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## FESTIVALS, SPORT, AND FOOD: JAPANESE AMERICAN COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT IN POSTWAR LOS ANGELES AND SOUTH BAY

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REDEVELOPMENT IN POSTWAR LOS ANGELES AND SOUTH BAY

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A Thesis  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State University,  
San Bernardino

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts  
in  
Social Sciences and Globalization

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by  
Heather Kaori Garrett  
June 2017

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June 2017

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## ABSTRACT

This study fills a critical gap in research on the immediate postwar history of Japanese American community culture in Los Angeles and South Bay. The purpose of this thesis is to contribute research and literature of the immediate postwar period between the late 1940s resettlement period and the 1960s. During the early to mid-1940s, Americans witnessed World War II and the unlawful incarceration of over 120,000 Japanese Americans. In the 1960s, the Sansei (third generation) started to reshape the character and cultural expressions of Japanese American communities, including their development of the Yellow Power Movement in the context of the Black and Brown Power Movements in California. The period between these bookends, however, requires further research and academic study, and it is to the literature of the immediate postwar period that this thesis contributes.

Furthermore, this thesis contributes to the nearly absent literature of Japanese American community redevelopment in the transboundary Los Angeles/South Bay area. It is in this area that we find the largest and fastest growing postwar Japanese American population in the country. This community built lasting networks and relationships through the revival of cultural celebrations like Obon and Nisei Week, sport and recreation – namely baseball and bowling, and ethnic resources in the form of food and ethnic markets. These relationships laid the foundations for later social activism and the redefining of the Japanese American community. Far from a period of silence or inactivity, Japanese

Americans actively shaped and reshaped their communities in ways that refused to allow the wartime incarceration experience, so fresh in their minds, to define them.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Lastly, I would like to thank the Issei, the Nisei, and the Sansei, for without your courage, endurance, and perseverance, the Nikkei community would not be what it is today. It is you that have defined and fought for what it means to be Japanese in America. It is you that we owe our love and our gratitude.

## DEDICATION

To the Yonsei and the “hapa” – it is our turn now.



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## INTRODUCTION

During World War II, Japanese immigrants and their American-born children were forced to leave their homes and endure wartime incarceration in camps hastily built and in harsh environments based solely on their Japanese ancestry. Often cited as one of the worst large-scale violations of civil rights in United States history, Japanese American wartime history has rightly been the subject of much academic investigation. Often missed are the postwar consequences, and the expressions of the wartime effects on identity and community. This study is designed to contribute to a burgeoning and still understudied literature on the postwar resettlement period. It provides a contextualized study of the ways in which cultural practices, leisure and sport, and food played in not only reestablishing the prewar communities, but also in helping the postwar community adapt to the lingering trauma and demographic changes that were caused by – or that reflected – the wartime removal and incarceration experience.

Japanese American communities have had to define, redefine, and reestablish their identities throughout the prewar, wartime, and postwar periods. Throughout the prewar and wartime periods, it was necessary for the Issei – Japanese immigrants – to fight against institutionalized racism for the right to

American citizenship, inclusion, and residence.<sup>1</sup> Their American-born children – the Nisei – served as bridges between the Issei and American society, as well as between the Japanese and American cultures.<sup>2</sup> The Nisei also had to prove themselves. They had to defend their right to citizenship and belonging, and against segregation, questions of their loyalty, and even attempts to strip them of their U.S. citizenship. After the war, the Nisei struggled to reestablish Japanese American communities under the stress of relocation, in the shadow of wartime incarceration trauma, and in the oppressive environment of the Cold War context.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Eiichiro Azuma, *Between Two Empires: Race, History, and Transnationalism in Japanese America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Frank Chuman, *The Bamboo People: The Law and Japanese-Americans* (Del Mar: Publisher's Inc., 1976); Ian Haney-López, *White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race* (New York: New York University Press, 2006); Lon Kurashige, "The Problem of Biculturalism: Japanese American Identity and Festival before World War II," *The Journal of American History* 86, no. 4 (2000): 1632-1654; Mae Ngai, "The Architecture of Race in American Immigration Law: A Reexamination of the Immigration Act of 1924," *Journal of American History* 86, no. 1 (1999): 67-92.

<sup>2</sup> Cherstin M. Lyon, *Prisons and Patriots: Japanese American Wartime Citizenship, Civil Disobedience, and Historical Memory* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2012), 16, 18-20; David K. Yoo, *Growing Up Nisei: Race, Generation, and Culture among Japanese Americans in California, 1924-1949* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000); Vicki Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 50; Eileen H. Tamura, "Bridge of Understanding, Bridge of Straw," *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 9, no. 2 (2010): 225-231; Yuji Ichioka, "A Study of Dualism: James Yoshinori Sakamoto and the *Japanese American Courier*, 1928-1942," in *Before Internment: Essays in Prewar Japanese American History*, ed. Gordon H. Chang and Eiichiro Azuma (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 92-125.

<sup>3</sup> Greg Robinson, *After Camp: Portraits in Midcentury Japanese American Life and Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012); Lane Ryo Hirabayashi, *Japanese American Resettlement through the Lens: Hikaru Iwasaki and the WRA's Photographic Section, 1943-1945* (Denver: University Press of Colorado, 2009); Charlotte Brooks, "In the Twilight Zone between Black and White: Japanese American Resettlement and Community in Chicago, 1942-1945," *Journal of American History* 86, no. 4 (2000): 1655-1687; Thomas Linehan, "Japanese American Resettlement in Cleveland during and after World War II," *Journal of Urban History* 20, no. 1 (1993): 54-80; Yuji Ichioka, ed., *Views from Within: The Japanese American Evacuation and*

## Postwar Intermarriage and the “Hapa” Identity Crisis

There are distinct consequences of the wartime incarceration that changed the demographics of Japanese American communities that highlight the importance of the postwar period as a distinct historical moment in Japanese American History. The wartime suspicion of anything Japanese, the official pressure put on Japanese Americans by the War Relocation Authority (WRA) telling Japanese Americans not to resettle together or congregate in groups of more than three or four at a time, contributed to Nisei rejection of their own cultural identities in ways that reflected the trauma of wartime suspicion. Postwar civil rights efforts to end racially restrictive laws also coincided with this trauma. California led these efforts in many respects, including ending legal restrictions

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*Resettlement Study* (Los Angeles: University of California Resource Development and Publications, 1989); Dorothy Swaine Thomas, Charles Kikuchi, and James Minoru Sakoda, *The Salvage: Japanese American Evacuation and Resettlement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1952); Stephen S. Fugita and David J. O'Brien, *Japanese American Ethnicity: The Persistence of Community* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991); Valerie J. Matsumoto, *Farming the Home Place: A Japanese American Community in California, 1919-1982* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993); Lon Kurashige, *Japanese American Celebration and Conflict: A History of Ethnic Identity and Festival, 1934-1990* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Vicki Ruiz, *From out of the Shadows*, 50; Sidney Mintz and Richard Price, *The Birth of African American Culture: An Anthropological Perspective* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1976, 1992); Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993); Pamela Goyan Kittler and Kathryn P. Sucher, *Food and Culture* (Belmont: Wadsworth/Thompson Learning, 2004). For the literature that considers the broader context of race and ethnicity in relation to immigration and Americanization in the U.S. more generally, see: Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign Peoples at Home and Abroad, 1876-1917* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001); Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999); Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Special Sorrows: The Diasporic Imagination of Irish, Polish, and Jewish Immigrants in the United States* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1995); Oscar Handlin, *The Uprooted: The Epic Story of the Great Migrations That Made the American People* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1951); Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003).

against interracial marriage. The combination of these factors led to many Nisei marriages outside of the group, which is apparent in the multiracial Sansei generation.

Interracial marriages among the Nisei led to the complexities of an interracial generation of Sansei (third generation). The challenges the Nisei faced raising interracial children in the shadow of the wartime incarceration experience necessitated a unique redefinition of what it meant to be Japanese American. Participation in cultural celebrations, and preserving ethnic cuisines and cultural ethics, serve as means of cultural retention for a Japanese American community that was still being challenged in the long “afterlife” of the wartime incarceration experience and in the new interracial context of the pre-civil rights decade of the 1950s.<sup>4</sup>

The postwar legalization of interracial marriage changed the Japanese American community and identity. The California State Supreme Court case of *Perez v. Sharp* (1948) served as a major precedent in the later U.S. Supreme Court landmark case *Loving v. Virginia* (1967), which legalized interracial marriage nationally.<sup>5</sup> The California State Supreme Court regarded the laws

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<sup>4</sup> Karen M. Inouye, *The Long Afterlife of Nikkei Wartime Incarceration* (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2016); Karen L. Ishizuka, *Serve the People: Making Asian America in the Long Sixties* (London: Verso Books, 2016); Valerie J. Matsumoto “Sansei Women and the Gendering of Yellow Power in Southern California, 1960s-1970s,” in *Trans-Pacific Japanese American Studies: Conversations on Race and Racialization*, ed. Yasuko Takezawa and Gary Y. Okihiro (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2016), 183-209.

<sup>5</sup> *Perez v. Sharp*, 32 Cal. 2d 711 (1948); *Loving v. Virginia*, 388 U.S. 1 (1967).



against miscegenation as violations of the Fourteenth Amendment, which later led to the U.S. Supreme Court overturning the national anti-miscegenation legislation. With the legalization of interracial marriages in California just three years after the end of World War II, the Nisei (second) and Sansei (third) generations would increasingly marry outside of their race. These intermarriages have created “hapa” – racially mixed – generations.<sup>6</sup>

There are several reasons Japanese Americans chose to intermarry after *Perez v. Sharp* and *Loving v. Virginia* provided them the legal opportunity. During resettlement, the government instructed those previously incarcerated not to congregate together nor to settle in predominantly Japanese American communities.<sup>7</sup> Settling in areas where few Nikkei – Japanese immigrants and Japanese Americans – resided limited the opportunities for them to marry within their race. Some Nisei and Sansei believed that selecting a non-Japanese spouse served as a means of assimilating and shedding racial stigma through marriage. Marrying outside of the ethnic group also served as a means of

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<sup>6</sup> Cherstin M. Lyon, “Japanese and Japanese Americans, 1940-Present,” in *Immigrants in American History: Arrival, Adaptation, and Integration*, vol. 3, edited by Elliot Robert Barkan (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2013), 1063; Kip Fulbeck, *Part Asian, 100% Hapa* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, LLC., 2010); Kip Fulbeck, “The Hapa Project: Part Asian, 100% Hapa,” [theHapaProject.com](http://theHapaProject.com); also previously exhibited at the Japanese American National Museum (JANM), <http://www.janm.org/exhibits/kipfulbeck/programs/>; Lily Yuriko Nakai Havey, “What Tribe You From, Brother?” *Discover Nikkei: Japanese Migrants and their Descendants*, November 6, 2013, accessed October 4, 2016. <https://discovernikkei.org/en/journal/2013/11/6/what-tribe-you-from/>.

<sup>7</sup> Hirabayashi, *Japanese American Resettlement through the Lens*; Ichioka, *Views from Within*; Robinson, *After Camp*.

rejecting their own Japanese identities, as some felt ashamed of being Japanese because of the negative wartime association between the Japanese and the enemy. Some Nisei, but mainly Sansei, women married non-Japanese men due to the rigidity and the inequality of traditional Japanese gender roles that many Nisei and Sansei men adhered to or embraced. Others simply intermarried due to love.<sup>8</sup>

Interracial marriages between Japanese Americans and non-Japanese Americans after World War II increased at a faster rate than any other minority group in the U.S. during the postwar period, leading to a rapid corresponding increase in interracial and multi-racial children. Of the 1,148,932 people recorded in the 2000 census who claimed Japanese ancestry, nearly a third of them also claimed at least one other race.<sup>9</sup> The “hapa” Sansei and Yonsei (fourth) generations do not fit neatly into racial categories, and therefore, they often lie in the margins of both or all of their respective communities. Many of the Sansei and Yonsei still search for their personal identity, and the multiracial Japanese Americans often experience a mixed identity crisis.

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<sup>8</sup> Matsumoto, *Farming the Home Place*, 195; Ishizuka, *Serve the People*; Matsumoto, “Sansei Women and the Gendering of Yellow Power in Southern California, 1960s-1970s.”

<sup>9</sup> Lyon, “Japanese and Japanese Americans, 1940-Present,” 1063.

## The Sansei and the Yonsei

The Sansei (third) and Yonsei (fourth) generations are each significant within the Nikkei community through their differing perspectives and contributions. The Sansei, having never personally experienced the forced removal and incarceration of their parents and grandparents, still witnessed the lingering trauma caused by the war. They grew up in the wake of wartime incarceration, and later, they fought for the redress movement, the community's equality within mainstream society, and redefined what it meant to be Japanese American. The Yonsei were raised in the post-redress and -civil rights eras, and are even further removed from the repercussions of the war. It is apparent, though, at Nikkei cultural festivals and establishments, and generally within the Nikkei community, that the Sansei have passed the torch to their Yonsei children who now continue the cultural traditions, establish ethnic connections, and continuously redefine the increasingly multiracial Nikkei community.

In the late 1960s and the 1970s, the Sansei created and participated in the Yellow Power Movement, also known as the Asian American Movement, in search of their identities and place within the Nikkei community. Some Sansei visited Japan in an effort to reconnect with their Japanese roots and to define their ethnic identities but later rejected the traditional Japanese culture. The Japanese American culture in which the Sansei were raised proved vastly different from the traditional Japanese culture of their Issei grandparents. This realization drove many Sansei to search for their identity, place, and purpose

within the Nikkei community, which many discovered in the pursuit of the community's equality within the American mainstream society.<sup>10</sup>

Four decades later, one can see how important food and language is in fostering a sense of belonging and identity in social media. Pages from Facebook like "You Know You're Japanese American When..." reveal some of the struggles and conversations individuals have in relation to longing for a sense of identity, nostalgia for the past, as well as a desire for the shared experiences of being Japanese American. The page highlights cultural knowledge and tendencies, such as "You learned the words 'bakatare' [stupid, idiot, or moron], 'urusai' [bothersome or nuisance, or if yelled at you, it means shut up!], and 'yakamashii' [noisy or annoying] because you were called them by your grandparents," "You know NOT to eat the tangerine on the top of the mochi" after the New Year, and "As a kid, you used to eat Botan rice candy."<sup>11</sup> Similarly, the Hawaiian-Japanese American community has created a webpage on E-Hawaii.com titled, "You Know You're Japanese-American If...", that highlights similar anecdotes. While these instances of cultural knowledge may indeed be humorous, especially to Japanese Americans, webpages like these ultimately

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<sup>10</sup> Ishizuka, *Serve the People*; Matsumoto, "Sansei Women and the Gendering of Yellow Power in Southern California, 1960s-1970s."

<sup>11</sup> "You Know You're Japanese American When...", *Facebook*, accessed February 25, 2017, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/8020292239/>; Joni, "You Know You're Japanese American If...", *E-Hawaii.com*, accessed February 25, 2017, <http://www.e-hawaii.com/jokes/you-know-you-are-japanese-american-if>.

evidence the community's need to illustrate these shared experiences as a means of fostering identity and community. In a time in which contemporary generations – like the Sansei, Yonsei, and the young Gosei (fifth) – prove increasingly multiracial, the need to establish ethnic connections are vital to one's identity.

The Japanese American National Museum (JANM) addresses and reflects the community's need for ethnic connections through its members and its attempts to be inclusive of the multigenerational and multiracial Japanese American population. The museum has an array of nearly sixty thousand members and donors across every state in the U.S. and throughout seventeen countries.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, JANM's exhibits and events have grown increasingly inclusive of virtually all of the Japanese American populations. JANM organized and displayed Kip Fulbeck's "Part Asian: 100% Hapa" exhibit from June 8<sup>th</sup> to October 29<sup>th</sup> of 2006, and since its exhibition at JANM, the exhibit has traveled across the country and to Canada.<sup>13</sup> This exhibit sought to include and celebrate the increasingly multiracial "hapa" generations in the Japanese American community. The "Perseverance: Japanese Tattoo Tradition in a Modern World" exhibit (March 8<sup>th</sup> to September 14<sup>th</sup>, 2014), explored the influence of traditional

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<sup>12</sup> "Support the Museum," *Japanese American National Museum*, accessed March 2, 2017, <http://www.janm.org/membership/>.

<sup>13</sup> Kip Fulbeck, "Part Asian: 100% Hapa," *Japanese American National Museum*, accessed March 2, 2017, <http://www.janm.org/exhibits/kipfulbeck/home/>.

Japanese tattoos on contemporary generations and modern tattooing.<sup>14</sup> Thus, in addition to the traditional foci, such as highlighting Oshogatsu (New Year), the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Executive Order 9066, and origami, JANM is frequently incorporating multigenerational, multiracial, and multicultural exhibits to draw and include visitors from all backgrounds.

JANM has also created a publishing platform, *Discover Nikkei*, for both scholars and the Nikkei community. *Discover Nikkei* provides a web project of multilingual, transnational, and user-generated content, as a symbol of its efforts to include and support multiracial and multiethnic identities and topics. The site welcomes Nikkei submissions of family stories and community experiences to add to the project and archives. JANM's inclusion of multiracial, multilingual, and transnational Nikkei populations is not only important to the museum's visitors and memberships, but more importantly, JANM offers the "hapa" generation a sense of belonging and representation within the Nikkei community.<sup>15</sup>

It was my own search for identity, as a multiracial Yonsei, which led me to this thesis. My Shin-Issei (Japanese immigrant after World War II) and Nisei grandparents played such a pivotal role in my upbringing that I was fluent in both

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<sup>14</sup> "Perseverance: Japanese Tattoo Tradition in a Modern World," *Japanese American National Museum*, accessed March 2, 2017, <http://www.janm.org/exhibits/perseverance/>.

<sup>15</sup> For more information on *Discover Nikkei*, see: [www.DiscoverNikkei.org](http://www.DiscoverNikkei.org); "DiscoverNikkei.org Resources," *Japanese American National Museum*, accessed April 26, 2017, <http://www.janm.org/projects/ec/resources/discovernikkei/>; and Carol Cheh, "Share Your Nikkei Family Stories on Discover Nikkei," *JANM Blog*, September 2, 2015, accessed April 26, 2017, <https://blog.janm.org/index.php/2015/09/02/share-your-nikkei-family-stories-on-discover-nikkei/>.

the Japanese and English languages as a child. Despite the loss of some of the Japanese language in my adolescent and adult years, my experience and knowledge of the Japanese American culture has never faded. As a multiracial Yonsei, I have always struggled with my identity – not being Japanese enough for the non-hapa Japanese Americans, and not white enough for the American mainstream society. This ambiguity proved even more present growing up in the South Bay area of California, where a substantial Nikkei community resides, yet also where much of the condescension I experienced due to being of mixed race – and not fluent in the Japanese language – occurred. I, like other hapa generations, have always searched for my identity and inclusion within the Nikkei community.

### Why Los Angeles and South Bay?

The most logical locale in which to study the Nikkei community's history is the transboundary L.A./South Bay area, which hosts a large Nikkei community and encompasses many cities other than Los Angeles in Southern California. The Crenshaw, Leimert Park, Gardena, and Torrance areas serve as the most historically and contemporarily significant cities for the L.A./South Bay Nikkei community, and in addition to L.A.'s Little Tokyo, are the focus of this study.





fervent as it was in northern cities, such as San Francisco.<sup>17</sup> After the disruption and the incarceration during World War II, many of the Issei and Nisei returned to the West Coast and the L.A./South Bay area. Others settled in the area due to marriage, to reunite with family, independence, education, and employment without ever having resided there prior to the war.<sup>18</sup> Since the resettlement period after World War II, L.A. and South Bay have become the heart of the Southern California Nikkei community. Crenshaw and Leimert Park served as the prominent districts of residency for the postwar community in the West Los Angeles area.<sup>19</sup> The Japanese American National Museum and the *Rafu Shimpō* – the prominent Japanese American daily newspaper in Southern California – reside in Los Angeles. Furthermore, several Japanese ethnic market headquarters, such as Marukai, Nijiya, and Tokyo Central, are located in Gardena and Torrance. The L.A./South Bay area hosting the prominent

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<sup>17</sup> Charlotte Brooks, *Alien Neighbors, Foreign Friends: Asian Americans, Housing, and the Transformation of Urban California* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), loc. 522-536.

<sup>18</sup> My maternal grandmother was an example of this circumstance. She was born and raised in Hawai'i, but after her service as a Japanese-language translator for the U.S. military, and her marriage to my grandfather, they moved to the L.A./South Bay area after their release from service to reunite with my grandfather's family. For more information, see Brooks, *Alien Neighbors, Foreign Friends*, chapters 7 and 8.

<sup>19</sup> Brooks, *Alien Neighbors, Foreign Friends*, chapters 7 and 8; Scott Kurashige, "Growing Up Japanese American in Crenshaw and Leimert Park," *KCET*, January 30, 2014, accessed November 8, 2016, <https://www.kcet.org/shows/departures/growing-up-japanese-american-in-crenshaw-and-leimert-park>; Ryan Reft, "Not Bowling Alone: How the Holiday Bowl in Crenshaw Became an Integrated Leisure Space," *KCET*, August 22, 2013, accessed November 2, 2016, <https://www.kcet.org/departures-columns/not-bowling-alone-how-the-holiday-bowl-in-crenshaw-became-an-integrated-leisure>.

establishments of the Nikkei community is no coincidence, but rather, it stands as evidence to the sizeable and vibrant resident community.

Culture and community are not limited to district or city borders, as the Nikkei community encompasses the L.A. and South Bay areas. Had the L.A./South Bay community not redeveloped, the area would not have had the concentration of Nikkei nor the community strength necessary to later spark the Yellow Power movement of the late 1960s and 1970s. Thus, the revival and reestablishment of this community proved vital not only to seeking the means of recovery from disruption and trauma, but also to the later Sansei generation that sought redress, equality, and a Japanese American identity.

### Historical Context

The first influx of Japanese immigration to the United States began with the migrants contracted as sugar cane and pineapple plantation laborers in Hawai'i. The plantation owners started bringing the Japanese to Hawai'i in 1868 due to the islands' proximity to Japan and the need for workers to combat the "Chinese [Labor] Problem," replacing the Chinese on the plantations. Due to the Meiji government encouraging emigration amidst Japan's economic turmoil and the signing of the Convention of 1886, subsequent waves of Japanese immigrated to Hawai'i in the late 1880s through the early 1900s. By the 1910s,

the Japanese population on the islands numbered well into the one hundred thousands.<sup>20</sup>

Japanese immigrants to Hawai'i faced anti-Japanese hostility almost immediately. According to Gary Okihiro, anti-Japanese sentiment began shortly after the ethnic group's arrival, and merely escalated during the early twentieth century and leading up to World War II. Okihiro argues that the anti-Japanese movement in Hawai'i fueled the government-driven investigation, detainment, and incarceration of targeted Issei, as well as the forced removal of the entire Nikkei population on the West Coast, during the war.<sup>21</sup>

Many Issei also immigrated to the mainland in search of employment. Japanese immigrants started settling on America's West Coast between 1880 and 1891, many of whom were searching for employment in agriculture.<sup>22</sup> In 1900, over ten thousand Japanese had settled in California, and by 1910, the population quadrupled to 41,356; of the total Japanese population in California, more than 1,200 Japanese resided in Los Angeles county, and within a decade, that number grew to 8,461.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Gary Y. Okihiro, *Cane Fires: The Anti-Japanese Movement in Hawaii, 1865-1945* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), 22-27; Susan L. Smith, *Japanese American Midwives: Culture, Community, and Health Politics, 1880-1950* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 33, 37.

<sup>21</sup> Okihiro, *Cane Fires*.

<sup>22</sup> Hirabayashi and Tanaka, "The Issei Community in Moneta and the Gardena Valley, 1900-1920," 130; "Timeline," *Densho Encyclopedia*, accessed March 3, 2017, <http://www.densho.org/timeline/>.

The anti-Japanese movement on the mainland resulted in exclusionary legislation for Japanese immigration, land ownership, and citizenship. The fear of the “Yellow Peril,” and the anti-Japanese hostilities, drove the federal government to issue the informal Gentlemen’s Agreement (1907) with Japan, which restricted much of the influx of Japanese laborers but allowed the immigration of the wives and children of the Japanese men already residing in the U.S. This agreement rapidly increased the influx of Japanese women, children, and “picture brides” to the states. The California Alien Land Laws of 1913 and 1920 prohibited Asian immigrants – “aliens” who were not eligible for citizenship – from owning property.<sup>24</sup> These laws primarily targeted the Japanese, as they held a significant position in the agricultural industry.

Despite the large populations of Nikkei in Hawai’i when Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, the mass, race-based removal and incarceration of persons of Japanese ancestry only applied to those living on the West Coast of the mainland and the lower third of Arizona. In Hawai’i, only targeted arrests were made of those with any direct connections to Japan, those who were leaders in their communities, those with specific strategic knowledge, etc.<sup>25</sup> The anti-

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<sup>23</sup> John Modell, *The Economics and Politics of Racial Accommodation: The Japanese of Los Angeles, 1900-1942* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977), 18.

<sup>24</sup> Cherstin M. Lyon, “Alien Land Laws,” *Densho Encyclopedia*, accessed February 25, 2017, [http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Alien\\_land\\_laws/](http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Alien_land_laws/).

<sup>25</sup> The FBI started investigating the Japanese in Hawai’i in the early 1930s due to suspicions of disloyalty and the “Japanese [Labor] Problem.” The bureau established the “Custodial Detention Program” in June of 1940, which outlined the course of actions the government and military would

Japanese movement in Hawai'i drove the forced removal and incarceration of Issei in Hawai'i, and two months later, the Nikkei on the West Coast.<sup>26</sup> Due to war hysteria and racism, the government incarcerated and disrupted the lives of over 120,000 Japanese immigrants and their American-born children for an average of two to three years throughout World War II.

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take in the event of a Japanese attack. The 391 detained from this list were community and cultural leaders of the Japanese community – Japanese-language school affiliates, Buddhist reverends, doctors, lawyers, and other influential community members. Okihiro, *Cane Fires*, 167, 177, 207, 210.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., part II and chapter 9.

Presidio of San Francisco, California

May 3, 1942

# INSTRUCTIONS TO ALL PERSONS OF JAPANESE ANCESTRY

## Living in the Following Area:

All of that portion of the City of Los Angeles, State of California, within that boundary beginning at the point at which North Figueroa Street meets a line following the middle of the Los Angeles River; thence southerly and following the said line to East First Street; thence westerly on East First Street to Alameda Street; thence southerly on Alameda Street to East Third Street; thence northwesterly on East Third Street to Main Street; thence northerly on Main Street to First Street; thence northwesterly on First Street to Figueroa Street; thence northeasterly on Figueroa Street to the point of beginning.

Pursuant to the provisions of Civilian Exclusion Order No. 33, this Headquarters, dated May 3, 1942, all persons of Japanese ancestry, both alien and non-alien, will be evacuated from the above area by 12 o'clock noon, P. W. T., Saturday, May 9, 1942.

No Japanese person living in the above area will be permitted to change residence after 12 o'clock noon, P. W. T., Sunday, May 3, 1942, without obtaining special permission from the representative of the Commanding General, Southern California Sector, at the Civil Control Station located at:

Japanese Union Church,  
120 North San Pedro Street,  
Los Angeles, California.

Such permits will only be granted for the purpose of uniting members of a family, or in cases of grave emergency.

The Civil Control Station is equipped to assist the Japanese population affected by this evacuation in the following ways:

1. Give advice and instructions on the evacuation.
2. Provide services with respect to the management, leasing, sale, storage or other disposition of most kinds of property, such as real estate, business and professional equipment, household goods, boats, automobiles and livestock.
3. Provide temporary residence elsewhere for all Japanese in family groups.
4. Transport persons and a limited amount of clothing and equipment to their new residence.

### The Following Instructions Must Be Observed:

1. A responsible member of each family, preferably the head of the family, or the person in whose name most of the property is held, and each individual living alone, will report to the Civil Control Station to receive further instructions. This must be done between 8:00 A. M. and 5:00 P. M. on Monday, May 4, 1942, or between 8:00 A. M. and 5:00 P. M. on Tuesday, May 5, 1942.
2. Evacuees must carry with them on departure for the Assembly Center, the following property:
  - (a) Bedding and linens (no mattress) for each member of the family;
  - (b) Toilet articles for each member of the family;
  - (c) Extra clothing for each member of the family;
  - (d) Sufficient knives, forks, spoons, plates, bowls and cups for each member of the family;
  - (e) Essential personal effects for each member of the family.
3. All items carried will be securely packaged, tied and plainly marked with the name of the owner and numbered in accordance with instructions obtained at the Civil Control Station. The size and number of packages is limited to that which can be carried by the individual or family group.
4. No pets of any kind will be permitted.
5. No personal items and no household goods will be shipped to the Assembly Center.
6. The United States Government through its agencies will provide for the storage, at the sole risk of the owner, of the more substantial household items, such as iceboxes, washing machines, pianos and other heavy furniture. Cooking utensils and other small items will be accepted for storage if crated, packed and plainly marked with the name and address of the owner. Only one name and address will be used by a given family.
7. Each family, and individual living alone, will be furnished transportation to the Assembly Center or will be authorized to travel by private automobile in a supervised group. All instructions pertaining to the movement will be obtained at the Civil Control Station.

Go to the Civil Control Station between the hours of 8:00 A.M. and 5:00 P.M., Monday, May 4, 1942, or between the hours of 8:00 A.M. and 5:00 P.M., Tuesday, May 5, 1942, to receive further instructions.

J. L. DeWITT  
Lieutenant General, U. S. Army  
Commanding

SEE CIVILIAN EXCLUSION ORDER NO. 33.

Figure 2. Forced "Evacuation" Order. The Los Angeles area. J. L. DeWitt, Lieutenant General of the U.S. Army. Issued May 3, 1942.

The wartime experience of incarceration and suspicion of all things Japanese had several consequences for Japanese Americans that would last long after the war was over. The War Relocation Authority (WRA) intended to shift the power from the Issei parents and community leaders to their American-born children through promoting Nisei leadership in the camp community councils, Nisei employment, stripping the “breadwinner” authority from the Issei men, and encouraging the selective release of “loyal” Nisei. Furthermore, the WRA contracted photographers to capture the lives of those incarcerated as well as the specific portrayal of the process to achieve release from the camps. Through photographs, the WRA instructed those incarcerated, namely the Nisei, to the appropriate attire, the procedures to acquiring the employment and housing necessary to gain release, and the correct behavior to exhibit upon release and in American society.<sup>27</sup> This shift of power within the community is evident in the resettlement period. Nisei men and women pursued their educations, the Nisei established businesses, assumed community leadership roles, and established Japanese American communities after the camps.<sup>28</sup>

Many of the Issei never fully recovered and the Nikkei community experienced vast changes and losses due to the disruption. The societal mandate to shed all things Japanese, as well as the limit to possessions (only

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<sup>27</sup> Hirabayashi, *Japanese American Resettlement through the Lens*; Ken Mochizuki, *Baseball Saved Us* (New York City: Lee & Low Books, 1995).

<sup>28</sup> Ichioka, *Views from Within*; Yoo, *Growing Up Nisei*.

what they could carry) those forcefully removed could take with them to the camps, caused many to burn, destroy, sell, or leave behind their cultural items. Families lost their kimonos, kokeshi dolls, family swords, and other items of Japanese heritage in addition to their businesses and homes. The disruption ultimately shattered the prewar communities, their livelihoods, and stalled their cultural celebrations like Obon and Nisei Week, which proved vital to bolstering the Japanese American community's strength and ties. The community would continuously address this disruption and would avidly attempt to rebuild their communities after the war.

Those that returned to, or settled in, California experienced a difficult transition after the war. Once General Henry C. Pratt of the Western Defense Command rescinded the restrictions on resettlement to the West Coast due to the impending defeat of the Japanese military, the Nikkei were legally able to begin resettlement within the West Coast in January 1945.<sup>29</sup> The anti-Japanese environment and the absence of a massive propaganda campaign to counter the image of enemy aliens and their non-alien children certainly did nothing to ease the transition back to California. The return of thousands of Nikkei forcibly removed and characterized as untrustworthy, and potentially disloyal, as well as the migration of many populations for employment during the war, caused a nationwide resettlement crisis. However, due to military industrial growth, the

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<sup>29</sup> General Henry C. Pratt of the Western Defense Command, Public Proclamation No. 21, December 17, 1944; Brooks, *Alien Neighbors, Foreign Friends*, loc. 2033.



returning of World War II soldiers, and the influx of workers to California during the war, the large numbers of Nikkei returning to California exacerbated the housing crisis.<sup>30</sup>

The Nikkei resettling in California attempted to reestablish their occupations and communities in a place that was familiar, either in terms of previous residence or through the familiarity of community connections – friends and family – that settled on the West Coast. While the housing crisis in California was most notable in L.A., prominent places of resettlement in the L.A./South Bay area included the Crenshaw, Gardena, and Torrance areas.<sup>31</sup> Many Nikkei resettled in the middle-class Crenshaw neighborhood in the late 1940s after many whites had fled West L.A. due to its increasing racial integration.<sup>32</sup> So many Nikkei moved to Crenshaw that it hosted the largest concentration of Nikkei in the metropolitan L.A. area after the war.<sup>33</sup> Those who settled in the older housing tracts of the Gardena and Torrance neighborhoods attempted to reestablish their employment in the agricultural industry.<sup>34</sup> Gardena witnessed such a massive influx of Nikkei after the war that from 1940 to 1960, the city's

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<sup>30</sup> Brooks, *Alien Neighbors, Foreign Friends*, 2085.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., chapters 7 and 8; "L.A. Housing Fight Looms as Japs Return," *Chicago Defender*, January 13, 1945, Densho Digital Archive.

<sup>32</sup> Brooks, *Alien Neighbors, Foreign Friends*, loc. 2798, 2812.

<sup>33</sup> Kurashige, *Japanese American Celebration and Conflict*, 131.

<sup>34</sup> Brooks, *Alien Neighbors, Foreign Friends*, 2175, 2818, 2827.

Nikkei population increased ten-fold, which made it the “fastest growing concentration of Japanese Americans in Southern California.”<sup>35</sup> Many Nisei established real estate companies to assist Nikkei resettlement in these neighborhoods. The community from these areas would later spark the movements that would fight for redress and equality for the entire Nikkei population.

The local Nikkei newspaper of the L.A./South Bay area – the *Rafu Shimpo* – assisted in the community’s recovery from the disruption of war and incarceration, and reflects the postwar community’s progression and identity. Local newspapers, when viewed historically, illustrate a community’s culture, successes, and its values. Therefore, given the limitations of a thesis, the intentional, focused examination of the *Rafu Shimpo* as the primary source that is reflective of the postwar Nikkei community identity and its values, provides the foundation for future research. The *Rafu Shimpo* began in 1926, and despite its hiatus between 1942 and 1946, the incarceration of its writers, editors, and publishers, and its complete recovery not until 1949, the newspaper served as an “organ” of the postwar Nikkei community.<sup>36</sup> The *Rafu Shimpo* essentially became the face of the *assimilating* Nikkei community after the war by highlighting Nisei

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<sup>35</sup> Kurashige, *Japanese American Celebration and Conflict*, 131.

<sup>36</sup> Yoo, *Growing up Nisei*, 70; Matsumoto, “Sansei Women and the Gendering of Yellow Power in Southern California, 1960s-1970s,” 186. Future research will include a broader range of sources, including oral histories, to provide a more comprehensive result.

progress – namely through business and community involvement. The *Rafu Shimpō* also restructured its content to imitate the *Los Angeles Times* by highlighting local announcements, advertisements, recipes, etc. At the same time, the *Rafu Shimpō* illustrated the Nikkei community's growth and foreshadowed its vibrant future by emphasizing Nikkei perseverance and solidarity, rather than its victimization due to incarceration. For a culture that is plagued by *shikata ga nai* (it cannot be helped), and promotes *gaman* (endurance; perseverance) and not dwelling on the past, by celebrating the vibrancy of a growing community, its accomplishments, and a general celebration of identity, the *Rafu Shimpō* helped the community address and recover from the scars and the traumas of the war through highlighting Nikkei achievements and unity. Ultimately, the *Rafu Shimpō* focused on and bolstered the topics that the postwar Nikkei community needed to recover from – and move past – the wartime disruption.

Cultural celebrations also served as opportunities to address trauma, rebuild the community, and to reestablish its relationships. Like the *Rafu Shimpō*, cultural celebrations like Nisei Week revived in 1949 after the community had time to reestablish the basic requirements of its everyday life – housing, employment, education, etc. Nisei Week's revival, as a social and cultural festival, marked the community's recovery to the extent that much of the community had the time and resources for recreation.

U.S.-Japan relations greatly affected the postwar social context. With the American efforts to rebuild postwar Japan and the American mainstream society viewing Japan as an anticommunist ally against the Soviet Union during the Cold War, the Nikkei gained social acceptance and started forming new organizations. The Japanese American Optimist Club, Nisei Veterans' organizations, and women's clubs were just some of the newly founded organizations that sought to provide a space for community resources and recreation.<sup>37</sup> These organizations assumed the leadership and organizing roles for the postwar Nisei Week, youth sports leagues, and ethnic establishments.

### Historiography

Existing literature of Nikkei history frequently focuses on the incarceration camp experience with more recent attempts exploring the prewar Issei experience and the Yellow Power Movement of the late 1960s and 1970s. Literature on the immediate postwar resettlement crisis, as well as against the traumas from the wartime disruption, forced removal, military service, and camp life, is finally gaining momentum.

The literature discussing the forced removal and incarceration experiences of the Nikkei community emerged in the immediate years after World War II and thereafter experienced large surges after certain events. The

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<sup>37</sup> Kurashige, *Japanese American Celebration and Conflict*, 135-138.

rise of ethnic studies, the civil rights era, the Vietnam War, the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, and the late 1990s, each sparked new surges of contribution to the field. Prominent books, such as Roger Daniels' *Concentration Camps USA*, Michi Weglyn's *Years of Infamy*, Arthur Hansen's *Japanese American World War II Evacuation Oral History Project*, Roger Daniels' *Prisoners Without Trial*, and Greg Robinson's *By Order of the President*, catalyzed the proliferation of subsequent studies explaining, describing, and analyzing the illegal incarceration, and the incarceration experiences, of the Nikkei during the war.<sup>38</sup>

The literature regarding the Yellow Power Movement of the late 1960s and the 1970s, however, is quite new. Within 2016, for instance, Karen L. Ishizuka published *Serve the People*, an eclectic book on the history, rise, and successes of the Yellow Power Movement, and Valerie J. Matsumoto contributed "Sansei Women and the Engendering of Yellow Power in Southern California, 1960s-1970s," which specifically discusses women's participation and influence in the Yellow Power Movement through the analysis of *Gidra* magazine.<sup>39</sup> In a time in

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<sup>38</sup> Roger Daniels, *Concentration Camps USA: Japanese Americans and World War II* (New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston, 1970); Michi Weglyn, *Years of Infamy: The Untold Story of America's Concentration Camps* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1976); Arthur A. Hansen, *Japanese American World War II Evacuation Oral History Project* (Westport: Meckler, 1991); Roger Daniels, *Prisoners Without Trial* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993); Greg Robinson, *By Order of the President: FDR and the Internment of Japanese Americans* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).

<sup>39</sup> Ishizuka, *Serve the People*; Matsumoto. "Sansei Women and the Gendering of Yellow Power in Southern California, 1960s-1970s."

which social unrest and activism are multiplying, scholars are increasingly looking to the past for insight and analysis to explain the tumultuous present.

Scholars have abundantly studied the incarceration of the Nikkei community during World War II, but the discussions of the postwar effects of wartime trauma are still scarce.<sup>40</sup> While the scholarly research focused on the L.A./South Bay housing crisis necessitates further research, one prominent book has significantly contributed to the discussion – Charlotte Brooks' *Alien Neighbors, Foreign Friends*. Brooks does not solely focus on Japanese Americans, as she includes the Chinese community as well, but she does provide a study specifically focused on prewar and postwar housing segregation in Los Angeles and San Francisco. Brooks examines the prewar and postwar anti-Asian sentiment and how this, in addition to the influx of the Nikkei previously incarcerated, contributed to the postwar housing crisis.<sup>41</sup>

The discussions of the trauma the Nikkei community experienced are often interwoven into the literature of the incarceration camps and the legal analyses of the legislation that allowed the population's incarceration. In many ways, Michi Weglyn started the conversations of trauma and redress by telling

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<sup>40</sup> For examples of the literature on the postwar trauma of incarceration, see: Donna K. Nagata and Wendy J.Y. Cheng, "Intergenerational Communication of Race-Related Trauma by Japanese American Former Internees," *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 73, no. 3 (2003): 266; Donna K. Nagata, "The Japanese American Internment: Exploring the Transgenerational Consequences of Traumatic Stress," *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 3, no. 1 (1990): 47-69; Inouye, *The Long Afterlife of Nikkei Wartime Incarceration*.

<sup>41</sup> Brooks, *Alien Neighbors, Foreign Friends*.

the raw accounts of incarceration and the wrongs committed by the U.S. government.<sup>42</sup> By providing the realities and the illegalities of the wartime circumstances suffered by the Nikkei, Weglyn effectively fueled the social unrest necessary to seek redress in the form of a government apology and monetary compensation.<sup>43</sup>

Much of the literature focused exclusively on postwar trauma extends across disciplines. Donna Nagata, in the field of psychology, has stood as one of the main proponents for the study of Nikkei trauma in recent years – especially regarding the result of trauma in the lack of incarceration discussion between those previously incarcerated and their descendants.<sup>44</sup> Nagata contends that some of the Nikkei cultural ethics, such as *haji* (shame; disgrace), *shikata ga nai* (it cannot be helped), and *gaman* (endurance; perseverance) lend to some of the reasons for the lack of postwar discussion.<sup>45</sup> However, these cultural concepts – though pervasive – do not pertain to the entire cultural population, as many

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<sup>42</sup> Weglyn, *Years of Infamy*.

<sup>43</sup> The Civil Liberties Act of 1988 issued a formal apology as well as \$20,000 to those previously incarcerated.

<sup>44</sup> Donna N. Nagata, "Psychological Effects of Camp," *Densho Encyclopedia*, accessed February 26, 2017, [http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Psychological\\_effects\\_of\\_camp/](http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Psychological_effects_of_camp/); Nagata and Cheng, "Intergenerational Communication of Race-Related Trauma by Japanese American Former Internees"; Nagata, "The Japanese American Internment"; Donna K. Nagata and Garyn K. Tsuru, "Psychosocial Correlates of Self-Reported Coping among Japanese Americans Interned During World War II," *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 77, no. 2 (2007): 221-230.

<sup>45</sup> Nagata and Cheng, "Intergenerational Communication of Race-Related Trauma by Japanese American Former Internees," 268, 275.

countered these notions during the redress movement and thereafter.<sup>46</sup>

Nonetheless, many historians discussing Nikkei history at some point address the conversations of “camp” and their infrequency or brevity with the Sansei and Yonsei generations.

The literature regarding the postwar period between the late 1940s and the 1960s is still a period that requires more extensive research and exploration. In addition to other periods and areas lacking extensive study, only a few memoirs and publications mark the immediate postwar period. Furthermore, the study of Nikkei community development and cultural perpetuation in the transboundary L.A./South Bay area is virtually nonexistent.

The Japanese American Evacuation and Resettlement Study (JERS) served as the first study of wartime and postwar conditions of the Nikkei community. Dorothy Swaine Thomas of the University of California, Berkeley directed the study, and it employed dozens of fieldworkers within the camps and resettlement communities to document the conditions of the camps, their prisoners, and the processes and circumstances of resettlement. The series of three books published on the study that spanned from 1946 to 1954, as well as subsequent publications about JERS, examined the sociological effects of the wartime disruption and the reorganization of communities. While the JERS certainly had its failures and its controversies, specifically in which the manner

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<sup>46</sup> Lyon, *Prisons and Patriots*, 192-200.



the employees collected the data, the project ultimately began the conversation of the conditions and context of resettlement.<sup>47</sup>

The Department of the Interior created and tasked the War Agency Liquidation Unit (WALU) with completing the resettlement work of the WRA, which the government dismantled in 1946. The WALU produced a publication in 1947 – *People in Motion* – that documented the postwar “adjustment” of the Nikkei released from the camps. The study gathered postwar demographic and employment statistics, as well as the extent of mainstream societal acceptance of the Nikkei influxes, from the main regions in which the Nikkei resettled. The publication may have had its biases, as the government gathered the data of the population that it had previously incarcerated. Nonetheless, this book served as the first comprehensive study of the resettlement processes and patterns of the Nikkei throughout the nation.<sup>48</sup>

Valerie J. Matsumoto’s *Farming the Home Place* contributes to the postwar studies of Nikkei communities by centering on a rural county, and provides an encompassing prewar, wartime, and postwar framework. Matsumoto

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<sup>47</sup> Ichioka, *Views from Within*; Alice Yang Murray, *Historical Memories of the Japanese American Internment and the Struggle for Redress* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008); “Japanese American Evacuation and Resettlement Study,” *Densho Encyclopedia*, accessed February 27, 2017, [http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Japanese\\_American\\_Evacuation\\_and\\_Resettlement\\_Study/](http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Japanese_American_Evacuation_and_Resettlement_Study/).

<sup>48</sup> United States Department of the Interior, War Agency Liquidation Unit, *People in Motion: The Postwar Adjustment of the Evacuated Japanese Americans* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1947); Brian Niiya, “People in Motion (Book),” *Densho Encyclopedia*, accessed February 27, 2017, [http://encyclopedia.densho.org/People\\_in\\_Motion\\_%28book%29/](http://encyclopedia.densho.org/People_in_Motion_%28book%29/).

studied the Cortez, Livingston, and Yamato colonies in California's Merced County. Her book is essential to studying Nikkei history due to these colonies reflecting a unique circumstance regarding the incarceration experience. Forced removal required most Nikkei to sell or leave behind practically everything they had – following the “only what you can carry” eviction order.<sup>49</sup> However, as Matsumoto illustrates, the Merced County inhabitants entrusted their farms and belongings to non-Japanese, and returned to their farms after their release from the camps. In essence, the Nikkei from these colonies were some of the few that regained what they left behind. Matsumoto does a service to the field by incorporating the postwar context of these colonies, and by emphasizing the rarity of their circumstances.<sup>50</sup>

Greg Robinson's book, *After Camp*, illustrates the political and social battles that the Nikkei faced after camp and during their attempt to reclaim their lives. Robinson highlights Franklin Delano Roosevelt and the WRA's part in encouraging the dispersion of the Nikkei upon release from the camps, as well as the relationships between the Nikkei and other ethnic minorities. One section in particular, compares the resettlement experiences of Nikkei in the cosmopolitan cities of Detroit, New York, and Los Angeles, attesting to the various circumstances many witnessed depending on the social and political

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<sup>49</sup> J. L. De Witt, Lieutenant General, U.S. Army, Civilian Exclusion Order No. 13, Japanese Evacuation Proclamation, Los Angeles, May 3, 1942.

<sup>50</sup> Matsumoto, *Farming the Home Place*.

atmospheres of the differing regions. While *After Camp* discusses the postwar social struggles of the Nikkei community, Robinson does so while focusing on confined metropolitan areas.<sup>51</sup>

Japanese American cultural celebrations rarely receive much focus in historical literature. Lon Kurashige's *Japanese American Celebration and Conflict* examines the creation and the rearticulation of the Japanese American identity through the narrative of Nisei Week. Through the analysis of American race relations, as well as the festival's prewar origins and its postwar revival, Kurashige outlines the community's efforts to Americanize and demonstrate their loyalty to the United States while retaining their Japanese heritage. Kurashige was the first author to discuss the history of the Nisei Week festival – a purely Japanese American creation – with regards to the community's identity and ethnicity.<sup>52</sup>

Ultimately, the literature discussing the resettlement patterns of the Nikkei, though vital to context, prove limited to geographically constructed borders, and with the exception of Matsumoto's book, to solely cosmopolitan regions. Within the years of the 2010s, the focus has shifted to the Crenshaw, Leimert Park, Torrance, and Gardena districts as the places of postwar Nikkei community reformation, especially from KCET reporters and historians, but these articles

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<sup>51</sup> Robinson, *After Camp*.

<sup>52</sup> Kurashige, *Japanese American Celebration and Conflict*.

namely discuss the dilemmas of educational segregation and the specific establishments of recreational space to foster a sense of belonging.<sup>53</sup> While this literature proves valuable in shifting the focus to the region, and proposes further research in the field, it is not eclectic. It is not until the literature documenting the late 1960s that these areas receive much notice.

Furthermore, the study of Nikkei cultural perpetuation and community building through celebrations, recreation, and food necessitate further research. For the Nikkei community, these components proved vital to the reestablishment of a close-knit postwar community, and they remain important to the contemporary generations' sense of identity. This proves especially true among the multiracial Nikkei who often find themselves in the margins of all of their respective racial communities.

## Contribution

The purpose of this thesis is to contribute to the gap in the research and literature of the immediate postwar period between the late 1940s resettlement period and the 1960s with the birth of the Yellow Power Movement. An additional goal of this thesis is to contribute to the nearly absent literature of Nikkei community redevelopment in the transboundary L.A./South Bay area. Had this

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<sup>53</sup> Reft, "Redefining Asian America"; Scott Kurashige, "Growing Up Japanese American in Crenshaw and Leimert Park"; Reft, "Not Bowling Alone."

Nikkei community not reemerged and redeveloped, the community would have lacked the strength, the resources, and the ties to spark the later fight for redress, equality, and the Nikkei identity by the local Asian American social activists. The postwar efforts of the Nisei not only assisted the Nikkei community in addressing and recovering from the traumas of war, incarceration, and prejudice, they also rebuilt a crucial community network of resources and relationships that would later prove necessary for their Sansei children to redefine the community. While Nikkei populations and communities exist throughout the nation and the world, the postwar L.A./South Bay community reemerged as one of the most substantial groups in the nation, which established the solidarity necessary for a powerful movement and the redefining of the Nikkei identity and its ethnic pride.

The Nisei demonstrated their efforts to assimilate and gain social acceptance from the mainstream American society while preserving their cultural values. The Nisei enculturated younger generations through the revival of community recreation, resources, and businesses, as well as through cultural celebrations. The Nisei would provide a pathway for future immigrant populations to gain American social acceptance by serving as bridges between the Japanese and American cultures and by gaining social and economic ascension through

American recreation and business.<sup>54</sup> Similar to the Yellow Power Movement learning from the logistical examples of the Black Power Movement,<sup>55</sup> the influx of Vietnamese immigrants after the Vietnam War would establish their enclaves and recreations amidst American suspicion and animosity similar to the postwar methods of the Nisei.<sup>56</sup> The Nikkei community built lasting networks and relationships, and laid the foundations for later social activism and the redefining of the Nikkei community, through the postwar revival of cultural celebrations, recreation, and ethnic resources. Thus, it remains imperative that scholars study the L.A./South Bay Nikkei celebrations, recreation, and the reestablishment of ethnic resources, as these components prove essential to community development, the rebuilding of postwar community networks, and the redefining of the Nikkei identity.

## Methodology

This thesis builds upon the theories of many scholars, as the post-incarceration redevelopment of the Nikkei community presents a complex and unique circumstance to the study of ethnic populations and community

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<sup>54</sup> Lyon, *Prisons and Patriots*, 16, 18-20; Yoo, *Growing Up Nisei*; Ruiz, *From out of the Shadows*, 50; Ichioka, "A Study of Dualism," 92-125.

<sup>55</sup> Matsumoto, "Sansei Women and the Gendering of Yellow Power in Southern California, 1960s-1970s"; Ishizuka, *Serve the People*.

<sup>56</sup> Nhi T. Lieu, *The American Dream in Vietnamese* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 59-77.

development. The study of culture and community remains ambiguous and subjective. Anthropologists define *culture* as a group of people's learned and patterned – rather than instinctual – behaviors and ideologies, whereas *community* describes the people that share the same behaviors and ideologies.<sup>57</sup> The *community* provides an opportunity to perpetuate these behaviors and to establish a personal and collective identity within an ethnic or cultural group.

Anthropologists have frequently tried to study cultures and communities quantitatively, but their subjectivity makes this nearly impossible. As Clifford Geertz argues, culture remains ever changing, and therefore, it must be qualitatively studied through its continuities and changes according to its social environment and contextual circumstances.<sup>58</sup> Given the disruption the Nikkei community experienced during and after World War II and incarceration, the Nikkei culture did not stagnantly replicate its prewar behaviors or traditions, but rather, the community continuously perpetuated or altered its practices according to what it deemed important to its culture and social welfare amidst American suspicion and prejudice.

Anthropologists have also attempted to observe and analyze the adjustments of cultures and communities after immigration. The theories of

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<sup>57</sup> Carol R. Ember and Melvin Ember, *Human Culture: Highlights of Cultural Anthropology*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Pearson Education, Inc., 2012), 16.

<sup>58</sup> Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture," in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 3-30.

Sidney Mintz and Richard Price suggest that the understanding of cultures requires studying their past and their creation of social institutions to fit the community and its needs in the immigration context.<sup>59</sup> The limits of cultural retention by immigrant groups in new host countries provides the opportunities – and in many ways, the necessity – of creating new cultures and establishing social institutions in relation to the culture’s social atmosphere. Japanese American markets and sports leagues serve as good examples, as they were created in response to the need for community resources, networks, and recreation amidst mainstream exclusion. Furthermore, the study of cultural celebrations illustrates the blending of the ethnic and the new host country’s cultures.

Cultural hybridity is characteristic of immigrants’ second generation children. The Nisei, however, while fitting the second generation mold in some respects, diverges from these generalizations due to their wartime incarceration experience. When Robert Park theorized the three generations necessary to assimilate, he did not consider the unique circumstance of the Nisei, their extraordinary wartime experience, nor their specific role as “bridges.” Thus, while the literature on immigration and subsequent generations is useful, the Nisei must be studied as divergent from the generalizable norm.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Mintz and Price, *The Birth of African American Culture*.

<sup>60</sup> For literature regarding immigration and Americanization, see: Matthew Frye Jacobson’s *Special Sorrows* (1995), *Whiteness of a Different Color* (1999), and *Barbarian Virtues* (2001);



Scholars also study the hybridity of culture through community and cultural expressions. Paul Gilroy theorizes the dual identity created by the blending of cultures, and through the examination of prominent figures, literature, and music, he studied the hybrid culture African Americans created.<sup>61</sup> This thesis builds upon the theories of Mintz, Price, and Gilroy by studying the formation of the Nikkei culture and the postwar continuities and changes of the Nikkei community through its cultural celebrations, recreations, and ethnic resources in the form of ethnic markets.

Nikkei communities became agents in creating a new postwar identity through a deliberate construction of space through culture. Paul Gilroy, Gary Okihiro, and David Yoo's work support this idea. Paul Gilroy analyzed African American literature and music during the Harlem Renaissance as the means of forming and disseminating a new culture in opposition to the mainstream American status quo.<sup>62</sup> Gary Okihiro countered the dominant Western historical narrative by illustrating Asian and Pacific Islander participation within American history amidst anti-Asian prejudice and exclusion.<sup>63</sup> David Yoo examined the

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Robert Ezra Park, *Race and Culture* (Glencoe: Free Press, 1950). For more information of the Nisei as cultural "bridges," see: Yoo, *Growing Up Nisei*; Tamura, "Bridge of Understanding, Bridge of Straw"; Ichioka, "A Study of Dualism."

<sup>61</sup> Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Gary Y. Okihiro, *American History Unbound: Asians and Pacific Islanders* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015).

Nisei creation of spaces in an attempt to establish the Japanese American identity through schools, religious institutions, and periodicals.<sup>64</sup> All three of these scholars advocate the groups of their studies as agents in the formation of their cultures and identities. This thesis utilizes their approaches by advocating the Nikkei community as agents in the revival of their postwar space, community, and culture. This is by no means an attempt to disregard or overlook the adversities of incarceration and resettlement, but rather than depicting the Nikkei as victims to their wartime incarceration experience, this thesis seeks to propagate and celebrate the community for its strength, perseverance, and its achievements.

Local newspapers, when viewed historically, illustrate a community's culture, successes, values, and its identity. As David Paul Nord contends, newspapers prove fundamental to the establishment of communities.<sup>65</sup> Newspapers illustrate the community's values and identity, what the community deemed worth communicating to the rest of the group, as well as the mainstream society's perceptions of the ethnicity and its community. Therefore, the examination of the Nikkei newspaper of L.A. and South Bay – the *Rafu Shimpo*, and the mainstream society's perspective – the *Los Angeles Times*, serve as the primary components of analysis of the postwar Nikkei community. While the *Los*

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<sup>64</sup> Yoo, *Growing up Nisei*.

<sup>65</sup> David Paul Nord, *Communities of Journalism: A History of American Newspapers and Their Readers* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2001).

*Angeles Times* is indeed a source for contextual information and opinion, the primary newspaper of analysis for this thesis is the *Rafu Shimpō*, as it served as a major postwar periodical for the L.A./South Bay Nikkei community. The *Rafu Shimpō* sources utilized within this study reside in the microfilm lab of the University of California, Los Angeles, unless stated otherwise.

I write this thesis as a cultural insider, utilizing personal background, knowledge, and experiences within the L.A./South Bay Nikkei community. After the war, my maternal grandparents settled in the Crenshaw district where they raised my mother, and my father grew up in Compton and Gardena. I am a “hapa” Yonsei that was raised in Gardena and Torrance. I have consistently celebrated Nikkei holidays, attended Nikkei events, and I identify as a Nikkei. I frequent ethnic Japanese markets, and I used a participant observer technique to attend and participate in the Obon and Nisei Week festivals of which I write as a researcher to test some of my historical research against current practices. I took photos, observed, and analyzed cultural behaviors after having done significant historical research to test my preconceived notions against academically situated observation.

### Terminology

The modern meaning of the term “Nikkei” transcends generational and racial boundaries, but more importantly, it broadly refers to the Japanese American community as a late twentieth century entity. The “Nikkei” community

initially developed to close the divide between the Japanese immigrants before and after World War II, but with the rapid increase of the “hapa” – or mixed race – generations, the meaning of the term has transformed to include the ethnic and multiracial Japanese born on U.S. soil. Furthermore, “Nikkei” will serve as an inclusive term encompassing persons of Japanese ancestry regardless of generational or multiracial differences.

Wherever possible, the terms Issei, Nisei, Sansei, Yonsei, Shin Issei, and Kibei will distinguish generations, natural-born citizenship, and location of education. “Issei” refers to the immigrants from Japan prior to World War II and incarceration. “Nisei,” meaning “second generation” in Japanese, regards the American-born children of Issei parents typically born before and during the war, whereas “Sansei” and “Yonsei” refer to the third and fourth generations of ethnic Japanese born in America, and are generally multicultural and multiracial.

The “Shin Issei” and the “Kibei,” however, commonly experience the greatest division from the Nikkei community. The “Shin Issei” are the postwar Japanese immigrants that lack the experiences of prewar prejudice and wartime incarceration. “Kibei” regards those born in the U.S., but educated in Japan. The Kibei, like the Issei and the Shin Issei, often retain more of the Japanese-language and the traditional culture of Japan, whereas the Nisei, Sansei, and Yonsei, blend and bridge the Japanese and American cultures, and English

stands as their dominant language.<sup>66</sup> Due to the clear division between the Shin Issei, the Kibei, and the other generations of the Japanese community, the generally inclusive nature of the postwar and contemporary generations formulated the Nikkei community to bridge the divide to those often lying in the margins of the Japanese American community.

In discussing the Nikkei experience during World War II, the terms “relocation” and “internment” have historically served as the most frequently used terms to describe the wartime disruption, removal, and imprisonment of the Nikkei population. However, scholars and the community have more recently shifted the terminology away from euphemistic terms like “relocation” and “internment” to terms, such as “forced removal” and “incarceration,” to more accurately describe the nature of these events.<sup>67</sup> For accuracy purposes, this thesis will utilize “forced removal” and “incarceration” in descriptions of the wartime events and Nikkei experiences, as the government mandated the “relocation” of the population and the Nikkei were imprisoned behind barbed-wire fences and surrounded by armed guards during their “internment.”

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<sup>66</sup> Ruiz, *From out of the Shadows*, 50; Mintz and Price, *The Birth of African American Culture*; Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*; Kittler and Sucher, *Food and Culture*.

<sup>67</sup> Lyon, *Prisons and Patriots*, xii; “Power of Words: Resolution,” *JACL National Council*, 2011, accessed February 26, 2017, <https://jaclpowerofwords.wordpress.com/resolution/>; Roger Daniels, “Words Do Matter: A Note on Inappropriate Terminology and the Incarceration of Japanese Americans,” *Discover Nikkei*, February 1, 2008, accessed February 26, 2017, <http://www.discovernikkei.org/en/journal/2008/2/1/words-do-matter/>.

Finally, the terms “space” and “place” often connote the same meaning of security and attachment once a person, group, or community bestows their meaning. According to Yi-Fu Tuan, “Place is security, [and] space is freedom” until they are endowed with personal meaning; nonetheless, the terms often “require each other for definition.”<sup>68</sup> Similarly, Dolores Hayden argues that “place” engenders a sense of meaning, history, memory, and personal identity for the community that holds attachment to it.<sup>69</sup> For the L.A./South Bay Nikkei community, certain spaces/places, such as Crenshaw and the Holiday Bowl, helped bolster postwar relationships, solidarity, and identities.

### Outline of Chapters

This thesis focuses on the reestablishment of the L.A./South Bay Nikkei community within the ambiguities of postwar trauma and prejudice. Chapter One underscores the importance of Obon and Nisei Week festivals to the L.A./South Bay Nikkei community. The annual Obon festivals continued to reunite the community and served as continuities of religious and cultural traditions. Nisei Week demonstrated the Nikkei community’s pride in their Japanese heritage while bridging the divide between the “foreign” Japanese and “domestic”

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<sup>68</sup> Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 3, 6.

<sup>69</sup> Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995).

American cultures. By actively incorporating American officials, media, and social events, the Nikkei community demonstrated their desires for inclusion through their efforts to Americanize while preserving their culture.

Chapter Two illustrates the Nikkei perpetuation of Japanese ethics through American sports and recreation. The Nikkei participated in baseball, bowling, golf, and other sports, and they established local Nikkei leagues, tournaments, and institutions. Nikkei communities addressed trauma, built lasting relationships, and strengthened community ties amidst exclusion and prejudice through sports and recreation.

Finally, Chapter Three discusses one of the most common forms of cultural propagation – food. The locations of Japanese markets, and the availability of ethnic Japanese foodstuffs, demonstrates not only the concentrations of Nikkei populations, but also the importance of cuisine in cultural perpetuation. L.A. and South Bay's Japanese markets play an important role in sustaining the community's identity through culturally specific foods and cuisine. The preservation of these establishments indicates their vitality to local communities, and their alterations allude to changes in the cultural trajectory of newer generations.

Studying the transboundary L.A./South Bay area illustrates not only the resettlement patterns of those previously incarcerated and their descendants, but also how the Nisei grew to prominence and assisted in the reestablishment of the postwar Nikkei community. Furthermore, utilizing the various recreational outlets

associated with Nikkei community reestablishment and development reflects the postwar revival and redefinition of the Nikkei culture and identity.



## CHAPTER ONE

### NIKKEI CELEBRATIONS

Celebrations and festivals serve as means of solidifying community ties and inculcating traditions. In the postwar period, the adversities of resettlement – namely housing, employment, and reestablishing the community – gradually shifted to addressing American mainstream exclusion. The Nisei established their businesses and assumed their leadership roles to assist the Nikkei community in housing, employment, and the revival of cultural recreations and traditions. Through the burgeoning Nisei participation in and the management of cultural events, the community restored its traditions and networks. The ties that bound the community together before the war would prove effective once again.

Nisei assisted one another and the Nikkei community in resettlement. They helped rebuild the community, perpetuate their Japanese American culture, and they demonstrated their Americanization for the betterment of the community's social relations with the mainstream society through their businesses and community events. Cultural components, such as the annual Obon festivals and ethnic food stores, drew the community together and continued the religious and cultural legacies of their ancestors while the Nisei Week festival bridged the gap between the Nikkei community and the mainstream American society. Japanese American culture and ethics, however,

remained a vital component of the community's participation in American recreations.

## Obon

Festivals and social activities create opportunities to build ethnic communities. While festivals may be utilized for fundraisers or to raise awareness for societal issues, in terms of the Nikkei community, festivals often hold a cultural and/or religious value. The Obon festival, sometimes called the Lantern Festival, for instance, is a Buddhist celebration in which descendants pay homage to their ancestors. Japan has celebrated the event for over five hundred years, and the festivals generally occur annually during the summer months of July and August. It is customary for participants to float candle-lit lanterns down river in honor of their ancestors. Furthermore, Obon has a specific narrative associated with it, as well as a particular meaning to the Japanese and Japanese American communities.<sup>70</sup>

The narrative of Obon stems from the story of Mokuren – one of the disciples of the Buddha. Mokuren had the ability to view the other realms of existence and the afterlife. Mokuren searched the realms for his deceased mother, as he wanted to assure her wellbeing, but instead, he found his mother

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<sup>70</sup> For more information, see: "Obon," *Japan Guide*, accessed April 12, 2017, <http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e2286.html>; Ensho Ashikaga, "The Festival for the Spirits of the Dead in Japan," *Western Folklore* 9, no. 3 (1950): 217-228.

tortured by hungry ghosts. According to Buddhist ethics, it is a child's duty to prevent or remedy a parent's suffering – in life and death. Therefore, Mokuren confided in the Buddha and asked how he could alleviate his mother's suffering and release her from the Realm of Hungry Ghosts. The Buddha instructed Mokuren to give offerings to his fellow monks who were arriving from their summer pilgrimage. After completing his offerings, Mokuren discovered his mother released from the realm and in a state of wellbeing. He then danced joyously in celebration.<sup>71</sup>

Due to Mokuren's narrative, Buddhists and their respective churches hold the Obon festivals to honor their ancestors and to assure their wellbeing in the afterlife until their next rebirth. The festivals generally host vast amounts of food and activities, and the weekend celebration culminates with traditional dances (called the Bon-Odori) for their ancestors, as Mokuren danced upon learning of his mother's release. The Nikkei community greatly values and preserves the Obon festivals every summer because of their religious and cultural significance.

The Young Buddhist Association (YBA) sponsored and organized many of the prewar Obon festivals. The YBA selected the chairmen of the association and organized the festivities with the chapter presidents.<sup>72</sup> While newspapers

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<sup>71</sup> For information on the Urabon Sutra, and the Obon's symbolism in Buddhism, see: "What is Obon?," *Shingon Buddhist International Institute*, 1998, accessed April 12, 2017, <http://www.shingon.org/library/archive/Obon.html>; "On the Urabon," *Nichiren Info*, from the *Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 7, accessed April 12, 2017, <http://nichiren.info/gosho/OnUrabon.htm>.

<sup>72</sup> "Obon Bazaar Committee Pick Workers in Gay August Fete," the *Rafu Shimpō*, June 25, 1940.

highlighted the logistics of the events, and the advertisements for the festivals, the prewar focus of newspapers sought to explain and clarify the religion for the American public prior to the annual festivals, as the wartime suspicions left the Buddhist religion open to attack. Two prominent articles appeared in the *Rafu Shimpō* explaining and justifying the Buddhist religion in June and August of 1941 – just months prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor. The article, “Buddhism in America,” spoke of the growing numbers of Buddhists in America and encouraged Buddhists to explain the religion to Americans unfamiliar with its principles.<sup>73</sup> This article was reprinted from an earlier publication in May 1941 and was originally written by the Central California YBA.

The other prominent article specifically defended the Obon celebration. The publication, “The O-bon Spiritual Holiday,” written by Reverend J. A. Goldwater, explained the Buddhist holiday and its teachings as a celebration of ancestors and goodwill to all. Goldwater also told of the religion’s benevolence not just to Buddhists and their loved ones, but also to all living beings. Amidst America’s xenophobia, suspicion, and its societal anti-Japanese sentiment, Goldwater defended Buddhism as a religion of magnanimity and not one that posed a threat to American ideals.<sup>74</sup> The *Rafu Shimpō* and the Buddhist community hoped to alleviate some of the suspicion and tensions with the

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<sup>73</sup> “An Editorial on Buddhism in America,” the *Rafu Shimpō*, June 1, 1941.

<sup>74</sup> Reverend J. A. Goldwater, “The O-bon Spiritual Holiday,” the *Rafu Shimpō*, August 3, 1941.

broader American society by clarifying the ethics of the religion and its context within the United States.

The YBA and the Nikkei community held prewar Obon festivals with some of the largest attendance in the community's history despite such prevalent American suspicion and resentment towards Buddhists. Buddhist churches hosted individual Obon celebrations for their members and their immediate communities. While smaller South Bay Buddhist churches and temples, such as the Gardena Buddhist Church, held their community Obon festivals, the Nishi Hongwanji Buddhist Temple in L.A.'s Little Tokyo has historically served as one of the primary locations of the L.A./South Bay community's Obon celebrations.

Nishi Hongwanji emerged as the Southern California Buddhist Church in 1905, and served as a pinnacle to the L.A./South Bay Issei community. In 1925, the temple moved to First Street and Central Avenue and assumed the name it has today. The temple received its Betsuin status in 1931 – meaning it received recognition as a branch of the mother Hongwanji Temple in Kyoto, Japan – making it the first American Buddhist temple to receive such an honor.

Thereafter, the temple has served as the Buddhist landmark of the entire L.A./South Bay Nikkei community. In 1941, months before America's entrance into World War II, Nishi Hongwanji hosted an estimated five thousand visitors for the weekend celebration, and part of Central Avenue in front of Nishi closed for

the Bon-Odori.<sup>75</sup> During the war, the temple closed and the Nikkei community utilized the space as storage to help preserve and retain the belongings most dear to them, as possessions that could not be carried – as well as Japanese cultural items – were not permitted in the camps. Even today, Nishi Hongwanji still serves as one of the most prominent sites to the L.A./South Bay Buddhist community and remains one of the most frequented Obon festivals in the area.<sup>76</sup>

Those incarcerated in the camps still organized and held Obon celebrations, often at the camp high school grounds. To bolster morale, relieve the monotony, and maintain tradition, the YBA and other camp residents celebrated with Obon festivities. The Obon festivals did not occur in many of the camps until 1943 despite the forced removal and incarceration beginning in 1941 and for the masses in 1942, as the early months were a period of severe adjustment to camp life. The community not only had to adjust to confinement, surveillance, and close quarters, it also had to utilize non-traditional music for the Bon-Odori, as heavy restrictions on Japanese language music precluded the possession and use of the traditional music intended for the dances. The camp Obon festivals served to ease the hardships of incarceration and provide a sense of normalcy in unfamiliar and uncertain conditions.

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<sup>75</sup> “O-bon Bazaar Draws Large Crowd to Little Tokio Area,” the *Rafu Shimpo*, August 18, 1941.

<sup>76</sup> “Temple History,” *NishiHongwanji-LA.org*, accessed February 22, 2017, <https://www.nishihongwanji-la.org/temple/temple-history/>.

The camp newspapers often promoted and underscored their own and other camps' weekend festivals as a means of bolstering inter-camp solidarity amidst the hardships of camp-life. In 1942, for instance, the *Tulean Dispatch*, the newspaper for the Tule Lake camp in California, told of the Obon memorial service held in hall number 1420 as well as a talk by Roy Higashi of the history and development of Buddhism.<sup>77</sup> The Rohwer camp in Arkansas prepared for its first Obon festival in 1943 in which Reverend Gyodo Kono, from the Jerome camp in Arkansas, made a guest appearance for the evening ceremonial service. Rohwer's weekend festivities culminated with the Bon-Odori after the memorial ceremony.<sup>78</sup> In addition to the normal festivities, such as the Bon Odori and the memorial service, in 1944, the Heart Mountain camp in Wyoming tasked the resident YBA and the women's association in selling snacks for the participants. The booths offered shaved ice – a Hawaiian summertime treat, ice cream, and peanuts, and the community mess hall provided refreshments during the intermission of the Bon-Odori.<sup>79</sup>

The camps also published articles within their own newspapers highlighting the festivities held by other camps. The *Tulean Dispatch* told of Rohwer's first Obon festival in 1943, and the *Manzanar Free Press* spoke of the

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<sup>77</sup> "Lantern Festival Attracts Bussei," *Tulean Dispatch*, August 18, 1942.

<sup>78</sup> "Buddhist Set for Obon Days," *Rohwer Outpost*, August 11, 1943.

<sup>79</sup> "Annual Buddhist Festival Slated: Obon Odori to Feature Two-Day Card," *Heart Mountain Sentinel*, July 15, 1944.

camp in Gila, Arizona preparing for its upcoming weekend festivities as well as the Obon festival held at Heart Mountain, Wyoming in 1944.<sup>80</sup> The camps relayed news of other camps' festivities in an effort to promote solidarity with the other Nikkei incarcerated and to close the divide between the Hawaiian and West Coast Nikkei communities during times of hardship. Hosting and discussing the Obon festivals in the camps served an even greater purpose than in the prewar years due to the need for a sense of normalcy and community connections while enduring incarceration.

The Obon festivals in the camps and in the immediate postwar period served as a means of resisting the government's attempted annihilation of the Japanese American culture. As the Obon festivals persisted amidst wartime incarceration, they too would continue after the war. The Nikkei would again experience a time of drastic changes and uncertainty during the resettlement period as they did during the forced removal and in the incarceration camps. Establishing necessities, such as housing, employment, and education, would take precedence over celebrations and recreation, but once established, the community would revive its Obon festivals. The community's efforts to retain their religion and culture, and to reestablish their connections, would continue throughout and after the tumultuous resettlement period.

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<sup>80</sup> "Footprints: Rohwer," *Tulean Dispatch*, August 25, 1943; "From Other Centers: Gila, Arizona," *Manzanar Free Press*, July 12, 1944; "From Other Centers: Heart Mountain, Wyoming," *Manzanar Free Press*, July 22, 1944.



While postwar newspapers certainly covered Obon festivals at smaller local Buddhist churches, the Nishi Hongwanji and West Los Angeles Buddhist Church festivals received the most extensive advertising and coverage in the postwar L.A./South Bay newspapers.<sup>81</sup> Nishi Hongwanji retained its prewar status as the landmark site of L.A./South Bay's Obon festivities. As the postwar community regained its footing, in 1949 and 1950, Nishi Hongwanji continued to hold and sponsor the annual Obon festivities. During the Bon-Odori, Central Avenue in front of the temple closed for the event, and Nishi still held the Ondo practice sessions prior to the festival.<sup>82</sup> As Nishi Hongwanji resumed its annual celebration despite the wartime disruption, the revival of the Obon festivals symbolized the perseverance of the community and its efforts to rebuild and restore its religious and cultural ties and traditions.

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<sup>81</sup> "Gardena YBA Obon Carnival" advertisement, the *Rafu Shimpō*, August 9, 1956.

<sup>82</sup> "YBA Obon Festival Slated," the *Rafu Shimpō*, July 9, 1949; "Summer Brings Out Many for Obon Odori Practice," the *Rafu Shimpō*, July 12, 1950.



Figure 3. "Summer Brings Out Many for Obon Odori Practice." The *Rafu Shimpō*, July 12, 1950. Courtesy of University of California, Los Angeles.



Figure 4. Previous Nisei Week Queens Get Ready for Obon. "Queens of Past, Present and Future," The *Rafu Shimpō*, July 15, 1954. Courtesy of University of California, Los Angeles.

The Obon festival held by the West L.A. Buddhist Temple (WLABT) demonstrated the restoration of the community and the continuity of its traditions. The emergence of the newer WLABT signified the growth and the revival of the L.A./South Bay Nikkei community, for without a resurgence of this community, the need for another temple would have proven unnecessary. Throughout the 1950s, the *Rafu Shimpo* actually promoted WLABT's Obon festival and carnival just as often as Nishi Hongwanji's through large headlines and detailed photographs.<sup>83</sup> This may have been due to the temple's recent independence from the Hompa Hongwanji temple and the introduction of its own Obon festival,<sup>84</sup> as Nishi had sponsored the event for many years prior to the war. Nonetheless, with the assistance of the new temple, the newspaper coverage, and the growing community, visitors attended the festival to demonstrate their perseverance and to solidify and celebrate their identities as members of the Nikkei Buddhist community.

The *Rafu Shimpo's* coverage of the Obon festivals, as well as the substantial crowds of visitors from the L.A. and South Bay areas, ultimately solidified the community by illustrating the shared event. Through the events themselves, as well as the highlights in the newspapers (camp and the *Rafu*

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<sup>83</sup> "Obon Carnival to Attract Crowd," the *Rafu Shimpo*, July 27, 1950; "West L.A. Obon Festival and Carnival Set for July 17, 18," the *Rafu Shimpo*, July 15, 1954; "WLA Obon Weekend Planned for Youngsters, Oldsters," the *Rafu Shimpo*, July 23, 1958.

<sup>84</sup> "History of West Los Angeles Buddhist Temple," *WestLosAngelesBuddhistTemple.org*, accessed February 21, 2017, <http://westlosangelesbuddhisttemple.org/about-us/history-of-wlabt>.

*Shimpo*), the community could palpably witness their connection and identity with the larger Nikkei Buddhist community. The attendees could embrace a return to normal life and activities after the disruption, and due to newspaper coverage, they could discuss the events later with other Nikkei that they either previously knew or met at the festival, they could interact with the rest of the community, and establish their identities and place within the community. Thus, Nikkei not only participated in the Obon festivals as a fulfillment of religious tradition, they also celebrated the festivities that created a means of returning to normalcy after the tumultuous years of incarceration.



Figure 5. Bon-Odori at the Nishi Hongwanji Buddhist Temple. Photo by author. Los Angeles, California, July 10, 2016.



Figure 6. Bon-Odori at the Nishi Hongwanji Buddhist Temple. Photo by author. Los Angeles, California, July 10, 2016.

## Nisei Week

The Nisei Week festival is a Japanese American social and cultural celebration that the Issei and Nisei created to bridge the Japanese and American cultures, and as a demonstration of the community's ethnic solidarity. Due to the stigma associated with the early twentieth century "alien enemy" Issei population because of their inability to naturalize, the Nisei sought to establish and solidify their identities as separate from their Issei parents as well as "Americanized."<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Lyon, *Prisons and Patriots*, 16, 18-20.

Amidst the prewar anti-Japanese prejudice, the Nisei began hosting Nisei Week to demonstrate their Japanese heritage while proving that they not only deserved a place within American society as American citizens, but also that their identities were those of Japanese Americans, not Japanese nationals. The Nisei generation served as bridges between their Issei parents and American society, as well as between the Japanese and American cultures, yet the Nisei ultimately forged an identity and culture of their own.<sup>86</sup> This identity and culture would be known as Japanese American, as it diverged from the solely Japanese culture of Japan and the completely “Americanized” culture of the assimilationists’ perspective.<sup>87</sup> Through the Nisei Week festivals, the Nisei combined specific components of the two cultures, creating a Nikkei festival that has come to encompass all generations of Japanese ancestry.

Nisei Week began in 1934, and despite its hiatus during the years of Nikkei incarceration during World War II, the festival has been held every August since 1949. The Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) initially organized Nisei Week to draw Nisei patronage to Little Tokyo businesses. The JACLers hoped that the “buy Lil’ Tokio” campaign would alleviate the floundering Little Tokyo economy during the Great Depression; moreover, they sought to include

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<sup>86</sup> Lyon, *Prisons and Patriots*; Yoo, *Growing Up Nisei*; Ruiz, *From out of the Shadows*, 50; Ichioka, “A Study of Dualism,” 92-125.

<sup>87</sup> Lyon, *Prisons and Patriots*; Yoo, *Growing Up Nisei*; Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows*; Tamura, “Bridge of Understanding, Bridge of Straw”; Ichioka, “A Study of Dualism.”

the Nisei in the future of the enclave's businesses.<sup>88</sup> In addition to the JACL and other sponsors, the Miyatake family, from which the popular photographer – Toyo Miyatake – hails, helped establish, organize, and continue the festival after the war. Nisei Week helped bring cohesion to the prewar Nikkei community, and later, it helped those scarred by the camps to reunite with their community. In 1949, the postwar community reestablished itself in the L.A./South Bay area during the resettlement period and began the festival once again. Since 1949, the festival has occurred annually without disruption.<sup>89</sup>

Nisei Week hosts a series of social and cultural events – some Japanese and some American, and reflects the Nisei effort to combine the two cultures. Scholars contend that the transmission of culture changes with immigration and succeeding generations according to the social and material environment of the new host country.<sup>90</sup> While discussing the history of all of the events featured throughout the festival's duration could amount to a full-length book, for the purposes of postwar community restoration and cultural perpetuation, the most noteworthy are presented here.

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<sup>88</sup> Kurashige, *Japanese American Celebration and Conflict*, 15.

<sup>89</sup> "A Tale of Two Legacies," [www.NiseiWeek.org](http://www.NiseiWeek.org), accessed January 9, 2017; Nisei Week newspaper articles, the *Rafu Shimpo*, *The Los Angeles Times*.

<sup>90</sup> Mintz and Price, *The Birth of African American Culture*; Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*; Kittler and Sucher, *Food and Culture*.

## Nisei Week Queen Contest

It is common to fuse ethnic cultural traditions with American social recreations in an ethnic minority group's attempts to assimilate. Beauty pageants, for instance, have been utilized by the Nikkei community during Nisei Week, and later, by the Vietnamese community after the Vietnam War. Vietnamese communities began hosting beauty pageants after their influx to the United States within their cultural "variety shows" to demonstrate their attempt to Americanize. It was necessary for the pageant contestants to don the traditional feminine gown attire (*ao dai*), and to demonstrate ethnic customs, Vietnamese language proficiency, Vietnamese feminine beauty, as well as a talent, to win the pageant.<sup>91</sup> Thus, ethnic groups incorporate the Miss America pageant structure into their own beauty pageants as a way of promoting their adaptation to the American culture.

The beauty pageant to select a Nisei Week queen established the precedent for some ethnic groups, such as the Vietnamese, to "Americanize" and gain social acceptance. During the prewar years, the community would cast votes for their favorite pageant contestants based on purchases from Little Tokyo businesses as part of the "buy Lil' Tokio" campaign. The *Rafu Shimpo* featured the contestants in the newspaper in the weeks prior to the festival, and the community would cast votes for a queen. A panel of judges determines who the

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<sup>91</sup> Lieu, *The American Dream in Vietnamese*, 59-77.



Nisei Week queen and her royal court will be for the festivities. The first night of the festival, the sponsors hold a coronation ball in which the judges crown the queen and announce her court. Upon crowning the queen, it is customary for the queen and her court to formally invite the city mayor – the city’s highest official – to the festival as well as to surprise and visit local businesses before the event begins. Albeit the queen and her court attend some of the Nisei Week formalities in traditional kimonos (Japanese formal attire for women), the beauty pageant, the coronation ball, and inviting the American mayor are components of the festival that demonstrate their desire to bridge the Japanese and American cultures. By attending the ball and the beauty pageant in American attire, the contestants and the queen participate in American social activities as part of the bridging of cultures, and to demonstrate their adherence to American culture.<sup>92</sup> The Nisei attempted to not only provide an event in which they could celebrate their heritage, but also to gain acceptance in American society.

The prewar Nisei Week contestants vied for the crown months before the festivities began, never knowing the devastation the community would experience during the war. In 1940, the final contestants included May Yamasaki, Itsuko Takeuchi, and Shizue Kobayashi, with Kobayashi winning the crown.<sup>93</sup> The following year, nearly one hundred contestants entered the beauty pageant

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<sup>92</sup> Kurashige, *Japanese American Celebration and Conflict*, 59.

<sup>93</sup> “Five Days to Pick Five Girls,” the *Rafu Shimpo*, July 24, 1940; “Queen Invites Mayor to Festival,” the *Rafu Shimpo*, August 5, 1940.

for the Nisei Week queen title.<sup>94</sup> As the judges crowned the queen, the other leaders of the pageant became the queen's court, as is customary. All of the festival's events occurred without any notion of what lay ahead for the community. The 1941 Nisei Week and beauty pageant served as the last festivity prior to the disruption that came that December.

In 1949, Nisei organizations and the JACL revived the Nisei Week festival and the beauty competition despite the wartime disruption and postwar necessities. Once the community fulfilled its basic needs during resettlement – housing, employment, education, etc., the festival returned. While the *Rafu Shimpō* too regained its momentum in 1949, the Nisei Week announcements and events on the itinerary continued to receive the attention it had during the prewar years – even amidst new content, such as local announcements and product and real estate advertisements. The revival of Nisei Week and the beauty pageant after the war demonstrates the community's desire to return to normalcy and to reestablish its community ties and sense of identity within the Nikkei community.

The *Rafu Shimpō* resumed highlighting the festival in 1949. The announcements and the beauty contest began in June and featured one or two pageant contestants on most newspaper issues until the closure of the contest on July 20<sup>th</sup>.<sup>95</sup> The contest for the Nisei Week queen generally ran from June to

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<sup>94</sup> "Fifty Candidates for Nisei Queen Named," the *Rafu Shimpō*, June 25, 1941.

<sup>95</sup> The newspaper usually featured a picture and a brief description of the contestants' backgrounds. The *Rafu Shimpō*, June 29<sup>th</sup>, June 30<sup>th</sup>, July 14<sup>th</sup>, and July 19<sup>th</sup>, 1949.

early August of each year. Upon announcing the Nisei Week queen and her court, the coronation ball and the formal invitation for the mayor to join the festivities shortly followed. The Nisei Week queen would represent the community during the festivities, and would serve as the Nikkei community representative to the mainstream American society.

### Coronation Ball

The coronation ball sparked the week-long festivities. The ball usually occurred at various sponsoring locations where the queen received her crown amidst the community gathered in the great room. In 1940, the gala occurred in the Blue Room of the Baltimore Hotel, which held one of the largest attendances in the history of the festival before America's entrance into World War II.<sup>96</sup> As the festivities returned, the Riviera Country Club held the event in 1949, and the Zenda Ballroom Café hosted the coronation ball in 1950, the second postwar festival. To illustrate the community's postwar participation in the event, 1950 witnessed some two thousand attendees to the coronation ball and crowning ceremony, a record-breaking attendance according to the *Rafu Shimpō*.<sup>97</sup> The community gathered to witness the tradition of the previous Nisei Week queen crowning her successor, as the following images depict.

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<sup>96</sup> "Queen is Crowned," the *Rafu Shimpō*, August 5, 1940; "Coronation at Riviera," the *Rafu Shimpō*, August 13, 1949; "Kazunaga Crowned," the *Rafu Shimpō*, August 21, 1950.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., "Kazunaga Crowned."

## Queen Is Crowned



Figure 7. "Queen is Crowned." Shizue Narahara, the 1939 queen, crowns Shizue Kobayashi. "Queen is Crowned," *The Rafu Shimpō*, August 5, 1940. Courtesy of University of California, Los Angeles.



Figure 8. "Kazunaga Crowned." Terri Hokoda, the 1949 queen, crowns Sachi Kazunaga. "Kazunaga Crowned," the *Rafu Shimpō*, August 21, 1950. Courtesy of University of California, Los Angeles.

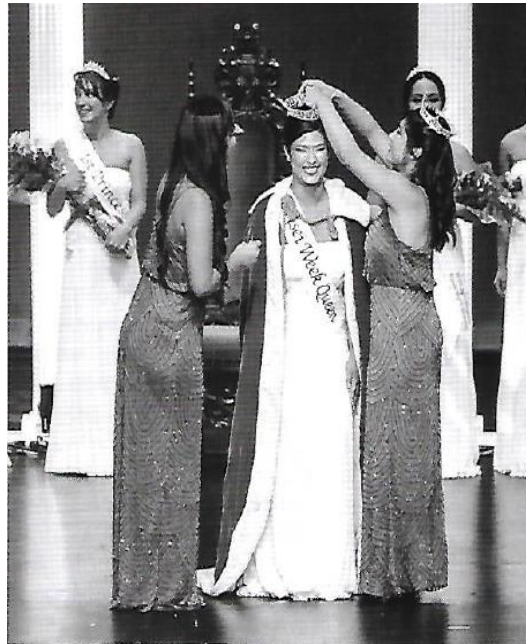


Figure 9. 2015 Nisei Week Queen. Sara Kuniko Hutter. "Coronation Highlights," Photo by Toyo Miyatake Studios, *Nisei Week: 76<sup>th</sup> Annual Japanese Festival*, Los Angeles: The Nisei Week Foundation, 2016, page 69.

The coronation ball symbolized the Americanization of the Nikkei community. The contestants and the attendees of the event would dress in American attire and dance ballroom dances to American songs, while the crowning ceremony would be in complete American beauty pageant fashion. The previous queen would crown the new queen, and she would receive the customary tiara, cape, and flowers. The coronation ball and the crowning ceremony were purely American events that the community hoped would demonstrate their embrace of American culture.

The morning after the coronation ball, the queen and her court would don their kimonos and proceed with their visits to officials, politicians, businesses, and the mayor as part of Queen's Day. The visits to various community members changed per year and per queen, but the invitation to the mayor, presented at the Los Angeles City Hall, remained the same every year.<sup>98</sup> This personal invitation by the newly crowned representative of the Nikkei community symbolized the bridging of the Japanese and American communities rather than a self-ostracization of the enclave.<sup>99</sup> Because the annual invitation proved symbolic, both the Nikkei and mainstream American media captured the event. The

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<sup>98</sup> While newspapers usually captured the invitation in a photograph, there were times the newspapers simply highlighted an article of the event. For instance, a newspaper article of Mayor Bowron receiving the invitation in 1951. "Mayor Invited to Festival of Nisei Week," the *Los Angeles Times*, August 21, 1951.

<sup>99</sup> Lyon, *Prisons and Patriots*; Yoo, *Growing Up Nisei*; Ruiz, *From out of the Shadows*, 50; Ichioka, "A Study of Dualism," 92-125.

invitation to the mayor reflected the community's attempt to include the American public in their festivities while retaining their ethnic culture.



Figure 10. "Queen Invites Mayor to Festival." The *Rafu Shimpo*, August 5, 1940. Courtesy of University of California, Los Angeles.



Figure 11. "Invitation to the Mayor." The *Los Angeles Times*, August 23, 1955.

### Traditions and Demonstrations

In contrast to the coronation ball and beauty pageant, as American social activities, the tea ceremony – called *chanoyu* – is a traditional Japanese custom incorporated into the Nisei Week itinerary. The Japanese tea ceremony has existed for well over a thousand years – since China introduced tea to Japan – and began as a religious custom associated with Zen Buddhism. The ceremony later transformed into an art and tradition. While the ceremony centers around the tea, which is actually in powdered form – called *matcha*, the ceremony underscores the ritualistic movements of the preparer, and not necessarily the tea itself. There are various types of tea ceremonies, but all are traditionally



formal demonstrations of ritual, purity, and benevolence between various relationships, in that, spouses, host and guests, etc. Pastries and confections are often served alongside and to counter the herbal taste of the tea. The tea ceremony is a traditional and historical component of the Japanese culture brought to America from Japan.<sup>100</sup>

Nisei Week highlights this custom in the form of tea ceremony demonstrations, gatherings, and classes. Nisei Week's tea ceremony classes began in the prewar years as a way to educate the Nikkei on the art form and to incorporate the American public. The tea ceremony classes became a "bridge of understanding" between the Nikkei community and the mainstream public.<sup>101</sup> Within recent years, the classes still exist, but Nisei Week has incorporated formal demonstrations of the art, often performed by a single preparer on a stage, into the itinerary. The leading queen contestants hold a tea ceremony prior to the beginning of the Nisei Week festival. In 1950, for example, the Tokuyama family hosted the tea ceremony on Fifth Street for the candidates.<sup>102</sup> The tea ceremony held by the contestants, as well as the demonstrations and classes of

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<sup>100</sup> For more information on the Japanese Tea Ceremony, see <http://www.japanese-tea-ceremony.net/>; Seno Tanaka, Sento Tanaka, and Edwin O. Reischauer, *The Tea Ceremony* (New York: Kodansha USA, 1973, 2000).

<sup>101</sup> Tamura, "Bridge of Understanding, Bridge of Straw"; Kurashige, *Japanese American Celebration and Conflict*, 48.

<sup>102</sup> "Queen Candidates' Tea Turns Out to be Punch and Cookie Affair," the *Rafu Shimpo*, July 31, 1950.

the tea ceremonies during Nisei Week, prove the thousand-year-old custom a crucial and propagated component of the Japanese culture.



Figure 12. 1956 Nisei Week Tea Ceremony. "Tea Ceremony," the *Los Angeles Times*, August 12, 1956.

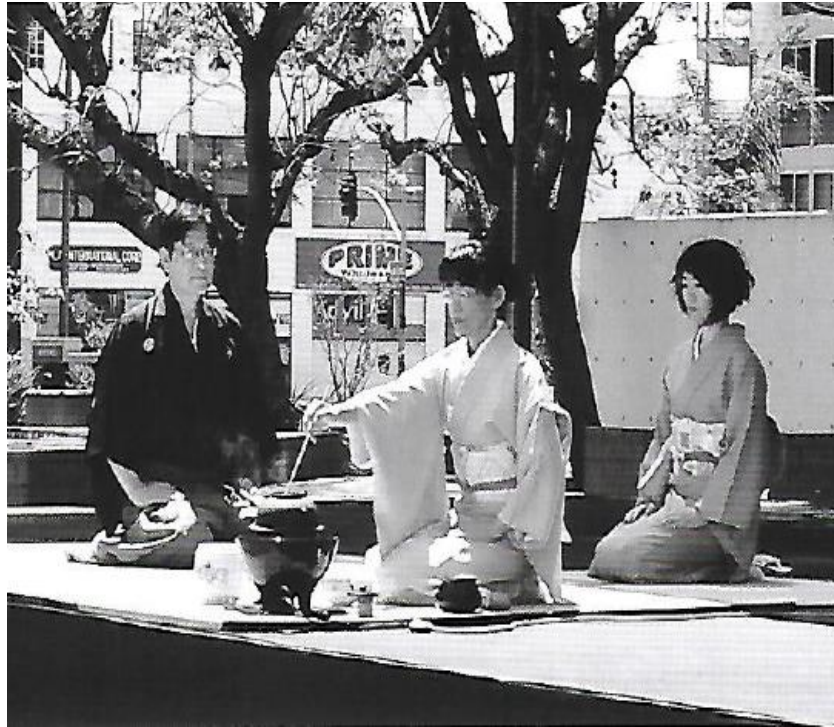


Figure 13. Tea Ceremony Demonstration at Nisei Week 2015. Photo by Leslie A. Ito. “Sustainable Little Tokyo,” *Nisei Week: 76<sup>th</sup> Annual Japanese Festival*, Los Angeles: The Nisei Week Foundation, 2016, page 32.

In addition to tea, Nisei Week festivals sell foods that are generally authentic to Japanese cuisine – namely, Japanese “street” food. The dishes available include takoyaki, andagi, gyoza, and other portable Japanese foods.<sup>103</sup> Some of the Japanese foods most well-known to the American public – yakisoba, sushi, and mochi – are also featured in Nisei Week booths and Little Tokyo

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<sup>103</sup> Takoyaki are best described as similar to the American hush puppy, except they contain bits of octopus; andagi are the dense, Okinawan doughnut; and gyoza are traditional dumplings containing various meat and/or vegetable fillings, but traditionally consist of ground pork, cabbage, ginger, and other vegetables.

restaurants.<sup>104</sup> Adults and children alike enjoy these treats while shopping for Japanese goods and observing and/or participating in the festival activities. Food remains an important component of culture and festivals, as it solidifies both the ethnicity through cultural roots and the ties of the ethnic community when enjoyed in a group setting. For the Nikkei who reside outside of the L.A./South Bay area, the Japanese foods available at Nisei Week serve as comfort foods that reestablish one's identity with the Nikkei community.



Figure 14. Sushi Vendor at Nisei Week 2016. Photo by author. Los Angeles, California, August 21, 2016.

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<sup>104</sup> Yakisoba is a sautéed barbeque-flavored noodle dish with bits of meat and vegetables; sushi refers to the sweet (vinegar) rice usually combined with raw fish and vegetables – makizushi is a piece of fish and/or vegetable rolled in rice and nori (seaweed), and nigiri sushi is a thinly-sliced piece of raw fish placed on top of a small mound of rice; mochi is a dough made from pounded rice that is either left plain and served with a soy sauce and sugar glaze, or flavored with fruit or green tea.



Figure 15. Japanese “Street Food” Vendor at Nisei Week 2016. Andagi – the Okinawan doughnut – in the center. Photo by author. Los Angeles, California, August 21, 2016.

The performances and activities at Nisei Week also serve as connections between the Nikkei community and its Japanese heritage. Similar to Lion Dancing as a traditional component and demonstration of the Chinese culture,<sup>105</sup> two prominent displays of the Japanese culture are the taiko<sup>106</sup> drum demonstrations and the Ondo – the dance session of Nisei Week. The taiko – “tai” meaning “big/large” and “ko” meaning “drum” – is a large cylindrical drum varying in diameter from one foot to several feet. The drums are played with “bachi” sticks, and typically take substantial effort, strength, and stamina for the

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<sup>105</sup> Bonnie Tsui, *American Chinatown: A People’s History of Five Neighborhoods* (New York City: Free Press, 2009), 87-91.

<sup>106</sup> Paul Jong-Chul Yoon, “‘She’s Really Become Japanese Now!’: Taiko Drumming and Asian American Identifications.” *American Music* 19, no. 4 (Winter 2001): 420.

drummers to play the taiko. Taiko drummers traditionally wear a hachimaki, or headband, and a happi – a short, cotton, loose-fitting coat – as a uniform representing the Japanese culture and their group.

Historically, the playing of taiko drums grew common in places of worship – in Buddhist or Shinto temples, and now prove essential to Nikkei celebrations like Obon and Nisei Week festivals. While many of the contemporary taiko groups are multiracial – including ethnic Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, and other Asian Americans along with the some Caucasians, such as the taiko group Soh Daiko, historically, taiko groups comprised solely ethnic Japanese members.<sup>107</sup> Taiko drums often prove symbolic of the community's Japanese roots and are frequently incorporated into the religious, cultural, and social events of the Nikkei community.

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<sup>107</sup> Yoon, "She's Really Become Japanese Now!," 417-438.





Figure 16. Taiko Performance at Nisei Week 2016. Photo by author. Los Angeles, California, August 21, 2016.



Figure 17. Taiko Performance at Nisei Week 2016. Photo by author. Los Angeles, California, August 21, 2016.

Nisei Week's Ondo hosts the traditional dances of Obon but on a grander scale. The dance session, often called "Ondo," refers to the Ondo music – Japanese folk music – to which the participants dance. Nisei Week visitors often dance the same dances to the same Japanese songs as Obon, and they dance for the same reason – to honor their ancestors. Therefore, the Bon-Odori is the name of the dance session during Obon and the Ondo is the dance session during Nisei Week, but essentially, they are the same event. Typically, because Obon festivals occur throughout July and August at a multitude of Buddhist churches, the attendance at individual churches is only a fraction of the population that attends Nisei Week, which includes the entire L.A./South Bay Nikkei community. The churches usually host the Ondo dances – or the Bon-Odori – in the parking lot of the church, or in a small recreational space on church grounds. The Ondo of Nisei Week, however, often hosts thousands of people, and therefore, local police often close entire streets for the Ondo to accommodate the large group of dancers.

The organizers of Nisei Week arrange the closure of a segment of a street – often First Street – spanning a city block for the dance, and dancers young and old form a large oval that occupies the entire street. In 1949, the Nishi Hongwanji Buddhist Temple, a landmark to L.A./South Bay's Nikkei community, hosted the first postwar Nisei Week, and the final round of the Ondo danced on First Street



near the temple.<sup>108</sup> Proving such a pinnacle to the L.A./South Bay Nikkei community, Nishi Hongwanji not only served the prewar community, for it also helped much of the community retain its valuables during the war, as the temple closed like most other Nikkei establishments, and it hosted the celebrations so vital to the postwar community upon its reopening. For nearly the past century, Nishi has assisted the entire L.A./South Bay Nikkei community – Buddhist or not – whenever possible, and it continues to do so today. In 2016, however, the social atmosphere toward the Nikkei community does not render Nishi's protection, or assistance in providing the Ondo site, necessary. Thus, law enforcement closed a section of First Street directly in front of Little Tokyo between Central Avenue and Alameda Street for the Ondo. Closing an entire street the length of a city block proves the only means of accommodating the large numbers of participants that attend Nisei Week. Nevertheless, the Ondoists dance seeking a reconnection with the community, to revisit their Japanese American cultural roots, and to reinforce their identity as members of the Nikkei community.

The dance participants include every generation, level of experience, and class of the Nikkei community. Members of various churches, temples, businesses, and organizations form small groups and don their coordinating happi coats. Within the larger oval of dancers, a designated "leader" group

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<sup>108</sup> "43 Booths to Welcome Crowd at Gala Nisei Week Carnival," the *Rafu Shimpo*, August 14, 1954; "First Postwar Nisei Week Activities Come to a Close," the *Rafu Shimpo*, August 22, 1949.

dances to guide the less experienced or those who could not attend the Ondo practice sessions available throughout the month prior to Nisei Week. Apart from the Nisei Week in 1941 promoting the yukata – a basic ethnic robe made of cotton – as the official attire for the Ondo parade, as the elaborate kimono proved an “unnecessary expense,”<sup>109</sup> the “leader” group usually wears matching kimonos (for women) or yukatas (for men) and dances in the traditional geta or zori.<sup>110</sup> All who wish to dance, may, and can take part in perpetuating this cultural activity, honoring their ancestors, and celebrating their Japanese heritage.



Figure 18. 1950 Ondoists. “Highlights of Nisei Week Viewed By the Camera,” the *Rafu Shimpo*, August 24, 1950. Courtesy of University of California, Los Angeles.

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<sup>109</sup> “‘Yukata’ Attire Slated for Nisei Festival Ondo Parade,” the *Rafu Shimpo*, July 29, 1941.

<sup>110</sup> The geta and the zori are similar, in that, they are sandals that have a thong strap which separate the toes. The primary difference between the two is the sole, as geta are wooden clogs with two beams underneath the sole, and zori are straw, rubber, fabric, wood, or any other material, with a flat sole.



Figure 19. Ondoist at Nisei Week 2016. 76<sup>th</sup> Anniversary event. Photo by author. Los Angeles, California, August 21, 2016.

### Nisei Week Special Editions

Nisei Week has consistently symbolized the vibrancy of the Nikkei community and the Japanese American culture. Accordingly, the *Rafu Shimpo* has covered the festival and its prominent and historical moments with great zeal and diligence. The years 1949, 1954, and 1960 marked three significant years for the postwar community and Nisei Week.

The Nisei Week in 1949 proved significant as the first postwar festival, and it served as an indication of the different social environment from the prewar years. The resettlement patterns of the returning Nikkei did not fully reestablish the Little Tokyo area, as many settled in the integrated suburbs outside of the metropolitan area in cities like Crenshaw, Leimert Park, Gardena, and Torrance.

Furthermore, since the failing economy of the Great Depression was no longer an issue after the war, the “Buy Lil’ Tokio” campaign disappeared; within a few years of the festival’s revival, Nisei organizations, such as the Japanese American Optimist Club and veterans’ organizations, started assisting the Japanese American Citizens League and sponsoring many of the booths and the events of the festival.<sup>111</sup> This postwar change in Nisei Week’s management from the Issei merchants to the Nisei organizations attests to the shift of power during the war and incarceration, and the passing of the torch to the Nisei as community leaders. It also signifies a desire on the part of the Nisei to revive and sustain their goodwill with the American public as well as their Japanese American identity. The postwar revival of Nisei Week is indicative of the L.A./South Bay Nikkei community’s restoration after the wartime disruption and its desire to reconnect with fellow community members in a Japanese American cultural setting.

The Nisei Week festivals of 1954 and 1960 were noteworthy anniversaries for the festival, and these years evidenced the community’s revival after the resettlement period and the postwar improvement of U.S.-Japan relations. In 1954, the *Rafu Shimpo* published an article describing the festival’s twenty-year history. This article discussed the advent of festival, previous Nisei queens, and the festival’s postwar recovery.<sup>112</sup> The 1954 Nisei Week also featured 43 booths

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<sup>111</sup> Kurashige, *Japanese American Celebration and Conflict*, chapter 4.

at the carnival. The sponsors of said booths included various clubs, veteran posts, and the Japanese American Optimist Club, which also sponsored a sports league of the same name.<sup>113</sup> These sponsors illustrate the burgeoning Nisei participation and management of the festival. The article, however, failed to thoroughly discuss the reasons for the seven-year hiatus, as it merely stated the festival's 1949 revival after the "resettlement from the relocation camps." This special edition reveals the intentional historical amnesia of the community's incarceration experiences, as the community stood more concerned with moving past the wartime disruption than addressing the traumas of incarceration. Nonetheless, the discussion of the "Twenty-Year History" reflects the desire to create solidarity within the community as well as the rise of the Nisei as the leaders and the future of the community. Five years after the war and the revival of the Nisei Week festival, the community – including the World War II 442<sup>nd</sup> Regiment veterans – embraced the festival, its events, and the shared identity of the L.A./South Bay Nikkei.

The 1960 special edition also reflected the newspaper and the community's historical amnesia of the wartime incarceration and disruption, and chose, instead, to highlight the postwar goodwill between the U.S. and Japan.

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<sup>112</sup> "Annual Nisei Pageant Develops from Humble Beginning 20 Years Ago," the *Rafu Shimpo*, August 14, 1954.

<sup>113</sup> "43 Booths to Welcome Crowd at Gala Nisei Week Carnival," the *Rafu Shimpo*, August 14, 1954.

The *Rafu Shimpo* published a special edition in 1960 commemorating the twentieth Nisei Week and the centennial celebration of the Japan-United States Treaty of Amity and Commerce (1860-1960).<sup>114</sup> Before the 1960 festival, Japan gifted a Mikoshi – a portable Japanese shrine – to the U.S. in commemoration of a century of friendly relations in reference to the long-standing trade between the two countries, albeit this trade ceased during the war.<sup>115</sup> The city of Los Angeles accepted the shrine from Nagoya, Japan – L.A.’s Japanese sister city. After Reverend Tsuyuki of the Konkokyo Mission performed the ritual of purification, the Mikoshi took center stage in the Nisei Week finale.<sup>116</sup> The Nikkei community showcased the shrine in the culminating Ondo parade.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> *A History of Japanese in Hawaii*, edited by the Publication Committee (Honolulu: United Japanese Society of Hawaii, 1971), 72.

<sup>115</sup> “Festival Shrine Show to Climax Centennial Rites,” the *Rafu Shimpo*, August 9, 1960.

<sup>116</sup> “Ritual Readies ‘Mikoshi’ Shrine for Festival Finale,” the *Rafu Shimpo*, August 17, 1960.

<sup>117</sup> “‘Mikoshi’ Puts New Spark in Routine Festival Parade,” the *Rafu Shimpo*, August 22, 1960; “1,000 Ondoists to Draw Throng in Festival Climax,” the *Rafu Shimpo*, August 20, 1960.



Figure 20. "Portable Shrine." the *Los Angeles Times*, August 22, 1960.

Moreover, Japanese singer – Peggy Hayama – visited the states and made a guest appearance at the 1960 Nisei Week festival.<sup>118</sup> The community sought to highlight the present celebrations and guest appearances rather than its tumultuous past as a means of “forgetting” the trauma and celebrating the present and the future. The year 1960 commemorated not only the centennial of the U.S.-Japan treaty, it also reflected the community’s desire to perpetuate its Japanese American culture.

The Mikoshi and the guest appearance from Peggy Hayama symbolized the postwar amicability between the United States and Japan, and signified the Nikkei community’s embrace of its Japanese roots. Albeit the Japanese

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<sup>118</sup> “Japan Singer Arrives Here for Festival,” the *Los Angeles Times*, August 4, 1960.

American culture is quite different from the Japanese culture, the Nikkei community propagates some of the ethnic Japanese roots, such as the Ondo dances, tea ceremonies, and Japanese attire, brought to America by their Issei ancestors. The honor of receiving a Mikoshi, and showcasing the Mikoshi and Hayama's performance, served as an opportunity for the community to reconnect with their ancestral origins and their ethnic identity.

### Conclusion

The Obon and Nisei Week festivals attest to the Nikkei community's desire to perpetuate the Japanese American culture, as well as its persistence and endurance through prejudice, incarceration, and time. It is understandable that immediately upon release from the camps, housing, employment, education, and other necessities took precedence over recreation. While the Obon and Nisei Week festivals halted – at some point or entirely – during World War II, as the community resettled and regained its footing, the activities began once again.

As much of the existing literature indicates, the Los Angeles area indeed hosts a substantial Nikkei community, but without the inclusion of the Nikkei residing in L.A.'s neighboring cities throughout the South Bay area, these case studies only discuss a fragment of the Nikkei community. Furthermore, the literature regarding the postwar Nikkei community generally focuses on the birth of the Yellow Power movement, and addressing and coping with the traumas of incarceration and disruption. Overlooking the South Bay Nikkei community and



these festivals ultimately negates the redevelopment of the larger community, the cultural mechanisms that assisted with the coping of wartime traumas, and the birth of the movement.

The Nikkei community has consistently perpetuated its cultural celebrations – through Obon and Nisei Week festivals – as means of recovering from wartime trauma, and to ensure that the culture and the community did not wane. Without the redevelopment of the L.A./South Bay Nikkei community, as well as its ties and strength, the Yellow Power movement of the late 1960s and 1970s would not have emerged in the L.A./South Bay area to fight for the community's equality. Moreover, the substantial and vibrant L.A./South Bay Nikkei community witnessed today would be virtually nonexistent, or at the very least, fragmented. Cultural celebrations aided this redevelopment and restoration of the community, its Japanese American culture, and its sense of identity as Nikkei.

The cultural demonstrations featured in Obon and Nisei Week festivals function as some of the only means of propagating the Japanese heritage, as contemporary Japanese American generations are often distant from their ethnic Japanese roots. If not for these festivals, the Yonsei – myself included – and the Gosei (fifth) generations would remain unaware of many of the traditions essential to their Issei ancestors and their cultural ties to the Nikkei community. Hence, these festivities continue today for the Sansei to pass on their ethnic

roots, customs, and traditions, to the L.A./South Bay Yonsei and Gosei generations.



Figure 21. Nisei Week 2016 Mascot. Contemporary Nisei Week festivals have their own mascot, an Akita – Japan’s favorite dog breed. The Akita is seen as the most loyal of the breeds. Image of the mascot dancing in the middle of the “leader” group. Photo by author. Nisei Week 2016, Los Angeles, California, August 21, 2016.



Figure 22. "2015 Queens Reunion." *Nisei Week: 76<sup>th</sup> Annual Japanese Festival*, Los Angeles: The Nisei Week Foundation, 2016, page 75.

## CHAPTER TWO

### SPORTS AND RECREATION

Sport is considered a cultural product.<sup>119</sup> Similar to celebrations, sports are not inherent to human necessity, but are acquired through the shared and learned behaviors of fellow cultural members. Sport serves to bridge cultures and language barriers. Ethnic populations have used sports to connect with one another, and participating in sports precludes the need to speak other languages. The game speaks for itself. Sports and games are also frequently used as tools to “train” children in appropriate cultural behaviors, such as teamwork and sportsmanship.<sup>120</sup> Sports and recreation tends to preserve and reinforce ethnic and cultural identities, community ties, and solidarity through participation in – and the discussion of – the activity.<sup>121</sup>

Historically, sports and leisure have served as means of escaping the hardships of labor and restoring a sense of autonomy.<sup>122</sup> For the Nikkei

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<sup>119</sup> Florence Stumpf Frederickson, “Sports and the Cultures of Man,” in *Sport, Culture, and Society: A Reader on the Sociology of Sport*, ed. John W. Loy, Jr. and Gerald S. Kenyon (London: MacMillan Company, 1969), 87.

<sup>120</sup> John M. Roberts and Brian Sutton Smith, “Child Training and Game Involvement,” in *Sport, Culture, and Society: A Reader on the Sociology of Sport*, ed. John W. Loy, Jr. and Gerald S. Kenyon (London: MacMillan Company, 1969), 116.

<sup>121</sup> Frederickson, “Sports and the Cultures of Man,” 88; Jay Coakley, *Sports in Society: Issues and Controversies*, 10<sup>th</sup> ed. (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2009), 302, as cited in Jorge Iber, Samuel O. Regalado, Jose M. Alamillo, and Arnolde De Leon, *Latinos in U.S. Sports: A History of Isolation, Cultural Identity, and Acceptance* (Champaign: Human Kinetics, 2011), 6.

previously incarcerated, recreation provided a source of distraction and recovery from the traumas of wartime confinement and surveillance, and from postwar suspicion and prejudice. The athleticism embedded in the Japanese and Japanese American cultures transformed the participation in sports into the dominant sources of recreation and leisure, as well as a means of strengthening Nikkei community interaction. Furthermore, exclusion from mainstream sports and recreation fostered the need to create Nikkei sports teams, leagues, and establishments. The participation in postwar Nikkei sports and recreation bolstered a sense of autonomy after wartime imprisonment as well as a reformation of community.

Sports tended to create a deeper sense of comradeship and community, and at the very least, a more consuming and consistent distraction from social adversities. Sports also provided an opportunity for a social and cultural bridge for many ethnic communities. This proved true of the Mexican American and Latino communities who sought a distraction from societal prejudice and exclusion through baseball. Similar to Japan during the Meiji Period, Mexico embraced baseball and other sports as a means of fostering nationalism and a sense of community. As immigrants came to the United States – where baseball was born – the ethnic communities saw an opportunity to bridge the divide

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<sup>122</sup> Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986).

between their culture and the mainstream American culture through an American sport.<sup>123</sup>

Baseball fields and bowling alleys created community relationships and spaces in the postwar years as they did before the war. Baseball fields have served as places of community collaboration since the late nineteenth century. Bowling alleys grew from tavern attachments for immigrant populations to places of community and family recreation.<sup>124</sup> Sports and their spaces often created the circumstances in which stable and familiar spaces, respect, and comradery were constructed and bolstered. The Nikkei community utilized these activities and their spaces to reinforce the cultural ethics – athleticism, endurance, and teamwork – of their Japanese heritage and to reflect their Americanization.

### Play Ball!

Baseball has held a special place in the hearts of Japanese and Japanese Americans since the late nineteenth century. Albeit Japan initially rejected baseball due to its American origins, the Meiji Period and its desire for Westernization embraced the sport as a prospective bridge to Americanization,

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<sup>123</sup> Jose M. Alamillo, *Making Lemonade out of Lemons: Mexican American Labor and Leisure in a California Town, 1880-1960* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006); Iber, et al., *Latinos in U.S. Sports*.

<sup>124</sup> Andrew Hurley, *Diners, Bowling Alleys, and Trailer Parks: Chasing the American Dream in Postwar Consumer Culture* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 15.

amicable relations between Japan and the United States, and American acceptance. Moreover, baseball reflected the ethics of the Japanese culture.

Some speculate that baseball's founder, Abner Doubleday, was versed in Buddhism and established the game of baseball in correlation with Buddhist characteristics. The numbers three, nine, and one-hundred and eight are multifaceted symbols in the Buddhist religion. For instance, the number three has several significances to the religion – one being the “Three Jewels,” standing as the Buddha, the Dharma (teachings), and the Buddhist community. In baseball, there are three strikes, nine players and nine innings, and one-hundred and eight stitches on the ball – the same number of prayer beads on a Buddhist Mala. Thus, with all of the symbolic components within the game, as well as the athleticism, values, teamwork, and sportsmanship inherent to the game, Japan embraced the sport as an acceptable recreation for its citizens. In the late 1890s, as the Issei immigrated to Hawai'i, they established the sport as a distraction from the hardships of plantation labor and as an alternative to vice. In later years, and on the mainland, the sport served as an educational tool to teach their children Japanese ethics.<sup>125</sup>

The prewar Nikkei community in L.A. and South Bay utilized sports to instill Japanese ethics into their children while participating in an American

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<sup>125</sup> Kerry Yo Nakagawa, *Through a Diamond: 100 Years of Japanese American Baseball* (San Francisco: Rudi Publishing, 2001), 2-4, 10; Kerry Yo Nakagawa, *Japanese American Baseball in California: A History* (Charleston: The History Press, 2014).

pastime. The prewar Issei viewed sports as not only an adherence to the Japanese practice of developing the body through athletics, but also as a way of demonstrating their Nisei children's Americanization while teaching them Japanese ethics. These cultural ethics included athletics, teamwork, sportsmanship, comradery, respect, endurance, hard work, and perfection of movement through practice and routine.

### Prewar Sports

Prior to the war, the *Rafu Shimpō* included sports updates and articles in practically every (daily) edition, as well as an entire "Sports" and "Nisei Sports" section page on Sundays. While many historians focus on Japanese American baseball as the pinnacle of Japanese American involvement in sports, L.A./South Bay's local newspaper proves their participation in many sports, not solely baseball. The sports sections featured baseball, softball, bowling, tennis, ping pong, and other sports, as well as updates regarding little leagues, club teams, and school teams. Headlines, such as "J.A.U. Baseball End Pre-Season Practice Today," "Softball Meeting," "Baseball Managers," "Fifteen Softball Teams in League," and "Ping Pongers Get Backing from SCPPA," littered the pages of the sports section.<sup>126</sup> The newspaper coverage of, and the community participation

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<sup>126</sup> "J.A.U. Baseball End Pre-Season Practice Today," the *Rafu Shimpō*, April 7, 1940; "Softball Meeting" and "Baseball Managers," the *Rafu Shimpō*, April 14, 1940; "Fifteen Softball Teams in League," the *Rafu Shimpō*, July 8, 1941; "Ping Pongers Get Backing from SCPPA," the *Rafu Shimpō*, March 31, 1940.



in, these various sports demonstrated the community's desire for inclusion into the American mainstream society and its activities, its willingness and attempts to Americanize, and its desire to connect with its fellow community members.

Prior to America's entrance into the war, bowling, for instance, was already gaining momentum as not only a recreation, but also as a sport. By 1940, alongside news of baseball, softball, and other sports, bowling received headlines in the community newspaper.<sup>127</sup> In addition, by the same year, a city or community center having a resident bowling alley served as a rite of passage and a means of attracting the community and other visitors. In 1940, the *Rafu Shimpō* published an article towards Japanese American investors – the Nisei Business Bureau in particular – in an attempt to develop and open a bowling alley within the Nihonmachi (Japantown). Many Nisei chose not to frequent the area due to a lack of recreational outlets, so the article argued that a bowling alley would draw more Nisei to Little Tokyo.<sup>128</sup> Despite community interest in the alley's establishment, the attack on Pearl Harbor, war hysteria, and incarceration shortly after the publication of this article, would ultimately thwart this attempt to establish a bowling alley. Nonetheless, by 1941, the Nisei sponsored and participated in the Nikkei state bowling championship. The second annual National Nisei Bowling Congress partly sponsored the event, and the Golden

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<sup>127</sup> "Bowlers Double-Up at Holly Western," the *Rafu Shimpō*, April 28, 1940.

<sup>128</sup> "Li'l Tokio Needs a Bowling Alley': Profitable Investment Outlets Sought," the *Rafu Shimpō*, March 31, 1940.

Gate Alley in San Francisco provided its location.<sup>129</sup> Through the constant inclusion of sports in the community newspaper, as well as through various leagues, including the Japanese Athletic Union, the Pacific Coast League, and so on, prewar L.A./South Bay Japanese Americans cultivated and perpetuated their Japanese ethics, and bound their community together through their love of sports.

### Camp Pastimes

The Nikkei love of sports never faltered despite the incarceration of the community and the disbanding of the teams and leagues during the war. Camp communities started their own sports teams – particularly baseball and softball – as life within the camps settled and the communities organized. Manzanar, for instance, had their own sports department, which handled the expenses of the sporting activities, equipment, and other necessities. The baseball and softball teams often raised their own money to provide for the teams' needs, such as the San Pedro Yogores sponsoring and selling ice during the Obon festival to raise money for a new "hardball ground."<sup>130</sup>

Furthermore, the camp teams frequently played one another to provide not only a brief distraction from the adversities and the monotony of camp life,

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<sup>129</sup> "L.A. Bowlers Take Major Prizes in State Tournament," the *Rafu Shimpō*, June 30, 1941.

<sup>130</sup> "San Pedro Yogores Sponsor Obon Dance," *Manzanar Free Press*, August 7, 1943; "C.A. Co-Op Financial Report," *Manzanar Free Press*, October 23, 1943.

but also to provide entertainment for fellow inmates. The Arkansas teams at Rohwer and Jerome, for instance, played one another in the 1943 Rohwer-Denson series, which was featured in the *Tulean Dispatch* – the newspaper of the Tule Lake camp.<sup>131</sup> Both the camps' baseball and softball teams played in this series, and these games became the highlights of other camps' newspapers. During the 1943 Obon festival at Tule Lake, a softball game between the Ward Three All-Star City Champions and the Bussei All-Stars provided entertainment before the Ondo dance ending the festivities.<sup>132</sup> The inclusion of sports within festivities in the incarceration camps proves that sports served as an integral component in fostering the community's ties and endurance through the hardships of camp life. As sports required teamwork and endurance, so too would surviving incarceration.

The wartime imprisonment of the Nikkei community presented logistical problems for continuing their participation in sports and recreation. The incarceration camps were built with the sole intention of housing, feeding, and containing the Nikkei population. The WRA never saw the need to provide recreational outlets for the incarcerated Nikkei, so the camps had no baseball fields or recreational equipment. The Nikkei had to work together to construct

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<sup>131</sup> "Footprints: Rohwer," *Tulean Dispatch*, August 25, 1943.

<sup>132</sup> "Program for Obon Festival," *Tulean Dispatch*, July 17, 1943.

baseball fields and to acquire equipment and funds to continue their sports and activities.

The hardships of the forced removal, incarceration, and ambiguity created an even greater need for teamwork, comradery, and distraction through sports and recreation. The ties developed through sports like baseball and softball also provided a social bridge between the Nikkei from West Coast and Hawaiian communities. The incarcerated Nikkei constructed their own baseball fields, raised money for equipment, and acquired the necessary sporting components themselves.<sup>133</sup> Given the need for distraction and community development within the camps, the Nikkei did what was necessary to provide the opportunity for sports.

### Postwar Sports and Recreation

Sports teams and leagues rapidly emerged in the postwar period as a means of recreation and a return to normalcy. Partaking in recreation was not only reflective of their newfound autonomy after their wartime incarceration. It was also a symbol of the Nikkei's desire to reform and rebuild their communities. Immediately after the war, the Nisei formed their own baseball leagues and teams, graduated to the semi-professional leagues, and created their own

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<sup>133</sup> "C.A. Co-Op Financial Report," *Manzanar Free Press*, October 23, 1943; Mochizuki, *Baseball Saved Us*.

recreational establishments.<sup>134</sup> As the Nisei formed postwar sports teams and leagues, the Nikkei newspapers would once again celebrate the community's activities.

Within months after the end of the war, the *Rafu Shimpo* avidly published Nikkei sports news and achievements. In June 1946, the Nisei Softball League held its opening games. Its first game was between the Nisei Rec and Pasadena teams with Nisei Rec – the favorite – taking the win.<sup>135</sup> Similarly, new baseball teams emerged at the same time and would reflect the gradual beginnings of Nikkei inclusion into mainstream sports.

Many Nisei formed baseball and softball teams through their businesses, organizations, and affiliates, and one team graduated to semi-professional status. Nisei ballplayers often founded teams through their respective affiliates, such as the Cal-Design and Nisei Rec teams.<sup>136</sup> One notable team was the veteran sponsored Los Angeles Nisei All-Stars, which, shortly after its founding in June 1946, advanced to the Major Municipal League.<sup>137</sup> The team debuted against the Red Devils, and unfortunately, showed its “green” position in the

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<sup>134</sup> Nakagawa, *Through a Diamond*; “43 Booths to Welcome Crowd at Gala Nisei Week Carnival,” the *Rafu Shimpo*, August 14, 1954; Other examples include the establishments of the Japanese American Optimist League and the Holiday Bowl in Crenshaw in the 1950s.

<sup>135</sup> “Favorites Win Opening Round of Softball Game,” the *Rafu Shimpo*, June 22, 1946.

<sup>136</sup> “Nisei All-Stars Take 10-Inning Tilt,” the *Rafu Shimpo*, July 22, 1946; “Valley Nine Take Nisei Rec 2-0,” the *Rafu Shimpo*, July 11, 1946.

<sup>137</sup> “Nisei Ball Team Drops First Game,” the *Rafu Shimpo*, June 18, 1946; “Sunday Hardball,” the *Rafu Shimpo*, July 11, 1946.

league, losing to the Red Devils 9-5.<sup>138</sup> Nevertheless, the L.A. Nisei All Stars endured and continued to play throughout the season. Despite the relatively small sports sections of the postwar newspaper,<sup>139</sup> the All-Stars took center stage in the *Rafu Shimpō*'s sports highlights as the community celebrated its achievements. The Major League Baseball (MLB) known today did not "move" to the West Coast until the 1950s, but leagues, such as the Major Municipal League and the Pacific Coast League (PCL), served as the first tastes of professional recognition and mainstream inclusion for the Nisei ballplayers.

Baseball and softball provided entertainment for the community as well as the reaffirmation of ethnic identity through athletics.<sup>140</sup> The Nisei teams promoted the Japanese American cultural standards of competition, teamwork, and endurance while reconnecting the community. The newspaper's coverage of sports also served to reconnect and assist in the community's ability to move past the traumas of wartime incarceration through celebrating the achievements

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<sup>138</sup> "Nisei Ball Team Drops First Game," the *Rafu Shimpō*, June 18, 1946; "Sunday Hardball," the *Rafu Shimpō*, July 11, 1946.

<sup>139</sup> During the immediate postwar years, the *Rafu Shimpō*'s English-language section proved surprisingly small in comparison to its prewar section. The "Sports" section became a smaller "Sports Shorts" section, and Sunday editions were omitted entirely. This decrease in size and frequency may have been due to a lack of funds, a smaller staff, or apprehension to fully reestablish amidst postwar suspicion and animosity. The omission of the Sunday editions may have reflected a desire to appeal to the Christian American masses by observing the mainstream Sabbath. As of 1949, however, the English section grew to its prewar size, and thereafter, exceeded its previous coverage and capacity.

<sup>140</sup> Francisco E. Balderrama and Richard A. Santillan, *Mexican American Baseball in Los Angeles* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2011), 49.

of Nisei ballplayers. The regular baseball and softball games brought families, and the community, together.

In addition to baseball, bowling also served as a sport the Nisei embraced postwar to strengthen community and family ties. Bowling, like baseball, perpetuates the same Japanese ethics in which the Issei instilled in their Nisei children. Bowling also provided an inexpensive, indoor, and less physically demanding sport that couples and older generations could play. Because bowling served as a less expensive sport – in terms of equipment, entire families could partake in the recreation. Bowling alleys' roots in immigrant neighborhoods made the activity popularly regarded as a recreation that created family cohesion, especially between immigrants and their American-born children and grandchildren.<sup>141</sup> Bowling alleys also served as sponsors for youth bowling programs that promoted good behavior and responsible citizenship to reduce juvenile delinquency.<sup>142</sup> The need to solidify family ties, discourage bad behavior, and reflect Americanization was necessary to alleviate the tensions and ambiguities of the postwar period. Thus, the Nisei revived the sport and established their own local bowling alleys for families and the community.

While some Nisei may have established bowling leagues in resettlement communities during the war as a loophole to the WRA's non-congregation rule,

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<sup>141</sup> Hurley, *Diners, Bowling Alleys, and Trailer Parks*, 15-19.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

immediately after the war, the Nisei revived the community recreation with full force.<sup>143</sup> In 1946, bowling teams, tournaments, and leagues flooded the newspaper headlines. This year marked the beginning of the Nisei Bowling Association's (NBA) Little Tokyo Bowling League, as well as the first postwar Little Tokyo bowling tournament. The league witnessed a variety of local teams, such as the Sad Sacks, the Sawtelle Garage, and the Waikiki Café teams, competing in the tournament at the Vogue Bowl, and throughout June and July, the community newspaper consistently published articles of the teams' successes. By the end of the tournament, three bowling champions received their crowns for the 1946 tournament.<sup>144</sup> Bowling tournaments gave both the participants and the spectators something to look forward to and enjoy among families and fellow members of the Nikkei community.

Throughout the resettlement years, the L.A./South Bay Nikkei community founded their own bowling associations and tournaments due to racial exclusion from the American Bowling Congress (ABC). In 1947, the Japanese American Citizens' League (JACL) appealed to the NBA to contact the Los Angeles Bowling Association in an attempt for inclusion into the local and national

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<sup>143</sup> Theory by Arthur A. Hansen.

<sup>144</sup> "Nisei Keglers Warm Up for Bowling Tourney June 23," the *Rafu Shimpō*, June 18, 1946; "Pinmen Enthusiastic over 1<sup>st</sup> Post-War L.A. Open," the *Rafu Shimpō*, July 1, 1946; "10 Local Teams in Bowling Tourney," the *Rafu Shimpō*, July 12, 1946; "Heat on as Nisei Bowlers Compete for League Honors," the *Rafu Shimpō*, July 22, 1946.



associations.<sup>145</sup> Despite continued exclusion, the Owl League and Sunset League participated in various tournaments, such as the Owl Bowling Tournament in 1947.<sup>146</sup> In 1951, the JACL held the fifth annual Nisei Bowling Tournament at Vogue Bowl.<sup>147</sup> Four years later, the Southern California Nikkei Bowling Association emerged as an inclusive bowling association to accommodate the entire Nikkei community in the Southern California region.<sup>148</sup> It is clear that the postwar community's involvement in the bowling circuit never wavered, and in fact, Nikkei participation increased during the postwar years. Nikkei keglers not only played the game, they also founded their own bowling establishments.

The Holiday Bowl and Café, for instance, in Crenshaw began as a Nikkei founded, operated, and frequented establishment. Four Nikkei businessmen founded the twenty-four-hour bowling alley and café in the 1950s, and the establishment opened to the public in 1958. The founders built the bowling alley with the intentions of providing a recreational safe-haven for the community while addressing the wounds of war and incarceration, providing a secure space for

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<sup>145</sup> "Bowling...", the *Rafu Shimpō*, June 5, 1947.

<sup>146</sup> "Sunset, Owl Bowl Results," the *Rafu Shimpō*, June 13, 1947; "Bowlers in Rough 8<sup>th</sup> Week Contest," the *Rafu Shimpō*, July 5, 1947.

<sup>147</sup> "Fifth Annual National JACL Nisei Bowling Tournament, Los Angeles, California, March 18, 1951," *JANM Special Collections*, <http://www.janm.org/collections/item/96.267.105/>, accessed January 17, 2017.

<sup>148</sup> "SCNBA History," *Southern California Nikkei Bowling Association*, accessed January 17, 2017, <http://scnba.com/nikkei-bowling-history/>.

the excluded, and encouraging integration. Over the following years, as Crenshaw and Leimert Park grew more diverse, the alley and the café accommodated its growing African American and Hispanic communities. It began as a place of recovery for the Nikkei community, but the diverse local community cherished the Holiday bowl as an inclusive space welcome to all races. The youth held their high school graduation celebrations there, and the community even formed a barrier around the building to protect it from looters during the 1992 Los Angeles Riots.<sup>149</sup>

This community resource certainly proved significant to its patrons, as it provided a place of protection from social prejudice and exclusion, as well as a space for recreation and initiating or strengthening community ties. For marginalized ethnic minorities, such as the L.A. and South Bay Japanese, African, and Mexican American populations, community ties remained a necessary resource and means of protection from American mainstream exclusions. Therefore, community centers like the Holiday Bowl provided a place in which many could develop and reaffirm their L.A./South Bay Nikkei identity, recover from the traumas of war and prejudice, develop strength in numbers and relationships, and could identify as inclusively *theirs*.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> For example, many of the students from Susan Miller Dorsey High School's 1976 graduating class celebrated at Holiday Bowl the night of their graduation. Personal conversation with Dawn Yagawa, February 23, 2017; Reft, "Not Bowling Alone"; "Timeline," The Holiday Bowl History Project, accessed February 23, 2017, <http://www.holidaybowlcrenshaw.com/timeline.html>.

Unfortunately, after years of decline and soaring crime rates, the founders sold the business in 2000, and the Holiday Bowl and Café closed its doors. Despite its closure, the Holiday Bowl and Café underscores the Nikkei desire and fight for a space of inclusion, to address the wounds of war, and to bolster community cohesion. The previous patrons of the Holiday Bowl still reminisce of their time spent, and the relationships built, within the safety of its walls.<sup>151</sup>

## Conclusion

Baseball, softball, and bowling indeed served as some of the most prominent sports highlighted and celebrated by the postwar Nikkei community, but the community embraced other sports as well. Golf, track and field, basketball, and ping pong also grew in popularity and participation in the postwar years.<sup>152</sup> The immediate postwar *Rafu Shimpō* no longer featured grand sports sections as it did prior to the war, as real estate and product advertisements, and local community announcements, occupied large sections similar to those of

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<sup>150</sup> Reft, “Not Bowling Alone”; Oral histories collected for The Holiday Bowl History Project, [HolidayBowlCrenshaw.com](http://HolidayBowlCrenshaw.com); Kurashige, “Growing Up Japanese American in Crenshaw and Leimert Park”; Hayden, *The Power of Place*.

<sup>151</sup> Reft, “Not Bowling Alone”; “Timeline,” The Holiday Bowl History Project; Hayden, *The Power of Place*.

<sup>152</sup> Some examples include: “Ping Pong Entry Deadline Nears,” the *Rafu Shimpō*, June 16, 1948; “Golf Pairings,” the *Rafu Shimpō*, June 9, 1949; “Track and Field” section, the *Rafu Shimpō*, April 19, 1952; “Festival Five Flights Golf Tourney on Tap,” the *Rafu Shimpō*, August 6, 1958.

local American newspapers. Nevertheless, sports remained a noteworthy component of the community's attention, devotion, and involvement.

Ultimately, sports and athleticism played just as large a role in bolstering the postwar Nikkei community as it did in Japan. In addition to perpetuating Japanese American cultural ethics, as well as assisting in Americanization, sports played a vital role in the community's ability to address and recover from the societal anti-Japanese sentiment and wartime trauma. The comradery established and bolstered through the involvement and attention to sports propagated the community's ties and its culture.

## CHAPTER THREE

### FOOD AND CULTURE

Ethnic foods stand as one of the most common forms of ethnic and cultural perpetuation. In addition to providing necessary sustenance, ethnic foods distinguish communities from other ethnicities living within the same geographical areas. Ethnic foods can engender nostalgia as well as pleasant memories for the older members of an immigrant group in the form of *comfort foods*, and they enculturate younger generations. Furthermore, ethnic foods foster one's cultural identity, and when enjoyed in a cultural gathering, they provide an opportunity for the affirmation of solidarity – at a cultural festival like Nisei Week for example. In order for an ethnicity to continue, however, these ethnic foods must be available and accessible. Therefore, ethnic markets play a significant role in the preservation of ethnicity and culture.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Kittler and Sucher, *Food and Culture*, 3-6; E. N. Anderson, *Everyone Eats: Understanding Food and Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2005); Vicki L. Ruiz, "Citizen Restaurant: American Imaginaries, American Communities," *American Quarterly* 60, no. 1 (2008): 1-21.

## Enbun

The Los Angeles and South Bay areas serve as the mainland's hub of Japanese markets for the Nikkei community. While these markets do indeed exist in other areas of California and other states, the beginnings and the headquarters of many of these businesses lie in the L.A. and South Bay areas. Historically, the L.A. metropolitan area and Little Tokyo necessitated the emergence of Japanese markets to accommodate the large Nikkei population. A prominent market for the prewar and postwar communities was Enbun.

The Enbun Company, later known as Enbun Market Incorporated, was one of the earliest Japanese markets. A pioneer Issei named Jisaku Kuwa founded the market, and he would later own two Enbun locations in the Los Angeles area – one on First Street and the other on Jefferson Boulevard. These markets served the Crenshaw and Leimert Park districts as well as the entirety of the L.A./South Bay area. The First Street location accommodated the residents and visitors to L.A.'s Little Tokyo, and the Jefferson Boulevard location catered to the large postwar Nikkei population in the Crenshaw and Leimert Park districts. Enbun carried the traditional Japanese produce, meats, and pantry goods necessary for cooking traditional Japanese dishes.

As the *Rafu Shimpo* resumed its daily newspaper after the war, business, product, and local event advertisements occupied large sections of the newspaper's pages. Following this trend, in 1946, Enbun began advertising in the postwar *Rafu Shimpo*.



Figure 23. Advertisements for the Enbun Company. The *Rafu Shimpo*, July 31, 1946. Courtesy of University of California, Los Angeles.

These advertisements continued throughout the postwar period, but as the advertisements section of the newspaper geared more towards American products, real estate, and local events, the Enbun ads frequently appeared in the newspaper's Japanese-language section. The L.A./South Bay Nikkei community served as Enbun's patronage, but the store's advertisements catered to the Japanese-language reading Issei population. Still, Enbun was one of the few

markets that carried Japanese pantry goods, so the Nisei and the young Sansei frequented the store for their Japanese foodstuffs as well.

Enbun emerged long before the war and incarceration, and even after its founder's death in 1940, Enbun remained a staple for the Little Tokyo and L.A./South Bay areas. While there were certainly other businesses that sold Japanese goods, such as produce stalls like Granada Market in Los Angeles,<sup>154</sup> Enbun provided the community with the resources to maintain its ethnic cuisine. Enbun was one of the businesses that the "Buy Lil' Tokio" campaign bolstered during the Great Depression, and it contributed to the postwar community's revival by providing resources for the community through selling Japanese staples. While Enbun was relatively small compared to the supermarkets of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, its significance lies in its lack of competition, for it was one of the main Southern Californian markets that carried Japanese foodstuffs until the 1970s.

### South Bay Markets

South Bay has become the hub of Japanese markets since the 1970s. As the postwar community settled outside of Little Tokyo and the L.A. metropolitan area, cities like Gardena and Torrance witnessed substantial concentrations of

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<sup>154</sup> "Death Takes Pioneer Issei Grocery Man," the *Rafu Shimpo*, May 15, 1940; Granada Market Advertisement, the *Rafu Shimpo*, June 5, 1947.



Nikkei residents. The burgeoning Nikkei community in South Bay led to the establishment of several Japanese ethnic markets across the area, and given the vibrant Nikkei community and its large population in Gardena and Torrance, these two cities host the headquarters of the prominent markets.

In the summer of 1976, New Meiji Market opened in the Pacific Square Shopping Center on Redondo Beach Boulevard in Gardena.<sup>155</sup> The Pacific Square Shopping Center began with the Nisei owned Nakaoka Realty, and gradually, New Meiji Market and other Japanese centered shops opened in the square for the community. The layout of the market, as well as the departments within, resembled those found in Japan. The meat, seafood, and takeout (hot foods) sections occupied the rear of the store while the pharmacy, liquor, and produce departments stood along the sides of the market surrounding the grocery section.

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<sup>155</sup> "The New Meiji Market" Advertisement, the *Los Angeles Time*, July 15, 1976.

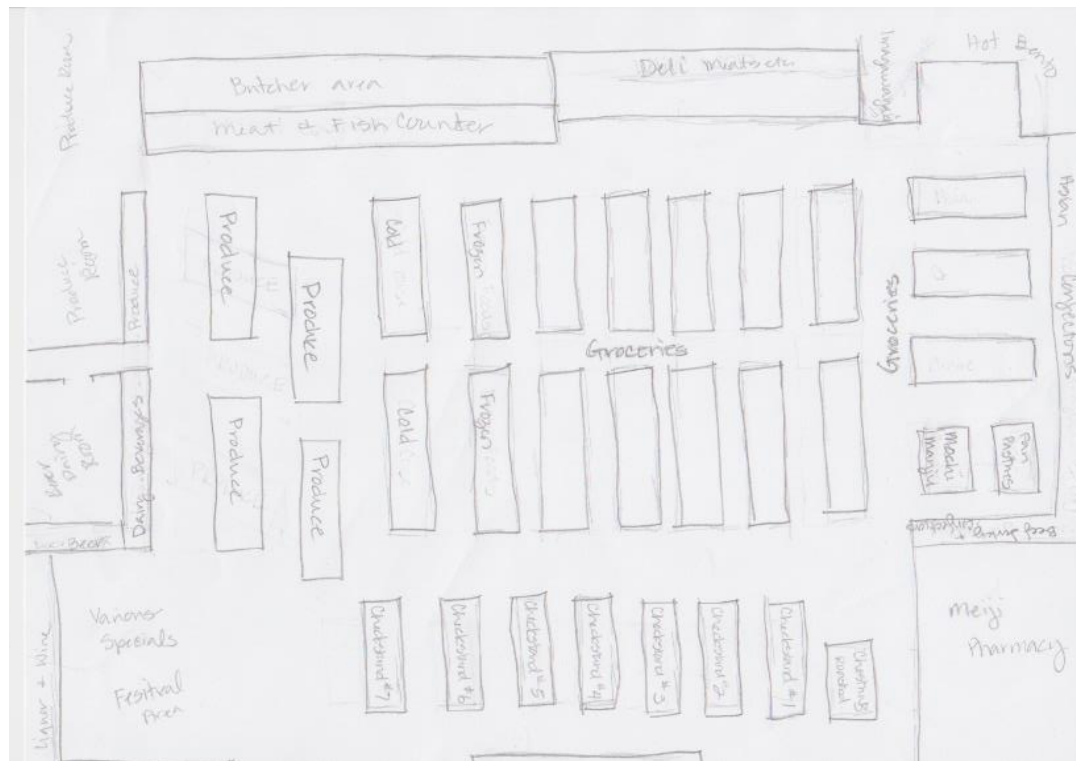


Figure 24. Layout of New Meiji Market, 1980-1986. Drawn by Dawn Yagawa, January 10, 2016.

Some of the other establishments that emerged in the shopping center in the late 1970s through the 1980s included a Japanese video store, an optometrist's office, a hotel for Japanese businessmen, Mikawayaya – a Japanese confections shop, Sumitomo Bank of California, and Chateau Bakery. In other words, the Pacific Square Shopping Center and the New Meiji Market provided virtually all of the necessary goods and services the South Bay Nikkei community would

require.<sup>156</sup>

Moreover, New Meiji Market hosted community fairs, fundraisers, and festivals within the shopping center. The fairs and festivals often included demonstrations, such as demonstrations of products and goods from Japan, how to make Japanese noodles, and how to pound mochi.<sup>157</sup> These instructional displays educated the less experienced and propagated the culture to the younger Sansei and Yonsei generations. The market also provided the site for community fundraisers. The Candy Strippers of the local Memorial Hospital, for instance, occasionally held bake sales in front of the market to raise funds for the less fortunate patients.<sup>158</sup> The market not only provided the community with the goods and products necessary to make Japanese foods, it also accommodated the site for Nikkei community events to strengthen its networks and its access to resources.

New Meiji Market and the Pacific Square Shopping Center stood as a Nihonmachi (Japantown) in the South Bay area outside of Los Angeles' Little Tokyo. The market also served the ethnic Japanese populations outside of the

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<sup>156</sup> Information based on the map and a personal conversation with Dawn Yagawa, a community member identifying the stores within the Pacific Square Shopping Center. Ms. Yagawa worked at

New Meiji Market from 1980 to 1986, May 25, 2016, Pacific Square Shopping Center, Gardena, California.

<sup>157</sup> Personal conversation with Dawn Yagawa, May 25, 2016, Pacific Square Shopping Center, Gardena, California. The fairs also included goods from specific regions in Japan, such as mochi or candy from regions like Tokyo, Hokkaido, Kyoto, etc.

<sup>158</sup> "Candy Strippers Plan Bake Sale," the *Los Angeles Times*, May 3, 1979.

United States, such as the Japanese Panamanians, who had no access to ethnic resources within their resident countries, yet were closer to Gardena than to Los Angeles.<sup>159</sup> Thus, without the goods, services, and events sponsored and held by the market and the square, it would have proven near impossible for the local, and distant, Nikkei community to access its ethnic necessities and continue its traditions. The lack of availability of foodstuffs ultimately diminishes ethnic cultural retention and can result in an immediate acculturation to a new environment. Therefore, ethnic food markets like New Meiji Market provide the means for community members to not only enjoy *comfort foods* – or foods that satisfy a psychological sense of cultural belonging, they also reestablish cultural identity and enculturate younger generations through food.<sup>160</sup>

Nijiya Market emerged in 1986. While the first store opened in San Diego, and several subsequent markets opened across California and the United States, the chain's headquarters lies in Torrance along the Gardena border where a large Nikkei population resides.<sup>161</sup> The Torrance market contains a small bakery and a Japanese video section, as well as grocery, produce, meat, and seafood

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<sup>159</sup> Personal conversation with Dawn Yagawa, May 25, 2016, Pacific Square Shopping Center, Gardena, California.

<sup>160</sup> Kittler and Sucher, *Food and Culture*, 3-6; Anderson, *Everyone Eats*; Ruiz, "Citizen Restaurant."

<sup>161</sup> "About Us," *Nijiya Market*, accessed January 7, 2017, <http://www.nijiya.com/about-us>.

departments. Nijiya stands as another resource for the ethnic foods and media so vital to the local Nikkei community and its culture.

Nijiya, like New Meiji Market, has held Japanese American cultural fairs and events since its founding, and it continues many of these events today. For example, Nijiya held the Japanese “Boys’ Day” (May fifth) and “Girls’ Day” (March third) festivals in its parking lot throughout the late 1980s and into the early 2000s. These events typically included Japanese water balloons, toys, and games for children, and occasional food demonstrations.<sup>162</sup> The fairs also sold barbequed meats, bento boxes, and other hot foods for the shoppers and the fair participants. The “Boys’ Day” and “Girls’ Day” festivals existed separately until the Japanese government combined the holidays into “Children’s Day” (May 5<sup>th</sup>). Nijiya sponsored these fairs and other events as a means of incorporating Nikkei children into cultural celebrations and to enculturate the future of the community.

Nijiya frequently advertised Japanese goods, foods, and recipes in the local newspaper to familiarize the public with Japanese dishes and customs. These advertisements included the store’s bento boxes as perfect dishes for picnics, recipes for Japanese sauces, oden, and Japanese curry, and explanations of Japanese products, such as Yakult and Pocky.<sup>163</sup> Parents could

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<sup>162</sup> An example of a children’s game is to land a ball into a small dish, tossing it from a few feet away, to win a prize. Winning a live goldfish was normally a prize for this particular game. One of my “prizes” lived for four years before jumping out of the fishbowl.

<sup>163</sup> “Home Cooking Japanese Style,” the *Los Angeles Times*, January 17, 1991; “All the World’s a Picnic,” the *Los Angeles Times*, June 28, 1992; “Shopping for sauce,” the *Los Angeles Times*,

thus use the goods, foods, and festivals to educate their children of their ethnicity and culture through dishes, events, and even a mainstream American newspaper.

Japanese ethnic markets accommodate their Nikkei patrons, but another population in which these markets cater to are the Japanese Hawaiians. Because many of the ethnic Japanese on the mainland have roots in the Hawaiian Islands, which often results in a hybrid culture, the Marukai Corporation U.S.A. established stores on the mainland. Marukai originally began in Osaka, Japan and soon founded stores in Hawai'i in the 1960s. In the 1970s and 1980s, two stores opened in Los Angeles and Gardena to accommodate the large Nikkei community in the L.A./South Bay area. Since then, several stores have opened in California and across the U.S., with the Gardena branch as its headquarters. While, as of 2015, several of the Marukai branches have since closed their doors to allow their sister store – Tokyo Central – to flourish, the Gardena main branch remains the corporation's headquarters.<sup>164</sup>

Marukai sells a mixture of Japanese and Hawaiian-Japanese foods and other goods. In addition to carrying items suited for the Hawaiian-Japanese cultural fusion, such as hurricane mix<sup>165</sup> for popcorn and macadamia cookies,

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October 13, 1994; "Unlocking the Mysteries of Yakult, Pocky, and Wiener Danish," the *Los Angeles Times*, August 22, 2002.

<sup>164</sup> "Marukai in Pacific Square Closing its Doors," the *Rafu Shimpo*, July 21, 2015, accessed November 8, 2016, <http://www.rafu.com/2015/07/marukai-in-pacific-square-closing-its-doors/>.

Marukai primarily sells Japanese foods, products, cooking appliances, and hot dishes. Marukai provides much more than simply grocery items and foodstuffs, as the market generally inhabits a much larger facility than stores like Enbun, New Meiji Market, and Nijiya. The Gardena branch, for instance, sells everything from Japanese breads, candies, and vegetables, to rice cookers and hot water dispensers, to Japanese stationary, origami paper, and ceramics.

Marukai creates the opportunity for not only the perpetuation of the Japanese American culture, but also the Hawaiian-Japanese fusion culture common among the Nisei and the younger generations by making Japanese and Hawaiian-Japanese foods and goods available. Demographically, the South Bay area – and particularly Gardena and Torrance – hosts some of the most substantial Nikkei, Hawaiian Japanese, and Polynesian populations on the mainland. Because the Nikkei have populated the Hawaiian Islands since the Japanese immigration to the islands in the late nineteenth century, as the Japanese Hawaiian and Polynesian populations relocate to the mainland, they frequently seek out family, friends, and familiar populations. After World War II and release from the incarceration camps, some Nikkei from Hawai'i did not return to the islands, as many moved to the South Bay area instead for various reasons – marriage, independence, employment, to reunite with family, etc. Migrants, those previously incarcerated, and military and civilian service

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<sup>165</sup> Hurricane Mix is a popcorn additive common in Hawai'i that contains bits of nori (dried seaweed), arare (small rice crackers), and other Asian and Hawaiian seasonings.

members transported and fostered the Hawaiian-Japanese fusion common on the Hawaiian Islands to the mainland, and specifically, to the South Bay area. Thus, Marukai provides the foods, goods, and resources for both the Nikkei and the Japanese Hawaiian populations.

Tokyo Centrals now occupy many of the locations of previous Marukais, but these sister stores do not offer many of the ethnic staples. Tokyo Centrals tend to sell the basic Japanese foodstuffs, but the stores lack variety, and cheap Japanese trinkets flood the shelves. It appears that Tokyo Centrals attempt to cater to the young, novelty-driven crowd, and not the ethnic community, whereas Marukai specifically catered to the latter. Marukai indeed sought to perpetuate the traditional culture while the newer Tokyo Centrals could prove detrimental to the community's culture. In time, Marukai Corporation's slogan – "Bringing new meaning to the Japanese culture" – could prove injurious for the Nikkei community.<sup>166</sup>

## Conclusion

Ultimately, of the Enbun, New Meiji, Nijiya, and Marukai markets, as well as the various ethnic shops of Little Tokyo and Pacific Square, relatively few remain extant. In 2017, Nijiya, a few Marukais, and Tokyo Centrals reflect the prominent Japanese ethnic resources available for the community. Of the older

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<sup>166</sup> "Home," *Marukai Corporation*, accessed January 7, 2017, MarukaiCorp.com.



L.A. shops, only Mikawaya, a small Nijiya, and Fugetsu-Do (a mochi shop founded in 1903) exist in Little Tokyo. The shops that previously inhabited Pacific Square in Gardena have all but vanished. The only ethnic shops remaining from the 1980s are Meiji Pharmacy, which previously stood within New Meiji Market but moved to the adjacent building, and the Japanese video store. It is true that times change according to the generations, but it is worrisome that novelty stores are frequently replacing traditional ethnic markets and shops, for novelties do not propagate true ethnic culture – they disintegrate it.

## CONCLUSIONS

Recreation often proves symbolic of a community's strength and a culture's perseverance. The Nikkei community suffered through the prewar years of institutionalized anti-Japanese racism, exclusion, and segregation, the wartime forced removal and incarceration, and discrimination during the resettlement period, but the community has persisted by culturally adapting to change. Through the annual Obon and Nisei Week festivals, Nikkei participation in sports, and the foods so vital to the Japanese ethnicity, the community has prospered despite the setbacks of the 1940s.

In addition to continuing Japanese customs and traditions within a distinctly Japanese American context, the Nikkei community consistently adapted and changed according to its social environment. Recalling the theories of Sydney Mintz and Richard Price, and Vicki Ruiz, the Nikkei redefined the community through the creation of social institutions,<sup>167</sup> such as sports leagues and establishments, cultural celebrations, and ethnic markets. Through the process of "cultural coalescence,"<sup>168</sup> the Japanese American community actively selected components and traditions, such as Obon and baseball, from both the Japanese and American cultures to perpetuate and incorporate into its ethnic

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<sup>167</sup> Mintz and Price, *The Birth of African American Culture*.

<sup>168</sup> Ruiz, *From out of the Shadows*.

identity. The beauty pageant, including the mayor in the Nisei Week festivities, playing American sports, and participating in the capitalist market and structure, all stood as attempts to embrace certain components of the mainstream American culture to gain societal acceptance after the war. The selective combination of the Japanese and American cultures reflected both the ethnic heritage and the national identity vital to those attempting to discern what it meant to be Japanese American.

Some of the Nisei assumed a hyper-American stance after having experienced prewar prejudice and wartime incarceration. The JACLers focused on the loyalty and patriotism of the Nisei veterans after the war in their efforts for redress. The Nisei veterans took center stage in events, such as Nisei Week and other fairs and festivals, replacing the Boy Scout troops. Nisei participated in the capitalist system by founding produce stalls, bowling alleys, realty offices, such as Saito Realty and Nakaoka Realty, and other businesses. The Nisei also established their own sports leagues, such as the Japanese American Optimist League, to promote Japanese ethics and American sports to their Sansei children. While some Nisei specifically chose to reflect hyper-American attitudes and positions, others chose to retain their Japanese heritage and to blend it with the American culture.

Since the coming of age of the Sansei during the 1960s and 1970s, the Nikkei community has promoted a greater focus on the acceptance of its

Japanese American heritage and identity rather than American assimilation.<sup>169</sup>

The Sansei generation, having never experienced prewar prejudice nor wartime incarceration, embraced more of the cultural components of their Japanese American identity than most of their Nisei parents. Many Sansei rejected the hyper-American components – the Miss America-style Nisei Week Queen pageant, for example – promoted by the JACL, as the Sansei – unlike their Nisei parents – never felt the need to “Americanize.” Ironically, in their attempts to embrace their ethnic heritage and to fight for the rights of their Issei grandparents and their Nisei parents, the Sansei reflected their American upbringings and drove the redress and Yellow Power movements.

Ultimately, without the redevelopment of the L.A./South Bay community during the immediate postwar period, the community would have lacked the size, strength, and resources to create substantial movements. The cultural events and resources revived by the Nisei after the war developed the strong Nikkei community in which the Sansei were raised. This community and its networks laid the foundations for the Sansei’s social activism in the 1960s and 1970s and the continuation of the culture.

As time progressed, the Sansei and Yonsei generations, with the assistance of the remaining Nisei, have fervently perpetuated the Japanese American culture and traditions through cultural and religious celebrations,

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<sup>169</sup> Matsumoto, “Sansei Women and the Gendering of Yellow Power in Southern California, 1960s-1970s,” 183-209; Ishizuka, *Serve the People*.

Japanese ethnic foods, and the retention of Japanese ethics and values through sports. The Obon and Nisei Week festivals still occur every summer, Nikkei sports leagues remain active, and Los Angeles and South Bay still host the headquarters of Japanese markets and a plethora of Japanese restaurants.

Retaining these cultural components remains a priority of the community, especially with regards to the high rates of intermarriage and the resulting “hapa” – racially mixed – generations. Persons of mixed race never fit neatly into racial categories and often develop an identity crisis at some point in their lives, which is why an inclusive Nikkei community is so vital to the multiracial generations. Through the Nikkei community, its resources, and its events, these multiracial generations have embraced their Japanese roots and their complex identities despite the near purging of all things Japanese during and after World War II.

The Sansei and Yonsei sponsor, host, and participate in the Nikkei businesses, festivities, and the vibrant community. Through their participation, they also pass on these customs and values to the next generation – the young Gosei. Indeed, the Japanese heritage and the Japanese American culture continues to prosper in Los Angeles and South Bay almost a century after its near extinction.



Figure 25. Multiracial and Multigenerational Nikkei. These images are examples of the multiracial and multigenerational participants of the L.A./South Bay Nikkei community. Bon-Odori, Obon Festival. Photos by author. Nishi Hongwanji Buddhist Temple, Los Angeles, California, July 10, 2016.

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