

University of Nevada, Reno

**Stay for a Dollar a Day: California's Church Hostels and Support during the
Japanese American Eviction and Resettlement, 1942-1947**

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

by

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Abstract

This thesis examines the support California's church groups offered to Japanese Americans during their eviction, internment, and resettlement from 1942 to 1947, centered on the hostels those groups opened to house, feed, provide storage, and seek employment and long-term housing for their Japanese residents. It first provides a hitherto unwritten narrative of that state's church hostel efforts that have been overshadowed by those in Midwestern and Eastern states that operated for nearly two years before the West Coast was reopened to internees. The origins of California's church hostels during resettlement had roots in the eviction, however, when certain denominations were among the lone supporters of Japanese Americans and demonstrated Christian charity by providing housing, securing storage for their goods, and generally lending a measure of humanity to an otherwise inhumane situation.

These church hostels also voiced strong support for the government that was prosecuting the internment of the very people they claimed to support. Conflating Christian and democratic language, church leaders in this period voiced support for a popular war and simultaneously for the most unpopular ethnic group in the country. During eviction, they manifested support of the government through trust in its claim of military necessity, and during internment and resettlement adopted from whole cloth its program of assimilation, steps that afforded a measure of self-insulation them to provide aid to "the enemy." This paradox of church support in this period is the central focus of this thesis.

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Introduction

When you happen on someone who's in trouble or needs help among your people with whom you live in this land that God, your God, is giving you, don't look the other way pretending you don't see him. Don't keep a tight grip on your purse. No. Look at him, open your purse, lend whatever and as much as he needs. Don't count the cost.

Deuteronomy 15:7-8 (MSG)

The morning of February 27th, 1942 dawned a typically clear day on Terminal Island near the Port of Los Angeles in Long Beach. Across the world, Allied navies had just suffered a crushing defeat in the Battle of the Java Sea as the Japanese navy extended its control of the Pacific nearly to Australia. In Europe, the British had successfully raided a German radar array during Operation Biting, giving the British people a welcome morale boost. Much closer to home, the Los Angeles area was still reeling from the sensational Great Los Angeles Air Raid that left several dead from shrapnel and car accidents, but notably, not enemy attack. But for some 3,500 Japanese American residents of Terminal Island, on this morning none of this mattered very much, because they had been the first to be evicted from their homes and sent with 110,000 other residents and citizens of Japanese ancestry to assembly centers for eventual distribution to ten internment camps for the duration of the war.

The internment of Japanese Americans during World War II remains a contentious episode in American history that raises issues of citizenship, civil liberties in wartime, ethnicity, and race. Indeed, that in each of these Japanese Americans were found wanting or denied altogether challenges both the past and the present regarding the rights of citizens and legal residents. Yet all the attention given the internment has overshadowed the ways in which these issues arose in the eviction period and extended

into the resettlement period, where until recently in historical memory Japanese Americans neatly transitioned from a threat to national security to a “model minority.”

Race prejudice against Japanese Americans was preceded by prejudice against Chinese immigrants, who preceded Japanese immigrants by several decades and who set the baseline for cheap Asian labor. Assumed to prefer a low standard of living, white laborers on the West Coast believed they should not have to compete for jobs with Japanese (just as they had felt about Chinese immigrants in the preceding decades), and accordingly anti-Japanese sentiment “had the ear of the rank and file.” Anti-Asian organizations, like the Japanese and Korean Exclusion League, formed in 1905, further mobilized anti-Japanese sentiment.¹ California, where most Japanese immigrants settled, was especially harsh in its treatment of “Asiatics,” in the century preceding World War II. Because Issei, the first generation Japanese immigrants, were predominantly farmers prewar, white farmers and laborers competing with Japanese skewed more strongly toward anti-Japanese sentiment, and the concentration of farming in California lent a particularly harsh racial climate for Japanese in that state.² Hearst and McClatchy newspapers fanned the flames of anti-Japanese sentiment in California. The San Francisco’s *Chronicle* and *Call* effectively competed for who could inflame the anti-Japanese exclusionists the most, all the while pushing absolute exclusion of Japanese from the United States as their baseline position.³

¹ Audrie Girdner and Anne Loftis, *The Great Betrayal: The Evacuation of the Japanese-Americans during World War II* (London: MacMillan, 1969), 47

² Ibid., 33-43

³ Ibid., 47, 66

Statutes closely followed waves of anti-Asian sentiment. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 solidified the anti-Asian sentiment of the preceding half-century and its bar to citizenship for Chinese immigrants echoed in the 1924 Immigration Act that barred Issei from citizenship as well. Preceding the statutory bar was Theodore Roosevelt's Gentleman's Agreement of 1907 wherein Japan agreed to restrict immigration of its laborers in exchange for Japanese children under sixteen being admitted to American public schools. Furious with Californians for potentially spoiling the historically positive relations between the United States and Japan by segregating its schools, Roosevelt expressed his support for naturalization of Japanese immigrants but failed to realize how the Agreement further played into the hands of exclusionists, and when the tables turned in 1924 that vision was officially squashed.⁴ California-specific statutory restrictions against Japanese through the Alien Land Laws of 1913 and 1920 barred all non-citizen Japanese from owning land, measures that prevented self-employment and ensured for white farmers a cheap labor force with whom they would not have to compete.⁵

Anti-Japanese sentiment accelerated in the immediate postwar years. Despite legal and social restrictions and limitations, Japanese people had earned a moderately successful existence, something anti-Asian agitators attributed less to tireless hard work and more to nefarious help from the outside, claims that would be given more credence after December 7, 1941.⁶ The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor thus provided the final

⁴ *The Great Betrayal*, 51-4

⁵ Dana Blakemore, "From Settlement to Resettlement: Japanese Americans in (and out of) Santa Monica, California, 1899-1960," M.A. thesis, California State University, Fullerton, 2000, 2, 77

⁶ Edward Spicer, et. al., *Impounded People: Japanese-Americans in the Relocation Centers* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1969), 50

impetus for exclusion after nearly a century of agitation for that goal. It was also thus no surprise when the Army issued an eviction notice in 1942 with a deadline of March 29th for all persons of Japanese ancestry to report to assembly centers for transfer to one of ten internment camps. The massive fire sales that ensued generated devastating losses for Japanese evictees, and the \$38 million paid under Japanese American Evacuation Claims Act of 1948 (some \$333 million today) does not represent the full scale of economic losses suffered because of the eviction, estimated independently at \$77 million.⁷ Many uncaring, unscrupulous neighbors enriched themselves at Japanese Americans' expense.

However, church groups emerged as Japanese Americans' greatest supporters during the eviction from the West Coast from February to May 1942 when religious activism peaked in support of Japanese Americans. Several Protestant denominations focused on meeting the evictees' physical needs as volunteers transported, fed, and housed their Japanese neighbors. Most significantly, Buddhists, Methodists, the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), and the Baptist Mission Board opened hostels to house the transient evictees en route to the assembly centers, while the Los Angeles Church Federation secured quarters and storage for their possessions in schools and churches. During internment, Buddhist and Japanese Protestant church buildings became *de facto* storage units while white church groups utilized Japanese church buildings like the Northern California AFSC who moved into the former YWCA building in San Francisco and the Southern California AFSC which opened a hostel in the Los

⁷ Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, *Personal Justice Denied* (Washington: GPO, 1982), 119

Angeles Japanese Union Church in 1945.⁸ When resettlement began in California in 1945, moreover, the economically crippling effects of internment rendered Japanese American church bodies ineffectual, save a handful of former internees who restarted congregations and served as hostel directors, leaving white church members as some of the resettlers' only means of support after returning from the camps.⁹

Early on the War Relocation Authority (WRA) was quick to note that the internment camps were not meant to be permanent residences for the duration of the war, but rather transient stops while internees made arrangements to resettle in the East and Midwest. Resettlement efforts began as early as June 1942, and with the highly touted and researched Student Relocation Program (started by YMCA and AFSC members) and various furloughs and work release programs about half of the internees headed east to restart their lives. Although the Army announced in December 1944 that most internees could return to the West Coast, the still-adversarial racial climate meant that few—just five hundred—did so by March 1945. Although on the ropes in California's urban areas by the end of 1945, during the war nativist groups like the Native Sons of the Golden West and politicians like California's lieutenant governor Fred Houser held significant sway over state and local politics. Private interests prized white "residential exclusivity" that engendered competition and antagonism over housing among nonwhites.¹⁰ The

⁸ Information Bulletin 16 (June 10, 1945); Page & Turnbull, Inc., "1830 Sutter St." DRP 523 Form, registration for California Historical Landmarks, <http://www.sf-planning.org/> (accessed July 19, 2013), 5

⁹ See War Relocation Authority, "Final Report, Community Activities Section," November 16, 1945 (Calisphere) and Scott Kurashige, *The Shifting Grounds of Race: Black and Japanese Americans in the Making of Multiethnic Los Angeles* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 170

¹⁰ Charlotte Brooks, "Ascending California's Racial Hierarchy: Asian Americans, Housing, and Government, 1920-1955," Ph.D. Diss, Northwestern University, 2002,

“bolder-spirited evacuees,” to use the WRA’s words, were entering this racial climate with \$25 from the WRA, a reservation at a hostel or a room in a friend’s home, and no job or a permanent place to live. Yet this trickle of bold resettlers became a flood by mid-1945.

Thus began the resettlement period in California, but many questions remain unanswered about that period. So much attention has been dedicated to the internment experience that few scholars have only recently drawn the critical resettlement period after internment into focus, and the brief eviction phase receives equally brief consideration. Their focus has been on race relations in the cities to which the internees resettled, and of course, on the broader postwar Japanese American experience in the wake of internment. Conspicuously lacking, however, is the narrative about those who helped the internees the most in making the transition from their California homes to the camps, and especially, in getting back on their feet upon returning: church groups.

This study will investigate the significance of church hostels and support in California during the Japanese American eviction, internment, and resettlement periods from 1942-1947. It will attempt to show that the resettlement in California presented a particularly acute crisis in housing and job opportunities because of residual prejudice from before the war that had precipitated the eviction and internment of the West Coast Japanese American population, and for resettlers exacerbated the housing and job crisis facing postwar urban California. Hostels served as the “storefront” for these churches’ material support and are thus the window into that support in each phase of the internment period.

The few church groups who ran hostels filled the significant lacuna in the Army's efforts during eviction and later in the War Relocation Authority's efforts to meet these basic needs yet simultaneously supported the government's overall goal of minimizing the prewar "threat" of Japanese Americans on the West Coast. Housing and jobs were the most immediate needs, and the significance of church hostels and general support from church members becomes apparent in light of the wide gap they filled in the Army's and WRA's efforts to meet these needs.

Charged with the disposition of America's Japanese for most of the period, the WRA was staffed by many New Deal liberals who executed the internment as civilly as possible, but proved mostly inflexible to the significant needs of its charges during resettlement. Due to fiscal constraints, all camps except Tule Lake were set to close by the end of 1945, and "the decision had to be made [by internees] whether to return to the west coast...whether housing was available or not."¹¹ Although inflexible, the WRA was not powerless, and seeing the need for housing for resettlers collaborated with the Army and the Federal Public Housing Authority to establish temporary housing camps outside San Francisco and Los Angeles that combined housed over 3,000 resettlers. But like the closing of the camps, these "special projects," including an especially temporary trailer project in Burbank, all closed by May 18, 1946.¹² From the WRA's own figures, however, by this date about 23,000 Japanese Americans had resettled in these cities and

¹¹ War Relocation Authority, *People in Motion* (Washington: GPO, 1946), 9

¹² WRA, *WRA: A Story of Human Conservation* (Washington: GPO, 1946), 142-3

their surrounding areas.¹³ Clearly there was a substantial need for more temporary housing, which church hostels met, and their impact will be the first focus of this study.

Yet for all their empathy toward the plight of Japanese Americans, these church groups remained very much in step with the government's efforts to break up the ethnic enclaves of Japanese it had perceived as such a threat before the war. The second focus of study will be this contradiction in the response of California's churches within the context of California's changing racial climate during internment and in the postwar period. There is a consistent contradiction throughout the internment period from church members in their vocal and material support for Japanese Americans followed closely—and often in the next sentence—by a statement of support for the government that was prosecuting the whole ordeal. This thesis seeks to explain what I call “the paradox of church support” in this period.

To better understand the internment period, then, we must first understand the impact of church hostels and support, the places from which so many resettlers departed and restarted their lives. Here the California hostel narrative is significant, for unlike New York, Chicago, and Cleveland, resettlers were returning to their prewar hometowns but not as they knew them. Their former neighborhoods had changed. Many of their neighbors who had harbored prejudices had deepened them. But most importantly, they had changed. The internment experience for many had altered their perspective on what America was, what it meant to be an American, and most tangibly, how they were to pick up their lives in the most familiar yet strangely foreign cities any former internee went. This thesis will seek to uncover the significance of church hostels and support to

¹³ WRA, *The Evacuated People: A Quantitative Description* (Washington, GPO, 1946), Table 13, 46-8

resettling Japanese Americans in California, a hitherto unexplored subject in a significantly understudied period in American history.

This thesis will thus explore several avenues with the goal of adding a fresh perspective to the existing narrative of the resettlement period, and an entirely new one regarding eviction. The most basic yet most critical step is to tell the tale of California's church hostels, since there does not appear to be a monograph, dissertation, or thesis that details that state's hostels in the research for this project. The tale brackets the internment in a sense, as hostels appeared during eviction, closed once their residents departed for the camps, and more opened and reopened once resettlement was well underway in 1945. Although hostels had been operating in eastern cities for a couple of years already by January of 1945, when internees began trickling back into California, the hostels that opened there carry a unique significance for existing within a barely tempered racial climate, predominantly through the efforts of some of the same people that operated the very hostels in which the resettlers stayed. Furthermore, they continued the pattern set by eastern hostels of promoting assimilation and the breakup of the "Little Tokyos" that so frightened westerners before the war. The first parallel continuity is simply the material support that church groups offered to Japanese Americans throughout the internment period, primarily through housing and feeding in hostels, storage and transportation, and during resettlement, help finding jobs.

The second avenue to explore is the discourses used by these Christian groups and people while assisting the Japanese American evictees, internees, and resettlers throughout the internment period. It is an odd mix to write at great length about the injustice of internment, vowing support in any way, while simultaneously voicing

unequivocal support for the wartime government that was prosecuting the internment.

Serving tea, coffee, donuts, and sandwiches, and even offering church buildings as assembly and departure locations only adds to this seemingly paradoxical "support" for "our Japanese brethren." Support of the government was not unanimous, however.

Quakers were among the strongest critics of eviction and internment, and the least likely to throw such unequivocal support behind the government. But as the *Christian Century* reported, "Quakers are not in accord with mass evacuation of Japanese who are American citizens, *although they are aiding in the process...* the friends are trying to help, but quietly, as they disapprove of the removal action."¹⁴ Silence, then, can be interpreted as tacit support even if their tepid support of the government complicates the picture of church support in this period. Whether quietly or loudly, however, church members' language in this period did not match their action, which says something about how they perceived themselves as supporters of an unpopular group. The second parallel continuity, then, is church groups' support for the government throughout the internment period. Although the object of their support of the government shifted as the internment progressed, from the Army to the WRA to assimilation, and although there was never a perfectly cohesive mantra of support for the government, the pattern of support of the government nevertheless emerges throughout the period.

¹⁴ J. Henry Carpenter, "Japanese Exile Hit by Pickett," *Christian Century*, April 15, 1942, 508. Emphasis mine.

Literature Review

There seems to be two reasons there is very little focus on the eviction period. First is its brevity. The mere four months of transition preceding four years of internment renders it a forethought, a mere bump on the road toward internment. Second, the privations suffered by Japanese Americans in this phase traditionally pale in comparison to those suffered for much longer in the internment phase in the existing literature. Primary source and government documents like the WRA's various reports from its activities, General DeWitt's *Final Report*, and the congressional study on internment, *Personal Justice Denied* provide the most detail about how eviction progressed. All three mention church support to varying degrees including testifying before the Tolan Committee and generally voicing support for Japanese Americans, but the eviction story, as elsewhere, gets subsumed by the much longer internment.

The body of literature on the resettlement period is small but growing. Greg Robinson's *After Camp* is probably the most comprehensive study of life in the decade after internees returned to their prewar homes. His aim is modest: "to provide an opening for further inquiry and more extended discussion" of the "largely uncovered subject."¹⁵ Examining the shift of group leadership from Issei to Nisei, he probes internees' questions of where to go after camp, and their political and ethnic engagement once they relocated. Regarding housing and employment, Robinson finds that because of employment far below their education level and prejudicial or unavailable housing options, resettlers were forced to resettle in urban black and Latino areas, creating a

¹⁵ Greg Robinson, *After Camp: Portraits in Midcentury Japanese American Life and Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 2

black/Japanese political alliance initially strong that faded as Japanese Americans regained their prewar affluence and bewilderment as to why their former black neighbors could not do the same.¹⁶

Scott Kurashige's book *The Shifting Grounds of Race* probes deeper into these racial alliances and conflicts in the resettlement period. Using a broad framework of Los Angeles' shift from a "white city" in the early twentieth century to a "world city" after World War II, Kurashige presents the basic reality of competition between black and Japanese Americans for jobs, housing, and political representation while arguing that "triangular nature of relations" between these groups and whites provides multiple vantage points from which to view the historical contingency of race in postwar Los Angeles.¹⁷ Thus focused on race, his discussion of postwar housing for Japanese Americans in relation to black Americans' housing situation, and finds that although a majority of black families were living in the former residences of Japanese Americans, both groups "felt the sting of the housing crunch."¹⁸ His consideration of hostels as "emergency housing" rings true for this study, and highlights the shame of living in relief shelters that only piled on to the shame of internment.

Dissertations and theses about resettlement consider primarily the student resettlement program, which itself is a well-mined topic of resettlement, and hostels in Portland, Chicago, Cleveland, Cincinnati, New York, and Seattle, the last of which where church activity during eviction and internment was heavily influenced by Floyd Schmoie.

¹⁶ Ibid., 266

¹⁷ Kurashige, *The Shifting Grounds of Race*, 2-4

¹⁸ Ibid., 164-7

A Quaker and early defender of Japanese Americans and student relocation, Schmoe was also future father-in-law to Gordon Hirabayashi, who rose to national prominence by challenging his conviction over violating the curfew under Executive Order 9066, which the Supreme Court upheld in *Hirabayashi v. United States*. One thesis on resettlement in Santa Monica brings to light the difficulties created by the severe housing shortage and the relief that the Venice Free Methodist Church and Venice Community Center (which was run by members of a local Methodist church) hostels provided.¹⁹ However, there appears to be no study about church hostels in California, where resettlement was a particularly acute crisis. For instance, the WRA reported in 1946 that housing for resettlers on the West Coast was not as acute in the Northwest, where the situation “was less severe than elsewhere on the coast.”²⁰

There is thus a clear need for a focused study on church hostels and support during the eviction and resettlement phases of internment in California. Historians have either given very short shrift or omitted entirely the support offered by religious groups in California as Japanese Americans departed for camps and returned to begin their post-internment lives. Japanese Americans did not simply sell or store their possessions, lease their houses, and arrive at the train station for transportation to assembly centers. Rather, there were often several days between clearing their quarters to leaving for the camps wherein they needed a place to stay and a way to get to the train station, a gap church groups happily filled. Similarly, the racial conflict and collaboration did not greet them

¹⁹ Dana Blakemore, “From Settlement to Resettlement: Japanese Americans in (and out of) Santa Monica, California, 1899-1960), M.A. thesis, California State University, Fullerton, 2001, 144-8.

²⁰ *People in Motion*, 174

as they stepped off the train again in 1945, but the need for a bed and a meal did. While those issues developed in the coming months and years, more pressing needs like a job and a house first took center stage as the resettlers arrived in California with the meager twenty-five dollars the WRA had given them as it re-evicted them from the camps. With as few friends as ever to greet them upon their arrival in California, church hostels and support were especially critical in this period to provide the resettlers with the bare necessities of food, shelter, and gainful employment as they began their lives anew.

Two articles form the operational framework for this study. Sociologist Tetsuden Kashima calls resettlement the “crisis of readjustment,” the final of several crisis periods endured by the Japanese since arriving in the United States in 1869. This interpretation rejects the notion of the resettlement period as merely a transition period from persecuted minority to “model minority.” He warns readers of the “social amnesia” that inevitably results from glossing over the events and social processes would otherwise dissolve this too-neat transition. For Kashima, the most basic questions of where the resettlers would go, work, and live coupled with their total dislocation and the lack of assistance as they left the camp make the period of 1945-1955 a crisis, not just a neat transition into upper-middle class America by the 1960s.²¹ This study’s assumption of resettlement *and* *eviction* is as a crisis period, and it will attempt to show that although church hostels and support eased the crisis in material terms, they complicated the crisis by being such

²¹ Tetsuden Kashima, “Japanese American Internees Return, 1945-1955: Readjustment and Social Amnesia,” *Phylon* 41, no. 2 (2nd Quarter 1980), 107-9

staunch supporters of the wartime government and its push for assimilation during internment and resettlement.

The second piece comes from historian Sandra Taylor's essay "Fellow-Fellers with the Afflicted: Christian Churches and the Relocation of Japanese Americans in World War II," in which she contends that the California churches at large failed to respond to the needs of the evacuees, although more provided aid after the war than before. She argues that church bodies were "Californians first and Christians second, and most Californians in 1942 did not like Japanese, wherever they were born, whatever language they spoke."²² This is especially salient because it emphasizes the racial climate in which the eviction and internment took place and how these feelings precipitated the whole event. But it was also the racial climate to which the Japanese Americans returned in 1945, and the racial climate in which church groups operated. Furthermore, it punctuates the need for charitable work in the eviction and resettlement periods, and highlights all the more the aid that the few church groups did provide, and those who were Christians first and Californians second will be the focus of this project. Through this lens the church collaboration with government efforts again comes into focus, for although these churchmen put Christian charity before race prejudice, they nevertheless supported the government that prosecuted the eviction and internment based solely on race. This project will explore this paradox more deeply through an analysis of the church's actions that contradicted their words.

²² Sandra Taylor, "Fellow-Feelers with the Afflicted: Christian Churches and the Relocation of Japanese Americans in World War II," in Roger Daniels, ed., *Japanese Americans from Relocation to Redress* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991), 124

This thesis draws heavily on journals, letters, periodicals, autobiographies, and oral histories to craft a hitherto un-synthesized narrative that seeks to splice the well-known story of the Army-led eviction, WRA-led internment, and mostly independent resettlement in California with the relatively unknown contributions of church hostels and churchmen in each phase. *Personal Justice Denied* acknowledges academics and church members as the two groups who were most outspoken against internment and for Japanese Americans' rights. The focus here is on the latter, although there are many interactions between academia and churches, and others like writer Carey McWilliams and real estate mogul William Carr who acted not on behalf of any congregation but nevertheless in support of Japanese Americans, and whose support intersected with church members in this period. Several of the church people I cite mention McWilliams' writing, and several served with Carr in either the Friends of the American Way or the Fair Play Committee.

For their part, the church members I cite below represent the more liberal Christian denominations; nowhere in my research did I see West Coast Lutherans, Episcopalians, or Catholics (although there were a couple of Catholic churches running hostels in the Midwest) providing or voicing support, for instance. As such, their biblical worldviews were more likely to align with notions of social justice and equality regardless of race than, say, the Southern Baptist Convention or a Pentecostal church. Quakers in particular were most accustomed to supporting the unpopular: concurrent with AFSC's support of Japanese Americans especially through Student Resettlement, its other large project during the war was running Civilian Public Service (CPS) camps for the "yellowbelly" conscientious objectors, men who rather unpopularity refused to fight in

an otherwise very popular war. But the divide between conservative, evangelical churches and the church groups and denominations mentioned herein is clear; the National Association of Evangelicals was founded in opposition to the Federal Council of Churches (FCC) and included Pentecostal, Holiness, and Anabaptist, and it even passed a resolution barring dual membership with FCC churches that notably includes many of the churches who supported Japanese Americans in this period.²³

The thesis is organized into the three phases of the period that form its three main chapters: eviction, internment, and resettlement. Eviction and resettlement compose about equal parts of this project, for although the eviction period lasted only a few months rather than several years like resettlement, the groundwork for church support during internment and church hostels during resettlement was laid in this short time. This short period delineated the church groups that would support Japanese Americans throughout the ordeal through advocacy, storage or management of possessions and property, securing jobs or housing, supporting or running church hostels, or usually a combination of several or all of these. Baptists, Methodists, Quakers, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists were at the forefront of providing relief in the frustrating and agonizing days leading up to the various evictions throughout February, March, April, and May of 1942. Their support ranged from serving tea, donuts, and sandwiches to opening their churches as hostels and even as Army Civil Control Stations for assembly and departure for the camps. Furthermore, their language was at once supportive of

²³ National Association of Evangelicals, "History: Connecting and Representing Evangelicals since 1942," <https://www.nae.net/about-us/history/62> (accessed April 10, 2014)

Japanese Americans and of the government that was interning them, and the groundwork for this paradox of supporting both was also set in this short period.

Of course, the eviction hostels closed once all their residents had left for assembly centers and camps, but church groups continued their support through advocacy and the various resettlement projects that began in later 1942. Run by Quakers, the National Japanese American Student Resettlement Council helped place thousands of Nisei students into universities outside of the exclusion zone that began only months after eviction. When general resettlement began to eastern cities, churches there took the lead in opening hostels and creating a receptive mood for the incoming Japanese Americans. Itinerant churchmen visited internees in various camps to offer support and to bring stored possessions, donated items, and even Christmas gifts. And church members in California as elsewhere throughout the internment period were advocating locally and nationally for a speedy return of their former neighbors and for a more hospitable public sentiment than when they left.

When the West Coast reopened in January of 1945, nobody was quite sure how the resettlement would proceed, least of which the internees. Many questions remained: would our houses still be there? What had happened to our things? Would anyone employ us? Where would we live? These daunting questions prevented all but a few to return in the first few months of 1945, but by late spring thousands were leaving the camps and resettling to their former homes in California. Some returned to find their homes and stored possessions vandalized or stolen and some encountered overt racial discrimination, but the effect of church members' advocacy, among other factors, meant

that if Californians still harbored prejudice toward Japanese Americans, they mostly kept it to themselves. More acute in the years to come were the severe housing shortage and recovery from what Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston in *Farewell to Manzanar* dubbed “economic zero.”²⁴ Church hostels during resettlement were instrumental in helping resettlers overcome both of these crises, yet once again their language still strongly supported the government in its resettlement efforts, and in this period added assimilationist rhetoric to help prevent the reformation of the “Little Tokyos” that had been such a “problem” before the war. But in both their language and actions, church members exhibited a continuity that extended from the eviction period through the closing of the hostels, whereupon the resettlers, with a job and a permanent home, completed their resettlement with the crisis blunted by the support offered them by the churches who chose to be Christians first and Californians second.

²⁴ Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston and James Houston, *Farewell To Manzanar* (New York: Bantam Books, 2001), 154

Chapter 1: Eviction

“For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home.” Matthew 25:35 (NLT)

The eviction of Japanese Americans from Terminal Island was but the beginning of a mass exodus of 107,000 persons of Japanese Ancestry from the West Coast, of whom 94,000 were from California.¹ As the forerunner of the mass eviction of Japanese Americans from the West Coast, the Terminal Island story encapsulates the process in many other cities and how church groups offered assistance. “Many were able to find temporary homes with friends,” Esther Rhoads of AFSC wrote, “a few went to hostels, hoping that in a few days they would be able to start to some new location. About 300 seemed to have no place to go and hostels were hastily opened in some of the language school buildings. Friends helped with a number of these and are still taking considerable responsibility for the management of two of them—one at Norwalk, near the Japanese Friends Church, where eleven families are living, and another at the Forsythe School in Boyle Heights, Los Angeles, where twenty-two families are being housed.”² After exclusion ended in 1945, the latter became the Evergreen Hostel, one of the largest and most notorious of resettlement hostels on the West Coast.

This chapter will follow the course of church hostels and support during the eviction phase from February to May 1942. In California, Pearl Harbor had further inflamed the tensions of the preceding decades and the consensus there was the Japanese

¹ WRA, *The Evacuated People*, 46

² Esther Rhoads, *Friends Bulletin*, number 12, March 1942, JCC, Box 3 folder A

had to go. With the American Friends Service Committee in the lead, certain church groups prepared for the eventuality of mass “evacuation” by securing storage facilities and preparing their homes and churches as temporary quarters. Once the eviction order came down, these church groups sprang into action, dedicating their time, resources, and influence to assist evictees as they made the transition from home to internment camp. The material support they provided in this phase through storing their goods, providing transportation, and housing and nourishment at ad-hoc hostels set the baseline for the material support they would provide through the internment period, and in this, these church groups never wavered.

But still early in the very popular war, many of these church members could barely eke out a statement of support for Japanese Americans without appending some statement of support for the Army and the government generally even as they executed the eviction of the people they ostensibly supported. Situated within a racial climate in which anyone with a Japanese face was the enemy, and any friend of such a face was a friend of the enemy, these church groups were not immune to insulating themselves from the criticism that they inevitably faced for such support. This conflict in rhetoric in this phase also set the baseline for the paradox of church support throughout the internment period that only varied in the government agency that was the object of their support. With hostels as the storefront, these church groups set the pattern of material support and the paradox of church support that they would build upon as soon as internees left the camps to begin resettlement only a few months later.

Church Hostels During Eviction

The hostel method in the United States was not new. American Youth Hostels, Inc., was but one hostel association that sponsored activities, welcoming travelers both domestic and international. Quakers Josephine and Frank Duveneck's Hidden Villa in Los Altos had been a center of hostellers in the Bay Area since they acquired the property in 1924, and served a dual-purpose hostel for Japanese American evictees from the West Coast as well as European refugees in early 1942. Frank Duveneck presided as chairman of the board of Northern California Hostel Association at the time, so his property was a natural fit for the Northern California Area Council of American Youth Hostels, Inc. to hold a conference there in January that year entitled "Youth Hostel Patterns in America" for "educators, group-work representatives and [sic] recreation leaders" to discuss the future of the state's youth hostels.³ Josephine Duveneck delivered a talk on the "responsibilities of participants in the hostel program," which, if Hidden Villa was any guide, included finding housing and providing meals and advice for transient youths, and providing an atmosphere where those "traveling on one's own steam by foot or bicycle or canoe, with possessions reduced to bare necessities, and having the chance to meet strangers from distant places, [could] be an adventure that provides a most valuable educational experience."⁴ The conference included folk dancing, movies, and music, with some sixty people in attendance from Northern and Southern California alike,

³ *Berkeley Daily Gazette*, January 15 & January 23, 1942

⁴ Josephine Whitney Duveneck, *Life on Two Levels: An Autobiography* (Los Altos, CA: William Kaufmann, Inc., 1978), 200-1

including representatives from Scripps and Claremont Colleges.⁵ The levity at the Duvenecks' hostel, however, would soon turn to a more somber business as they converted it into a hostel for the evicted Japanese Americans.

Even before President Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066 on February 19, 1942 that authorized military areas from which “any or all persons may be excluded,” the Pacific Coast Branch of AFSC was considering ways to help the evictees who were quite obviously about to be evicted from these areas “in such places...[as] the appropriate Military Commander may determine” that that commander, General John DeWitt, delineated on March 2nd. As early as February 11 its inter-racial relations committee was compiling “a list of houses and rooms available for Japanese evacuees.” One of its members reported on his search for possible properties to use for hostels, some of which like the Stern Estate, several language schools near Whittier, and the Boyle Heights language school (estimated to accommodate 100 people), would become functioning hostels during eviction and again during resettlement.⁶ Two days after this meeting, the committee was in negotiations for use of a building on the Stern Estate that would house fifty evictees and was about to close a deal with the Presbyterian Board for use of its language school building for the future Evergreen Hostel for \$40 per month, equivalent to the pro rata share of taxes. Raymond Booth reported, “The authorities welcomed and

⁵ *Berkeley Daily Gazette*, January 15, 1942. Also *Oakland Tribune*, January 14, 1942

⁶ AFSC Pacific Coast Branch, “Minutes of the Inter-Racial Relations Committee, February 11, 1942,” JCC, Box 3 folder A

approved the plan...to open hostels where evacuees can stay while they are hunting places of permanent resettlement.”⁷

The day before Roosevelt issued EO 9066, the committee was speculating about what segments of the Japanese American population most needed the help. “There will probably be two groups of people entering such a hostel, transients and more permanent guests, the latter possibly training for some kind of self support.” It considered the Forsythe School best suited as a hostel for women and children if the husband and fathers of the family were interned. Although the school became a coed hostel, this almost prescient remark indicates a bead on the pulse of the broader community in its assumption that the men would be taken first. Simultaneously, however, the committee took on a paternalistic air: “the committee seemed to feel that a Caucasian resident should be there, to represent and interpret the AFSC to deal with community relations and to supervise the business.” Never mind that many of the hostel residents had been business owners; a white churchman was needed to handle the business and community relations while the evictees were left the responsibility for rooms, menus, etc., and both races would collaborate on the religious, social, and educational aspects of the hostels.⁸ This self-insulation from hostile communities would reappear throughout the internment period and foreshadowed the way church hostels later helped placed resettlers into jobs often less than commensurate with education and experience during resettlement.

⁷ AFSC Pacific Coast Branch, “Minutes of the Inter-Racial Relations Committee *ad interim*, February 13, 1942,” in *ibid*.

⁸ AFSC Pacific Coast Branch, “Minutes of the Race Relations Committee *ad interim*, February 18, 1942,” in *ibid*.

Church groups provided other services during the eviction phase, and AFSC even distributed surveys to determine the level of need during eviction.⁹ Esther Rhoads, in a surprisingly self-congratulatory tone for a Quaker, wrote, “It was amazing the way friends jumped into action.” In her estimation, the Terminal Island evacuation had been a success, and her standard of measurement was primarily how by the first night of the eviction order on February 25th, the evictees with no friends to stay with were “assigned” to hostels.¹⁰ A week later, Norwalk Hostel housed thirty-nine residents representing ten families (although very few men) and Forsythe Hostel housed seventy-six representing twenty families, and “applications [kept] coming.” The hostels accepted food donations to reduce costs, and the charge was only fifty cents per day per adult with any additional going toward the \$40 rent due the Presbyterian Mission Board.¹¹ The preparations for the hostels had in some cases been vast; Forsythe Hostel, the largest, took volunteers ten days to clean. AFSC secured mattresses from a member of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, had some Russian Molokan plumbers check the plumbing, and used chalk to mark off the dormitory floor into three sections for three families. Gurney Binford, a Quaker and former missionary to Japan, put evictees’ furniture that could not be used in the bedroom section “carefully and systematically...on numbered sections of the basement floor.”¹²

⁹ AFSC Pacific Branch, “Minutes of Race Relations *ad interim* Committee, March 13, 1942,” JCC, Box 3 folder B

¹⁰ Esther Rhoads, letter to Mary Kimber, March 3, 1942, JCC, Box 3 folder B

¹¹ AFSC Pacific Branch, “Minutes of Race Relations *ad interim* Committee, March 4, 1942,” JCC, Box 3 folder B

¹² Rhoads to Kimber March 3, 1942, JCC, Box 3 folder B. Russian Molokans, also a traditional peace church recognized by the Selective Service, comprised over seventy conscientious objectors in Civilian Public Service, the members of which later wrote letters of support to editors of various newspapers on behalf of Esther Nishio, the first Japanese American to resettle in California in September 1944.

Financing hostels required help beyond the nominal charge to residents. AFSC budgeted \$500 per month for its Southern California hostels that only covered administration and assistants, staff travel, and miscellaneous expenses. The Committee outlaid the fifty-cent per day charge for evictees for food and utilities. For white staff members, food was paid and they shared the cost of utilities.¹³ The Fellowship of Reconciliation, a member of which had donated mattresses, contributed \$50 a month to AFSC's hostel efforts, and through frugality and thrift, not to mention donations of food, at the El Monte Hostel actual costs tallied only nineteen cents per person per day, while at Blue Hills Hostel the total was forty cents.¹⁴

In Northern California, the Duvneck's Hidden Villa transitioned naturally from a travelers' hostel to an eviction hostel. In fact, Hidden Villa was already well enough equipped that Frank Duvneck offered cots he had acquired from the Stanford dormitories to their friend and fellow Quaker Gerda Isenberg for her planned hostel. And in an example of how pitched the hysteria was over Japanese Americans in those early weeks of 1942, someone reported to the FBI that she was building barracks to house the invading Japanese Army.¹⁵ "Even the F.B.I. investigator had a good laugh over that fantasy," Josephine reported, but however fantastic the claim was it represents the

¹³ AFSC Pacific Branch, "Minutes of Race Relations *ad interim* Committee, March 13, 1942, JCC, Box 3 folder B

¹⁴ AFSC Pacific Branch, "Minutes of the Inter-Racial Relations Committee, March 31, 1942, JCC, Box 3 folder B

¹⁵ Gerda Isenberg, "California Native Plants Nurserywoman, Civil Rights Activist, and Humanitarian," an oral history conducted in 1990-1991 by Suzanne B. Riess, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1991

hysteria in California over anything relating to Japan and the Japanese Americans.¹⁶ The Duvenecks' Hidden Villa Hostel was unique among church folk and church hostels, however. During eviction, other hostels may have been as ad-hoc as the Duvenecks' but were almost exclusively church-run, with support enlisted from church members.

In San Francisco, Japanese Americans and churchmen had the benefit of knowing how the eviction in the Los Angeles area proceeded, and the process was accordingly less frenetic than the last week of February 1942. Churches also played a much more prominent role in lending a hand both to the government and the evictees on their way out of town. When the *Berkeley Gazette* reported in early April about the Fair Play Committee aiding "Berkeley evacuees in their preparations for moving out of the city on war time orders," its mention of an office in the library of the First Congregational Church being used for storage of property was but one piece of the interracial, interdenominational, and interagency cooperation that would mark the eviction phase in the Bay Area.¹⁷

Much had transpired to get the Pilgrim Hall, the parish house of First Congregational, to be an operational Civil Control Station (CCS), the assembly and departure point for evictees, named by Western Defense Command (WDC).¹⁸ In fact, the newspapers probably did not know that the church *offered* its building for that purpose,

¹⁶ *Life on Two Levels*, 201

¹⁷ *Berkeley Gazette*, April 8, 1942, JCC, Box 3 folder C

¹⁸ *Berkeley Gazette*, April 23, 1942, JCC, Box 3 folder C. Some other contemporary documents refer to a Civilian Control Center, but I will keep with the term used in the newspapers that I saw most often, a Civil Control Station, or CCS. Another church used as a CCS was the Christ United Methodist Church in Santa Maria, California, a Japanese Church cared for by a local Nazarene congregation during the war. It reopened as a hostel in 1945. www.smchristumc.org (accessed April 14, 2014)

only that because “formalities were observed” the Army “requested” use of the church facilities, but it was the church initiated.¹⁹ Even before the church approached the Army, however, Ruth Kingman, a member of the Fair Play Committee and member of First Congregational Church, had learned that the Army’s initial plan for a CCS was to use “a vacant auto agency on Shattuck Avenue, a place with no comforts or privacy.” Kingman had already been assisting evictees after WDC issued the voluntary eviction order, enlisting the help of friends “to find housing and storage space for the non-English speaking parents” of a worker at Stiles Hall, Berkeley’s YMCA, that her husband directed. “The project expanded as the needs became known.” After the general eviction was issued, Kingman suggested to a contact at the United States Employment Service, which was working with the Army, that Pilgrim Hall would be more suitable. Initially the Army balked, suggesting that there might be “too many doors to guard.”²⁰

The church balked, too. At a church council meeting, there was little discussion over the matter, with only one dissenting vote who thought “the church should not cooperate in the dirty business.” The measure passed on the agreement “that we see that some courtesies are extended to the evacuees.” Regarding the same meeting, church secretary Eleanor Breed “suspected that here and there in the group enthusiasm was a bit thin,” although she noted no dissent. Board members clearly suspected that church

¹⁹ Much of the following regarding the use of First Congregational Church comes from two sources: Shirley Q. Henderson, “First Congregational Church of Berkeley: Pilgrim Hall, Civilian Control Station April 1942 Registration and Evacuation of Japanese and Japanese-Americans,” February 1975, and Eleanor Breed, “War Comes to the Church Door: Diary of a Church Secretary in Berkeley, California, April 20 to May 1, 1942,” both in Files Relating to the Evacuation of Japanese and Japanese Americans: Berkeley, Calif., 1942-1975 (hereafter FREJA), The Bancroft Library

²⁰ Henderson, “The First Congregational Church of Berkeley,” FREJA

response might be a bit tepid, as well, as church members only found out about the plans from the front page of the *Berkeley Gazette* on April 21. Breed echoed this suspicion, wondering “what some of the old-timers will say when the word gets around,” but expressed her relief when word broke that at least “we don’t have to be mum about our military secrets [anymore].”²¹ Breed later noted her church friends “seemed happy that their church was trying to ease the evacuation for the Japanese a little,” adding that the soldiers and their lieutenant were “very considerate of the Japanese...treating them like human beings. Good old America!”

Alterations to the church began immediately. The church installed a switchboard for eight phones, converted rooms to begin quartering two Army privates, and made an effort “to appoint the waiting area graciously with Oriental rugs, nice furniture, and a silver tea service.” The nursery and other rooms were similarly converted to accommodate representatives from various federal agencies advertising their services to evictees. It was a hectic atmosphere, with rooms divided into cubicles and a corner devoted to Nisei doctors and nurses who gave everyone physical examinations and shots before they left.²² The same soldiers who were “considerate” of the evictees were nevertheless the armed guards of the building and its inhabitants. Adding to the incongruity and unbeknownst to their lieutenant, some of the soldiers went to town with

²¹ Breed, “War Comes to the Church Door,” FREJA. Eleanor Breed and her sister Clara were brought up in a Congregational, pacifist home. Clara is notable in this period for being a mentor, pen pal, and advocate for Japanese Americans during internment as featured in Joanne Oppenheim, *Dear Miss Breed: True Stories of the Japanese American Incarceration during World War II and a Librarian Who Made a Difference* (New York: Scholastic, 2006)

²² Ruth Kingman, “The Fair Play Committee and Citizen Participation,” an interview conducted in 1971 by Rosemary Levenson in *Japanese-American Relocation Reviewed, Volume II: The Internment*, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1976

some of the evictees for dinner, while some of the high school evictee girls were overheard chatting with the men, saying “we hope you’ll be stationed at our camp so we’ll see you some more.” Breed noted that the soldiers had rather enjoyed the assignment, “bemoaning the fact that soon they will pull out of here. They’ve liked this job, they tell us, with its coffee and sandwiches in the afternoon and the Boy Scout room to lounge in, and people inviting them out to dinner.” One soldier from Tanforan Assembly Center played hide-and-seek around a tree with a five-year old evicted boy “and drew quite a gallery.”



Figure 1: Evictees departing Hayward, California, May 8, 1942. The girls are holding sandwiches made by local church women. Source: JARDA

Interdenominational cooperation also marked the eviction in Berkeley. After the board approved the use of the church as a CCS, Pastor Vere Loper of First Congregational crafted a letter requesting other local ministers and the Berkeley Fellowship of Churches to share the burden, and multiple denominations turned up to provide assistance. Each church volunteering support was assigned a day to provide refreshments and general good cheer. Eleanor Breed reported that every denomination set about their work vigorously; the Quakers followed First Congregational, disappointed that there was nobody to serve because the registration had been completed in the first two days; the Methodists made sandwiches and coffee not only for evictees but also for soldiers, government workers, and bus drivers, with enough extra for the Presbyterians the next day; the Baptists, too, sent a very “nice group of women” but caused some friction by bringing “a retired minister who is just too godly. He bustles in everywhere and goes around shaking hands with the evacuees and saying a hearty ‘God bless you!’...Dr. Loper is embarrassed. That sort of thing is just what he wanted to avoid—yet how to deal with a fellow minister?”²³ This interdenominational friction was not limited to Berkeley, either, and even Christian goodwill was not immune to internecine resentment, as the Southern California Baptists’ exclusivity of ministering only to fellow Baptist evacuees irked some Quakers.²⁴

The church provided much more than just a facility for the government’s eviction efforts, however. There was a reception room offered for “comfort and convenience”

²³ Breed, “War Comes to the Church Door,” FREJA

²⁴ Charles Lord, “The Response of the Historic Peace Churches to the Internment of the Japanese Americans during World War II,” M.A. thesis, Mennonite Biblical Seminaries, 1981, 26

with hosts and hostesses ready to “extend any courtesy” of value. As any parent of small children can imagine, the kindergarten room was a valuable service, a place to drop off the children while parents dealt with the various government agencies. There was a lounge with chairs for rest and refreshments at any time of day, and cots for sleeping, if desired.²⁵ First Congregational was thus unique among most church hostels during eviction, serving its dual purpose of church hostel and government-appropriated Civil Control Station.

Also unique about First Congregational was that it did not offer storage for evictees’ property but rather served as an intermediary for storage. Occupying rooms in Pilgrim Hall were representatives from the United States Employment Service, the agency arranging the eviction for the Army, the Federal Security Agency, and the Federal Reserve Bank, the latter two of which were charged with government storage of goods during internment. Most other evictees sought alternate storage solutions, however, as only about a fifth stored their possessions with the Federal Reserve, although undoubtedly many of the remaining four-fifths had nothing left after fire-selling all they owned as many evictees did.²⁶ One of the most common storage solutions among Bay Area evictees were the attics and basements local churches and University of California faculty members and affiliates.²⁷ Eleanor Breed guiltily described how “my little house

²⁵ Vere Loper, “A Statement,” Berkeley Fellowship of Churches and the First Congregational Church of Berkeley to Japanese Friends and Fellow Americans, April 24, 1942, FREJA

²⁶ WRA Memorandum to project directors regarding avoiding liability for removal of Japanese property, July 25, 1942, Reel 41, Japanese American Evacuation and Resettlement Records (hereafter JAERR), BANC MSS 67/14 c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. On fire sales of evictees’ property in the days preceding eviction, see CWIRC, *Personal Justice Denied*.

²⁷ Ruth Kingman, “The Fair Play Committee and Citizen Participation”

is beautifully dressed in new blue Chinese rugs...the rugs are a loan, for the duration, from the Kajiwaras in San Francisco, and much as I admire them I have a guilty feeling for being a war profiteer.”²⁸ Berkeley mayor J. Stitt Wilson, one of only two elected officials to speak in support of Japanese Americans before the Tolan Committee, received various letters bequeathing items like prized trees, which he graciously accepted only temporarily with hopes for the swift return of its owner.²⁹ Eleanor Breed similarly received offers by local Berkeley residents to foster evacuees’ dogs, even adopt evictees’ children!³⁰

This early demonstration of collaboration between church groups and the Federal government in gathering Japanese Americans en route to internment camps revealed a rather amenable arrangement. The Christian goodwill of local Congregationalists, Baptists, Methodists, Quakers, and Presbyterians relieved the Army of providing basic needs like food and beds, plus the additional services like childcare and storage. One can imagine the cold, empty rooms of the auto agency initially planned for registration and departure, and the significance of such places becomes eminently clear. The stated goal of adding some humanity to an inhumane situation was thus well satisfied and the Army and soon the WRA found in these churches a willing ally with whom they could collaborate to accomplish their task of relocating and resettling the West Coast Japanese Americans. The willingness of churches to collaborate so closely with the government also evinced a measure of self-insulation against criticism. Wrapping up both material

²⁸ Breed, “War Comes to the Church Door,” FREJA

²⁹ Letter to J. Stitts Wilson, c. April 1942, FREJA

³⁰ Breed, “War Comes to the Church Door,” FREJA

and rhetorical support in the paradox of church support permitted these groups to make an unacceptable support of the “enemy” more palatable by assisting the government’s and community’s wishes in removing the Japanese Americans.

Just as San Francisco churchmen were able to watch and learn from the Los Angeles eviction, Bay Area church members went elsewhere to advise the eviction process. After the Berkeley CCS had emptied, Ruth Kingman went south to Fresno and had meetings with church leaders. With “almost exclusively church groups” pitching in, they were able to “set up very much the same kind of thing” as in Berkeley, including childcare and food. Although not always in church buildings they were nevertheless “in a good place,” not in barns, like Kingman supposed the Army would have chosen. Their experiences continued to travel south “partly by osmosis, partly by letter, and people from one town would go to another town and get it started,” and this process was what Kingman described as “trying to do an inhumane thing in a humane way.”³¹

³¹ Ruth Kingman, “The Fair Play Committee and Citizen Participation”



Figure 2: Christ United Methodist Church as a Civil Control Station, April 30, 1942. Note the Army "guards" in the foreground. This photograph was taken from almost the same spot for one of the 39th Annual Conference of the Pacific Japanese Mission hosted here in 1938. Source: JARDA

Eviction and Church Member Discourse

Like the whole process of eviction had been, the day of departure for assembly centers and camps was orderly and peaceful. Evictees arrived at the various departure points, laid their duffle bags and suitcases neatly in a row, and civilly queued for their departure into a wholly unknown period in their lives. There was even good humor to be found; some evictees had marked their suitcases with destinations like "Rome," "Paris," or "Bayreuth," while others cracked jokes. There was an ominous mood among the levity, however, as Eleanor Breed recorded that the street was blocked off and the evictees took "great pains not to speak Japanese." The evictees represented every stage

in life: newlyweds, babies in baskets, the elderly and infirm, all with badges around their necks with their name and family group number on it. Naturally some were crying as the buses pulled away. And in a final demonstration of church collaboration, on that last day when the paralyzed and infirm left the church for assembly centers, Breed noted “another picture to remember: the young Chinese serving the Japanese evacuees as they have to leave their American homes. Good old China!”³²

"It was a hot, still day, with a murky sky and not a breath stirring--amazingly hot for San Francisco in May," thought Josephine Duvneck, writing after the eviction had been completed in San Francisco. Departing from the Raphael Weill School that served as a CCS for San Francisco, the evictees cued outside in the shade waiting in line for their "medical inspection," little more than a naval doctor looking at their throats, "while all of curious San Francisco stood outside the courtyard and gawped." Duvneck's knack for painting the somber mood flies in stark contrast to the lightheartedness with which the evictees handled the eviction as the *Christian Century* would have had its readers believe. She wrote of a Caucasian woman standing with her two small children, each only an eighth Japanese, whose estranged father had only reemerged because he had to take his children to the camp with him because of their traces of Japanese blood. She wrote of the "old, and blind, and lame, and sick," who were the last to depart because they lived furthest from little Tokyo, including a woman with a note from her doctor saying that she

³² Breed, "War Comes to the Church Door," FREJA

was too ill to leave and should stay in San Francisco for treatment. She was put on a Greyhound bus with the others.³³

Frank and Josephine Duvneck were also on hand at First Congregational Church's Civilian Control Station, and they were not pleased at the nature of the thing they had witnessed in the preceding weeks. Josephine likened the soldiers nailing evacuation orders to telegraph poles to "Munich in 1936 when the posters appeared overnight on the walls of buildings along the street, proclaiming various restrictions for Jews. The German ones were put up by storm troopers, these by stalwart American boys in khaki uniforms. But the crowds that gaped on every street corner were not fundamentally different in their reactions."³⁴ But once the evictees had left, after some cursory thank-you notes to those who helped her efforts, Josephine, like so many other Christians who had come to the aid of Japanese Americans, turned immediately to working on resettlement efforts and visiting friends in internment camps.

Frank Duvneck naturally agreed with his wife, and took this observation to a national level. In correspondence with former education writer for *The Nation* Agnes de Lima, Duvneck wrote that in San Francisco on April 2nd, he noticed "large notices that all Japanese aliens and citizens would have to leave on the following Monday. My mind went back to similar notices that I saw posted in Germany some years ago, proclaiming restrictions against the Jews." On the day of evacuation, he noticed an American legion had worn by a Japanese American World War I veteran who was a little discouraged, but

³³ Josephine Duvneck, "Japanese Evacuation Report #4," May 28, 1942, JCC, Box 4 folder "Japanese Evacuation 1942 May"

³⁴ Josephine Duvneck, letter, April 6, 1942, in *ibid.*

not as bad as another WWI vet who had rented a room and “blown his brains out rather than be evacuated.”³⁵ Apparently de Lima sent this to her former associates at *The Nation*, for it was published almost verbatim in that magazine on May 9th.³⁶ Duveneck wrote her several other letters asking for more publication to agitate for this cause; probably her contacts led to his letter to the editor of the *New York Times*, to whom he wrote: “I think it is a colossal blunder to evacuate all Japanese aliens alike when we need their labor on our ranches and to put them into places where at best we must supply them with part of their food...I don’t think that the country should stand calmly by and let a few people here dictate a policy which is so clearly a step in the direction of just what we say we are fighting against.”³⁷

Even so, privately Frank Duveneck used much harsher, dismissive language. “I don’t wish to stress the human side of the picture,” he wrote to a friend a few weeks after witnessing his friends’ departure from Berkeley.

“This is war and all of us might have to live in this fashion. I served in the last war and I have lived with all sorts and under not too delightful conditions. But it is a very different thing for free men and women...to be sent off just because they are of a certain parentage. It strikes pretty close

³⁵ Frank Duveneck, letter to Agnes de Lima, May 9, 1942, Frank B. and Josephine Whitney Duveneck Collection (hereafter FJDC), Box 1 folder 1.8, Hoover Institution Archives. This story appears in several sources, and a gun was not the only weapon of choice. Another WWI veteran, Hideo Murata, was an Issei who lived in Pismo Beach for twenty years. Monterey County gave him an “Honorary Citizenship Certificate” for his service, a treasure to a man who undoubtedly would have sought citizenship if he was not barred from it. He, too, rented a hotel room and was found dead in the bed the next morning, apparently taking strychnine. See Galen Fisher, “Our Japanese Refugees,” *Christian Century*, April 1, 1942, 424-6.

³⁶ Frank Duveneck, letter to Agnes de Lima, May 9, 1942, FJDC

³⁷ Frank Duveneck, “Evacuation of Aliens: Forced Moving of All Japanese Regarded as Unjust,” *New York Times*, April 12, 1942

to the foundations of our democracy. Above all I am impressed with the stupidity of it all.”³⁸

In the aforementioned letter to the editor of the *New York Times*, Duveneck also acknowledged “I quite realize that this is war and that it may be necessary to evacuate all aliens and any citizens that may be deemed necessary, but this is a very different thing from taking a group just because they have a certain parentage...it is well to note that even Hitler defined a Jew as one who had, I believe, one Jewish grandparent.” Always a supporter of his Japanese American friends, like many other Christians in this period Duveneck nevertheless conceded support of the government’s claim of internment under its claim of military necessity.

While the AFSC’s inter-racial committee was planning to open eviction hostels, it published those plans in a series of Information Bulletins aimed at spreading word of the services they had prepared, offering Friends Meeting Houses as “temporary havens of refuge” and declaring that many homes had been made available for “these unfortunate people.”³⁹ Beginning in April 1942 in the midst of evacuation, the AFSC’s Southern California Branch’s Japanese-American Relations Committee published seventeen of these bulletins that continued throughout the internment and resettlement periods that shared information with its readers about its work with the internees, the communities they left, and the progress toward national resettlement. It is difficult to determine the width of its dissemination; the Quaker desire for anonymity in their work most likely precluded keeping tally of such figures. Its readership appears to be exclusively Quaker,

³⁸ Frank Duveneck, letter to Jacob Billikopf, April 25, 1942, FJDC, box 5 folder 5.3

³⁹ AFSC Southern California Branch, “Information Bulletin No. 1,” February 1942, in *ibid.*

which, numbering about 100,000 nationwide and heavily concentrated near Philadelphia, likely figured an infinitesimal proportion of Los Angeles County's population of nearly two million.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, these bulletins connected the small group of Quakers into a powerful community, with the standalone force to influence public opinion in their sphere of influence and their connection to the AFSC in Philadelphia to sway public and government opinion on a national level.

Although the Bulletins spoke for the Japanese-American Relations Committee and the AFSC more broadly, they nevertheless carry a personal style and bias that manifest in the text. There appear to be two authors of the Bulletins: The first is Gracia Booth, who served as executive secretary for the newly established Pasadena office that opened in 1940. Booth and her husband, G. Raymond Booth, came to the Southern California Branch after serving in Canada in the Toronto Meeting of the Society of Friends, where they assisted Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi Germany in the 1930s.⁴¹ The Booths came to California where Raymond served as its first executive director before moving to Cincinnati to head the WRA's new relocation office there, while Gracia first directed the newly opened Cincinnati hostel and later became executive secretary of the Citizen's Committee for Relocation of Japanese Americans.⁴² Booth's style is markedly succinct, lacking much in-depth analysis of the events and news she recounts, including

⁴⁰ U.S. Census Bureau, 1940 Census, "Religious Bodies—Denominations, by Number of Churches and by Membership: 1926 and 1936," 68

⁴¹ Alan Davies and Marilyn Nefsky, *How Silent Were the Churches? Canadian Protestantism and the Jewish Plight during the Nazi Era* (Waterloo, Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1997), 119-21

⁴² AFSC, Information Bulletin 9 (April 1, 1943) and 10 (July 1, 1943); Gordon Yoshikawa, "Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of Resettlement of Japanese Americans in Cincinnati," *The Grains of Rice* (Cincinnati Chapter, Japanese American Citizens League, February 2013)

some suggested steps forward for the Quaker readership. She gives much copy to excerpts from internees around the camps and updates on friendly work around the country, but does very little to incite activism on the behalf of her Japanese American neighbors, demonstrating a general lack of familiarity and closeness with the people for whom she was advocating. This is especially stark when compared to the Bulletins' later calls to activism on behalf of Japanese Americans.

The second author may be impossible to determine, but certainly served under the influence of G. Raymond Booth's successor, the dynamic AFSC powerhouse Esther Rhoads. When eviction was impending, AFSC sent Rhoads from Philadelphia where she was working in the Civilian Public Service section to Pasadena to work on the eviction, and when the *Christian Century* reported on AFSC's work a month later, Rhoads was almost certainly one of the "three staff members...sent to the west coast to assist in caring for evicted Japanese."⁴³ Rhoads herself may have penned parts of the Bulletins after assuming leadership of the office, but it is unlikely that she would have controlled the process entirely with a staff of fifteen and the operation growing daily, let alone writing about herself in Bulletins' Friends' updates.⁴⁴ Unlike the Booths, Rhoads had lived in Japan for the twenty years preceding World War II working as a teacher at the Friends School of Tokyo, was one of the few Americans who spoke Japanese when war broke out, and returned again afterward as soon as she was permitted; accordingly, she

⁴³ AFSC Newsletter #3, February 12, 1942, JCC, Box 3 Folder A; *Christian Century*, March 25, 1942

⁴⁴ Esther Rhoads, "My Experience with the Wartime Relocation of Japanese," in Hilary Conroy and T. Scott Miyakawa, eds., *East Across the Pacific: Historical & Sociological Studies of Japanese Immigration & Assimilation* (Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio Press, 1972), 135. For simplicity's sake, I will hereafter refer to Rhoads as the author of the second half of the Bulletins.

felt a deep connection to the plight of her Japanese-American neighbors that the Booths probably could not have felt as strongly.⁴⁵ Her passion for the interned people simply emanates from the pages, but her assimilationist rhetoric signals a change from before the war when former missionaries to Japan encouraged Japanese American Protestants to maintain close ties with Japanese culture.⁴⁶ Writing both in the 1940s and the 1970s, she praised Japanese Americans for their character and determination, but in the context of integrating into American society.⁴⁷

The broader Christian community painted the “evacuation” in a slightly different light, however, strongly mixing sympathy and outrage over the eviction with patriotism and support for the government. First Congregational pastor Vere Loper, in the same letter offering the church’s services “to make the burdens of this trying time easier for you,” wrote that the church was “happy to render this patriotic service.” He went further, saying “We rejoice in this consideration on the part of our government... We have a deep and profound love for the United States, which we are eager to express in this opportunity to work along with the government,” his hope to offer “Christian hospitality” as a way of saying “*We believe in you.*”⁴⁸ Similarly, the Executive Committee of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ wrote a letter to President Roosevelt vowing their loyalty and not questioning the grounds of military necessity on which the internment was

⁴⁵ Ibid., 127

⁴⁶ Hayashi, *For the Sake of Our Japanese Brethren*, 73

⁴⁷ Rhoads, “My Experience with the Wartime Relocation of Japanese,” 139; see also Information Bulletin 15 (November 10, 1944), which emphasizes the opportunity for “persons of Japanese ancestry to affiliate themselves with regular American churches and social activities.”

⁴⁸ Loper, “A Statement,” FREJA. Italics in original.

proceeding, but in the same letter noted that Germans and Italians were not being interned and that the whole thing “smacked of ‘race discrimination’ and totalitarianism.”⁴⁹ These churchmen’s ability to extend their support to the government yet support the Japanese Americans exemplifies the paradox of church support that continued throughout the internment period and signals a desire to shield themselves from criticism for aiding what a hostile public perceived as the enemy, a move that permitted them to operate in both spaces simultaneously.

So short-lived were the church hostels during eviction that local newspapers barely took notice; they covered the eviction, of course, but despite even a church section in some, hostels were mostly overlooked. The *Christian Century* was probably the most commonly read periodical among the church members named in this thesis; several of them wrote for it, to it, and about it to others in the letters in the archival research for this project. Not surprisingly, then, the journal reflected much of the same paradox of church support in the writing and action of these churchmen elsewhere. For instance, Vere Loper felt compelled to write to the editor to defend the Army, saying “[I have] exhausted my patience waiting for some justice to be done to the United States Army in connection with the Japanese evacuation” claiming that it was only “acting for the safety of the Japanese people as well as the protection of the United States.” As one who had firsthand experience with the Army’s interaction with the evictees, Loper cited his church’s use as a CCS, how he “did not see an unkind look or gesture on the part of any

⁴⁹ Stephanie D. Bangarth, “Religious Organizations and the ‘Relocation’ of Persons of Japanese Ancestry in North America: Evaluating Advocacy,” *American Review of Canadian Studies* 34, no. 3, (November 2009), 516 (511-540)

government or army person. The soldiers were soon warm friends of the Japanese young men and were invited by the latter to eat with them.” Yet in the next breath he quite seriously says, “I love the Japanese people as I have never loved any minority race in this country,” concluding by saying “the whole thing is horrible. And yet it must be put in the bracket with boys dying and, still worse, killing in the Orient.” If the *Christian Century* had its way, charged Loper, and the Japanese American “who was released from a camp where he was safe, is killed, know that you and not the United States Army are responsible for his death.”⁵⁰

Reporting on the progress of eviction and internment in California came almost exclusively from one man, Alan A. Hunter, whose reporting reflects much of the same unflappable optimism that marked AFSC’s Information Bulletins. He first wrote about eviction at Terminal Island in which he notes that “evacuation...is not voluntary as was that of the Israelites crossing the Red Sea. Out of it has come no Moses—as yet.” He continued by praising the Quakers saying, “The delightful thing about the Quakers is that they don’t waste their time in righteous indignation over such things,” that is, they got right to work assisting the Terminal Islanders with hostels, transportation, and storage.⁵¹ When evictees began arriving at Manzanar, Hunter reported on the “bewildered but cheerful” internees, among whom “no tears are in evidence now.” He delineated the mood among Christians and non-Christians in the camp, claiming that he had “not found

⁵⁰ Vere Loper, “Protecting Japanese-Americans,” Letter to the Editor, *Christian Century*, May 27, 1942, 700

⁵¹ Allan A. Hunter, “Exiled Japanese Suffer Greatly,” *Christian Century*, March 18, 1942, 364-5

a single Christian who is bitter. The Christian has something to hang on to.”⁵² Three weeks later he reported again how many internees “refuse to yield to bitterness,” and again in May, after citing the crowding in the “abysmal” camps, quotes a Nisei high school girl who couldn’t “think of a thing to complain about.”⁵³

Other writers in the *Christian Century* were optimistic about the future of internment and the mood of internees. One reported on a group of ministers in Santa Barbara who “issued a public statement of regret for their enforced evacuation. They did not criticize the policy of evacuation, but contented themselves with deploring its apparent necessity and wishing well to the loyal Japanese who are its victims.” The ministers noted the “tragedy of a war...which is not of your making” that “makes it necessary that we be separated for a time,” and concluded by claiming that if the communities to which they resettled would vow to maintain their friendship with the internees, “the damage done...will be measurably repaired.”⁵⁴ More than goodwill was needed of course, and the material support through hostels, job finding, transportation, and storage did more to foster community support than simple vows of friendship.

The *Christian Century* did not publish all optimism and support for the government, however. In particular, Galen Fisher, a former missionary to Japan, University of California, Berkeley political science researcher, and long-time writer for the *Christian Century*, was unrelenting in his criticism of internment, throughout the

⁵² Allan A. Hunter, “Japanese Taken to Owens Valley,” *Christian Century*, April 15, 1942, 508-9

⁵³ Allan A. Hunter, “War Exiles Hold Little Bitterness,” *Christian Century*, May 6, 1942, 608 and Hunter, “Tragedy Haunts Steps of Exiles,” *Christian Century*, May 27, 1942, 711

⁵⁴ “Ministers Express Good Will to Japanese Evacuees,” *Christian Century*, April 8, 1942, 453

period, and during eviction began his four-year assault on the government's decision to intern Japanese Americans. Arguably his most influential article from the eviction phase, "Our Japanese Refugees," assailed "the uprooting of 60,000 Americans of Japanese parentage" as "a testing by fire" for white Americans about "devotion of the letter and the spirit of the federal Constitution...For white Christians, it is a challenge to demonstrate that Christian brotherhood transcends blood and skin color." He allows the Army some sympathy for "their grievous losses at Pearl Harbor" but invoking the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments, says it "had no right in law to order the compulsory evacuation of 60,000 American citizens, *on the basis of their racial character*, without any pretense of judicial hearings [emphasis in original]." As elsewhere, however, he is sympathetic to white church members for their slow reaction to the internment order: "it is also true that the mass of intelligent people in the churches and outside kept still, not because they favored indiscriminate evacuation, but apparently because they could hardly conceive that the authorities would adopt it."⁵⁵ Fisher would continue writing throughout the internment and resettlement phases, and although he would maintain his criticism of internment on Constitutional grounds, his rhetoric of support for Japanese Americans would shift, like others, to assimilation.

Yet after eighteen months of reporting and opining on the eviction and internment, one brief letter to the editor of the *Christian Century* from an internee and his Caucasian wife interned with their family in the Gila River camp in Arizona most closely depicts what I am arguing about the paradox of church support in this period. The couple

⁵⁵ Galen Fisher, "Our Japanese Refugees," *Christian Century*, April 1, 1942, 424

wrote in response to an earlier editorial which was "unclear concerning the ethics and efficacy of the evacuation of Japanese from the Pacific coast," on the one hand upholding the right of the government "to deprive citizens of their liberty (and indirectly of a large proportion of their property) on the grounds that they are unpopular and might therefore be harmed," and on the other hand admitting that this deprivation had failed to solve the problem and instead resulted in further persecution. The real solution, they contended, was to provide financial restitution and restore constitutional rights of citizens including return to their homes.⁵⁶ That this perspective had to come from the pen of an interned Christian couple in Arizona serves as a significant indicator that white church members were quite unaware of how their support for both the government and the internees presented a paradox that was not then but is now becoming clear.

Impact of Church Support during Eviction

The support church groups offered during eviction did not go unnoticed either contemporarily or in the internees' memories. A month following the Terminal Island eviction one evictee wrote, "among all these associations of men who scorn our presence we have found one true friend in the Christian church—an institution which, all good Americans will agree, represents the highest and the best in the American civilization." To him, church support was most punctuated by their help sending "truck after truck to

⁵⁶ Royden and Charlotte Susu-Mago, Letter to the Editor, *Christian Century* August 11, 1943, 920

cart away what belongings we were able to save.”⁵⁷ Clearly California Christians’ conflation of Christian charity and Americanism was not the only thing conferred on “these unfortunate people.” Remembering the names of those who lent a helping hand in this period, another said, “We will never forget the assistance and kindness shown us by their members such as Ms. Esther Rhoades [*sic*], Mr. & Mrs. Herbert Nicholson, David Thurston Griggs and many others.”⁵⁸ Another paid tribute by saying, “They just told us to get out. Where are you gonna get out to? So, you know, if it wasn't for the Quakers and the church groups that provided the trucks and transportation and a place to stay like the hostel in Los Angeles we'd have nowhere to go.”⁵⁹

Even before Forsythe Hostel closed in June 1942, church members were already agitating for release from the internment camps. In Northern California, AFSC had partnered with YMCA workers to form the Student Relocation Council that became a massive success. No sooner had the doors closed than other church groups were working to smooth community sentiment in the East and even in California, even if after eviction church members and secular supporters of Japanese Americans divided over how soon they should be permitted to return. Robert Inglis, pastor of Plymouth Congregational in Oakland journeyed to Kansas in May 1942 to survey the Midwest for its sentiment on receiving Japanese American resettlers and called on churches there to change the

⁵⁷ Shigeo Tanage, “Church Lends Aid,” an open letter by a churchman, c. April 1, 1942, JCC, Box 3 folder C

⁵⁸ Min Hara, an oral interview conducted on July 31, 1990, *Terminal Island Life History Project*, Japanese American National Museum, Los Angeles, California

⁵⁹ Mas Tanibata, in *ibid.*

mood.⁶⁰ And Galen Fisher likewise called on churches in the “interior states” to find work for Japanese Christians in their own communities and to assure those resettlers of “find and friendly treatment.”⁶¹

By April 13, 1942, all of the Southern California AFSC’s hostels were empty, their residents put on trains to so-called assembly centers and internment camps. Esther Rhoads recorded that with the help of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, all forty-eight Forsythe Hostel and all Blue Hills Hostel residents had gotten on the train on April 4th, and Norwalk Hostel closed after its residents left on April 13th. The WRA had no apparent plans to transport the evictees to the train station, and one wonders how else they would have gotten there, much less where they would have lived or what they would have eaten, if it were not for church members’ material support through hostels during this crisis period.⁶² Many of these same church members continued supporting Japanese Americans while in the camps and simultaneously preparing for their arrival in destinations east and back home in California, whereupon hostels would once again blunt the next crisis period of resettlement.

⁶⁰ Stanley Armstrong Hunter, “West Coast Exile Half Completed,” *Christian Century*, May 20, 1942

⁶¹ Galen Fisher, “Our Japanese Refugees”

⁶² Esther Rhoads, open letter to Friends, April 13, 1942, JCC, Box 3 folder C

Chapter 2: Internment

“I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me.” Matthew 25:36 (NLT)

As early as June 1942 the War Relocation Authority began considering releasing internees for seasonal agricultural work outside the camps, but acknowledged that it “did not seem to us to be enough...As we saw the problem, a program which would permit permanent relocation was equally as important as the maintenance of the camps.”¹ Its favored term for this priority was “dispersion” or “dispersal,” terms that it used both in conjunction with and representative of the assimilation of Japanese Americans into mainstream society. Indeed, dispersal, rather carelessly continuing the notion that the “evacuation” was for the safety of Japanese Americans and therefore for their benefit, was also presented as “healthy for the nation and for the Nisei,” as none other than WRA director Dillon Meyer asserted.² Assimilation through dispersed resettlement therefore provided the right fit into the WRA’s role as intermediary between the binary of “unassimilated prewar ethnic communities” and “postwar complete assimilation.”³ The “Little Toykos” that were such a cause for concern were particular targets for dissolution under dispersal, and the WRA beat this drum unwaveringly despite the contradiction of having, in effect, a Little Tokyo at every one of its camps.

¹ WRA, *The Relocation Program*, 86

² WRA, *People in Motion*, 31

³ Orin Starn, “Engineering Internment: Anthropologists and the War Relocation Authority,” *American Ethnologist* 13, no. 4 (November 1986), 714

Church groups, meanwhile, adopted wholesale this plan of dispersal and assimilation. They extended the amenable collaboration with the Army to the WRA's efforts, going far beyond the basic motivation of providing Christian charity by functioning as an auxiliary of the WRA for assimilation agenda. They maintained their support of the government throughout the internment period but in this phase their support shifted from the Army to the WRA and increased its praise of the latter. They also maintained the continuity of material support in this phase. Without evictees to house and feed, California church members turned toward assisting Japanese Americans in the camps and advocating for their return. They formed a pattern of visiting internees in the camps and reporting their experiences to their congregations and to a general readership of newspapers and journals. Although the West Coast hostels had closed for want of residents, as soon as resettlement to eastern cities opened to internees, church groups opened hostels to house resettlers even though such places effectively created the Little Tokyos they had vowed to dissolve. These certain church members thus continued and even deepened the paradox of church support in this phase, for they expressed support for the return of Japanese Americans but only on the WRA's terms of dispersal and assimilation.

Ministry in the Internment Camps

As soon as evictees arrived in the camps, church members continued to offer material support. Having coordinated storage for their possessions, the Quakers took the lead in delivering some of these stored goods as the WRA permitted. Quaker missionary-

turned-truck driver Herbert Nicholson, on whom an internee had bequeathed a “stake truck,” claimed he drove 50,000 miles during the war, delivering internees’ goods to Manzanar in California and Poston and Gila River in Arizona. Permitted extra petrol from WRA and afforded even more as a preacher, he delivered trunks, beds, Christmas presents, and even pets to these camps in the Southwest. Crediting the “neatly marked” storage areas in the Pasadena Japanese Church, Nicholson received help loading and driving from conscientious objectors who volunteered their time off from nearby CPS camps.⁴ The *Christian Century* reported on his “free trucking service,” hauling “everything from pianos to canary birds...he is entrusted with keys to safety deposit vaults and is sometimes authorized to sign valuable papers.”⁵ With his wife Madeline, Nicholson dedicated his wartime existence to uplifting internees. In the words of a grateful internee, they “ate in our mess halls, slept in our barracks, and with the sensitivity of saints, avoided identity with the privileged status of our overseers.”⁶

Through ministry in the camps the conflation of Christianity and Americanism comes rushing to the surface, suggesting the desire to perform one’s Christian duties while remaining patriotic and thus insulated from criticism of “helping the enemy.” One unique piece of evidence comes from Charlotte Susu-Mago, the white former missionary to Yokohama who was interned with her Hawaiian-born Nisei husband.⁷ Writing to the

⁴ Herbert Nicholson, *Treasures in Earthen Vessels* (Whittier, CA: Penn Lithographies, 1974), 80-1. Nicholson even entitled this chapter in his autobiography “Truck Driver.”

⁵ Kirby Page, “Empty the Relocation Centers!” *Christian Century*, June 16, 1943, 715-6

⁶ Togo Tanaka, introduction to *Treasures.*, n.p.

⁷ Regarding white women wedded to Japanese American men, see Eunhye Kwon, “Interracial Marriages among Asian Americans in the U.S. West, 1880-1954,” Ph.D. diss, University of Florida, 2011, 157

Methodist Protestant Mission Board under which she had served in Japan, her skit of a missionary club meeting for a Christmas project in the relocation centers suggests that the Christmas presents it planned to send to the camps “might carry the Christian message to people in the Japanese camps.” She proposed hymns to sing in the skit/meeting such as “In Christ There Is No East or West” and “Father of All, from Land and Sea,” capped off by children carrying in the American and Christian flags, saying the pledge to both interspersed with readings of letters from gift recipients.⁸ Susu-Mago had also written a play that the periodical *Methodist Woman* published in April 1943 that “urged white Methodist families to assist in resettling Japanese Americans in their communities as ‘part of the church’s missionary work.’”⁹ There are many layers of significance here, but the simplest is this white churchwoman’s push for converts that prompted her to mix Christian and American praxis and language.

As these skits suggest, for how little proselytizing the church groups did while they ran the hostels and provided other assistance during the eviction phase, during internment convert-seeking was precisely the goal of some white church members, Japanese American Christians, and even the WRA. Again finding willing partners in church groups, WRA thoroughly endorsed the Americanizing potential of mass Christian evangelism in the camps. Large-scale revivals that made young Kibei Buddhists “uncomfortable” had the express dual purpose of Christianizing—and thereby Americanizing—the internees, which gave them “the best hope of adaptation to life in the

⁸ Charlotte Douglass Susu-Mago, “Suggestions for a Program Based on the Christmas Project for Relocation Centers,” n.d., Box 7, Folder 7c, JARC

⁹ John Howard, *Concentration Camps on the Home Front: Japanese Americans in the House of Jim Crow* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 169-70

postwar United States.” Although Christianizing was but one plank of church members’ platform as they assisted the WRA’s assimilation agenda, early departures from the camps required WRA certification of their American-ness, and there was little better way of demonstrating “one of the most significant credentials of U.S. belongingness: Christian faith.”¹⁰

The close association in the minds of church members during internment of democratic and Christian principles also comes through in their advocacy for closing the camps and resettling their residents, even if not immediately to the West Coast. As one editorialist in the *Christian Century* opined, “Our churches must lead by example. Democracy as a way of life is precious enough to be practiced. And Christianity is far more effective when followed with fidelity.” Immediately after the West Coast had been cleared of Japanese Americans, another Christian leader made some suggestions for their future, including “continued support by the denominations of their Japanese churches, and a greater absorption of Japanese Christians into American churches” and “rapid Americanization of the Japanese aliens now living in the centers” to include counseling them on their adjustment to American life.¹¹ Never mind that two-thirds of the internees were American-born, to these church leaders the ease with which they mixed Christian and democratic language signals an operating assumption that their Christian faith and the concomitant duty to help those in need in no way conflicted with their simultaneous support of the government that was prosecuting the internment.

¹⁰ Ibid., 169-71

¹¹ George Gleason, “The Japanese on the Pacific Coast: A Factual Study of Events, December 7, 1941 to September 2, 1942 with Suggestions for the Future,” Committee for Church and Community Cooperation, September 1942, Box 8 Folder 8d part II, JARC

Opening the Camps for Resettlement and Eastern Hostels

The WRA always intended the internment camps to be transitional settlements, and as early as May 1942, even before the last of the evictees had been removed from the West Coast, Southern California's AFSC petitioned then-WRA director Milton Eisenhower for authority to direct the relocation of Japanese college students to inland schools, accompanied by a letter of protest against mass evacuation of the Japanese. Eisenhower endorsed the idea mandating only that the government make *individual* examinations and certifications (emphasis in the original) before release.¹² Student resettlement also served the WRA's dispersal plan well, since the students were expected to be "ambassadors of goodwill" at their new universities to foment a positive community sentiment for when other Japanese Americans arrived.¹³ Thus the National Japanese American Student Relocation Council was born, and immediately the students, with others on seasonal and indefinite leaves, were at first a trickle that gave way to a steady stream by the end of 1942, and became a flood by late 1944 that continued until the last camp closed in March 1946.¹⁴

The Student Resettlement Program had a history predating AFSC's involvement, however. Harry Kingman, director of University of California, Berkeley's Stiles Hall

¹² Japanese American Relations Committee, Pacific Coast Branch, American Friends Service Committee, "Information Bulletin Number 1," February 1942 (Calisphere)

¹³ Allan Austin, *From Concentration Camp to Campus: Japanese American Students and World War II* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 2-3

¹⁴ War Relocation Authority, *The Relocation Program* (Washington: GPO, 1946), 18, 101

YMCA, met with a group of friends on March 21, 1942 to devise a plan to permit California college students to continue their studies despite the eviction and internment. They quickly secured five hundred dollars from the regional “Y” and hired an executive secretary. They chose Quaker Joseph Conard, whose papers comprise a significant portion of this project’s research base. Because the initial eviction order permitted Japanese Americans to simply move out of military area no. 1, the nascent Student Relocation Council immediately placed seventy-five students to other campuses, and 4,000 more followed suit over the next two years. It first moved its offices to AFSC in San Francisco and when it became a national program it moved to AFSC headquarters in Philadelphia with that organization taking primary responsibility.¹⁵ Initiated and directed by two Christian organizations—YMCA and AFSC—student resettlement was a massive success both by helping internees begin or continue university educations and by sending ambassadors into communities to prepare the way for the dispersal that began soon after.

With student resettlement underway, the WRA established a policy for indefinite leave from the camps as early as July 20, 1942. Although before October 1942 only 273 internees, including students, resettled outside the camps, by the end of 1942, 866 had left and by the end of 1944, almost 30,000 had permanently resettled.¹⁶ The Midwest and East were thus opened for resettlement, and once again church hostels filled the need for housing and the additional WRA requirement of a contact on the “outside” for internees moving out of the camps. Church hostels sprang up in many Midwestern cities including

¹⁵ Harry Kingman, “Citizenship in a Democracy,” an oral interview conducted by Rosemary Levenson in 1971-2, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1973

¹⁶ WRA, *The Relocation Program*, 18

Cleveland, Dayton, Cincinnati, Kansas City, Chicago, Des Moines, and St. Paul, and in Eastern ones including New York, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C.¹⁷

What is significant in these hostels here is the rhetoric their directors used regarding assimilation and the model they set for California church members to follow when the West Coast reopened for resettlement. Although in California church groups pioneered hostels in support of Japanese Americans during eviction, resettlement hostels in cities outside the West Coast provided much-needed temporary housing for resettlers and carried the additional burden of helping to find jobs for and promote assimilation and dispersal among Japanese Americans, and so set a pattern, especially in Chicago and New York, that California's hostels would follow when they reopened in 1945.

The Quakers were first to open a hostel in the east, in Chicago in February 1943. Its pamphlet first answered the question, "What is a hostel? The hostel is an enlarged home where one shares in the chores, the board and good fellowship of a dozen or more other evacuees until more permanent housing can be secured. It is a temporary home for evacuees getting a new start; and for the newcomer it is a friendly introduction to a strange city." Offering "a comfortably furnished building, with six bedrooms, two bathrooms, a large parlor, two dining rooms, kitchen and laundry room, it is now servicing a steady stream of hopeful men and women, young and old, coming out of all the centers." It touted its services for evacuees including job placement, "part of the full-

¹⁷ See, for example, Thomas Linehan, "Japanese American Resettlement in Cleveland during and after World War II," *Journal of Urban History* 20, no.1 (November 1993), 54-80, or Paul Dankovich, "The Japanese American Resettlement Program of Dayton, Ohio: As Administered by the Church Federation of Dayton and Montgomery County, 1943-1946," M.A. thesis, Wright State University, 2012.

time program of the office staff,” and offered a “thorough introduction to the educational, cultural, religious and social life of the neighborhood.”¹⁸

However, these “introductions” were mostly code for the assimilation program these church members, in coordination with WRA, had planned. Even before arriving at the hostel, Chicago’s Brethren Hostel director Ralph Smeltzer wrote to Gila River’s camp administrators some “suggestions to hostel travelers,” including not doing “anything that will make you conspicuous,” and saying “American citizen” in response to questions of nationality.¹⁹ The Brethren Hostel in Chicago even held “Resettler Discussion Groups” that answered questions regarding adjusting the resettler’s personal life to the new community. The sample questions included “do I fear to meet *hakujins* [whites]?” “Am I bitter against the government?” “How should I dress for applying?” And most tellingly about the assimilation agenda, “do I realize that I am no longer in a relocation center where I can speak loudly, act cocky, and wear strange clothes?”²⁰

Among themselves, church members used less coded language regarding assimilation. The AFSC discussed “the problem of assimilation...at some length” and found an “opportunity in the city of Chicago to prevent the formation of a 'Little Tokio' [*sic*] or a segregated area. American-Japanese coming into the city are eager to find a place in the normal community life. Organizations and churches need to reach out to

¹⁸ “Relocation Hostel,” AFSC, 1942, Reel 82, Frame 122, JAERR

¹⁹ Memo, Ralph Smeltzer to William Huso, et. al., March 26, 1943, Reel 82 Frame 202, JAERR

²⁰ “Resettler group discussion no. 1: How can I adjust my personal life to this new community,” May 9, 1943, Reel 82 Frame 199, JAERR

these newcomers and urge that they participate in the group life of the city.”²¹ George Rundquist of the Committee on Relocation of Japanese Americans (CRJA) also encouraged church members to develop “a sound program to prevent the formation of a “little Tokyo” or segregated district in your community,” assigning “responsibility for evacuee integration to the churches, the YMCA, and the YWCA in the particular area. They would do this by not planning “large functions for the benefit exclusively of the Japanese Americans... Urge them to participate in the group life of the community” like folk dancing, hobby groups, art and music, or other outlets “for interests outside the job.” He goes even further, concluding that “the problems of maladjustment can best be handled by a person familiar with good standards in the field of social work,” that is, failure for a resettler to assimilate is a social problem that needs remediation.²²

These church groups, particularly Brethren and AFSC workers, pushed this policy on hostel residents in the Midwest and East. However, although there are a few examples of resettlers holding to the letter of the law by not talking in public or dressing “conspicuously,” the spirit of the law was flagrantly disregarded. Historian Ellen Wu finds that resettlers’ more pressing concerns of housing, jobs, and making friends, to say nothing of their hesitance to interact with whites, trumped any concern for assimilating, and this pattern, like the pattern of church hostels as assimilation centers in their

²¹ AFSC Advisory Committee for Evacuees, minutes of meeting May 20, 1943 at YMCA Chicago, Reel 82 Frame 116, JAERR

²² George Rundquist, “Community Preparation for Resettlement of Japanese Americans,” n.d., Reel 81 Frame 407, JAERR; George Rundquist, “Planning Resettlement of Japanese Americans,” Committee for Resettlement of Japanese Americans, July 1943, Frame 443, *ibid.*

directors' eyes, carried on into California's hostels beginning in 1945.²³ Indeed, even the WRA later noted that beginning with the first all-Nisei dance in Chicago in 1943, racially homogeneous social events at hostels "caused an increasing disregard" of the admonition "not to appear publicly in groups of more than three." It also acknowledged that the pressure for dispersal from these white church members "was less severe."²⁴ So although church hostels and support toed the WRA's party line of assimilation and dispersal, their goals as hostel operators complicated their support for that agenda.

Ralph Smeltzer, writing just before he moved to New York to open another Brethren Hostel in May 1944, offered some recommendations to hostel directors, and although it is unlikely any church leaders on the West Coast read them, they nevertheless prove prescient tips that the hostels there followed anyhow. He recommended sending information about the hostels to the camps including many pictures since many in the camps were "inadequately informed" about what the hostel did, offering firsthand stories from hostellers, preparing posters and display material, and visiting some of the camps. Displaying the magnanimity of spirit that marked much of the church support in this period, he also recommended giving "special consideration and encouragement to the Buddhists. They especially need our interest and help in relocating. Correspond with the Buddhist leaders in the centers. Urge them to share equally in the hostel program, both at

²³ Some very good examples of both adhering to and ignoring the assimilation plan in Chicago are in Ellen Wu, "Race and Asian American Citizenship from World War II to the Movement, Volume One," Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 2006, 297-306.

²⁴ *People in Motion*, 237

the centers and in the hostel.”²⁵ This also evinced an interfaith cooperation that had surfaced during eviction in California but one that was eclipsed by the push for assimilation there during resettlement.

But no matter how much directors prepared their hostels, in Eastern cities they were not always well received, offering a bleak foreshadowing of what was to be expected when West Coast hostels reopened. Most notable was New York’s Brethren Hostel directed by Ralph and Mary Smeltzer, modeled after operating hostels in Chicago (one of which they had opened and directed), Cleveland, Des Moines, and elsewhere. The planned hostel in Brooklyn was immediately protested loudly by Mayor La Guardia who worried that this paltry number of resettlers would “form their own colony, creating serious danger of violent clashes with members of other racial colonies in the city,” and even by Rep. John Costello of California, whose concern was over 800 resettlers being “within the shadow of the Brooklyn Navy Yard.”²⁶ Even the board of trustees of the fraternity from which the hostel rented its space denied a lease had been signed for that purpose.²⁷ The criticism was countered with support, however, as a Yale professor wrote to the editor of the *New York Times* objecting to calling the resettlers simply “Japanese” and therefore conflating them with the enemy, and from a local minister lambasting the “disgraceful furore [*sic*]” over the hostel’s opening.²⁸ And unlike Chicago’s hostels,

²⁵ Ralph Smeltzer, “Report #10: Recommendations to Hostel Directors,” January 6, 1944, Reel 82 Frame 191, JAERR

²⁶ “Mayor Protests Japanese in East,” *New York Times*, April 27, 1944; *ibid.*, May 6, 1944

²⁷ “Hostel for Japanese in Kings Protested,” *New York Times*, April 25, 1944

²⁸ “Narrowness is Scorned,” summary of a sermon by John Paul Jones of Brooklyn Union Church, *New York Times*, May 15, 1944

which were met with comparatively little resistance, the Brooklyn hostel protest story landed on the pages of California's newspapers, which reported that police had guarded the first three residents of the hostel, just as California police would do in that state's hotly contested hostels.²⁹

Toward Advocacy for Resettlement to the West Coast

Just as they had been generally unwilling to openly confront the government on the issue of eviction and internment, in 1943 churches were slow to begin advocating for return to the West Coast. It is possible they simply did not think it was possible given the public sentiment that prevailed, but their language suggests more strongly that they simply did not want to confront the issue. In late 1943 the Church Federation of Los Angeles issued a statement, wherein, after extolling the virtues of Japanese loyalty and citizenship, it said "the question of the location whether in California or elsewhere of the American-Japanese should be set aside until war is over and tempers have cooled. It is quite possible that the question will resolve itself." Knowing how slowly the Allies were progressing in the Pacific in 1943, this is an especially strong statement in favor of kicking the can down the road some more. The Federation continued with recommendations to its parishes including, in order, to communicate to the government their support in any manner if it decided to return internees to the West Coast, to prepare

²⁹ "Brooklyn Police Guard Jap Trio," *Oakland Tribune*, May 11, 1944

the hearts and minds of the public to give favorable support, and lastly to be concerned with racial equality and fairness.³⁰

Yet even the most subdued support for the return of Japanese Americans was met with wildly venomous language among the “Japanese-baiters” in late 1942 and throughout most of 1943. Pamphlets abounded circulating fears of what ultimately amounted to a Japanese takeover of the United States. One pamphleteer published “something to think about” that blandly stated “in time of war...the innocent must necessarily suffer,” projecting the atrocities of the Japanese military onto Japanese Americans. The return of evictees to California would be “a most unfair situation for our own people...They would soon obtain definite control of our nurseries, truck farming, and distributing markets, as well as our fisheries, and we would be compelled to face a situation in which our own people would be forced to work under them.”³¹ Another pamphleteer directly assailed church leaders for opposing eviction “lest a grave injustice be committed and racial hatred be engendered” even though the government had “found ample and imperative reason for its drastic action.” Ignoring the effects on the 1924 Asian Exclusion Act on Issei’s sentiments about assimilating, he quotes Buddhist priests saying that Japanese Americans had become more Japanese before the war. Also ignoring its conciliatory approach to internment, this author assailed the JACL as a “principal front organization for the Japanese in America by ‘selling the Japanese here,’”

³⁰ Church Federation of Los Angeles, *Statements*, October 5, 1943, Box 8, Folder 8c, Japanese American Relocation Collection, Special Collection Department, Occidental College Library, Occidental College (hereafter JARC)

³¹ Julia Ellsworth Ford, “Something to Think About,” July 7, 1942, Box 7, Folder 7b, JARC. Ford even published a supplement to the this pamphlet three months later, suggesting her message was well received so soon after eviction.

and continues to wildly predict Japan's plans for bacterial warfare including bubonic plague and typhoid, in which the Japanese Americans were ostensibly complicit.³²

Indeed, some of the internees' greatest supporters cautioned *against* resettlement to California in 1943 and early 1944. The Fair Play Committee was "specifically not in favor" of return to the West Coast but advocated for resettlement elsewhere to meet manpower shortages and for minority rights and those of citizens.³³ By summer of 1944, however, the sentiment was changing if still mixed. Aggravating the housing situation was a concern of some like Galen Fisher, who nevertheless remained in favor of reopening the West Coast, citing WDC's own admission that the danger of Japanese sabotage there had passed.³⁴ While groups like the Los Angeles CIO Council were content with leaving resettlement to California as "purely a military matter," the Friends of the American Way, composed of William Carr and Esther Rhoads among others, claimed that resettlement was delayed not because of military reasons but because of "strong California pressures and threats."³⁵ And even as late as September 1944 the Home Mission Council's Committee on Resettlement of Japanese Americans denounced protective custody but called for "increased co-operation with the War Relocation Authority to accelerate the program of resettlement in unrestricted areas."³⁶

³² John Lechner, "Playing with Dynamite," c. August 1942, in *ibid*

³³ Pacific Coast Committee on American Principles and Fair Play, June 15, 1943, Box 7 Folder 7d, JARC

³⁴ Galen Fisher, "Unsnarling the Nisei Triangle," *Christian Century*, September 8, 1944, 1288

³⁵ "Resolution on the Return of American Citizens and Resident Aliens of Japanese Ancestry to the West Coast," Los Angeles CIO Council, January 5, 1945, Box 7 Folder 7B, JARC; Letter, Friends of the American Way, c. May 1944, in *ibid*.

³⁶ CRJA, *Resettlement Bulletin* 2, no. 7, September 1944, Box 1 Folder A, JCP

The Southern California AFSC similarly supported return, and began incorporating assimilationist rhetoric that had punctuated resettlement in the East. As others had, its Information Bulletins supported the WRA's efforts to break up the "Little Tokyos" that so frightened urban Americans nationwide. Esther Rhoads wrote "It is deeply heartening" that the WRA would break down the Japanese American's prewar isolation, a "long-range benefit to the country."³⁷ When the Army called for Nisei volunteers, AFSC's Information Bulletins repeatedly considered such service an "opportunity" to prove their loyalty, however incongruous service to the nation seemed while their families remained interned.³⁸

The Bulletins also mixed the AFSC's critique of internment with support of the government, usually expressed in an unflagging optimism that at best tests the limits of reality and at worst ignores and dismisses the harsh realities of internment. Minor factual errors notwithstanding, the first example over-optimism occurs in discourses about the assembly centers and camps. Countless authors have detailed the unmodified horse stalls, tar paper barracks, and communal toilets that "greeted" Japanese Americans at the assembly centers, but despite personal visits to these places, these authors nevertheless balance the bad with a healthy dose of good; for instance, Booth mentions the "breath-takingly [*sic*] magnificent view" at Manzanar, and glowingly reviews the facilities there as though the internees were improving their lot. She even makes the astonishingly imperceptive remark that "there was no apparent bitterness in their grief at leaving their

³⁷ AFSC, Information Bulletin 14, August 1, 1944

³⁸ AFSC, Information Bulletin 13, April 10, 1944

homes and the land they love.”³⁹ Knowing her connection to the WRA through her husband, it is no surprise that Booth would give such an endorsement for the camps, just as she supported its assimilationist push during resettlement.

It is also unsurprising, therefore, that the Bulletins take on a conciliatory tone toward the WRA and other government officials involved in internment and resettlement. Some students of internment have criticized the AFSC and the Christian church community more broadly for failing to more strongly confront the government’s undemocratic decision to relocate,⁴⁰ but in the Pasadena branch office Booth and Rhoads ably distinguish the War Department’s commands from the WRA’s actions, the latter of which both appropriately perceive as a liberally-led, fair-minded bureaucracy within the constraints placed on it from higher authorities. In April 1942, in the midst of evacuation, Booth reported the Friends’ gratefulness to Milton Eisenhower for “sincerely trying to do the best he can with the job at hand, difficult beyond expression, at the best.”⁴¹ Rhoads, too, heaps praise on the WRA for providing “kindliness and intelligent direction in the details of the [segregation] program,” despite the “many ironic inconsistencies” like asking for interned volunteers for Army service (or drafting them soon after) even while their “citizen’s rights [were] disregarded.”⁴² Indeed, AFSC

³⁹ AFSC, Information Bulletin 3 (April 1, 1942)

⁴⁰ See, for instance, Sandra Taylor, “Fellow-Feelers with the Afflicted: The Christian Churches and the Relocation of Japanese Americans in World War II,” or Floyd Schmoe, “Seattle’s Peace Churches during Relocation” in Roger Daniels, ed., *Japanese Americans from Relocation to Redress* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991) or Charles Lord, “The Response of the Historic Peace Churches to the Internment of the Japanese Americans during World War II”

⁴¹ AFSC, Information Bulletin 3 (April 1, 1942)

⁴² AFSC, Information Bulletin 11 (October 15, 1943)

perceived nonmilitary federal officials as allies in the fight against internment and the effort toward resettlement. Rhoads cites the “forces of intelligent liberalism” at work to fight the racial propaganda against resettlement, and that “among high officials...we have a large degree of fair-mindedness and a sincere desire to have the Japanese-Americans returned to normal productive life as soon as public sentiment will permit.”⁴³

The internees’ letters excerpted for the Bulletins obscure their disappointment with optimism. Despite dysentery, hot water and soap shortages, and unrelenting dust in the “breathtakingly” beautiful Manzanar, Booth reports receiving many “uncomplaining and cheerful” letters from the internees there.⁴⁴ Her editing includes more excerpts from internees in Gila River in Arizona and Minidoka in Idaho that rave about the food, staff, and houses with only casual mention of the dust, heat, and lack of privacy that marked the early days of internment in the newly constructed camps. These kinds of letters are notably absent from Rhoads’ Bulletins, which instead prefer assimilation discourses like a sympathetic editorial from Powell, Wyoming welcoming the internees to their community yet reminding them that they were “following the oldtimers of the valley in an already blazed trail.”⁴⁵

The Bulletins also reveal a largely imagined friendship with the Japanese Americans. The partnerships with the Japanese Union Church and other Japanese Protestant denominations notwithstanding, the Quaker call to Christian service was

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ AFSC, Information Bulletin 4 (April 27, 1942)

⁴⁵ This quote appeared in both Information Bulletins 8 and 9 to emphasize the steadily growing acceptance of Japanese Americans in communities throughout the West.

universal and not exclusive to members of their own denomination. As there were only 543 Japanese American Quakers among the internees, ministering to them alone would have been neither practical nor proper.⁴⁶ The AFSC nevertheless portrayed itself as “friends” of the internees, using language explicitly describing the relationship as such.⁴⁷ From the evacuation of Terminal Island where Friends helped the evacuees by opening hostels and providing transportation and storage of household goods, they continued to ease the suffering during internment by exhorting Bulletin readers to visit the camps, become pen pals, sponsor a relocating internee, or send Christmas presents and books or other educational material to ease the boredom and continue their educations. This “friendship” was probably very unidirectional, for although internees continued to call on Quaker support throughout the internment period, the Japanese Americans performed more as consumers of services than friends to those offering them.

Quaker discourses stressing the need for Christian charity in this crisis are a recurring theme in the Bulletins. Whatever the author, they contain subtle reminders to the readers to fulfill the philanthropic priorities of the AFSC. Gracia Booth had a particular talent for garnering sympathy among her readership through moving stories like that of a Japanese mother who expressed her grief to the mothers of captured American soldiers on Guam and Wake Island at the hands of people of her own race, or of a gray-haired Japanese grandmother who had burned her only picture of her father—because he was wearing an Imperial Army uniform—and was leaving her normal life

⁴⁶ War Relocation Authority, *The Evacuated People*, 79

⁴⁷ AFSC, Information Bulletin 13, April 10, 1944

behind.⁴⁸ Stories like these undoubtedly sought to rally support for the internees, and particularly for their resettlement, the torch of which Esther Rhoads took up with vigor in the second half of the Bulletins in late 1942. Although Booth occasionally appealed to the Christian mandate to help the needy, Rhoads weaved these mandates into every Bulletin. From “kindly gestures” like delivering Christmas presents to interned children to expressing their “own faith in the Light which shineth in the darkness” and other religious language, Rhoads at times equated these Christian principles to democratic ones, at once calling on Quakers to fulfill their moral and patriotic duties.⁴⁹ She was also not bashful about soliciting specific and general pecuniary needs to fund resettlement activity, especially student relocation.

Gracia Booth, former secretary of AFSC’s Southern California branch and author of several of that organization’s Information Bulletins, now living in Cincinnati as Assistant Relocation Officer after a brief stint as director of that city’s hostel, wrote a pamphlet in November 1944 revealing not only the church’s work to date on behalf of their Japanese American neighbors and friends, but also the kind of language that would mark church groups’ contributions to resettlement in the postwar years. “Church women all up and down the coast rallied around their darker-skinned neighbors, eager to help them through this trying experience in every way possible,” she wrote to church women everywhere, adding to this racialized description of her Japanese American neighbors and residents the multi-faith and multi-ethnic contributions from Jewish and Catholic groups as well as YWCAs, PTAs, black and Mexican women, and women from college,

⁴⁸ AFSC, Information Bulletin 3, April 1, 1942; Information Bulletin 4, April 27, 1942

⁴⁹ AFSC, Information Bulletin 14, August 1, 1944

university, and businesswomen's clubs. She admonished her female readers to exercise their "Christian privilege to help them in every possible way," including offering employment, finding housing, meeting resettlers at the train, inviting them to one's home, even adopting a "war wife."⁵⁰

She also suggested opening a hostel. "A hostel provides a temporary home until the resettler has found employment and a permanent residence" through which churchwomen could acquaint themselves with people at established hostels, boost morale by their interest, and offer advice. Alternatively, Booth suggested establishing "cooperatively run dormitories for unattached young people whose parents may still be in camp," especially for young girls in large cities where private housing was difficult to find and "loneliness after work hours [is] a grave and serious problem."⁵¹ This latter suggestion was not heeded; eastern hostels, however, may have been *de facto* singles' dormitory in the early stages of resettlement, as primarily young, single Nisei were the first to resettle eastward through Student Resettlement or other employment.⁵²

This push for community building among resettlers *within* the broader white community was concomitant with the dispersal and assimilation agenda pushed by the WRA and adopted by the churches in their willing support of the government. Some of it contradictory, these hostels and church groups nevertheless discouraged resettlers from

⁵⁰ Gracia Booth, "How Can We Help Japanese American Evacuees? Suggestions for Church Women," Committee on Resettlement of Japanese Americans: November 1944, JCC, Box 2 folder A

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Indeed, by January 1945 when the West Coast re-opened, only one in six Nisei had left the camps. See Donna Nagata, *Legacy of Injustice: Examining the Cross-Generational Impact of the Japanese American Internment* (New York: Plenum Press, 1993), 14; CRJA, *Resettlement Bulletin* volume 1, number 6, October 1943, Occidental College Japanese American Relocation (hereafter OCJAR), <http://callimachus.org/cdm/landingpage/collection/p4004coll1> (accessed January 17, 2014)

congregating in groups of more than three, dressing in the traditional *yukata* or other conspicuous garb, and not forming Japanese American clubs or speaking Japanese. One resettler to Milwaukee writing to CRJA encouraged others who were considering resettling to do so, but cautioned that “one must remember to conduct himself at all times as an American citizen and to make every effort to get along with his next-door neighbor.”⁵³ The CRJA itself stated it was formed “for the purpose of aiding the government in its program of relocating the evacuated people in communities where their presence would not create any disturbance and where there was a demand for their service.”⁵⁴ Yet like the internment camps, every resettlement hostel worked against the dispersal goal by concentrating all the Japanese Americans arriving in these new cities in a few places, something that would contribute to the ultimate failure of the dispersal plan.

Reopening the West Coast

Although WDC officially announced the end of exclusion on December 17, 1945, it is no coincidence that the next day the Supreme Court’s unanimous decision in *Ex parte Endo* held that although “wartime measures are to be interpreted as intending the greatest possible accommodation between the Constitutional liberties of the citizen and the exigencies of war,” detaining a “concededly loyal citizen” or even granting conditional release (which had been ongoing since 1942) could not be implied by the need to protect against espionage or sabotage, much less “as a useful or convenient step

⁵³ Hiroshi Neeno, *Resettlement Bulletin* volume 1, number 4, July 1943, Committee on Relocation of Japanese Americans, Reel 81 Frame 475, JAERR

⁵⁴ CRJA, *Resettlement Bulletin* volume 1, number 6, October 1943, OCJAR

in the evacuation program.” It also held that EOs 9066 and 9102 (which created the WRA) provided “no basis for keeping loyal evacuees of Japanese ancestry in custody on the ground of community hostility.”⁵⁵ The Army, not wanting the Court to restrict its authority over civilians in wartime and more broadly, to preserve its power, revoked the exclusion order after several months of deliberation among WDC officials. And because the evacuation program itself was also being challenged the same day as *Endo* in *Korematsu v. United States*, they feared its whole program would be declared unconstitutional. In this case, the Court declared the evacuation constitutional on the grounds of military necessity in an emergency, citing “pressing public necessity” but not “racial antagonism” as the underlying cause.⁵⁶ These conflicting cases brought no legal clarity to the internment, but one thing was clear: the West Coast would reopen, without restrictions, in January 1945.

Upon receipt of the rescission order, church groups once again sprang into action to prepare California for what was assumed to be at first a trickle of resettlers. In fact, a test case had already been run in California with mixed results. After Pasadena responded most favorably in a letter writing campaign to Assistant Secretary of War John McCloy begun by Herbert Nicholson in August 1944, McCloy asked if Pasadena would sponsor a student to come from one of the camps. Nineteen year-old Nisei Esther Takei got the nod, and took the train from Amache alone just ten days after WDC approved the idea. The faculty and students at Pasadena Junior College showed ninety-percent favored the idea and received her warmly, but her arrival prompted “a storm of protest” that

⁵⁵ *Ex parte Endo*, 323 U.S. 283 (1944)

⁵⁶ Girdner and Loftis, *The Great Betrayal*, 372-7

lasted for five weeks with a “parade of cars” driving by Hugh Anderson’s house, where she was staying, and letters and phone calls “made life tense” for a time, but her supporters won out.⁵⁷ Takei remembers a group of AMVETS at the school escorted her around campus to guard against hate speech, reporters, and threats, she attended Pasadena Methodist Church where she had potlucks with black neighbors, and even went to a nearby CPS camp with Anderson to visit with those who had written her letters of support. Although connected with Quakers only through student resettlement that had coordinated her return, Takei fondly remembers the way “the Quakers were very, very cognizant of the plight of the Japanese Americans, and they were very, very helpful.”⁵⁸

However, Christian groups had been agitating for a hospitable reception for when the internees returned since the day they departed, and the success of their efforts is one of the greatest successes of the Christian community’s support of Japanese Americans in this period. Unlike in the East, where communities had only months to prepare for Japanese Americans among them, in California Christian and civic leaders spent nearly three years fomenting favorable public sentiment. What is most striking is that such a small, unpopular group of pacifists and supporters of Japanese Americans could become such a strong engine for social change in a wartime society that was propagandized to hate the image of the enemy, especially on the West Coast where such strong anti-Japanese sentiment still lingered. But despite Brian Hayashi’s claim that white Protestant leaders “uniformly” opposed the harsh treatment of Japanese Americans on the West

⁵⁷ Girnder and Loftis, *The Great Betrayal*, 379-80

⁵⁸ Esther Takei, oral interview by Darcie Iki, Japanese American National Museum, *REgenerations Oral History Project*, June 21, 1999

Coast after Pearl Harbor, anti-Japanese sentiment was evident even in Los Angeles County's churches. As historian Sandra Taylor describes, some church bodies "appear to have been Californians first and Christians second, and most Californians in 1942 did not like Japanese, wherever they were born, whatever language they spoke."⁵⁹ This sentiment more closely resembles the obstacle facing Rhoads and her staff immediately after beginning her tenure in the Pasadena offices. AFSC Information Bulletins displayed an impressive review of periodicals regarding resettlement, unashamedly assailing any illiberal sentiment in any community on the West Coast and fighting back with facts about the internees' patriotism and good neighborliness. Indeed, AFSC, CRJA, and other supporters of Japanese Americans sought to arm its readers with both the opponents' rhetoric (and names) and information for a counter attack.

Another "method of attack" involved enlisting powerful people to advocate for Japanese Americans. Robert Sproul, president of the University of California and honorary chairman of the Pacific Coast Committee on American Principles and Fair Play (hereafter the Fair Play Committee), though not a church representative was nevertheless recruited by Galen Fisher to lead an organization composed of many church members, and in this role led other academics and civic leaders in advocating for a swift and hospitable return for Japanese Americans. In a speech at the California Club in June 1944, Sproul touted the record of Nisei soldiers and assailed internment as a weakening of "the whole fabric of American government," demonstrating his support for Japanese

⁵⁹ Sandra Taylor, "Fellow-Feelers with the Afflicted: The Christian Churches and the Relocation of Japanese Americans in World War II," in Roger Daniels, ed., *Japanese Americans from Relocation to Redress* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991), 124

Americans while simultaneously supporting “dispersed relocation,” arguing “that the swarming of persons of one race in a Ghetto or a Little Mexico or Little Tokio [*sic*], the separation of a minority physically and culturally from the rest of the population is a profound social and political error and a potent breeder of social and political ills.” He went on to predict that there would never be a mass return of Japanese Americans to the West Coast but their right to return could not be denied.⁶⁰ Despite its inaccurate predictions, this speech played a key role in turning the tide toward positive public sentiment toward resettlement in California and it also demonstrated the extension of the paradox of church support even outside official church circles.

Church groups around the country also beat the drum of dispersed resettlement. The Federal Council of Churches of Christ in American endorsed WRA’s plan of “dispersal resettlement,” The Board of Missions of the Methodist Church encouraged, “as wide as possible a dispersal of the evacuees through individual resettlement in normal American communities,” and a Presbyterian Church Synod supported the government’s program of resettlement (i.e., dispersal) and “reabsorption [*sic*] into the normal processes of American community life.” California church groups did not even go this far in their resolutions in late 1943 and early 1944. The Church Federation of Los Angeles and the Sacramento Council of Churches only tepidly stated that they had already made their positions known and only obliquely denounced discrimination, and the Santa Maria Ministers Association very colorfully decried “indiscriminate herding of aliens or alien

⁶⁰ Robert Sproul, “The Test of a Free Country,” June 29, 1944, Box 8 Folder 8b, JARC

descendants into concentration camps” yet did not bother to make a statement of any variety regarding the return of the people whose rights they otherwise supported.⁶¹

Early in 1945 the Fair Play Committee published a pamphlet detailing the various ways in which advocates for Japanese Americans, most of whom were Church groups, were preparing for their return. In San Francisco, the Northern California AFSC compiled a list of townspeople who had spare rooms to offer and offered cots on the ground floor of its headquarters. In Sacramento, the Council on Civic Unity set up a recreation room in the YMCA as a dormitory for transient Japanese Americans. It also offered a church set up for the same purpose, and redecorated a downtown store for a hospitality center. In Berkeley, the Fair Play Committee circulated a survey to find permanent and temporary housing and work at standard wage levels; two hundred replies yielded forty-five rooms for permanent occupancy and twenty-five temporary ones. Job offers came in for gardeners, gas station attendants, farm managers, clerks, secretaries, and couples for domestic work. Furthermore, the Committee kept in touch with local WRA officers to know who was returning, relayed job and housing information to them, and acted as “clearing houses” for offers of temporary or permanent housing for people with no place of their own, and in the larger cities, Fair Play Committees ran hostels for resettlers.⁶² Thus California was ready to receive Japanese Americans, but not without a healthy dose of dispersal, assimilation, latent race prejudice, and a massive housing shortage, issues that church hostels addressed beginning January 2, 1945.

⁶¹ Committee on Resettlement of Japanese Americans, “The Concern of the Church for Christian and Democratic Treatment of Japanese Americans,” April 1944, Box 8 Folder 8d, JARC

⁶² Pacific Coast Committee on American Principles and Fair Play, “Homeward Bound,” 1945, JCC, Box 2 folder A

Chapter 3: Resettlement

“And the King will say, ‘I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!’” Matthew 25:40 (NLT)

As internees looked toward becoming resettlers, many were naturally apprehensive about returning to California and the racial climate that had precipitated their removal less than three years earlier. They would be taking with them what Donna Nagata called a “Legacy of Injustice.” Forced incarceration had caused the Issei and Nisei to leave the camps disillusioned about their citizenship, and the suspected disloyalty and forced relocation and internment, to say nothing of the economic losses and community upheaval, left a deep mark on their common psyche. Nagata’s examination of these effects on the Sansei, or third generation, reveals that even for those who had never been in the camps, their self-esteem was lower and they felt that they needed to prove themselves as Americans.¹ Compounding this legacy was the very immediate and palpable sense of practical homelessness. As one internee remembered of staying in a Buddhist hostel in San Jose, “that is the hardest thing, to come home and you have nothing. You’re just, like homeless. So they lived there in the church.”² Research has shown that “the sudden or gradual loss of one’s home can be a stressor of sufficient severity to produce symptoms of psychological trauma,” and resettlers faced such a crisis as they returned to their hometowns in California.³

¹ *Legacy of Injustice*, 138-40

² Katie T. Hironaka, oral interview in *REgenerations*

³ Lisa Goodman, Leonard Saxe, and Mary Harvey, “Homelessness as Psychological Trauma,” *American Psychologist* 46, no. 11 (November 1991), 1219-25

Rising to meet the challenge, churches opened hostels that provided critical housing relief during the first few years of the crisis period of resettlement. Hostels filled the large lacuna in the WRA's last efforts as an organization, and outlasted its temporary housing accommodations by several years. Adding to the services offered by eviction hostels, they also provided a hub where job seekers and potential employers could meet while their directors worked to secure permanent housing for the residents. The paradox of church support in this period appears again as a push for assimilation amid material support while continuing the support for the WRA and its assimilation agenda. Adding to that agenda, these church members also sought to integrate the Japanese churches in a push for wide dispersal while—and adding to the paradox—concentrating Japanese Americans in hostels and in effect creating the same ethnic enclaves they were trying to dissolve.

Housing Shortage and WRA's Trailer Parks

Resettlers were returning to one of the worst housing shortages in United States history. Nationwide, the picture was bleak. National Housing Agency administrator John Blanchard estimated that in the first ten years after 1945, 12.5 million new homes would be necessary to house returning veterans, new families, and families currently living “doubled up.” Another estimate was that a third of the U.S. population was living in substandard housing. Put another way, as one commentator said, “The nation faces

peace with a 1945 population and a 1931 supply of homes.”⁴ In June 1945 California reported on its housing problem and found that even before the war, there was a lack of suitable housing, and the record migration to its cities (some 1.3 million people), replacing temporary government housing (like FPHA trailers), and replacing half of the substandard homes spurred a need for 625,000 new family units in the first five years after 1945, with 230,000 needed in Los Angeles County alone.⁵ There was no mention of Japanese American internees as part of those doubling up or migrating to the city, but the report does generally underestimate the scale of the impending housing crisis, and into this crisis the Japanese Americans stepped as they left the camps and went home.

The WRA realized the need for housing for its former charges, but let churches and sympathetic organizations like the Friends of the American Way take the lead. “Immediately after the lifting of the exclusion order, extraordinary efforts were put forth by friendly groups in California to establish hostels and to provide temporary housing for evacuees,” WRA wrote in its final report. For its part, the WRA reopened its offices all over the West Coast and loaned out its surplus cots, mattresses, blankets, china, and cooking equipment. The offices also helped arrange housing and employment. For local organizations unsure of their commitment to help, WRA offices compelled them. “In the Santa Clara Valley, for example, a cooperative growers' association was induced to purchase 400 prefabricated units to house needed farm workers.” By comparison, in Portland and Seattle federal housing became available as war contracts started to end, and

⁴ Robert Beauregard, *Voices of Decline: The Postwar Fate of U.S. Cities* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 73, 112-4

⁵ California State Reconstruction and Reemployment Commission, *Postwar Housing in California*, June 1945

“while the problem in this area was severe, it did not assume the crisis proportions that developed in California.”⁶

Perhaps it had seen some of the evidence the State of California saw, but it took WRA until June 1945 to realize the proportions of this crisis. Indeed, the housing shortage played into the WRA’s dispersal plans, since it forced resettlers to “extend their search for desirable vacancies into areas which members of the Japanese minority did not previously occupy.”⁷ It is little wonder, then, that the WRA was slow to action, for the very dearth of housing helped them accomplish their goal of changing an unassimilated prewar minority into postwar completely assimilated. The Authority did take a "renewed emphasis" on finding hostels plus surveyed military installations all over west coast until "turned over...the first big block of temporary housing" in San Francisco at Fort Funston and in Los Angeles at Lomita Air Strip that each housed 500 plus five other facilities bought from army corps of engineers that housed 700. WRA also claimed to have provided sufficient housing in Orange County at Santa Ana air base and in Sacramento at Camp Kohler.⁸ The claim was somewhat unfounded in the latter case, however, because by WRA’s own reports from Sacramento, in the spring of 1945 that office coordinated with YMCA and other local community centers to open hostels, with plans for the Presbyterian Church Council to open another in June.⁹

⁶ *People in Motion*, 173

⁷ *Ibid.*, 114

⁸ *Ibid.*, 173

⁹ Sacramento WRA Office, “Monthly Report,” April and May 1945, Reel 42 Frame 10, JAERR

Concurrently, WRA negotiated with the Federal Public Housing Authority (FPHA) for even more buildings throughout urban California. Between San Francisco, Los Angeles, and San Diego, the two organizations created permanent public housing for 250 service-connected families and temporary dormitory-style housing for 1,800 individuals. WRA concluded, "in general, these steps went a long way toward solving the immediate housing crisis." The FPHA also loaned 450 unused trailers to the WRA that it distributed among the dormitory facilities to supplement. Yet by its own figures, when the last "relocation center" closed in November 1945 (designated a "segregation center," the camp at Tule Lake that closed in 1946 was not included in this count), 2,500 resettlers were living in WRA-procured housing while 4,000 were living in hostels.¹⁰

However, when the WRA was set to close and the resettlers faced what Caleb Foote, a Quaker and former member of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, called a "third evacuation," FPHA stepped in with more trailers and set up camps near Burbank in Los Angeles County and in Richmond in the Bay Area that each housed 1,000 resettlers and one in Long Beach.¹¹ By the end of 1946, when many church hostels began closing for want of residents, these trailer camps still housed 1,700 to 1,800 resettlers.¹² Unlike church hostels, these trailer parks were nothing more than simple housing communities on the outskirts of Los Angeles County, and lacking a dedicated staff to help secure jobs and housing, it is no wonder these were still so full in late 1946. Historian Charlotte Brooks dubbed them "isolated ghettos that perpetuated the hardships of incarceration,"

¹⁰ *People in Motion*, 174

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 174

¹² *Ibid.*, 181

and their remote regions made it even harder to get to a decent job, so it is no wonder at Winona about a fifth of the working-age population was unemployed. Quaker Raymond Booth observed that “a trip to the city...requires anywhere from one to two hours each way, 94 cents round trip, in addition to a meal away from camp. Jobs are not available within walking distance or adjacent to public transportation.”¹³ Even the WRA acknowledged the camp-likeness of its trailer parks. "In many respects, life in both trailer camps and hostels is reminiscent of the WRA center," its final report said, reiterating its belief in its superior efforts to the churches', "concentration of Japanese people, cramped quarters, limited facilities—except that in some of the smaller hostels, facilities are considerably less adequate."¹⁴

Still, these measures were insufficient. The impending date of April 30, 1946 set for the WRA's termination of relocation housing projects meant a “third evacuation” for its Japanese Americans unable to secure permanent housing. Once again, church groups rallied to the cause of aiding resettlers in their housing crisis. Clarence Gillette of the Committee for Christian Democracy and Newell Steward of AFSC's Southern California branch claimed the letters distributed among the various WRA trailer parks announcing their closing were not legal eviction notices. Enlisting the help of the ACLU, these men advised anyone not able to move to wait until a formal, legal eviction notice came from

¹³ Charlotte Brooks, “Ascending California’s Racial Hierarchy: Asian Americans, Housing, and Government, 1920-1955,” Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 2002, 283-4; Raymond Booth, “Lomita Evacuee Camp,” November 5, 1945, in *ibid.*, 244

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

the WRA giving fifteen days' notice.¹⁵ This protest came in response to the closing of the Winona Housing Project in Burbank on April 1 that forced out 500 resettlers, most of whom, because of their inability to security private housing elsewhere, by necessity transferred to other housing projects Lomita and Hawthorne, projects that were in turn scheduled to close that same month. The WRA, calling upon private organizations to pick up its responsibilities after it closed, guaranteed 150 more trailers if "a reliable organization could assure the Federal Public Housing Administration of security." Meanwhile, at this extreme crisis period within resettlement, 1,420 resettlers were living in thirty-two hostels in Los Angeles County, so the likelihood of a church organization being able to shoulder this additional burden was slim.¹⁶ Just ten days later, the number in federal temporary housing had jumped by nearly two hundred to almost 2,100 representing 508 families, an in-migration to these facilities of seventy-five families.¹⁷

¹⁵ "Church Service Groups Rap 'Third Evacuation'; Question Legality of Eviction Notice," *Pacific Citizen*, April 6, 1946, JCC, Box 1 folder C

¹⁶ "Two Thousand Returnees Still Living in Housing Projects," in *ibid.*

¹⁷ *Pacific Citizen*, April 16, 1946, in *ibid.*

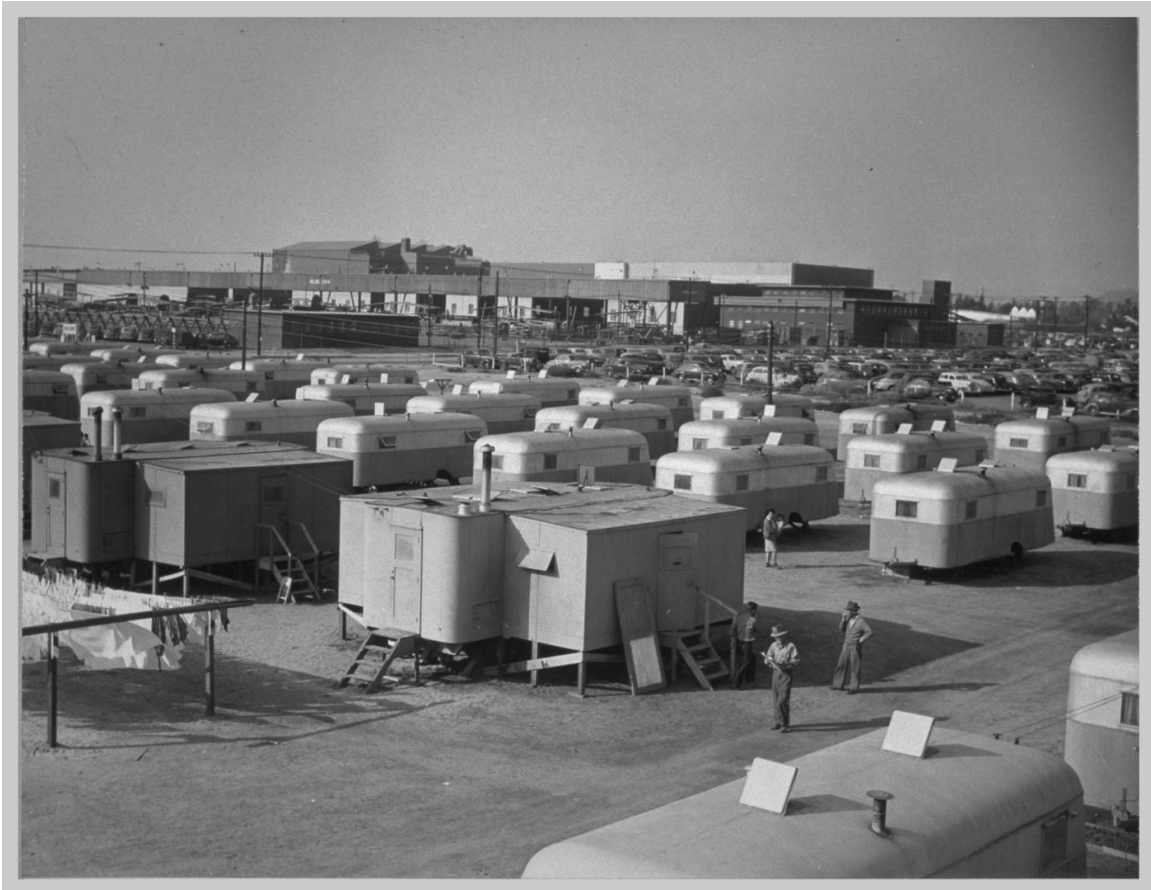


Figure 3: The Winona Housing Project, Burbank, California, November 1945. The units in the foreground are the communal toilets. Source: JARDA

Church Resettlement Hostels

As internees began returning to California, church hostels served as loci for the transit of Japanese Americans through internment camps, and unlike hostels in the East, some of these internees filtered through the same places from which they had left less than three years prior. Hostels hummed with activity as hubs of travel from camps and eastern cities to the West Coast again, and unlike resettlers in the East who during the war needed a contact on the “outside” before leaving camp, once the West Coast

reopened, that erstwhile duty of hostel directors and staff ended. Hostel directors thus turned their attention to other matters like fomenting community goodwill and job and house placement.

The obvious first purpose of hostels, then, was to provide a place for resettlers to stay. Church resettlement hostels, owing to their ad-hoc and temporary nature, had many shapes and sizes but were generally church or school buildings in which residents shared large rooms. Only large families or in churches with small converted rooms did anyone have private rooms. Bathrooms were communal, as was the kitchen and dining area. Some of the larger hostels employed a dietician but many, as in the FPHA facilities, had cooperative kitchens and families took turns making meals for the hostel residents. Residents also shared in the cleaning, maintenance, and grounds keeping duties.

Supplying West Coast church hostels with furniture and bedding prompted yet another collaboration between white churches and the WRA, participation unique to California and West Coast hostels broadly because the hostels opened as the WRA began closing its camps and the closer proximity of California to most of the camps than, say, Chicago. As such, the WRA's wealth of cots, mattresses, linens, and kitchen supplies from the disused camps found welcome homes "on a loan basis" in "approved hostels in the West Coast States."¹⁸ While Eastern hostels had to rely solely on the generosity of church members and concerned citizens, on the West Coast the WRA and the churches once again were forging a strong partnership. Churches acknowledged its efforts for "constantly working on the housing problem from a number of other angles" even while

¹⁸ "Joint Conference on Future of Japanese Church Work, Resettlement, and Return," April 24-6, 1945, Los Angeles, Reel 82, JAERR

their efforts served as a stopgap for the government's incomplete ones to provide sufficient, to say nothing of suitable, housing.¹⁹

The largest and most prominent hostel in California and indeed, the entire West Coast, Evergreen Hostel at the Japanese Union Church was the model of California's hostels. A central hub for evicted Japanese in 1942, Evergreen reopened under its new name on March 1, 1945 "to provide temporarily a quiet and inexpensive place where persons of Japanese ancestry may stay while seeking jobs and housing, or while studying the changed conditions in Southern California." Its official pamphlet touted space for sixty to seventy-five guests in "four large dormitories for men and two for women, as well as a few smaller rooms for couples and families" but within three months it had housed as many as eighty-six in one night.²⁰ Residents were expected to work around the hostel thirty to forty minutes a day so "the work of the Hostel can be carried without undue hardship on any individual." The charge, as it was in most resettlement hostels, was a dollar a day before a resident found work and a dollar fifty after finding work. The charge for children under ten was half. Residents unable to provide their own bed linens, pillows and towels, could rent them for a nominal deposit. As the occupancy levels indicate, the pamphlet's requirement to make reservations was a critical component of hostelling at Evergreen as elsewhere.²¹

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ "Evergreen Hostel: A Hostel for Returning Japanese Americans," (Los Angeles: American Friends Service Committee, 1945), The Bancroft Library; "Joint Conference," JAERR

²¹ Ibid.

Other organizations opened their doors as hostels during resettlement as well. Oakland's Japanese Methodist Church reopened as a hostel and a church with help, in another interracial collaboration, from the youth of the Oakland Chinese Presbyterian Church. Even before its hostel opened, its pastor, Reverend John Yamashita presented the work done on the hostel to the Berkeley Interracial Committee at Berkeley Community Church, a meeting at which films about Nisei soldiers and Black troops were also shown. In preparation for the hostel's opening, members of several local Chinese churches helped "for several weeks" in renovating the building. When the hostel opened in May 1945, the church held inter-racial services with a message from the Chinese Presbyterian Church's minister and candle lighting by the youth of a dozen East Bay churches of several races that had prepared the church for use as a hostel.²²

Meanwhile, Buddhists were operating hostels in Los Angeles, San Jose, and Fresno with ministers at each, housing resettlers "irrespective of their religious belief" just as Christian hostels did. Buddhist churches also considered establishing hostels in San Francisco, Oakland, Portland, and Seattle, plans that of necessity all came to fruition.²³ In Ventura County, the housing shortage was mostly solved by converting Oxnard's Buddhist temple into a hostel for resettlers. Four months after opening, the temple housed fifty-one people with twenty-seven others representing nine families related to war veterans living on a farm east of town.²⁴ Farm country was faring much better than Los Angeles. Resettlers prided themselves on not being on relief, and in

²² *Oakland Tribune*, May 18-20, 1945

²³ Minutes of Buddhist Church of America Conference, Salt Lake City, June 29, 1945, Reel 82, JAERR

²⁴ *Oxnard Press Courier*, January 23, 1946

Ventura County only eleven, ten of whom lived in the Buddhist hostel, received assistance versus 4,000 in Los Angeles County. Perhaps so, but it appears that these rural resettlers struggled more than urban ones to become self-sufficient, since as late as June 1947 the Oxnard Buddhist Hostel was in operation and searching for gardeners to tend the grounds, making it one of the last hostels in California to close.²⁵

Residents and hostel directors alike prided themselves on keeping lengths of stay short, as this was the clearest metric by which to measure the hostels' most immediate impact of providing temporary housing and helping with employment and permanent residences. Accordingly, hostel directors offered consultation on jobs and housing as well as other community contacts like religious services, maps, bus schedules, and college catalogues, all things that would encourage people to permanently settle and actively search for permanent housing.²⁶ By June 1945 Evergreen had residents staying as long as three weeks but an average of only six and a half days. This was incredibly short in comparison to the early days of eastern hostels: Cleveland Hostel residents averaged just over fifteen days in its first few months while Chicago's Brethren Hostel averaged eleven and a half.²⁷ In California, one reason the stays remained short was because of the number of resettlers taking a "look around" period as they decided in which area of California they wished to settle. Indeed, hostels were necessary for this

²⁵ *Oxnard Press Courier*, June 19, 1947

²⁶ "Evergreen Hostel"

²⁷ "Joint Conference," JAERR; George Rundquist, "Resettlement Bulletin," Committee on Resettlement of Japanese Americans, November 1944; "Relocation through the Brethren Hostel" (Chicago: Brethren Service Committee, 1943), John W. Nason Papers (hereafter JNP), Box 35 Folder "JA Relocation Non-Printed Matter," Hoover Institution Archives

purpose especially in the early months of 1945 when many internees remained unsure about whether the general populace remained hostile to their presence.²⁸ In fact, as early as March 1945 the “look-arounds” were already increasing in number in Oakland, making them some of the first residents in the Bay Area hostels.²⁹



Figure 4: Hostellers relaxing at Evergreen Hostel in Los Angeles, June 1945. Note the Spartan accommodations and the total lack of privacy. Source: JARDA

With the initial need of a temporary place to live satisfied, hostels also served as the meeting place of employers and job seekers. Employers sought out hostels and their

²⁸ “Joint Conference,” JAERR

²⁹ WRA Oakland Office, “Monthly Report, March 1945,” Reel 42, JAERR

residents, and hostel directors and workers in turn helped match the right person to the job. Local residents used hostels as a community bulletin board, posting advertisements, most commonly, for domestics, gardeners, or farmers. Reverend Art Takemoto of Senshin Buddhist Hostel in Los Angeles remembers taking out advertisements in newspapers and making phone calls to seek jobs for resettlers.³⁰ Local churches also used hostels to make contacts, no doubt to invite resettlers to their services, but also to extend invitations to homes and get them involved in the community as part of the assimilation plan.³¹ Hostels collocated with churches also touted the religious services held there, and others were sensitive to religious observance. Evergreen Hostel held Japanese language services twice a week, planned so that “it will not interfere with the attendance of guests at regular church services throughout the city.”³²

Hostels also served social and emotional functions. The AFSC hostel in San Francisco was a place where resettlers as well as other minority groups could receive “counselling [sic] and direction with their problems” as well as drop in for inter-racial folk dancing, sewing for foreign relief, and lectures on various topics, and targeting a specific audience for a specific purpose, “Nisei are welcome to drop in for informal social contacts in the evening.”³³ Evergreen Hostel billed its facility as a place where “groups of college students and church people come from time to time to take part in social and religious programs. These visitors are deeply interested in returnees and their

³⁰ Art Takemoto and Rose Honda, oral interviews in *REgenerations*

³¹ “Joint Conference,” JAERR

³² “Evergreen Hostel”

³³ Untitled WRA document, n.d., JCC, Box 2 folder B,

problems and enjoy meeting our guests.” The social rooms at Evergreen were places where residents could “entertain their friends,” even equipped with ashtrays in the hall and reading room.³⁴ And with so many black residents Bronzeville/Little Tokyo, the hostel residents in this area discovered “jazz and gospel music in black storefronts, recalling especially that they were treated as welcome participants at these performances rather than interlopers.”³⁵

Hostility toward Church Hostels

Some hostels in eastern cities had been met with opposition, but nothing like the violence that befell some of California’s hostels and resettlers’ homes in the first few years of the crisis period of resettlement. No less than Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes was furious over the terrorism perpetrated on the hostels and resettlers generally. He indignantly pointed out that some of the homes into which shots were fired in California had American service flag stars in their windows. He called it “a pattern of planned terrorism by hoodlums,” identifying “an economic beachhead on the property of the evacuees.”³⁶ Indeed, the *New York Times* reported that the WRA had recorded no fewer than twenty-four incidences of this “violence or open intimidation” including fifteen shootings, three arson attempts, five threatening visits and a dynamiting attempt.

³⁴ “Evergreen Hostel”

³⁵ Hillary Jenks, “‘Home is Little Tokyo’: Race, Community, and Memory in Twentieth-Century Los Angeles,” Ph.D. diss., University of Southern California, 2008, 181

³⁶ WRA memo, May 1945, FJDC, Box 5 folder 5.8

It concluded: “obviously, our law enforcement officers are making no effort to enforce the law.”³⁷

In its annual report for 1945-1946, the American Civil Liberties Union of Northern California aptly referred to resettlement as “evacuation in reverse,” as the internees were forced out of the camps into which they had been forcibly sent to their home communities in California where housing was not available. “They were herded into so-called hostels, barracks, and dormitories to live under the most primitive conditions from which many of them have not yet escaped.” They experienced “terrorism” for the first six months upon resettling in California, their homes burned and dynamiting attempted, bricks and gunshots sent through their home and store windows. They accused local police of being “sympathetic with the lawlessness,” and even considered offering a \$1,000 reward for the arrest and sentencing of a man who shot a shotgun into two returnees’ homes near Centerville.³⁸ Even the CRJA acknowledged that police protection had been a bit lax, noting in July 1945 that law enforcement “seems to be working better with popular beckoning.” Yet just two months prior, it had wondered when the West Coast “is really going to open for the return of the evacuees,” citing confirmed incidents of terrorism that confirmed for camp residents the rumors were actually facts.³⁹

³⁷ *New York Times*, May 16, 1945

³⁸ American Civil Liberties Union of Northern California, “From War to Peace: 1945-1946 Annual Report,” Joseph Conard and Josephine Whitney Duvencek Collection, JCC, Box 5 folder 5.6

³⁹ CRJA, *Resettlement Bulletin* 3, no. 4, July 1945 Reel 81 Frame 475, JAERR; *Resettlement Bulletin*, May 1945, OCJAR

The *New York Times*' and the ACLU's claims would soon be refuted, however, for local law enforcement soon did take precautionary measures against such violent acts. Attacks on San Francisco Nisei made front-page news as the county investigated shotgun shots into two resettlers' houses and detained two men. The Buddhist Hostel in San Francisco, where 151 resettlers were staying, was the first Bay Area hostel to be targeted, but only after it sustained multiple attacks of various natures including plaster, rocks, and beer bottles thrown through the windows and a lantern that hit a wall did local police stand guard for an unknown period of time. The hostel was only saved from this arson attempt because the flame went out before the lantern hit the wall, and it was not the first or the last to be attacked in this or any manner.⁴⁰ Afterward, local police guarded the temple throughout the night and occasionally during the day. In a similar incident in Monterey County, two unidentified men threw flares at a Buddhist hostel in Pajaro. Police responded by saying "violence of any kind against Japanese Americans would not be tolerated and would be prosecuted to the full extent of the law." These simple actions and statements around California cut the violence significantly, although as late as 1949 a family of resettlers was the target of arson.⁴¹

Church Deliberation over the Future of the Japanese Christian Church

While church hostels provided vital services to resettlers, other church leaders, in cooperation with Japanese American religious leaders, met to discuss the future of the

⁴⁰ *Oakland Tribune*, September 20, 1945. Also *San Mateo Times*, September 20, 1945

⁴¹ Jenna Lee Andrews, "From Internment to 'Model Minority': The Reintegration of Japanese Americans in United States Society after World War Two," M.A. thesis, George Washington University, 2009, 13

Japanese American church. In these meetings we can see in the clearest possible terms what churchmen in this period thought about assimilation and the reintegration of the Japanese American population on the West Coast, and even how these sentiments colored the hostel efforts underway throughout California. It represents the level to which church members incorporated the WRA's assimilation agenda as the best course of action for Japanese Americans and even took it into their own domain. Specifically, the Joint Conference on the Future of Japanese Church Work, Resettlement, and Return in Los Angeles in late April 1945 addressed these issues in a multi-ethnic, multi-denominational forum that included some of the most prominent names in church-supported resettlement in California: Esther Rhoads, Herbert Nicholson, Gurney Binford, Gracia and Raymond Booth, and Galen Fisher. Sohei Kowta, Presbyterian minister before internment and Issei minister and co-director of Evergreen Hostel after, appears as the most prominent representative from the Japanese American community. The Protestant congregations' representatives included Methodist, Disciples of Christ, Congregational Christian, Presbyterian, Baptist, and Protestant Episcopal, as well as YMCA, AFSC, and WRA representatives. With a nod to the work of groups like the Fair Play Committee and Friends of the American Way, the conference acknowledged how "local committees have been active in the field of public opinion and the fostering of community acceptance for the evacuees and in arranging for reception and housing facilities, and the way is being prepared for re-integration of returning evacuees."⁴²

⁴² Much of the following comes from the enormously powerful minutes of this conference. See "Joint Conference on Future of Japanese Church Work, Resettlement, and Return," April 24-6, 1945, Los Angeles, Reel 82 Frame 346, JAERR

This assumption that reintegrating resettlers was the best course of action echoes throughout the conference. When the subject was put to comment from the various denominations, they separated themselves into left and right wings over the extent to which the Japanese Christian church ought to remain segregated or whether separate services ought to be abolished altogether. The statements themselves reveal the extent to which even the church supporters of Japanese Americans—often the strongest of any—nevertheless favored the breakup of Japanese churches in terms of their inability to assimilate or in terms of fear of resettlers reforming ethnic enclaves in cities. On the right wing, the Methodist representatives thought it “too early to say that they can enter any community and attend a Caucasian church,” and that question had better wait until at least 1946 when things settled down. They argued for considering “the feelings of the Caucasian churches and our Japanese brethren, and wait until they can be resettled.” The Protestant Episcopal representatives went further, noting the Japanese American family breakdown to the extent that Buddhist parents were telling their children to become Christians to better integrate. Their policy, therefore, was “first, last, and always—integration,” adding their doubts for the need to continue Issei churches.

On the “extreme left,” predictably, was Galen Fisher and the Congregationalists who supported separate language churches for Issei “only in extreme cases of necessity” and who preferred to collaborate in forming interdenominational churches to meet the needs of the Japanese community. The Baptists joined in on the far left, their policy “to refrain from opening new segregated churches under any conditions, and refrain from reopening segregated churches except under strong compulsion because of special circumstances.”

There was also a lengthy discussion about hostels. The conference acknowledged the political force behind large numbers of resettlers “stranded” in hostels to bring pressure to Washington but also conceded the undesirability of such a strategy. In order to “not use the predicament of persons,” it instead proposed to secure hostel space for “only about five hundred people in the Los Angeles area” encouraging the hostlers to be scattered about in small units rather than concentrated in one large one. This sentiment echoes the encouragement these same denominations and others gave to resettlers in the East to avoid congregating in groups of more than three and speaking Japanese. Still, the conference agreed that “practically all of the denominations” were ready to lend their buildings for use as hostels just as most of the Japanese churches were currently in use that way. Holding Evergreen Hostel as the model, it identified seven churches scheduled to open within a month or two of the conference, and the Methodists alone offered eleven more churches “without regard to religious affiliation.”⁴³

The de-emphasis on proselytizing in this conference and throughout the resettlement period is somewhat puzzling because it runs contrary to the Christian mandate to “go and make disciples of all the nations,” something that was a rather secondary goal among the church hostels and supporters.⁴⁴ Certainly the Methodists and Quakers had subscribed to this mandate, as several members from each denomination mentioned in this thesis had been missionaries to Japan before the war. Yet only faint hints of evangelism surfaced in this conference, hints that are otherwise almost completely absent from the references for this project. One mention came during the

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Matthew 28:19, NLT

Japanese church integration debate, the Presbyterian delegation voted for integration “as the ultimate principle or ideal” citing the burden “for the non-Christian evacuees who should be evangelized.” Another came during the hostel discussion when the conference stated, “the aim is to provide an inexpensive place, with a quiet and friendly atmosphere, where returning evacuees can make their adjustment to the new situation under the leading of the Spirit of God.”⁴⁵ Adding to the confusion, this comment came on the heels of the one repudiating any religious requirement in Methodist hostels. These murmurs toward evangelism appear to have been the rare exception to the rule that hostels were for extending Christian charity and goodwill and the churches for integration.

Two committee reports also provide deeper perspective on California churches’ opinion on housing and integration. With Gracia Booth as secretary, the committee report of Problems of Resettlement and Return to the Pacific Coast recommended several key action items, some of which were already underway. First, the WRA in San Francisco should make available all information regarding the sale or rent of property by evacuees and disseminate information regarding eviction proceedings on the resettler-owned properties, and where Japanese churches were being used by another denomination, temporary facilities should be made available by the concerned denomination while the leases or eviction proceedings continued. Secondly, where desirable, former Japanese church properties should be converted to hostels to aid in relocation, and the committee also resolved to petition the FPHA to make much more

⁴⁵ “Joint Conference,” JAERR

public housing available.⁴⁶ Of course, not every Japanese church group regained their building as the committee had hoped. The most famous success story was the Pilgrim House that passed neatly from Japanese to black control and back again in the postwar era. But the Japanese YWCA building on Sutter Street in San Francisco that the AFSC had leased during the war never was re-occupied by YWCA women. Although AFSC allowed YWCA to use the building for its activities, coupled with national YWCA policies disallowing single-race chapters and many of its former members not returning, “institutional memory of the Japanese YWCA’s ownership of the...property was lost.”⁴⁷

Galen Fisher chaired the committee report on the future of Japanese church work that was the capstone piece of the conference. The consensus was that “integration of people of Japanese ancestry into membership and active participation in Caucasian churches is the ideal toward which we should press.” Doing so would weave the “robe of solidarity” into strands of cultural diversity. Before the eviction, Fisher said, Americanization was hindered by the concentration of Japanese Americans in Little Tokyos,

“but one of the few compensations of the evacuation has been the unprecedented opportunity which evacuation and resettlement have afforded for nationwide dispersion and for fuller incorporation into the main stream of American life. A heavy responsibility rests upon the churches, both Japanese and Caucasian, to facilitate this process by removing all barriers to inclusion of the hitherto separate Japanese churches into the larger fellowship of the corresponding American churches.”⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Page & Turnbull, Inc., “1830 Sutter St,” DRP 523 Form, registration for California Historical Landmarks, <http://www.sf-planning.org/> (accessed July 19, 2013), 5-6

⁴⁸ “Joint Conference,” JAERR

Fisher in fact had already been beating this drum for months when the Joint Conference met. Although possibly the least susceptible to conflating Christianity and democracy, he nevertheless felt free to consider “the wide dispersion of the resettlers, which has prevented re-creation of the little Tokyos that hindered Americanization” one of the “compensations” of internment.⁴⁹ Clearly this was more a compensation for white church members than for resettlers, as the disproportionate acceptance of Japanese American clergy into white churches prompted “a recurrence of sectarianism.”⁵⁰ But here was the summary of white church members regarding the direction they were pushing Japanese Americans in postwar California. Herein also lies the paradox of church support in the entire internment period: that so many could voice support for Japanese Americans while voting to dissolve their churches and communities in the name of Americanization, something most of them, by birth if not by choice, had already attained.

Meanwhile, the Buddhist Church of America (BCA) was gathering its shattered pieces, trying to rebuild alongside its members. Clearly part of the reason for the pressure for Japanese Christians to integrate was the white churches remained while the Japanese churches emptied to become simple storage spaces during the war. The Buddhist Church, however, transplanted *en masse* to the camps, and its changes after internment mirror very closely those that the general Japanese American population underwent. Rising Buddhist Nisei challenged the Issei leadership and emerged as the clear successor and true vigor of the new BCA, a move that had its origins with the

⁴⁹ Galen Fisher, “Unsnarling the Nisei Tangle,” *Christian Century*, September 8, 1944, 1285-8

⁵⁰ Editorial, “Crisis in Church Relations of Japanese-Americans,” *Christian Century*, January 23, 1946, 101

leadership void left by the FBI's roundup of so many Issei Buddhist priests in the days after Pearl Harbor. Watsonville Buddhist Temple, for example, installed a new Nisei board of directors on January 18, 1942, ending thirty-six years of Issei leadership.⁵¹ In a letter to the BCA at Topaz in advance of the BCA's conference in Salt Lake City the following week, the Young Buddhist Association (YBA) at Poston demonstrated the direction its emerging leaders wished to take the BCA. It advocated for reestablishing self-sustaining coastal churches, finances and hostility permitting, by converting them into hostels while still offering religious services, and to begin calling the YBA a "church," complete with dues and a National YBA executive secretary, because Nisei-led YBAs in eastern cities were already functioning as traditional BCA churches.⁵² At the conference the following week, and after "a heated discussion," the BCA voted to make YBA an "affiliated body of the Buddhist Churches of America," one of the "functional branches" of that organization.⁵³ The YBA's challenge to their elders was this: "We are on the eve of establishing or destroying the confidence of nearly 100,000 Buddhists who are looking toward this conference to set up a dependable organization during this transition period."⁵⁴ The YBA, like thousands of other Nisei now spread across the country, was poised to lead such a dependable organization in the postwar years.

⁵¹ *Watsonville Buddhist Temple: 1906-2006*, centennial yearbook

⁵² Letter, Poston III Young Buddhist Association to Buddhist Churches of America (Topaz), June 21, 1945, Reel 82 Frame 57-8, JAERR

⁵³ Minutes of Buddhist Church of America Conference, Salt Lake City, June 29, 1945, Reel 82 Frame 59, JAERR

⁵⁴ Letter, Poston III YBA, June 21, 1945, Reel 82 Frame 57-8, JAERR.

Also unlike the white Christian churches, the Buddhist Church used its new territory for opportunities to spread Buddhism to the rest of the country, assuming an ambition for proselytizing that Christian churches notably lacked in this period. During the war BCA sought to retain existing Nisei and attract others who felt disaffected by the internment and resettlement experience.⁵⁵ One of the YBA proposals that rather naturally came to fruition was to initiate a “Buddhist movement” in eastern states with larger Japanese American populations, places “where Buddhism never existed before. Every possible assistance should be given them in establishing the church.” The vote to include the YBA as a functional branch of BCA complete with dues of a dollar per year per member indicates an implicit agreement to spread the Buddhist faith nationwide.⁵⁶

Closing the Hostels

Church hostels began closing as their need became exhausted, usually signaled by want of residents, an issue that generally did not arise until at least mid-1946. The former Japanese school-turned-hostel in Colusa, California decided in February 1947 to remain open until at least the end of that year “because of the critical housing shortage in the area.”⁵⁷ Other hostel directors likewise postponed closing because the housing shortage prevented their residents from finding permanent housing. The Sacramento WRA office,

⁵⁵ James Gatewood, “Resettled People, Unsettled Lives: Community Rebuilding among Japanese Americans of the West Los Angeles United Methodist Church, 1945-1965,” M.A. thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 2001, 39-40

⁵⁶ Letter, Poston III YBA, June 21, 1945, JAERR

⁵⁷ *Pacific Citizen*, February 15, 1947

which had been working closely with community and church groups to provide hostels, postponed closing of the Buddhist Hostel in Sacramento two months for that reason.⁵⁸

There is also evidence that hostels were closed not because their usefulness had been exhausted, but forcibly by local authorities. A police judge ordered Frank Kanada, director of a hostel in Stockton, to close his establishment in November 1945 because of “overcrowding and other violations of health regulations.”⁵⁹ Similarly, the city council of Salinas ordered a hostel at a Presbyterian Church plant closed for violating a zoning ordinance. In this instance the church refused, insisting that “the church had always served as a refuge for its people in emergency,” and the deadline passed for it to close and the council took no action.⁶⁰ In an opposite case and reflecting the political powerlessness of the resettlers, when Los Angeles County demanded that the Kyoasan Buddhist Temple, which had been converted into a hostel, owed \$5,000 in unpaid property taxes, “the temple board had to work out a plan to pay in installments to prevent the County from seizing the building.” Never mind that the building had not been used while its congregation was interned during the war; the County insisted that it “had lost its right to a church exemption” *because* of this fact and as a hostel it had become a for-profit enterprise.⁶¹

Concurrent with hostel closings and the presumption of finding a permanent residence came retrieving one’s goods from government storage. Although only a fifth of

⁵⁸ *Pacific Citizen*, March 9, 1946

⁵⁹ *Pacific Citizen*, December 15, 1945

⁶⁰ Galen Fisher, “Justice for the Evacuees,” *Christian Century*, October 24, 1945, 1098-9

⁶¹ Jenks, ““Home is Little Tokyo,”” 168

evictees entrusted the government with their property in early 1942, after eviction was complete through January 31, 1943, WRA began consolidating evictee property stored in the larger Japanese American churches, schools, and YMCAs and transferring property in Federal Reserve care to its own, shipping items to Japanese Americans in its internment camps when requested by twenty families with goods at one location. Not surprisingly, this program was discontinued after these few months “for economic reasons.”⁶² With this lesson in memory, when that office was reconstituted in early 1945, it declared that resettlers were to furnish their own transport of property when their point of relocation was within “reasonable trucking distance from either WRA warehouse or place of private storage,” usually twenty-five miles. The map depicting these areas thus included nearly all of the Los Angeles, San Francisco, Sacramento, Stockton, and Fresno areas, effectively forcing nearly all resettlers to California to retrieve their own goods from government storage at an expense they likely could not well afford.⁶³ And unlike the transport and storage of their goods they provided during eviction, hostels and churches do not appear to have noticed this need to offer any help, perhaps too overwhelmed with running hostels, job placement, and swaying public sentiment.

The last resettlement hostel closing reported in the newspapers appears to be not in California, in fact, but in St. Paul, Minnesota, a hostel initially funded by church members and individuals in the community but by operated by local business men in a leased, non-church building. After three years of operation it closed its doors on

⁶² WRA San Francisco Office, Bulletin 21, Supplement B, November 24, 1942, Reel 41 JAERR

⁶³ WRA San Francisco Office Number 13, February 12, 1945, Reel 41, JAERR

September 30, 1948.⁶⁴ In California, the Buddhist Hostel in Oxnard was looking for an experienced Japanese gardener as late as June 19, 1947, indicative of a housing shortage that lasted relatively long after those in the urban centers of Los Angeles and San Francisco.⁶⁵ There is no clear indication when Colusa's hostel actually closed. Perhaps the clever answer to the last church hostel to close, however, is the Buddhist Temple Hostel in Stockton, which was still undergoing expansion and remodeling in 1955, only for a different sort of resettlement—accommodating elderly Issei being moved from Manteca's Home for the Aged upon its closing.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ *Pacific Citizen*, September 18, 1948

⁶⁵ *Oxnard Press Courier*, June 19, 1947

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, July 29, 1955

Conclusion

“And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous will go into eternal life.” Matthew 25:46 (NLT)

Measuring the significance of California’s church hostels during the Japanese American eviction and resettlement period brings pause, for the support they offered during their temporary existence could very easily be overshadowed by the significance of the interned-to-model minority story of Japanese Americans in the postwar decades. With little measurable help from WRA and the government that had interned them and beginning again from “economic zero,” through the same hard work and determination that had secured them a modest prosperity before the war in the face of statutory and social racism and prejudice, the resettlers forged an even more prosperous life within a decade of internment.

Historians and social scientists like Harry Kitano have preferred to dub the resettlement period as one of “transition,” a time the resettlers spent rebuilding their modest livelihoods until they became firmly upper-middle class and part of the “model minority.” Japanese Americans, as much as other races in California in this period, witnessed the ending of discriminatory practices like race-restrictive housing covenants and the McCarran-Walter Act that ended a racial test for citizenship (although it still maintained the controversial quotas) and found jobs more suited to their level of education and experience. The “legal pluralism” period in the 1960s and ‘70s further broke down racial divides between whites and Japanese Americans, ushering in the era of the “model minority.” But that moniker not only suggests there is something less

desirable about other minority groups, it also “serves to minimize the psychological effects that accompanied the internment and its aftermath.”¹ The allusion to internment’s “aftermath,” however, suggests that resettlement was more a crisis than a mere transition, one in which church hostels played a role in tempering, even while they pushed an assimilation agenda that plainly contributed to the “super American” Japanese.

Another crisis was occurring in Japanese American Christian churches, too, in a change that has clear ties with the paradox of church support in this period. Japanese American Christians began leaving their prewar faith *en masse* during resettlement. In 1942 the WRA reported that twenty-eight percent of its internees were Protestant and fifty-five percent Buddhist, yet by two decades later Japanese Americans nationwide were merely five percent Protestant, and even less a decade and a half later.² How did this happen, despite the close prewar and postwar associations with religious groups, the induction of Nisei ministers, and the building of new churches? Why did four-fifths of Japanese American Christians desert their faith in the postwar years? There are clues pointing toward deep-rooted issues related to church activity in the internment period.

Internment had been a seminal event in their lives, and naturally Japanese Americans could have harbored resentment toward the Protestant nation that had incarcerated them.³ However, mere bitterness is not sufficient explanation for such a flight from a once fervent faith. Historian Brian Hayashi cites a connection between

¹ *Legacy of Injustice*, 27; Jane Hong, “Immigration Act of 1952,” *Densho Encyclopedia*

² War Relocation Authority, *The Evacuated People*, 79; Hayashi, *For the Sake of Our Japanese Brethren*, 154

³ This suggestion was from no less than Franklin Roosevelt. Schultz, *Tri-Faith America*, 10

prewar advocates of assimilation into American society and a loosening of ties with Japanese American Christian churches, and conversely, advocates of identification with Japan kept ties with Christianity while shedding their prewar Japanese nationalism. Resettlers who longed for a normal, American life found postwar community in civic and ethnic activities, and coupled with the hard work of starting from “economic zero,” there was little time to dedicate to church activities.⁴

Despite the number of Nisei ministers who led churches and were enrolled in seminary in the postwar period, there were simply not enough of them. Lester Suzuki writes of the financial impossibility due to low attendance for Japanese ethnic churches to employ two pastors, one English and one Japanese speaking, and accordingly ministers of these churches needed proficiency in both languages; because very few Issei or Nisei had any thorough mastery of both, however, ministers in this position sacrificed study of Greek and Hebrew for Japanese or English.⁵ Further complicating the issue, Toru Matsumoto cites the prejudice within white churches against having a Nisei as head minister, a clear discouragement to entering the ministry.⁶

Perhaps, then, it is fairer to say that Christians turned their backs on returning Japanese Americans in terms of providing church homes. A vacuum of Nisei leadership in churches undoubtedly contributed to another Japanese exodus from the Christian churches that could no longer effectively minister to them. The plan of assimilation that

⁴ Hayashi, *For the Sake of Our Japanese Brethren*, 155

⁵ Lester Suzuki, *Ministry in the Assembly and Relocation Centers of World War II* (Berkeley: Yardbird Publishing, 1979), 348-50

⁶ Toru Matsumoto, *Beyond Prejudice: A Story of the Church and Japanese Americans* (New York: Friendship Press, 1946), 140-1

the Joint Conference on Future of Japanese Church Work, Resettlement, and Return advocated in 1945 clearly was not viable for effectively ministering to resettling Japanese Americans, much less for retaining members of the churches represented there, and though the plan to integrate resettlers into white churches was well-intentioned, it failed to recognize how a lack of Japanese representation in those churches would provoke a massive exodus from the integrated churches. Frank Smith, a Methodist minister and a more empathetic but lone voice writing two months after the Conference argued that integration could not cost the churches its members. Observing the BCA's tactics, he recommended that Christian churches hold more social events for Nisei, and open the Japanese American churches to everyone rather than require Nisei to "do all the giving up and go up the hill or across the city to some Caucasian church."⁷ The white church leaders would have been wise to read and heed Smith's suggestions.

While Japanese Americans were deserting Christian churches, the rest of the United States in this period was strongly moving toward them. From 1942 to 1947, religious leaders moved from third to first place in polls asking who did the most good for the country, and by 1942 a Gallup poll showed interest in religion had increased since the war began, up from less than a third in 1939.⁸ The 1950s were marked by a particular kind of popular Christianity, fueled by President Eisenhower's "Back to God" campaign and other public encouragement of a faith in a universal Judeo-Christian God. Conflating God with American identity served to create a spirit of "One Nation under God" and to

⁷ Frank Herron Smith, in Gatewood, "Resettled People, Unsettled Lives," 41

⁸ Raymond Haberski, *God and War: American Civil Religion Since 1945* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2012), 13

enact social justice in the name of the Almighty.⁹ As I have tried to show, church hostels by this time had already been participating in this discourse for at least a decade.

The Churches that had supported Japanese Americans throughout the internment period were undergoing a transition, too. There was no rush to Quakerism among resettlers after the war, and their membership remained as stagnant after the war as before. Quaker participation in the AFSC, moreover, dwindled to almost nothing, reflecting the Service Committee's growing desire to diversify and professionalize in order to be better informed about the people it wished to reach. Composed of a paltry thirty-two percent Friends as early as 1947, after four more decades of decisive politicization and leftward movement only fifteen percent of the Committee remained staffed by Friends in 1985.¹⁰ Furthermore, the AFSC quickly refocused its efforts on rebuilding efforts in Europe and on other projects worldwide, and any collaboration with Japanese Christian denominations ceased.

Contemporary responses to church hostels and support point to the impact of their efforts, although the internees seem to remember Quaker support the most. As one internee wrote to the AFSC after evacuation, "We shall never forget what our American Friends have done for us." During resettlement, religious organization hostels created an enduring impact on resettlers who were beginning as their parents had decades before, that is, with nothing. Said one Nisei, the hosts of a Cleveland hostel were "the

⁹ Kevin Schultz, *Tri-Faith America: How Catholics and Jews Held Postwar America to Its Protestant Promise* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 73-80

¹⁰ However few Friends staffed AFSC, the Committee was quick to squelch criticism by emphasizing that its policy is shaped by a board of only Quakers. Austin, *Quaker Brotherhood*, 9, 193.

personification of that oft-quoted phrase, ‘a friend in need is a friend indeed.’”¹¹ But if figures and contemporary accounts fail to fully cohere a legacy, oral histories can help, and some interviewed internees remember the kindness extended to them throughout this difficult period, primarily through job placement and hostel stays. But the quiet anonymity exemplified most by the Quakers is perhaps the true enduring legacy of church support in this period, for their selfless efforts undoubtedly softened the crushing impact of internment, and we have only fragments of who they were. Although the AFSC is still very active in projects around the world, its present focus is on peace, disarmament, and humanitarian needs like prison and immigration reform and disaster relief. Perhaps, then, the AFSC has finished Toru Matsumoto’s “Unfinished Business” of working to phase out any mention of race in church discourses, since its current projects do not emphasize helping any one race, but all people, unified under the “essential worth of every human being.”¹²

My primary contention here, then, is that hostels were significant in this rags-to-riches story, and more, they played a pivotal role in blunting the impact of the crisis of eviction and resettlement. In one of the largest oral history projects for former internees that collected forty interviews for resettlers in Chicago, San Jose, Los Angeles, and San Diego, almost half mentioned church hostels in answers to questions not tailored to prompt such responses. Of San Jose and Los Angeles interviewees, fully two-thirds remembered the hostels as significant in their resettlement experience, fifty years after

¹¹ *People in Motion*, 167

¹² “Our Work,” American Friends Service Committee, afsc.org/our-work (accessed July 6, 2013)

they had lived in them.¹³ There is plainly something significant about these hostels and the impact on their residents, however short their existence, and something particularly significant about California's hostels in the San Francisco and Los Angeles areas.

If the goal was simply to offer some Christian charity through their services, then church hostels and support in this period were an overwhelming success. Both during eviction and resettlement, hostels served as a critical stopgap in the Army's and WRA's task of getting West Coast Japanese to and from camps, and did it with a compassion and humanity that was otherwise missing from the cold bureaucracies. As I have tried to argue, however, that was not only the goal. Committing themselves to supporting the government early on during eviction translated to wholesale adoption of the WRA's dispersal and assimilation agenda, and hostels, like the internment camps, complicated that goal by concentrating, however temporarily (although for several years in some) Japanese Americans in one or a few places in cities across the United States. And in this goal, church hostels, like the WRA, did not achieve much immediate measurable success. That Nisei flatly rejected the admonition to assimilate in Chicago reverberated throughout other resettlement cities, and rather than dissolving the Little Tokyos, in California those ethnic centers experienced something of a revival.

The other argument I have tried to make, then, is that these same churches and church members who so deeply impacted the lives of the Japanese Americans they served nevertheless dedicated themselves, as most Americans did in this period, to an

¹³ Japanese American National Museum, *REgenerations Oral History Project*

unwavering support of the government in the general war effort. Publicly and privately, church members freely and generously mixed patriotic and religious language, conflating Americanism with Christianity to demonstrate their loyalty both to their country and their faith. Thus the paradox of church support in this period becomes clear, for even while these groups and individuals advocated, sought housing and employment, and generated goodwill for their Japanese American neighbors, they also voiced their strong support for the wartime government that was prosecuting the whole ordeal. There are hints toward motivation for self-insulation from the hostile population that just as readily hurled vitriol toward Japanese Americans at those who supported them. Thus the mandatory white church member in eviction hostels; the sense of “otherness” when a churchman or woman would write about the Japanese Americans as “brown-skinned”; or the full-throated push for integration to dissolve the “Little Tokyos” as ostensibly benefiting resettlers. In all these ways church support for Japanese Americans could be both supportive and palatable to the broader community, and by voicing support for the government’s various agencies these church groups could operate in two social spaces simultaneously. Indeed, the paradox of church support probably did insulate these groups from some of the bilious rhetoric thrown at Japanese Americans, and permitted them to provide the support that might otherwise have been shouted out of existence. The paradox, then, functioned more as a fine line between the desire to offer Christian charity and to do so within a racial climate that otherwise may not have permitted it.

That this paradox is supported by only fragmentary evidence of a simple desire to add some humanity to an inhumane situation is not a hollow victory; to the contrary, it is to the great credit of the churches and their members who threw their support behind the

most unpopular of ethnic groups in the worst possible racial climate immediately before and after the war. Whatever paradox their actions and language creates, their efforts are laudable for what they were: timely, tangible, empathetic support that had a lasting impact, tempered the crisis of resettlement, and helped reestablish a baseline upon which Japanese Americans could rebuild their communities, their finances, and their lives once again.

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