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## The Monterey Welcome (Episode 9)

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[0:00 - 0:09] *OtterPod Music Start*

[0:09 - 0:14] **Christian:** Hey there! Welcome to the **OtterPod!** I'm Christian Rota.

[0:14 - 0:16] **Amanda:** My name is Amanda Gaffney.

[0:16 - 1:09] **Christian:** And you are listening to “*The Monterey Welcome: Return of the Japanese American Incarcerees.*” Today we’ll be looking at the reception the Japanese received once they were allowed to return home in 1945 after their long, racially-motivated incarceration. Our story will begin in Salinas, a city in Monterey County, whose residents came together to organize *against* the returning Japanese Incarcerees. While this kind of response was pretty typical in cities along the West Coast, the Salinas community was uniquely motivated by competition over land and farming. Now what makes this entire story so interesting is in how the rest of the Monterey community reacted in response to the Salinas resistance. On May 11, 1945, a petition was published in the local paper that actually welcomed back the returning Japanese and supported their return.<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> O'Donnell, W. M. "The Democratic Way Of Life For All." *Monterey Peninsula Herald*. May 11, 1945.

[1:09 - 1:32] **Christian:** With some help from two local historians that we interviewed, Tim Thomas<sup>2</sup>, a fisheries historian, and Larry Oda<sup>3</sup>, a Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) member and former president, we will travel back to explore the social climate around that time. We'll look into the motivations behind the Salinas and Monterey responses and try to figure out why the Monterey community was so welcoming to the Japanese Americans.

[1:32 - 1:35 ] *OtterPod Music Break*

[1:35 - 1:49] **Amanda:** On April 23, 1945, an organization named The Monterey Bay Council on Japanese Relations published an anonymous article in the Monterey Peninsula Herald under the headline: "*Organization to Discourage Return of Japanese to the Pacific Coast.*"<sup>4</sup>

**Organization to Discourage Return Of Japanese to the Pacific Coast**

Articles of Incorporation of Monterey Bay Council on Japanese Relations have been duly approved by the State of California.

General Purposes of the Corporation are:

- To conduct by all proper and lawful means an educational program regarding the background, history, pre-war activities, and future disposition of Japanese in the United States of America.
- To exercise all legal means:
  - To discourage the return to the Pacific Coast of any person of Japanese ancestry, except those in the uniform of the Armed Services and those of unquestioned loyalty to the United States and our people.
  - To insist upon the deportation after the War of all alien Japanese whose beliefs make impossible their loyalty to the United States and those whose past affiliation or actions have demonstrated interest inimical to the welfare of the United States.
  - To insist upon the strict supervision and regulation by local, State and Federal government of all Japanese schools, societies, and organizations in this country.
  - To promote further legislation and insist upon strict enforcement of existing laws so as to completely eliminate dual citizenship.
  - To strengthen and demand strict enforcement of existing alien land laws.
  - To insist upon institution of excheat proceedings in all proper cases.
- In general to do all things, or all things necessary, suitable, or proper for any and all of the above purposes, or anything which the Board of Directors may from time to time deem conducive or expedient for the protection of the corporation.

That said corporation does not contemplate pecuniary gain or profit to the members thereof.

That the county in the State of California where the principal office for the transaction of the business of the corporation is to be located, is the County of Monterey, State of California.

That the number of directors of this corporation shall be twenty five, unless and until changed by a by-law regularly adopted by the members thereof, but in no case shall the number of directors be less than three.

That there shall be but one class of membership, namely, regular memberships, all of whom shall have equal property rights in the assets of this corporation upon liquidation, and all members shall have equal voting rights, each member possessing one vote.

That all members of the corporation shall be exempt from assessment and the corporation and its Board of Directors shall be without power to levy any assessment or assessments upon the members.

**MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**  
MONTEREY BAY COUNCIL ON JAPANESE RELATIONS, INC.  
P. O. BOX 382, SALINAS, CALIFORNIA

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ (Print clearly)  
ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_ (St.) \_\_\_\_\_ (City) \_\_\_\_\_ (State)  
Due in Amount of \$1 accompany this application.  
Signature \_\_\_\_\_  
Upon acceptance, membership card will be issued by the secretary.

**Monterey Bay Council on Japanese Relations, Inc.**

<sup>2</sup> Gaffney, Amanda, Sat Kartar Khalsa, and Christian Rota. Tim Thomas Zoom Interview. Personal, November 14, 2021.

<sup>3</sup> Gaffney, Amanda, Sat Kartar Khalsa, and Christian Rota. Larry Oda Zoom Interview. Personal, November 14, 2021.

<sup>4</sup> O'Donnell, W. M. "Organization to Discourage Return of Japanese to the Pacific Coast." *Monterey Peninsula Herald*. April 23, 1945.

[1:49 - 2:11] **Christian:** The organization's stated purposes were to "conduct . . . an education program regarding the background, history . . . and future disposition of Japanese in the United States of America." Their goal was to stop the Japanese from returning to the Pacific Coast and encourage the establishment of strict legislation designed to restrict and discourage them.

[2:11 - 2:17] **Amanda:** But what was the motivation behind Salinas' decision to discourage the Japanese from returning home? Here are Tim and Larry to explain.

[2:17 - 2:21] **Tim:** Really it's about land. That's really what it was all about.


[2:21 - 3:20] **Larry:** Salinas was known as the Salad Bowl of the world. For the amount of lettuce and other green vegetables that were grown there. And the fact is that, over half of the crop was grown by Japanese farmers, who only had, I think 40% of the land. So they were very productive and the other farmers in the Salinas Valley saw that, you know, here all the vegetables were coming out of these little farms. Their farms were much larger, but they couldn't produce that number of crop, I guess. So in my mind they were jealous. And they thought that, well, you know if we can get that land we can be the ones growing the most crops. They saw the opportunity to seize that land, you know, when the Japanese were taken away.

[3:20 - 3:24] *OtterPod Music Break*

[3:24 - 4:09] **Amanda:** Where Salinas was openly hostile when it came to the Japanese returning home, Monterey reacted in a much different way. Just two days after the anti ad was published, the Herald began receiving letters to the editor from readers who objected to the ideas put forward by this organization. Several letters were published in the days that followed. One of these letters from April 26, 1945 quoted officials that acknowledged the mixed motives of the anti-Japanese movements in California. Austin E. Anson, a lobbyist for a shipper-grower association is quoted as saying,

"We're charged with getting rid of the Japs for selfish reasons." and the Chairman of the Board of Supervisors of Santa Barbara Country is quoted as saying, "We don't want to see the time return when we have to compete with the Japs again in this valley."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> O'Donnell, W. M. "Letter Box." *Monterey Peninsula Herald*. April 26, 1945.

<b>Letter Box</b>	guaranteed to them as American citizens.	backers to sign the announcement makes it immediately suspect.
Pacific Grove, Calif. 819 Walnut Street, April 23, 1945	In their attempt to indulge in organized activities already delegated by the people of this country, they are interfering with the processes of constitutional government. This interference should be viewed with even greater alarm than the return to California of even the disloyal Japanese, for this attempt to seize and administer the responsibilities constitutionally delegated to a legal government, by biased pressure organizations, is one of the most obvious manifestations of the Fascism we are fighting abroad and hope to defeat in this war.	Undoubtedly some of the Japanese and Japanese-Americans were disloyal. These have been screened out. The remainder who are citizens have suffered patiently—a denial of their constitutional rights. The Supreme Court and the Army have both determined that the time of this denial has ended, that these people can return, that we are in no danger from them. It is our duty not to prevent their return. An organization such as this attempts to deny a right. Acting thus against one racial group it works toward the decay of constitutional rights for us all.
Editor, the Herald Dear Sir:	The Monterey Bay Council on Japanese Relations, Inc. should be viewed with infinitely more alarm by an alert community, than all the Japanese in America.	Yours very truly, Homer R. Levinson
On page 5 of the April 23, 1945 edition of your paper are two large announcements. One is an appeal for funds and memberships by the Monterey Bay Council of Japanese Relations, Inc. The other is a P. G. and E., sponsored article (advertisement) "Prayer of Peace," a prayer for success at the United Nations Security Conference at San Francisco.	Respectfully, Ruth Speakman	<b>DRY YARN</b> HELENA, Mont., April 25 (AP)—Police found a man sprawled out in a vacant lot during a rainstorm. Officer Martin Foley gave this description at the city jail: "This gentleman is drying out—internally and externally."
We like to presume that it was not accidental that these announcements appeared side by side.	Carmel, Calif. April 24, 1945	<b>FIRE RAZES NAZI LEGATION</b> LISBON, April 25 (UP)—A fire of undetermined origin swept the German legation quarters here today.
The purpose of either would eliminate the other.	Editor, the Herald:	<b>P</b> <b>JUST</b>
Take your choice.	Dear Sir:	
It is time to stand up and be counted.	Regarding the ad inserted in last night's Herald by the Monterey Bay Council on Japanese Relations.	Date of first publication: April 23, 1945. Date of last publication: May 4, 1945.
Make ours "Prayer of Peace."	The title sounds upright, even cordial. Its wording conceals nicely the organization's purpose as stated in the headline: "to Discourage Return of Japanese to the Pacific Coast." The careful phrasing of the entire ad carries out this ambiguity. It leaves an initial impression of sincerity that gives scope for anything from vilification on down. The whole thing is weasel worded. And the failure of any of the scheme's	
Sincerely yours, Charles C. Butler	LEGAL NOTICE	
507 Bennet Street Pacific Grove, Calif. April 23, 1945	IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA, IN AND FOR THE COUNTY OF MONTEREY.	
Editor, the Herald:	Dear Sir:	
I am convinced that it is the duty of every American citizen who is aware of the nature of the liberties guaranteed to an American citizen under the American constitution to promptly express opposition to the Monterey Bay Council on Japanese Relations, Inc., recently organized in Salinas.	In the Matter of the Estate of ANNA T. OLSEN, also known as ANTOINETTE OLSEN, and also known as ANNA TONETTE OLSEN, Deceased.	
There is, first of all, no necessity for the formation of any organization of private citizens for the objectives advertised at such great expense from funds of unknown origin. Every American of Japanese ancestry has over a long period of time been under the direct surveillance of both the Department of Justice of the United States and the army of the United States, either or both of which can be relied upon by the citizenry to keep under surveillance and in confinement any individuals whom they have even the slightest reason to mistrust as dangerous to the country. All Japanese-American released have already proved to governmental authorities their loyalty to this country.	NOTICE OF HEARING PETITION FOR PROBATE OF WILL A document purporting to be the last will and testament of ANNA T. OLSEN, also known as Antoinette Olsen, and also known as Anna Tonette Olsen, deceased, having been produced and filed in this court together with a petition for probate thereof, and for letters testamentary to be granted and issued to Alice H. Lepfert, said petition is hereby set for hearing by the Court on Monday, the 7th day of May, 1945, at 10:30 o'clock a.m. of that day, at the courtroom of said court, in the courthouse at Salinas, Monterey County, California, at which time and place any person interested may appear and contest said will and file objections to writing to the granting of said petition.	
It is both unnecessary and unconstitutional for any group of private citizens to attempt to take into their hands the responsibility of surveillance over the loyalty of another group, a responsibility legally delegated to government, or to attempt to deprive them by means legal or illegal of liberties	By JOSEPHINE QUATRINI, Clerk. EMMETT G. McHENAMIN, Deputy. JOHN MILTON THOMPSON 128 Bonifacio Place Monterey, California Attorney for Petitioner.	

**[4:09 - 4:14] Amanda:** Given this anti-Japanese sentiment, those writing in to the editor to object also felt the need to take it further.

**[4:14 - 5:30] Tim:** Monterey is very unique; this is the only place we know of on the West Coast where this happened. Where there was a real output to try to welcome the Japanese community home. This was done mainly by women, it was a small group of women led by a woman named Toni Jackson. Toni was a pretty political person, she was very progressive and when this organization from Salinas sent out this notice in the local newspaper, that they were trying to stop the Japanese from returning home to the West Coast. She was so incensed that they created this group, again, mostly women, where they went around the Monterey Peninsula gathering signatures to welcome the Japanese community home. Guaranteeing their full Democratic Rights as American Citizens and they gathered close to 600 signatures. But what gets me is the people, you don't... the names you don't recognise. The, you know, the working class people who took a lot of chances in some cases, to sign that petition. Especially in 1945.

**[5:30 - 5:33] OtterPod Music Break**

**[5:33 - 5:56] Christian:** Signing the petition was a dangerous risk to take. The people who put their names on that list risked drawing the attention of the anti-Japanese members of the community. If someone like your boss didn't support the Japanese return and saw your name on

there, you were at risk of losing your job. Signing meant potentially jeopardizing both your financial security and reputation.

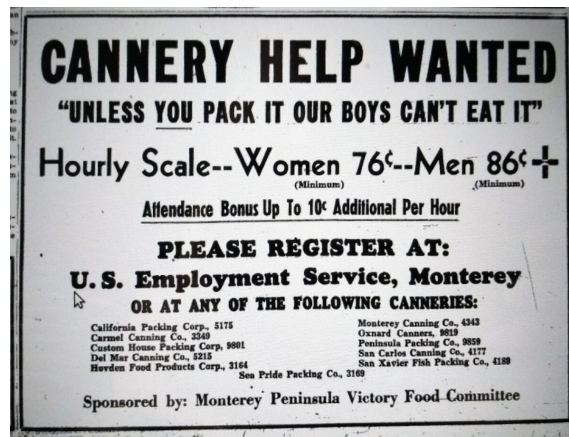
**[5:56 - 6:00]** *OtterPod Music Break*

**[6:00 - 6:28]** **Amanda:** Apart from putting their reputations on the line, our guests shared stories of the participants who signed taking other steps to actively support the Japanese return. This included helping them get new jobs or getting their jobs back. More support came from the Japanese community itself. Many stayed at the JACL until they could find new working and living arrangements, for example. Our guests shared these stories, about how the community was involved beyond the petition, with us. Tim and Larry talked with us about what made Monterey such a uniquely welcoming community.

**[6:29 - 7:23]** **Tim:** It's a small community, that's a big part of it. In Monterey it was fishing, not farming, and everybody was affected by the fishing industry one way or another. Everybody worked in it, one way or another. And they all, these guys, these Japanese boys, these Italian boys, they all grew up together, they all went to school together, they all played together and so they all knew each other, They relied on each other in a lot of ways. The Canaries in particular really relied on the Japanese help, working in the canaries or the big demand for Sardines during the war years and after the war. They really wanted those workers to come back to work in those canaries. And there was some resistance, there were letters that were written to The Herald that

they were coming back to work in there. But all about the economics, really; I mean, they were bringing in money. So they were welcome back.

[7:23 - 7:37] **Amanda:** We can see the demand for workers reflected in the “Help Wanted” ads published in the local paper, as well. One ad appeals to the reader's patriotism, noting that if workers don't participate in the industry the soldiers won't have any fish to eat.<sup>6</sup>



[7:37 - 7:40] *OtterPod Music Break*

[7:40 - 7:56] **Christian:** Now Monterey definitely wasn't the only fishing community in California and if it was just the Japanese presence in the industry then surely we would have seen a similar welcome from other places. But what made Monterey so different was their unique union structure.

[7:56 - 8:36] **Tim:** In the fishing world, Monterey at that time is the only place that I know of where the fishermen actually had one Union. So, other parts of California, all the ethnic groups

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<sup>6</sup> O'Donnell, W. M. "Cannery Help Wanted." *Monterey Peninsula Herald*, 1945.



had separate Unions; Monterey they had one, and that's primarily because, as I mentioned, this was a small town. The guys all knew each other. They all played [and] went to school together. It wasn't uncommon for the Japanese boys, when they were growing up, to first learn to speak some Italian before you learn to speak English. ...and those Italian boys who first learn some Japanese before they learn to speak English. That was pretty common. I don't know [any other] place in California where that happened, but here.

**[8:37 - 8:56] Christian:** So unlike many other places around California, the people of Monterey really interacted with and worked alongside the Japanese as fellow community members. It was a really good example of the American melting pot in action. But there was actually one other thing that brought the community together. The classic American pastime of baseball.

**[8:56 - 8:59] Tim:** They all played baseball together.

**[9:00 - 9:17] Larry:** That's where they learned each other's language. The interaction when you're playing baseball and someone says something and you say 'What's that mean?'. It builds a community.

**[9:17 - 9:23] OtterPod Music Break**

**[9:23 - 9:59] Christian:** And with that, we're back to the May petition. The strong integration of the Japanese into the community is the biggest reason why Toni Jackson and the other petitioners

got together to welcome the Japanese home. They weren't competing with the Japanese over land like the farmers in Salinas. Instead, they were trying to work together, spurred on by the demands of the fishing industry and a shared sense of community. The LetterBox letters they sent and the petitions they signed were all in service of bringing the Japanese Americans back home. A real Monterey Welcome.

**[9:59 - 10:07]** *OtterPod Music Break*

**[10:08 - 10:34]** **Amanda:** Executive producers of the Otterpod are Dr. Sara Salazar Hughes and Dr. Chrissy Lau. Theme music by Eric Mabrey. Our hosts are Christian Rota and Amanda Gaffney. Audio editing done by Christian Rota and Sat Kartar Khalsa, and our script writers and researchers are Sat Kartar Khalsa, Christian Rota, and Amanda Gaffney. We'd also like to give a special thanks to our guest historians and interviewees Tim Thomas, Larry Oda, and Sandy Lydon.

**[10:35 - 10:54]** **Amanda:** If you'd like to learn more about these events, you can go to the OtterPod site where we'll provide links to library news archives, JACL, Museums, pdf's of the news articles/letters referenced, and a transcript of this Podcast. Also look out for the upcoming documentary on the Monterey Petition titled, "Enduring Democracy: The Monterey Petition" coming soon in 2022. <sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>"Enduring Democracy: The Monterey Petition." JACL Monterey Peninsula California, March 21, 2018. <https://jaclmonterey.org/2017/11/05/documentary-update/>.

[10:55 - 11:06] *OtterPod Music Break*

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For more information:

- Monterey Library News Archives  
([https://monterey.org/services/library/education\\_research/historical\\_newspapers.php](https://monterey.org/services/library/education_research/historical_newspapers.php))
- JACL Website (<https://jacl.org/>)
- JACL Monterey Hall and Museum (<https://jaclmonterey.org/>)