



The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus

in-depth critical analysis of the forces shaping the Asia-Pacific...and the world.

Satsuki Ina's *From a Silk Cocoon*, Japanese-American Incarceration Resistance Narratives, and the Post 9/11 Era

By Jean Miyake Downey

"Every Nisei should be unalterably opposed to mass evacuation. Some Nisei Americans publicly encourage voluntary evacuation as a symbol of loyalty. Voluntary evacuation by the Nisei is a false idea of loyalty and is a betrayal of their inherited rights. We should not be so eager to give ground at the first threat to our civil liberties but should struggle to hold on to those inalienable privileges to which we are entitled. In trying periods, such as the crisis we are now experiencing, false gods will appear to advise us. They will attempt to weaken us and then destroy us by subtle preachments and soothing promises for our submission. Whatever promises are made for us beyond the Sierras should not undermine our stern resolve to fight the good fight here where destiny has placed us. We ought not to barter our birthright for gold."

-- James Omura, "The Passing Show"

"The names, faces, emotions of fellow human beings, especially children, can convey a message that no history book can. It is through this humanizing process that empathy occurs and therein hope for our humanity."

-- Satsuki Ina, producer of *Children of the Camps* and *From a Silk Cocoon*



Film poster of *From a Silk Cocoon*.

The haunting sounds of shakuhachi music and poet Lawson Inada's resonant narration underscore the powerful emotional and moral reverberations of the Ina family's American diasporan story, told in Dr. Satsuki Ina's evocative documentary, *From a Silk Cocoon*. The film describes her father's upbringing as a *kibei*, a Japanese-American educated in Japan; his hastened return to the United States because of parental fear that he would be drafted into the Imperial Japanese military; his marriage to a beautiful *kibei*, born in Seattle and educated in Nagano; and the profound damage perpetrated by the U.S. government on the young couple during their devastating four years of incarceration during the Second World War because of their ethnic heritage. The Inas spent two years at [Topaz Internment Camp](#), in Utah before they were separated and Satsuki Ina's father was sent to a Department of Justice internment camp in Bismarck, North Dakota with other so-called "enemy aliens" while Ina, her mother, and brother were sent to [Tule Lake Segregation Center](#), a maximum-security prison for those who either refused or said "no" to a loyalty questionnaire.

The award-winning filmmaker's second documentary joins fifty years of Japanese American counternarratives challenging prevailing views about the incarceration experience. Arthur A. Hansen, professor of history at California State University, Fullerton, asserts that the widespread misperception persists, even after the passage of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, that the Japanese American removal was "justified on the grounds of wartime security, generally humane in its implementation, passively conformed to by Americans of Japanese ancestry, and limited in significance to the period of U.S. participation in World War II." This may be due in large part to sketchy and even misleading treatment in American history textbooks.



Dr. Satsuki Ina, with members of her film production

team, including her niece, Kimberly Ina, and Emery Clay, accept a Northern California Emmy for "From a Silk Cocoon", at the San Francisco Palace of Fine Arts, on May 20, 2006.

In "[Remembering 'The Good War' The Atomic Bombing and the Internment of Japanese-Americans in U.S. History Textbooks](#)", a longitudinal analysis of American history texts, historian Mark Selden points out the omission of the protesters in textbooks that frame the Japanese Americans as a loyal "model minority" who accepted this mass abuse of rights without question:

"But not a single text mentions the fierce Japanese and Japanese-American resistance against the violation of their constitutional rights. In particular, there is no reference to the members of the "Fair Play Committee" who refused U.S. demands to register for the draft so long as Japanese and Japanese-Americans were deprived of their constitutional rights..."

"And not a single text hints at the existence of the fierce struggle waged by internees who demanded repatriation to Japan, refusing to declare allegiance to a nation that imprisoned them solely for having committed the crime of being born Japanese..."

"And none discusses the U.S. government apology and reparations to Japanese-Americans four decades after the war in terms of the movement for justice by Japanese-Americans and others..."

"In eliminating the terrain of resistance and social conflict we are left with the image of a U.S. government that moved in mysterious ways to right a gross violation of the rights of one of its hyphenated minorities and to reify the image of Japanese-Americans as a model minority, one that rallied unanimously to the national cause and fought heroically for the United States against Japan in World War II, even as their parents, grandparents, brothers, and sisters passed the war in the camps. It is an analysis that distorts fundamental elements of the Japanese-American experience and deprives substantial elements of the community of agency and history."

Japanese-Americans, especially survivors and descendants of the incarceration, have addressed these omissions. In doing so, they have shifted post-incarceration activism from the political level of achieving redress to an ideological level, insisting on the inclusion of their perspectives and voices in shaping the history of this period. As they continue to engage in the rediscovery of their history, they bring a light to a broad range of resistance, ranging from the creation of counternarratives to noncooperation through draft resistance. Satsuki Ina's father, Itaru, participated at both levels, as Ina is doing, in telling her parents' story.

"From *A Silk Cocoon* tells the story of the frightening and tragic outcome resulting from the wartime hysteria and racial profiling that occurred in the name of 'military necessity.' Chilling similarities in government decision-making, euphemistic language, and suspension of constitutional and human rights in the name of national security are echoed in today's post 9/11 America. This film puts a human face and heart to a historical incident that should never be forgotten, lest it be repeated again," Satsuki Ina counsels.

"It is our hope that by sharing this story we will not only educate, but inspire and strengthen community commitment to live by our cherished democratic principles, especially in time of great social anxiety."

Since 9/11, challenges to civil liberties, attacks on dissent, and the spectre of racial profiling, have all put a spotlight on the seemingly parallel history of the Japanese North American incarceration, as people reexamine that period for insights about the present. Important perspectives may be gleaned not only by examining the multiple contexts leading up to suspension of the civil liberties of Japanese Americans, but also by exploring the Japanese American patterns of resistance that eventually culminated in the historical rectification of governmental abuse of power.

Even while most Japanese Americans outwardly conformed to their incarceration, they engaged in subtle levels of resistance through creative acts. Personal narratives, the visual arts, and music have universally constituted alternative forms of resistance, from African American slave narratives, spirituals, and blues to the [Plains Indians' Ghost Dance of 1890](#) to [European Holocaust diaries and letters](#). Similarly, many Japanese-American prisoners, of all ages, sought to document their experience as they saw it. In so doing, they created spontaneous counternarratives to the official framing of the incarceration. Through journaling, haiku, drawings, and surreptitious photography using smuggled cameras, their words, images, and perspectives have defied attempts to spin, minimize, and even erase their experience.

The late [David Tatsuno's](#) illegally filmed and poignant home movie, [A View from Topaz](#), documented daily life in the desolate Topaz internment camp. The camera was smuggled into the camp by the supervisor of the dry goods store where Tatsuno worked – the men shared YMCA ties. Mayumi Hayashi's 1996 ["Family Album Project"](#) features photographs taken with contraband cameras. Visual artists [Mine Okubo](#), author of *Citizen 13660*, and Estelle Ishigo Peck, an Anglo-American, who followed her husband into incarceration, both relentlessly documented their experiences, leaving creative records contrasting the starkness of incarceration life with the two women's affirmative humanity. Oscar-nominated filmmaker [Steven Okazaki](#) documented Peck's life in his moving documentary, [Days of Waiting](#). Visual artist [Roger Shimomura](#) has created a challenging visual memoir of life at Minidoka Relocation Center and postwar anti-Asian racism.

It took almost half a century for Japanese Americans to prove that racial profiling, not military necessity, was the real reason for their incarceration.

[Michi Weglin's](#) 1976 *Years of Infamy: The Untold Story of America's Concentration Camps* pioneered the undoing of the official framing of the mass removal as justified by national security. Thereafter, legal historian Peter H. Irons, author of the 1993 *Justice at War: The Story of the Japanese American Internment Cases*, discovered evidence of fraud in the original case of Fred Korematsu, who refused to cooperate in the removal. Korematsu, Gordon Hirabayashi and Minoru Yasui, respectively challenged the constitutionality of the presidential order authorizing incarceration. All three cases reached the U.S. Supreme Court in the 1940's and all lost when the court upheld the order each time. However, armed with Irons' research showing that the solicitor general deliberately withheld critical evidence, including military intelligence concluding that Japanese Americans did not pose a threat to national security, Korematsu, and the others were able to reopen their cases. All eventually prevailed, beginning with Korematsu in 1983. Dorothy Ehrlich, executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Northern California stressed, "If it had not been for Fred Korematsu, the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II...would have been just a footnote in our history books."

Also in 1983, a unanimous federal commission concluded that the incarceration policies were not a matter of military necessity, and, instead stemmed from "race prejudice, war hysteria and a failure of political leadership." [The Civil Liberties Act of 1988](#) declared the incarceration "a grave injustice," authorized reparations, and finally acknowledged the constitutional violations perpetrated against the Japanese Americans.

Without this official acknowledgment of governmental wrongdoing, Japanese American incarceration resistance would have remained historical examples of "disloyalty," instead of being recovered, and finally recognized as examples of unyielding loyalty to American constitutional principles, in the tradition of anti-slavery abolitionists before them and Civil Rights Movement activists after them.

For Ina, life lessons about racism and justice emerged out of the crucible of her early childhood in Tule Lake Segregation Center located in a northern California desert, just south of Oregon.

The imprisonment and resistance of the Japanese-Americans in this desert landscape eerily echoed earlier history in reverse. Tule Lake, a land of ancient volcanic eruptions, especially a luminous underground cavern, Fern Cave, held deep spiritual significance for its first people, [the Modoc](#), who arrived around 0 C.E. When European-American settlers came to California during the mid-1800's Gold Rush, they seized this desert land and the U.S. Army forcibly relocated

the Modoc to a reservation in southern Oregon in 1864. A Modoc group escaped to Tule Lake and refused to return to the reservation. Hiding in the terrain's [black lava beds](#), they fought the U.S. Cavalry's attempts to [forcibly return them](#) until they were overcome. Survivors were executed, returned to the reservation, or marched to Oklahoma.

This place where U.S. soldiers had cleared out over a millennia of Modoc history etched into the earth became the site of hastily built barracks housing a new generation of forcibly relocated people. Born in this desert prison, Ina's earliest, most primal memories were of her parents' fear, anger, and heartbreak.

Her parents, Itaru and Shizuko, striking, even glamorous newlyweds, were first-generation American citizens who loved the United States. They also loved Japan, where family and friends remained behind. True cosmopolitan and bilingual Americans, they traveled back and forth between the two countries. Itaru was an accomplished calligrapher who wrote haiku. Shizuko, before she married Itaru, represented Japan as a "Silk Girl" in the 1939-40 World's Fair. Their lives seemed to be charmed until their world was shattered in just one day, when soldiers with guns forced them from their homes and relocated them to a horsetrack stable converted into an assembly center for Japanese Americans.



Ina Family at Tule Lake Concentration Camp-Tulelake, California, 1946. Shizuko Ina with Kiyoshi (3) and Satsuki (1 1/2).

According to [Anupam Chander](#), a University of California, Davis law professor, in "Legalized Racism: The Internment of Japanese Americans," the removals "flouted nearly every provision of the Bill of Rights of the U.S. Constitution" and grew out of "rampant anti-Asian sentiment in the pre-war period...by those seeking racial cleansing of the Japanese Americans from the West Coast."

Despite disagreement by government leaders, including FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, Lieutenant General John L. DeWitt, head of the Western Defense Command, and others prevailed in demanding deportation. DeWitt's racist talking points were "A Jap's a Jap," and "enemy race." He testified to Congress, "There is no way to determine their loyalty...we must worry about the Japanese all the time until he is wiped off the map." The media, including Walter Lippmann, joined in inflaming "Yellow Peril" fears. Popular culture also promoted racist stereotypes. In 1942, Twentieth Century Fox released *Little Tokyo, U.S.A.* portraying Japanese Americans as a "vast army of volunteer spies" and "blind worshippers of their Emperor."

Despite the fact that there was not one instance of sabotage by Japanese-Americans before or during the war, DeWitt twisted this fact to argue for incarceration. "There are indications that the very fact that no sabotage has taken place to date is a disturbing and confirming indication that such action will be taken."

Attorney General Francis Biddle succumbed to federal lawyers who advised "that the removal would be constitutional because, to white Western (Occidental) people, all Japanese look alike: 'Since the Occidental eye cannot readily distinguish one Japanese resident from another, effective surveillance of the movements of particular Japanese residents suspected of disloyalty is extremely difficult if not practically impossible.'" The government did not apply the same argument to American detainees of Italian and German heritage, even though they were able to blend into the Anglo-American populace. They, instead, were given hearings to determine their loyalty on a case-by-case basis and not incarcerated, en masse, simply by reason of ethnicity.

On February 19, 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, authorizing "the Secretary of War ... the power to exclude any and all persons, citizens and aliens, from designated areas in order to provide security against sabotage, espionage and fifth column activity," according to *Personal Justice Denied: Report of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians* (1997). Three weeks later, he signed Executive Order 9102 establishing War Relocation.

For Ina's parents, numb disbelief shifted to shock when they realized that the government had sent them to live in horse stables at a racetrack. Photographs at the [Virtual Museum of the City of San Francisco](#) reflect the "horrific and primitive conditions" at the Tanforan Assembly Center in San Francisco. At the stables, the Inas were told to use manure-laced straw to fill body bags, which would be their "beds." For the rest of her life, Shizuko could not shake physical memories of queasiness that would bring back that day.

Her mother's intermittent nausea became part of Ina's everyday reality as a toddler. Her life also included the extreme emotions of the adults and children around her who suffered from demoralization, a sense of loss of continuity between the past and the future, hopelessness, grief, and pining for relief -- natural responses to what would become four years of betrayal of patriotic trust, imprisonment behind barbed wire fences, guards in turrets, dust storms, shifting extremes in daily temperature, inadequate food, overcrowded rooms, beatings of dissidents by guards with baseball bats, and an indeterminate future.

As an adult, Ina became a psychologist, seeking to heal the profound injuries that she, her family, and others suffered. During her practice, she began to realize that she and other former inmates suffered from a collective form of [chronic post traumatic stress](#).

Collective post traumatic stress disorder refers to the feelings, thoughts, actions and physical reactions of individuals who experienced a collective trauma that overwhelmed their coping abilities. Psychologist Kai Erikson defined collective trauma as a "blow to the basic tissues of social life that damages the bonds attaching people together and impairs the prevailing sense of community." A repetitive phenomenon in world history, often stemming from abuse of state power or war, examples include African American slavery; the genocide of indigenous peoples; Ireland under British colonization; the European Holocaust; the Nanjing Massacre and other wartime atrocities; South African apartheid; the Soviet Gulag; the Cultural Revolution; and the 9/11 attack.

Attempts toward recovery include creation of memorials; seeking and telling the truth about the multiple consequences of collective injuries; the use of creative arts to work through emotions; and helping others who have been similarly wounded. Rectification of past injuries and action to prevent possible future repetition of similar injury are also part of the collective healing process.

Satsuki Ina feels compelled to share what she has learned about scapegoating, racial profiling, and collective trauma with others. "Both of the documentaries I

have made were motivated by the hope that the experience of the Japanese Americans will serve as a lesson to be learned about the human consequences of race hatred, war, and the failure of political leadership. There's so much to be learned from this experience. I don't think this is just about Japanese Americans. It's about how profoundly damaging racism is."

During decades as a community therapist for former Japanese American prisoners and their children, she discovered the healing power of creating coherent life narratives in helping people gain mastery over the fragmented memories and debilitating emotions that accompany trauma.

She became a [filmmaker](#) to bring the power of the narrative to a collective, even global level, as the scope of her concern enlarged from directly healing Japanese American survivors, to telling the world about the traumatic consequences of racism and racial profiling. Her films hold broadly relevant lessons revealing why dominant groups are compelled to scapegoat others and the lasting psychological effects of institutional racism.

"From a social psychology perspective, there is an ever-increasing level of societal anxiety as a result of war, economic threat, and diminishing resources. The way to bind that anxiety is often to find a scapegoat to direct all the fear and anger. This process often requires that the scapegoated group be dehumanized so that inhumane treatment can be justified. Pearl Harbor was not the beginning of anti-Japanese hostility, there is clear historic evidence that anti-Asian sentiment in America was very strong many years leading up to the war," Ina explained.

[Dr. Derald Sue](#), a multicultural psychologist at Columbia University, argues that racist extremists do not do as much damage to a society as "ordinary" people who are unaware of their sense of supremacy. He explains that those responsible for the Japanese American incarceration were not members of white supremacist extremist organizations, but were, instead ordinary people -- political leaders, journalists, and citizens -- convinced that their negative, cartoonish, and melodramatic stereotypes actually mirrored the "reality" of Japanese Americans.

Sue's views correspond with those of moral philosopher [Emmanuel Levinas](#), whose writings are at the center of the multicultural canon. Levinas asserted that every individual is unique, thus ought not be reduced to the supposed characteristics of any group to which that person might belong. Unfortunately, a popular view of multiculturalism reduces it to collective kitsch, equating individuals with static and simplistic cultural stereotypes. Such perception leaves no room for any kind of nuanced thought, including intercultural hybridity, diversity within cultures, and the particularity of the individual.

Ina's first film, [Children of the Camps](#), broadcast on American public television from 1999 to 2003, puts the face of children on this history, exposing the fact that over half of the 120,000 imprisoned Japanese Americans were children, including infants removed from [orphanages](#). [Densho, the Japanese-American Legacy Project](#), explains, "In the end, the U.S. media would often make no distinction between Japanese-Americans and Japanese Imperial soldiers. One *Los Angeles Times* editorial noted: 'A viper is nonetheless a viper wherever the egg is hatched...'"

[From a Silk Cocoon](#), Ina's second film unlocks memories of the incarceration:

"The discovery of a small metal box leads to the uncovering of a family story, shrouded in silence for more than 60 years. Woven through their censored letters, diary entries, and haiku poetry, is the story of a young Japanese American couple whose dreams are shattered when, months after their wedding, they find themselves held captive, first in race track horse stables and later, in tar paper barracks."

Thousands of Japanese Americans accepted what happened for diverse reasons. Not only did soldiers use the threat of deadly force for noncompliance, but the [Japanese American Citizens' League \(JACL\) encouraged unquestioning acquiescence](#), hoping that appeasement would eventually shift government policy. 13,500 incarcerated Nisei entered the U.S. Army, even as their family members remained behind barbed wire. [The all-Nisei 100th/442nd Regimental Combat Team, the "Purple Heart Battalion," became the most decorated unit](#) in American military history for its size and length of service. Their unconditional sacrifice contributed to a shift in public opinion towards all Japanese Americans. When President Truman received the 442nd on the White House lawn in July 1946, he said, "You fought not only the enemy but you fought prejudice-and you have won." Satsuki Ina's uncle is one of these proud Japanese American veterans who served in the Military Intelligence Service.

Her parents, along with thousands of others, chose to demonstrate their patriotism in a different way, insisting on the reinstatement of their constitutional rights, following the liberal democratic *quid pro quo* reciprocal tradition that established Anglo-American independence from Great Britain: "No taxation without representation." The Nisei variation: No draft without freedom.

Japanese American resistance came to a critical juncture in 1943, when the U.S. government incongruously decided to draft young men for combat at the same time it incarcerated their families. To find candidates, it forced prisoners to submit to a loyalty questionnaire, asking them to "forswear any form of allegiance or obedience to the Japanese emperor" and to affirm willingness "to serve in the armed forces of the United States on combat duty." [John Okada's](#) 1957 unflinching and nuanced novel *No-No Boy* described the moral dilemma of his protagonist, Ichiro, who could not forswear a loyalty to Japan he had never felt, and who could not fight for a country that kept him and others imprisoned without cause. Ichiro was an accidental activist, an individualist unable to compromise his honesty and sense of justice.

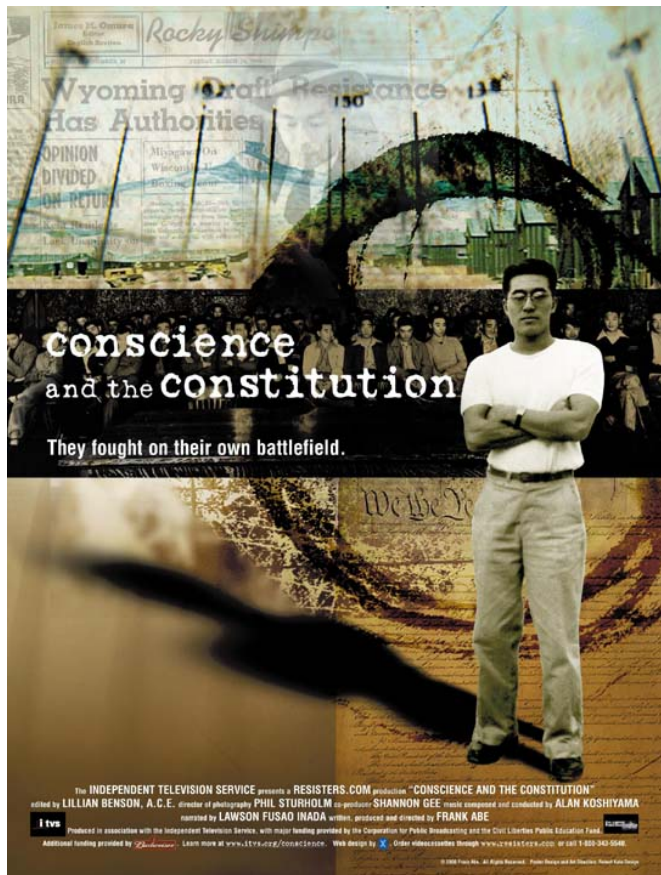


Heart Mountain Relocation Center, with Heart Mountain rising in the background. Photo: U.S. National Archives.

In contrast, the Heart Mountain Relocation Center Fair Play Committee leaders are a textbook example of organized nonviolent actionists who refused to give up their struggle, even in the face of confiscation of their property; imprisonment within a prison; censorship; and psychological pressures (name-calling and ostracism). Their protests were completely ignored by the media, except by [James Omura](#), a Nisei journalist. Although the *New York Times* published several articles about the "disloyal evacuees" at Tule Lake, it did not cover the Fair Play Committee draft resisters' trial.

Journalist and filmmaker Frank Abe's exploration into the history of incarceration resistance was inspired by his father's experience at [Heart Mountain Relocation Center](#), located in harsh, treeless northern Wyoming. Abe's 2000 documentary [Conscience and the Constitution and its comprehensive multimedia website](#) puts human faces on these remarkable dissenters and tells the stories of their lives before and after incarceration -- most died early in life, in

obscurity. However, former FPC leader Frank Emi remains an outspoken advocate against racial profiling and on behalf of civil liberties.

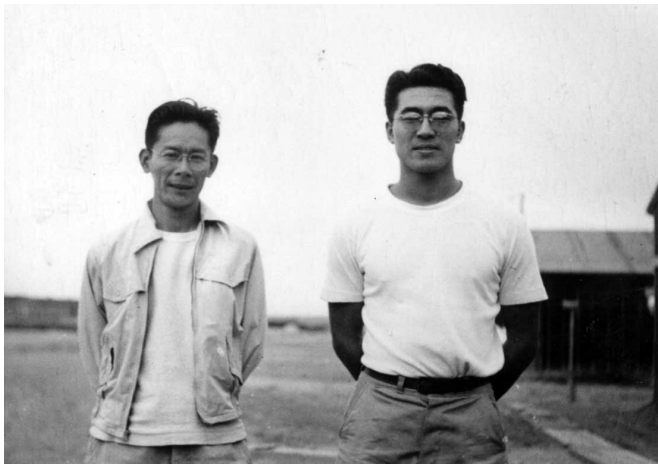


Poster of *Conscience and the Constitution*

Frank Chin's 2002 [Born in the U.S.A.](#), [Gary Okihiro's many writings](#), Abe's film, and constitutional law professor Eric Muller's 2003 [Free to Die for their Country: The Story of the Japanese American Draft Resisters in World War II](#) have resurrected the long-buried chapter in American democratic history of the Fair Play Committee leaders who used draft protest to highlight the injustice of being asked to fight on behalf of liberty by a government which imprisoned them without just cause.



Frank Emi (left) wartime leader of the Heart Mountain Fair Play Committee, shares a story during production with producer/director Frank Abe. Photo by Brian Minami. From *Conscience and the Constitution*, produced by Frank Abe for the Independent Television Series.



Frank Emi, left, leader of the Heart Mountain Fair Play Committee, with supporter Kozie Sakai, in a 1944 photo taken at the height of the draft resistance movement. Credit: from *Conscience and the Constitution*.

The Fair Play Committee [issued a statement](#) invoking American constitutional principles to underscore the patriotic nature of their dissent against governmental abuse of power:

"The Fair Play Committee believes that the first duty of every loyal citizen is to protect and uphold the Constitution of the United States. The cornerstone of this instrument of our government is JUSTICE, LIBERTY, FREEDOM, AND THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS...

"The Fair Play Committee believes it has a right to ask first a clarification of our status, and full restoration of our rights, and abolishment of the discriminatory features of the Selective Service as applied to Japanese Americans, before being drafted into the armed forces...

"Thus, to be drafted or not to be drafted, or to be loyal or disloyal, are not the questions at issue. To us, the very fundamentals of Democracy are at stake. If Democracy and Freedom are to exist in this Country, then we must uphold the ideals and principles of the Constitution and right the wrongs committed to a minority group."



The first day of the trial of the Heart Mountain draft resisters in Federal District Court, Cheyenne, Wyoming. Mits Koshiyama (center, looking down) was 19 years old when this photo was taken on June 12, 1944. Credit: *Conscience and the Constitution*.

One out of every nine men at Heart Mountain resisted the draft. In May 1944, sixty-three men were charged with draft evasion, and tried in the largest mass trial in Wyoming history. Newspaper headlines covered the "Japs on Trial" who were convicted and sentenced to jail terms. Journalist James Omura, was tried with them, charged with conspiracy to counsel draft evasion for his supportive editorials in his newspaper, the [Rocky Shimpo](#). He was acquitted on grounds of the First Amendment. By the war's end, 85 men were imprisoned for draft law violations. The total for all ten WRA camps was 315.

On Christmas Eve 1947, President Truman issued them a blanket postwar pardon. After eighteen months of imprisonment, the FPC leaders' verdict and sentencing were overturned on appeal. The disparate treatment they received, depending on their judge, reveals the complexity of the contribution of the judiciary in acting as a "check" in the American democratic system. Judge Louis Goodman dismissed indictments against seven Tule Lake draft resisters, declaring, "It is shocking to the conscience that an American citizen be confined on the ground of disloyalty and then, while so under duress and restraint, be compelled to served in the armed forces or be prosecuted for not yielding to such compulsion."

Japanese American soldiers also began protesting at about the same time the Heart Mountain group began organizing. In March, 1944, forty-three at Fort McClellan, Alabama refused to participate in combat training in protest against continued harsh treatment of their incarcerated families. Eventually, 106 soldiers were arrested for their refusal. Twenty-one were convicted and imprisoned before being paroled in 1946.

Satsuki Ina's father, Itaru, and her mother, Shizuko, were two of the No-No's demanding consistency from the U.S. government who were transferred to the harsh Tule Lake Segregation Center, the largest and most controversial of all the prison camps, with a peak population of 18,000.

According to the *From a Silk Cocoon* website, "In his speech, Itaru demands that Japanese Americans be 'treated equal to the free people' before they are required to fight in the war... In answering "no" to the questions regarding his willingness to bear arms against the enemy and disavow loyalty to the Emperor

of Japan, Itaru is identified as a trouble-maker, and he, his wife and baby son, are segregated to Tule Lake, where Satsuki is born."

The U.S. government responded to Itaru's and other dissenters' demands for the restoration of their constitutional rights by meting out harsher punishments. Michi Weglyn's *Years of Infamy* includes a photograph of a crudely built small steel cage from Manzanar, more fitting for transporting a wild animal than for imprisoning men. Smuggled grainy photographs from Tule Lake show guards with clubs dragging men. A mug shot of Itaru after he returned from the stockade reveals cuts on his face.

The history of faith-based protests to the removals has also been omitted from history texts. [Stephanie Bangarth](#), a scholar on comparative human rights advocacy during the Canadian and American incarcerations, wrote in "Religious Organizations and the 'Relocation' of Persons of Japanese Ancestry in North America: Advocating Ancestry," that faith organizations, notably some Quakers, did "advocate for oppressed people" during the Japanese North American removal. Prior to the removal, the Federal Council of Churches of Christ wrote to President Roosevelt, declaring that American prestige would be damaged by such racist policy and that loyal Japanese Americans would be "de-Americanized" as a result of an incarceration, a prediction that proved true for Satsuki Ina's parents.

Itaru and Shizuko, devastated by governmental hypocrisy and further demoralized by the "squalid housing and sanitation, unsafe working conditions, and inadequate food and medical care" at Tule Lake, renounced their American citizenship, as did [5,589 other Japanese Americans](#). The Inas were motivated not only by anger over injustice, but also by fear over their children's future in the United States. In her diary, Shizuko wrote, "Because our children have Japanese faces, I don't want them to be Americans."

Itaru associated himself with the *Hoshi Dan* (informal name of *Sokuji Kikoku Hoshi Dan*, "Organization to Return Immediately to the Homeland to Serve"), a group that re-identified with Japanese culture and advocated renunciation throughout the camp, not only because of their anger over unjust incarceration, but because they thought deportation was imminent.

Barbara Takei, co-author of [Tule Lake Revisited](#), recently discovered evidence, declassified in the 1990's, that shows government officials discussed means to encourage renunciation because they wanted to keep Japanese Americans imprisoned after the Dec. 17, 1944 announcement that the incarceration would end within the year. While constitutional protections would prevent the government from legally holding citizens indefinitely at the war's cessation, non-American citizens could be detained indefinitely.

Many Tule Lake prisoners were Issei parents who could potentially be deported to Japan when the camps closed, separating them from their American citizen children. Other prisoners feared that when the camps closed, they would be forced into hostile white communities, without housing or work opportunities. Officials cruelly spread rumors that renunciants would be allowed to remain safe in the camps, with their parents, according to a [Nichi Bei Times article](#) on Takei's report at the 2006 Tule Lake pilgrimage:

"Current mythology has it, Takei explained, that it was loyalty to Japan and/or disloyalty to the United States that inspired these people to give up their legal status..."

"The Army was planning ahead for individual detentions once the mass exclusion order was lifted," Takei explained. "Unless they came up with some legally defensible reason to continue holding people, they would be vulnerable to legal challenges to such detentions."

Takei, whose mother was incarcerated at Tule Lake while Takei's father spent the war years in Europe with the 522nd field artillery battalion that liberated Dachau, also found that officials manipulated information to shift blame for the incarceration from the government onto the resisters and renunciants, intentionally dividing members of the Japanese American community against each other, a split that lasted decades. Only recently, have these groups begun to reconcile.

Against all odds, continued resistance by a small group of stubborn Japanese Americans and a few supporters, developed into a broad movement for redress that ultimately changed the ways in which Americans would remember the suspension of the civil liberties of 120,000 Japanese Americans. The U.S. government's affirmative response to rectifying past wrongs is a model of a success in democratic society, demonstrating how a government may contribute to reconciling historical trauma stemming from abuse by the state. And, in a twist that would have shocked General DeWitt, former Japanese American prisoners and their descendants have moved beyond their role of advocates for retroactive justice to democratic watchdogs in the post 9/11 period.

Global educators are now connecting the Japanese North American incarceration and activism within [the historical continuum of international human rights history](#), not only in terms of patterns of racially motivated domination, but also in terms of historically interrelated patterns of resistance.

While at least the contours of the Japanese-American incarceration are somewhat known outside of the United States, few outside of Canada know of the parallel forced removals that took place there, also within the historical context of white supremacy. [Canada, which today markets itself to Japanese tourists as the idyllic home of the fictional "Anne of Green Gables," incarcerated 23,000 Japanese Canadians](#), most of them naturalized or Canadian-born citizens, under harsher conditions than in the United States. Men were separated from their families "to prevent the propagation of the species" and sent to work on road gangs. More than a few were housed in chicken coops. Moreover, the government did not provide schools or hospitals. Unchecked by constitutional guarantees, the Canadian government's "[White Canada" policy](#) intended to deport all Japanese Canadians, en masse, many of them Nisei who had never been to Japan and could not speak Japanese, after years of forced relocation and labor, to a destroyed and starving postwar Japan. Almost four thousand Japanese Canadians, many whom were citizens, were "repatriated" to Japan. However, widespread grassroots protests, initiated by human rights activists, journalists, and church groups, stopped the culmination of the deportation, according to Bangarth, who describes this movement as Canada's first "human rights campaign."

The Second World War incarceration and resistance to it is not just relevant to Japanese Americans and their descendants. Instead, this crucial period raises questions of contemporary relevance about the potential for politically-motivated abuses during wartime when a national government is permitted to suspend civil liberties for reasons of national security; the role of political leadership in damaging or strengthening democratic values and processes; the role that racially-motivated scapegoating plays in populist politics; the role of the media in hindering or furthering an open society; the resilient power of creative and political grassroots resistance; and the creation and healing of historical trauma.

This history also demonstrates the historically interrelated and global nature of human rights movements. The African American Civil Rights Movement not only inspired the South African Anti-Apartheid movement but also the Japanese American movement for redress. At a forum sponsored by the Asian Law Caucus at the UC Berkeley Boalt Hall School of Law entitled "Sixty Years After the Internment: Civil Rights, Identity Politics, and Racial Profiling," Dale Minami, attorney for Fred Korematsu, asserted "...the idealism of African Americans ignited the fires of the civil rights movement, which inspired Asian Americans to discover their true history...the legacy was not just the money or the apology. The legacy was the lesson it gave to America. It gave a gift to this country – a gift of education and a lesson about civil rights."

In turn, the American experience influenced the Canadian campaign for human rights to broadly protect citizens from racial and religious discrimination and to provide reparations for incarcerated Canadian-Japanese. Japanese Canadian novelist [Joy Kogawa's](#) *Obasan*, the classic literary representation of the Japanese North American incarceration for both Canadians and Americans merges imagery of Anglo-Canadian prejudice towards First Nations people with prejudice towards Japanese Canadians. Her activism, along with other Japanese Canadians, documented in poet Roy Miki's 2005 *Redress: Inside the Japanese Canadian Call for Justice* resulted in the Canadian government issuing an apology and reparations that followed the American example.



Joy Kogawa in front of [her childhood home](#) from which she and her family were forcibly removed. A Vancouver-based grassroots movement supported its purchase by The Land Conservancy of British Columbia this year for historic preservation and use as a retreat for writers on human rights and justice.

Most recently, in the post 9/11 era, Japanese American incarceration resistance history has intersected with the contemporary situation of Muslim Americans, who are enduring increasing acts of racially motivated discrimination, from the individual to the institutional level according to the [Southern Poverty Law Center](#).

Since 9/11, Japanese Americans are among those who have spoken out on behalf of human rights and due process for international detainees and they have come to the support of Arab, Muslim, and South Asian Americans who are now targets of scapegoating. Dale Minami explains, "It is like the African Americans who had to endure slavery, who had to go through segregation and violence perpetrated upon them. They gained a moral authority through their suffering and struggle to gain equal rights and dignity, and while I cannot compare our suffering to theirs, we do have a moral authority and duty to speak out. We have a duty to dissent."

In 2004, when the Supreme Court addressed the issue of whether U.S. courts could review challenges to the incarceration of mostly Afghan prisoners held at Guantanamo Bay Naval Station in Cuba, ruling that the Bush administration's policy of detaining foreign nationals without legal process at Guantanamo Bay was illegal, the late Fred Korematsu, then 84, filed a friend-of-the-court brief saying, "The extreme nature of the government's position is all too familiar."



1st Florin JACL Manzanar Pilgrimage in front of camp monument with the Sierra Nevada Mountains in background. 55 people of diverse backgrounds attended. (Photo by Mike Namba.)

In the summer of 2006, the Florin, California JACL, which has taken a lead in supporting Muslim Americans, brought together brought together fifty-five diverse Americans of Japanese, Muslim, Chinese, Jewish, Filipino, Korean, and European ancestry from the Sacramento area at the Manzanar Pilgrimage. [Andy Noguichi, Civil Rights Co-Chair](#), relates:

"A young Muslim man in our group, Mike Fauzy, unexpectedly made his way onto the stage during the open mic session. He courageously shared his fears as a Muslim American when many people ignorantly cast suspicion on his community after 9/11.

"Karen Kurasaki, Florin Chapter President, expressed the empathy felt by the audience when she called on all to support Mike Fauzy and our Muslim neighbors. People responded with a moving standing ovation."



New friends. L to R: Maren Shawesh, Florin Manzanar internee Carol Hironaka, & Dina El-Nakhal. (Photo by Marion Hironaka Cowee)

"People ask me, 'Why are you digging all this up?'" Satsuki Ina explains why she won't let this story go. "It never really got buried. It hasn't died in us yet."

This year, Ina brought her message of the profound human consequences of racial profiling and racism to her ancestral home. She and her husband traveled to Japan to screen *From a Silk Cocoon* at the annual conference of the Japanese Association of Migration Studies in Nagoya, the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan in Tokyo, and the Aichi International Women's Film Festival. Ina also visited the Komagane Silk Museum in Nagano-ken. She had met the director and curator while she was shooting footage for the documentary at the Miyasaka Silk Reeling Mill in Okaya in 2004.

"I decided to donate the silk dresses that were hand-made for her when she represented Japan as a Silk Girl for the World's Fair in 1939-40. The museum is planning a special exhibit about the Japanese Silk Trade and the Second World War, through my mother's personal story," Ina shared. "The museum is not far from where my mother was raised, where she described falling asleep listening to the rain-sound of silkworms feeding on mulberry leaves."

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