees in camps earned twelve dollars a month as unskilled laborers, sixteen dollars as skilled, and nineteen dollars as professionals. Busy and active people before the evacuation, many internees became bored and listless:

*Gazing at the barracks
Where my wife exists,
Beyond the barbed wire fence,
I pluck and chew
The leaves of grass.*

Proud people before evacuation, they felt diminished, their dignity destroyed. Some were overwhelmed by their despair.

*A fellow prisoner
Takes his life with poison.
In the evening darkness,
Streaks of black blood
Stain the camp road.*⁹⁰

In the camps, families no longer saw down to eat together. The internees ate at long tables in large mess halls, and parents often saw at separate tables from their children, especially the teenagers. People were “crowded in a long line just like a snake,” waiting “for a meal in the dust and wind.” Young married couples worried about having children born in the camps. “When I was pregnant with my second child, that’s when I flipped,” said a Nisei woman. “I guess that’s when the reality really hit me. I thought to myself, gosh, what am I doing getting pregnant. I told my husband, ‘This is crazy. You realize there’s no future for us and what are we having kids for?’”⁹¹

But the war had also begun to open a future for the Nisei. In September 1942, the Selective Service had classified all young Japanese men as IV-C, or enemy aliens. A month later, however, the Director of the Office of War Information urged President Roosevelt to authorize the enlistment of Nisei: “Loyal American citizens of Japanese descent should be permitted, after an individual test, to enlist in the Army and Navy. . . . This matter is of great interest to OWI. Japanese propaganda only if our deeds permit us to tell the truth.” President Roosevelt understood the need to neutralize “Japanese propaganda”: in December the army developed a plan for forming an all-Nisei combat team. On February 1, 1943, hypocritically ignoring the evacuation order he had signed a year

earlier, Roosevelt wrote to Secretary of War Stimson: “No loyal citizen of the United States should be denied the democratic right to exercise the responsibilities of his citizenship, regardless of his ancestry. . . . Americanism is not, and never was, a matter of race or ancestry. Every loyal American citizen should be given the opportunity to serve this country . . . in the ranks of our armed forces. . . .”⁹²

Five days later the government required all internees to answer loyalty questionnaires. The questionnaires had two purposes: (1) to enable camp authorities to process individual internees for work furloughs as well as for resettlement outside of restricted zones, and (2) to register Nisei for the draft. Question 27 asked draft-age males: “Are you willing to serve in the armed forces of the United States on combat duty, wherever ordered?” Question 28 asked all internees: “Will you swear unqualified allegiance to the United States of America and faithfully defend the United States from any or all attack by foreign or domestic forces, and forswear any form of allegiance or obedience to the Japanese emperor, or any other foreign government, power or organization?”⁹³

Forced to fill out and sign the loyalty questionnaire in the internment camps, Nisei stared at the form:

*Loyalty, disloyalty,
If asked,
What should I answer?*

Some 4,600 or 22 percent of the 21,000 Nisei males eligible to register for the draft answered with a “no,” a qualified answer, or no response. Many of them said they were not expressing disloyalty but were protesting against the internment. “Well, I am one of those that said ‘no, no’ on the questions, one of the ‘no, no’ boys,” explained Albert Nakai, “and it is not that I was proud about it, it was just that our legal rights were violated and I wanted to fight back.” When he was told the army wanted Nisei to volunteer for a special combat unit, Monica Sone’s friend, Dunks Oshima retorted: “What do they take us for? Saps? First, they change my army status to 4-C because of my ancestry, run me out of town, and now they want me to volunteer for a suicide squad so I could get killed for this damn democracy. That’s going some, for sheer brass!”⁹⁴

At Heart Mountain internment camp, Frank Emi studied the questionnaire. “The more I looked at it the more disgusted I became,” recalled Emi, who at the time was a twenty-seven-year-old Nisei with a wife and two children. “We were treated more like enemy aliens than American citizens. And now this [the loyalty questionnaire].” Emi decided to hand print his answer and post it on the mess hall doors: “Under the present conditions and circumstances, I am unable to answer these questions.” Shortly afterward, he attended a mass meeting where he heard a stirring speech by Kiyoshi Okamoto. An educated soil-test engineer from Hawaii who had moved to the mainland and become a high-school teacher, Okamoto told his fellow Nisei that as American citizens they should stand up for the rights guaranteed to them under the Constitution. He referred to himself as the “Fair Play Committee of One.” The fifty-year-old Okamoto moved the younger Nisei. “At first we were naïve and just felt the questionnaire was unfair,” said Emi. “But Okamoto taught us about the Constitution and it came to have great meaning as we began to resist.”⁹⁵

Though most Nisei answered Questions 27 and 28 affirmatively, they did not rush to join the army. The army was able to recruit only 1,208 volunteers – a small fraction of the 10,000 eligible Nisei. In January 1944, the Selective Service began reclassifying to I-A Nisei who had answered yes to the two questions and serving draft registration notices. At Heart Mountain, Emi and several fellow Nisei organized the Fair Play Committee and declared they would not cooperate with the draft unless their citizenship rights were restored first. Their movement spontaneously gathered widespread support. Four hundred Nisei attended their meetings and the Committee had two hundred dues-paying members. Draft resistance broke out in the other camps. Some three hundred Nisei refused to be inducted, protesting the violation of their Constitutional rights.⁹⁶

Worried, government authorities acted quickly to repress the protest. Emi and six other leaders of the Heart Mountain Fair Play Committee were arrested and indicted for conspiracy to violate the Selective Service Act and for counseling others to resist the draft. James Omura, editor of the Denver *Rocky Shimo*, was also indicted on the same charges because his paper had published statements issued by the Committee and had offered editorial support. The cost of the trial bankrupted Omura’s newspaper. Speaking over forty years later, Omura defended his actions: “The *Shimo* took up the cudgel of Nisei rights under the Constitution.” More important than silencing the *Shimo*, for the government, was destroying the leadership of the Committee. During the trial, said Emi, “a surprise witness appeared in court. His name was Jack Nishimoto.” Emi and Nishimoto had been friends. “When he took the stand,” Emi recalled, “he began to tell wholesale lies about me, saying for example that I had told a resister’s family not to worry because the Fair Play Committee would take care of him. I had not said such a thing. Years later, I learned from files released under the Freedom of Information Act that Nishimoto was an informer and had been instructed by the FBI to get close to me in order to gather information on the Fair Play Committee.” In court Emi and his

fellow leaders of the Committee argued that the draft law as applied to Japanese Americans in the internment camps was morally wrong and unconstitutional. “We, the members of the FPC are not afraid to go to war – we are not afraid to risk our lives for our country,” they had declared in their statement of resistance. “We would gladly sacrifice our lives to protect and uphold the principles and ideals of our country as set forth in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, for on its inviolability depends the freedom, liberty, justice, and protection of all people including Japanese-Americans and all other minority groups.”⁹⁷

Emi and the others were found guilty and sentenced to four years at Leavenworth Federal Penitentiary. “What you guys are doing is all right,” a Nisei told Emi. “but I don’t want to go to jail so I have to register for the draft.” At Leavenworth they found themselves in a prison for hardened criminals. “They asked us, ‘Why are you here?’” said Emi. “And we told them, and they replied, ‘It don’t make sense to put you in jail.’” Altogether some three hundred Nisei refused to be inducted and many of them were sent to prison. “Look, the government took my father away, and interned him someplace,” explained a Nisei draft resister. “My mother is alone at the Grenada camp with my younger sister who is only fourteen. If the government would take care of them here in America, I’d feel like going out to fight for my country, but this country is treating us worse than shit!”⁹⁸

During the war, 33,000 Nisei served in the U.S. Armed Forces. They believed participation in the defense of their country was the best way to express their loyalty and to fulfill their obligation as citizens. Several thousand of them were members of the Military Intelligence Service, functioning as interpreters and translators on the Pacific front. Armed with Japanese language skills, they provided an invaluable service, translating captured Japanese documents, including battle plans, lists of Imperial Navy ships, and Japanese secret codes. Richard Sakakida’s translation of Japanese plans for a landing on Bataan made it possible for American tanks to ambush the invaders as they landed. Nisei soldiers volunteered for service Merrill’s Marauders in Burma; one of their officers described their heroic work: “During battles they crawled up close enough to be able to hear Jap officers’ commands and to make verbal translations to our soldiers. They tapped lines, listened in on radios, translated documents and papers, made spot translations of message and field orders. . . .” As members of the MIS, Nisei soldiers participated in the invasion of Okinawa. Two of them, Hiroshi Kobashigawa and Frank Higashi were worried about their families in Okinawa. Both of them had been born in the United States and had parents who had returned to Okinawa before the outbreak of the war. When American soldiers landed in Okinawa, they found the people hiding in caves: Okinawans had been told by the Japanese military it would be better for them to be dead than to be captured, and the Okinawans were afraid they would be tortured, raped, and killed by the Americans. In his family’s home village, Kobashigawa was relieved to find his mother, sister, and three younger brothers safe in a civilian refugee camp. Higashi found his father in the hills of northern Okinawa during a mop-up operation and carried him on his back to the village. Nisei soldiers like Kobashigawa and Higashi rescued their own families and also persuaded many Japanese soldiers to surrender. General Charles Willoughby, chief of intelligence in the Pacific, estimated that Nisei MIS contributions shortened the war by two years.⁹⁹

Nisei soldiers also helped to win the war in Europe. In 1942, while General DeWitt evacuated the Japanese on the West Coast, General Emmons recommended the formation of a battalion of Hawaiian Nisei – the 100th Battalion. After training at Camp McCoy in Wisconsin and Camp Shelby in Mississippi, fourteen hundred Nisei of the 100th Battalion were sent to northern Africa and then to Italy in September 1943. They participated in the Italian campaign until the following March. Three hundred of them were killed and 650 wounded. The 100th was called the “Purple Heart Battalion.” In June, the 100th Battalion merged with the newly arrived 442nd Regimental Combat Team, composed of Nisei from Hawaii and from internment camps on the mainland. The Nisei soldiers experienced bloody fighting at Luciana, Livorno, and the Arno River, where casualties totaled 1,272 men – more than one fourth of the regiment. After the battle at the Arno River, they were sent to France, where they took the town of Bruyeres from the German troops in heavy house-to-house fighting. Then they were ordered to rescue the Texan “Lost Battalion,” 211 men surrounded by German troops in the Vosges Mountains. “If we advanced a hundred yards, that was a good day’s job,” recalled a Nisei soldier describing the rescue mission. “We’d dig in again, move up another hundred yards, and dig in. That’s how we went. It took us a whole week to get to the Lost Battalion. It was just a tree-to-tree fight.” At the end of the week of fighting, the 442nd had suffered eight hundred casualties. When the trapped Texans finally saw the Nisei soldiers, some broke into sobs. One of the rescued soldiers remembered the moment: “[The Germans] would hit us from one flank and then the other, then from the front and the rear . . . we were never so glad to see anyone as those fighting Japanese Americans.”¹⁰⁰

Nisei soldiers went on to take the Gothic Line in northern Italy and then in April 1945 assaulted German troops on Mount Nebione. “Come on, you guys, go for broke!” they shouted as they charged directly into the fire of enemy machine guns. Captain Daniel Inouye crawled to the flank of an emplacement and pulled the pin on his grenade. “As I drew my arm back, all in a flash of light and dark I saw him, that faceless German,” he remembered.

And even as I cocked my arm to throw, he fired and his rifle grenade smashed into my right elbow and exploded and all but tore my arm off. I looked at it, stunned and unbelieving. It dangled there by a few bloody shreds of tissue, my grenade still clenched in a fist that suddenly didn't belong to me any more. . . . I swung around to pry the grenade out of that dead fist with my left hand. Then I had it free and I turned to throw and the German was reloading his rifle. But this time I beat him. My grenade blew up in his face and I stumbled to my feet, closing on the bunker, firing my tommy gun left-handed, the useless right arm slapping red and wet against my side.¹⁰¹

The war, for the wounded Captain Inouye, was over. Two weeks later, in May 1945, the war in Europe came to an end for everyone. Nisei soldiers of the 442nd had suffered 9,486 casualties, including six hundred killed. "Just think of all those people – of the 990 that went over [with me], not more than 200 of them came back without getting hit," said 442nd veteran Shig Doi. "If you look at the 442nd boys, don't look at their faces, look at their bodies. They got hit hard, some lost limbs." The 442nd, military observers agreed, was "probably the most decorated unit in United States military history." They had earned 18,143 individual decorations – including one Congressional Medal of honor, forty-seven Distinguished Service Crosses, 350 Silver Stars, 810 Bronze Stars, and more than thirty-six hundred Purple Hearts. They had given their lives and limbs to prove their loyalty.¹⁰²

One of the Nisei soldiers explained the meaning of their involvement and their sacrifice in the war. In a letter to a young Japanese woman in Hawaii, he wrote from the European battlefield during the war:

My friends and my family – they mean everything to me. They are the most important reason why I am giving up my education and my happiness to go to fight a war that we never asked for. But our Country is involved in it. Not only that. By virtue of the Japanese attack on our nation, we as American citizens of Japanese ancestry have been mercilessly flogged with criticism and accusations. But I'm not going to take it sitting down! I may not be able to come back. But that matters little. My family and friends – they are the ones who will be able to back their arguments with facts. They are the ones who will be proud. In fact, it is better that we are sent to the front and that a few of us do not return, for the testimony will be stronger in favor of the folks back home.¹⁰³

"They bought an awful hunk of America with their blood," declared General Joseph Stilwell. "You're damn right those Nisei boys have a place in the American heart, now and forever." After the war in 1945, General Stilwell flew to California to award the Distinguished Service Cross to Kazuo Masuda. Sergeant Masuda of the 442nd had single-handedly fired a mortar on Nazi positions and had been killed at Cassino, Italy. On the porch of a frame shack in Orange County, General Stilwell pinned the medal on Masuda's sister, Mary, who had recently returned home from the internment camp. Several show-business personalities, including Robert Young and Will Rogers, participated in the ceremony, and a young actor, Ronald Reagan, paid tribute to the fallen Nisei soldier: "Blood that has soaked into the sands of a beach is all of one color. America stands unique in the world, the only country not founded on race, but on a way – an ideal. Not in spite of, but because of our polyglot background, we have had all the strength in the world. That is the American way."¹⁰⁴

The Nisei soldiers had made an impact back home. A Filipino described how his attitude toward Japanese Americans had been turned around by the valor of the Nisei soldiers: "When Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, Manila, and all parts of the Philippines, I was entirely against the Japanese too. My feeling was 100% against them. But when those Japanese in the war showed their patriotism in favor of this country, I changed my mind. They should not have been taken [to internment camps]. Like the Italians and the Germans, all those born here are citizens. They should not have been suspected as spies." After the war, on July 15, 1946, on the lawn of the White House, President Harry Truman welcomed home the Nisei soldiers of the 442nd: "you fought for the free nations of the world . . . you fought not only the enemy, you fought prejudice – and you won."¹⁰⁵

As they stood on the land of their birth, however, they could not be certain they had defeated prejudice in America. Captain Inouye soon discovered they had not won the war at home. He was on his way back to Hawaii in 1945 when he tried to get a haircut in San Francisco. Entering the barbershop with his empty right sleeve pinned to his army jacket covered with ribbons and medals for his military heroism, Captain Inouye was told: "We don't serve Japs here." Another Nisei soldier from Hawaii reflected on the future of his brothers in arms from the mainland. He and his Hawaiian buddies would be returning to the islands to take up "again the threads of life" where they had been left off. But the mainland Nisei soldiers had "no home to return to except the wire-enclosed relocation centers." "They have nothing to look forward to," he observed sadly, "except an even greater fight than that which they are undergoing here in Italy – to win their battle at home against the race-baiters and professional patriots."¹⁰⁶

Meanwhile on the West Coast, General DeWitt had been succeeded by none other than General Emmons. On November 5, 1943, Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCoy wrote to Emmons after the new commander's transfer from Hawaii: "The situation in California is not eh same [as in Hawaii]. You have no doubt become aware of the existence of active and power minority groups in California whose main interest in the war seems to take the forms of a desire for permanent exclusion of all Japanese, loyal or disloyal, citizen or alien, from the West Coast or at least, from California. . . . This means that considerations other than of mere military necessity enter into any proposal for the removal of the present restrictions." California, General Emmons was learning quickly, had a different way of doing things than Hawaii.¹⁰⁷

Even before the end of the war, the evacuation order had been rescinded and the War Relocation Authority had begun to close the internment camps. After administering the loyalty questionnaire, the War Relocation Authority had begun to permit internees who had responded affirmatively to Questions 27 and 28 of the loyalty questionnaire to leave the camps, allowing them to resettle in cities like Denver, Salt Lake City, and Chicago. "I felt wonderful the day I left camp," recalled Helen Murao. "We took a bus to the railroad siding and then stopped somewhere to transfer, and I went in and bought a Coke, a nickel Coke. It wasn't the Coke, but what it represented – that I was free to buy it, that feeling was so intense." But would the internees be free to return to the West Coast and rebuild their communities? At a press conference on November 21, 1944, President Roosevelt was asked this question. In his answer, Roosevelt offered his vision of a dispersed Japanese population:

A good many of them . . . [have already left the camps and] have re-placed themselves, and in a great many parts of the country. And the example that I always cite, to take a unit, is the size of the county, whether it's the Hudson River or in western "Joegia" (Georgia) which we all know, in one of those counties, probably half a dozen or a dozen families could be scattered around on the farms and worked into the community. After all, they are American citizens, and we all know that American Citizens have certain privileges. And they wouldn't – what's my favorite word? – discombobulate – (Laughter) – the existing population of those particular counties very much. After all – what? – 75 thousand families scatter all around the United States is not going to upset anybody.¹⁰⁸

All of their rights guaranteed by the Constitution had been taken away, and now the Japanese were being told they were American citizens and had "certain privileges." Finally they could leave the internment camps but the President wanted them "scattered," for they should not be permitted to "discombobulate" American society. "My parents did not know what to do or where to go after they had been let out of camp," said Aiko Mifune. Her mother, Fusayo Fukuda Kaya, had come to America as a picture bride in 1919; she and her husband, Yokichi, had been tenant farmers in California before they were interned in Poston, Arizona. "But everything they had worked for was gone; they seemed listless and they stayed in Arizona and tried to grow potatoes there." But most of the newly freed internees wanted to go home to the West Coast, and they boarded trains bound for Los Angeles, Seattle, and San Francisco. When a group of returning Japanese stepped from the train in San Jose, they were welcomed home by some black and white women led by Anne Peabody, Marjorie Pitman, Evelyn Settles, and Nina Wolters. The women gave them hot food and then transported them to their places of lodging. But often at other train stations, former internees were met with hostile signs: No Japs Allowed, No Japs Welcome. When they finally saw their homes again, many found their houses damaged and their fields ruined. An uncertain, fearful future seemed to await all of the returnees. They had suffered years of infamy – years they would never forget. Some were never able to return home: too old, too ill, or too brokenhearted, they died while in camp. Tragically, they had come all the way to American only to be buried in forlorn and windswept cemeteries of desert camps. Their "extravagance" did not deserve such an ending.

*When the war is over
And after we are gone
Who will visit
This lonely grave in the wild
Where my friend lies buried?*¹⁰⁹