The Sounds of Being "Un-American": Embodied Cultural Trauma Within Japanese American Musical Worlds

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Abstract

WWII saw the forced removal of around 120,000 Japanese Americans to concentration camps across the United States. Despite being incarcerated in often unforgiving social, political, and physical environments, many incarcerees developed means of continuing Japanese cultural traditions and music. Since that time, former incarcerees have largely avoided detailed discussion of their experiences of imprisonment, and as such, there is little information to determine what kind of impact incarceration had on their individual and collective musical worlds.

This thesis explores transgenerational cultural trauma using the incarceree experiences of the Granada Relocation Center (a National Historic Landmark) in southern Colorado. The cultural memories of those imprisoned, passed down to later Japanese American generations, can not only provide clues as to how music was performed, taught, and perceived by the incarcerees, but also to what those same cultural experiences mean now to both former incarcerees and their descendants. Paramount in this research is the question: How did the experience of imprisonment impact the musical worlds of formerly incarcerated Japanese Americans and their descendants? Also important in this study is the relationship between music and conflict, particularly racial conflict. Examining redress efforts both after the war and well beyond to the present day allows for a social and historical context to be applied to current musical practices. Semi-structured interviews with former incarcerees and their descendants are utilized to inform conclusions about meaning and development of trauma over time within the Japanese American community.

Due to the experiences of Japanese Americans at Amache and other concentration camps, the community at large has reacted either by abandoning traditional Japanese music and embracing Western musical conventions, or by devoting effort to reviving and transforming traditional Japanese practices, especially through taiko drumming. Such musical choices reveal the magnitude of the impact of racial prejudice and transgenerational cultural trauma caused by that prejudice.

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WWII saw the forced removal of around 120,000 Japanese Americans to concentration camps across the United States. Despite being incarcerated in often unforgiving social, political, and physical environments, many incarcerees developed means of continuing Japanese cultural traditions and music. Since that time, former incarcerees have largely avoided detailed discussion of their experiences of imprisonment, and as such, there is little information to determine what kind of impact incarceration had on their individual and collective musical worlds.

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Introduction

Going to Amache on a bus seems to be the tradition. Like those before me,
I rode past the empty fields and dusty small towns in Southeast Colorado,
wondering how much farther the journey might be, and where exactly on earth I
was. In every direction, the flat land extended beyond the horizon, and though I
was on a bus of roughly 40 people, it was easy for me to feel alone. My
imagination drove me to wonder how much farther home felt to the expelled
Japanese Americans traveled from California in 1942.

We arrived in a desperate place, where the activity of life and living things
was minimal. Besides the short lines of trees and unmanaged grasses which have
begun to overgrow what used to be Amache, the few remaining cement
foundations, a chunk of the original Co-op building, and a reconstructed guard
tower and barracks were the only objects which spoke to the history of an area
which once supported over 7,000 internees.

The bus turned from a paved highway to a small dirt road that apparently
had many offshoots to nothingness. Down one of these our bus turned and we
stopped in a small field next to a memorial built after the war. In a small well-kept
and fenced grassy area, lay 6 beautiful headstones, with the names of some of
Amache’s brave soldiers who perished while battling the United States’ enemies.
There is also a plain white obelisk with engraving that honors those who suffered in the camp. Here, we pilgrims gathered and proceeded with traditional Buddhist Hoji and Oshoko ceremonies, paying respects to those who passed. I am told by a fellow pilgrim that this journey has been repeated every year for a very long time, and that it shall repeat for a long time to come.¹

Imprisonment of Japanese Americans during WWII led to a cascade of problems during the war, and following it. Not only those who were imprisoned were affected, but arguably, the whole of the Japanese American community has been forever impacted. By 1940, nearly 127,000 Japanese immigrants had settled in the United States, and of this population, more than 120,000 would be interned in American concentration camps before the end of the war. Surrounded by barbed wire and military guards, these people, two-thirds of whom were born in the United States, had to reconstruct their lives and communities from what little they were allowed to bring to concentration camps, and find meaning within the violence committed upon them by the very nation which had once offered promising opportunities for achieving success and happiness through principles of personal liberty.

The forced removal and imprisonment of this group of people first accomplished the silencing of some of those same people, even for many years beyond the war. And, the significance of Japanese American silence reaches beyond those who were directly affected. For those who had immigrated from Japan to the U.S., incarceration was

¹ Author’s field notes, from pilgrimage to the site of Amache National Historical Landmark, May 18, 2019.
shameful, but their begrudging acceptance of it became one of the few ways to prove loyalty to the country. For the American-born children and grandchildren of those immigrants, incarceration represented an affront to their constitutional rights, challenging their loyalty and effectively removing their status as American citizens. As a consequence of Japanese American silencing, the long-term impacts of the imprisonment of Japanese Americans on their cultural and musical lives have not been adequately studied.²

It is necessary to re-introduce historical perspective into the understanding of Japanese American musical practice, for whom incarceration serves as an embodied memory of cultural trauma. In order to understand Japanese Americans and their musical lives even today, the episode of internment must be reflected upon as it has resonated over generations and still affects the community. Broadly considering the performative practice of Japanese Americans through the lens of internment adds an element which must be considered before making conclusions about identity and meaning-making through musical activity. Further, the issue extends beyond the Japanese American population to any group that experiences or has experienced racially-motivated imprisonment, though each group will have its own set of circumstances and conclusions.

My research approaches a WWII Japanese American incarceration facility, the Granada Relocation Center National Historic Landmark (often formerly referred to as “Camp Amache”), from a mostly unexplored ethnomusicological perspective, while drawing concepts, methodology, and theory from the related fields of anthropology,

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sociology, and music psychology. Comparisons are also made to the experiences and musical worlds which existed at other Japanese American concentration camps during the war. My research aims to provide understanding of the musical activities of survivors of Amache and other camps, and to reveal how the Japanese American musical world has been impacted by the “event” of incarceration over several generations.

While some study has been done regarding the music performed and listened to in the ten War Relocation Authority-run concentration camps, little has been done to reveal how the musical lives of survivors (especially those who were children at the time) and their descendants have been impacted since, and how music plays a role in recovering from imprisonment. Amache in particular lacks the significant documentation and study done with other similar incarceration camps, though it held roughly 7,300 at its peak operation.

The questions at the core of this research focus on explaining the role of music in the lives of former internees and understanding how they and their descendants have used music as a tool for recovery or adaptation. I ask: How did this significant event (racially-motivated incarceration) impact the Japanese American musical world? How did it impact those who were incarcerated at Amache and their descendants? How does prior Japanese American musical practice compare to music practiced in the camps and following the war? What adaptations were required by internees to survive and eventually continue life outside of the camps, and have these adaptations resulted in perceived positive or negative results for former Amache internees and their descendants? How did propaganda and the general environment of a war-time United States increase or motivate
the process of acculturation by interned Japanese Americans? How does Amache’s unique location and political environment make it different from other camps across the country? Following this, how are musical experiences at Amache and other camps remembered by former internees?

In this research, transgenerational musical trauma is explored as a reaction to internment, as well as a mode of survival and meaning-making following racial conflict. In exploring these questions and their possible answers, I argue that cultural trauma has been embodied by and transmitted through generations of Japanese Americans in musical form. In particular, the performance and practice of taiko drumming by Japanese Americans serves as a tool for healing and community-building. Taiko gives scholars a prime example of musical trauma, and demonstrates how transgenerational trauma operates within Japanese American sound worlds.

**Methods & Terminology**

I adapt and apply the concept of “cultural trauma,” a major theory introduced and expounded on by sociologist Jeffrey Alexander and his colleagues, to understand the complex processes at work in the musical worlds of former incarcerees. This idea also serves to provide a reasoning for these processes occurring over multiple generations, affecting those who were never interned themselves, but have inherited this trauma, and in so doing, have also gained a particular set of musical adaptations and “memories”

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(which expand into practice and performance). Trauma in this sense is neither inherently positive or negative, but it reflects a transgenerational carried memory and musical legacy which influences current former internee activities and attitudes toward music, as well as those of following generations. These concepts also offer grounding for the formation and communication of social or collective identity, an aspect of Japanese American insecurities at the time, considering the racial tensions between themselves and their prisoners.

Due to the sensitivity of the subject at hand and limited time available with former internees of Amache or their descendants, semi-structured interviews were used to gather detailed experiences which shaped my conclusions overall. Limited ethnographic interviews allow for case-study examples of current Amache survivor musical habits and activities, and a comparison to their musical habits and activities before incarceration. I interacted with two former internees between age 70-90 and three descendants of internees between age 20-60 and engaged in participant-observation in musical events and performances as available. These present-day experiences reveal the methods of musical adaptation and coping used by Japanese Americans to regain a sense of secure, normal life in a country previously hostile to their presence, as well as to embrace their historical and cultural connections.

For the purposes of this research, I strictly limited the population to former incarcerees and their descendants, who were recruited through specific Japanese American organization events and through electronic invitations to participate.
Additionally, I used an interview guide to focus the above mentioned interviews (see appendix).

Another complicating factor for gathering information regarding current musical practices of former internees is their relatively advanced age. Many who could have provided invaluable insight into how incarceration impacted their long-term cultural habits have since passed away, or are unable to provide details due to various obstacles that come with aging — it has been over 70 years since incarceration began. I interrogate concentration camp newspapers, like the Granada Pioneer, in an effort to preserve in one place some of the activities of Amache incarcerces during the war years. I utilized two primary online databases/archives to view facsimiles of newspaper collections from Amache: The Fresno State Henry Madden Library digital collections, browsing under the category “San Joaquin Valley Japanese Americans,” as well as the United States Library of Congress online archives browsing under the category of “Japanese American Internment.” To find related articles, events, or information, I used the following search terms: “music,” “Ondo,” “Obon,” “festival,” “parade,” “Japanese music,” “taiko,” “talent show,” “band”, “drum”, “Bon Odori”, “music appreciation,” “Kabuki,” “theater/theatre,” “dance,” “shamisen,” “koto,” “naniwa-bushi,” and “celebration.”

When names of significant performers or music educators were discovered, I also searched by name for other instances in which these individuals were discussed. When musical ensembles or specific festival or holiday names were found within the newspaper, a search was conducted for each term to locate further instances of these ensembles or festivals/holidays. As newspapers often have repeated reminders of
upcoming events or performances, some of these sorts of articles or mentions were deemed unnecessary/redundant, and were not included in this thesis. Importantly, this thesis primarily explores the English-language sections of the *Granada Pioneer*. The newspaper did in fact have a Japanese-language portion, ideally suited for Issei incarcerated, who largely did not read or write in English. The Japanese-language portions of the newspaper likely contain additional information or perspectives not revealed in the English-language portion because of the unique Issei readership, and also because the English-language portions were heavily censored by the WRA authorities while there were few authorities with the knowledge to effectively censor Japanese-language portions in the same manner. Regardless, these publications offer incredible detail about how music developed and was practiced in the inhospitable camps, and may offer more conclusions with further examination.

Several phrases and terms in this research are used to describe the imprisonment of Japanese Americans during WWII. First, a distinction must be made between the different types of camps which operated during the war. The Immigration and Naturalization Service, part of the Justice Department, held roughly 32,000 German, Italian, and Japanese “enemy aliens” over the course of WWII. Many of these “aliens” were already living in the U.S., but others were deported from Latin American countries and placed in about 65 so-called “detention stations,” “camps,” or even in city and county jails, or hotels. The type of camps discussed primarily in this research are those built and

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operated by the War Relocation Authority, which was established in March of 1942 by Executive Order 9102 with the mission to “resettle” all Japanese Americans out of newly designated west coast ‘excluded’ zones.⁵

Additionally, a variety of “assembly centers” were used before placing Japanese aliens and Japanese Americans into the WRA concentration camps. These are referred to as temporary detention centers in this research.

The euphemization of the imprisonment of American citizens and Japanese immigrants as “relocation,” “resettlement,” or “evacuation” has often caused confusion and as such demands clarification. This language mirrors the racist and highly destructive rhetoric used by those who participated in and advocated for both Native-American removal and confinement on land reservations, and for African slavery in early American history—actions which have since been widely and rightly condemned in scholarship and the public sphere. To be clear, nearly all Japanese Americans were forced to leave their homes shortly following the attack on Pearl Harbor, and placed in fenced enclosures with inadequately constructed military barracks as their living quarters for up to three years—these people were prisoners without having committed (or for that matter been charged with) any crimes.

The U.S. military and other government agencies at the time deemed this action as “protection” and “safety,” for both white citizens and those imprisoned peoples, since fear of “fifth-column” (or sabotage/collaboration) activities by those of Japanese descent

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had risen to an all-time high, spurred by xenophobic and racist attitudes towards Asian immigrant populations. My research rejects the notion that Japanese Americans presented any threat to the United States and the euphemistic language outlined above as a gross and skewed misunderstanding of immigrant Japanese and Japanese American experiences during the war. It also considers “relocation” and other similar parlance as following a campaign of misinformation and harmful rhetoric regarding a now well-documented unconstitutional procedure which violated the rights of American citizens and immigrant populations to due process, and which now can be said violates the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 9.6

Instead, this research uses “forced removal” as a way to more accurately describe the coercive and compelled nature of the moving of Japanese and Japanese American people by military force to remote and harsh areas of the United States. Additionally, “concentration camp” is used here to describe the WRA-run locations, as it is appropriate; by literal definition the concentration camp is “a place where large numbers of people (such as prisoners of war, political prisoners, refugees, or the members of an ethnic or religious minorities) are detained or confined under armed guard.”7

I also use the term “incarceration camp” interchangeably with “concentration camp,” since both the War Relocation Authority and the Immigration and Naturalization Service operated similar installations during the war, and the term has been recommended

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by The Densho Project to prevent further confusion between the two agencies’ camps, and to recognize the differences between imprisonment of ‘enemy aliens’ and a nation’s legal citizens. The word “camp” is also occasionally used as a convenience, but it should be understood that in every instance this means concentration or incarceration camp.

As this research examines issues of race, ethnicity, culture, and identity-negotiation, I acknowledge the complexities surrounding each, especially as the terms “Japanese” and “Japanese American” have evolved over time to mean many things for people of different backgrounds. It is my hope to honor the intricate and often interwoven social and collective identities of those with whom I spoke in the course of my research, and any to whom this research is historically relevant. I use both terms above to describe primarily those of predominantly Japanese ancestry, who often also have close cultural ties to Japanese tradition. However, this research is not limited to conclusions about any one group of people, and with careful understanding, can be appropriately applied to other groups as well.

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Cultural Trauma & Japanese Americans

Trauma is most often conceived of and discussed as the individual trauma a person experiences as a result of sudden or dramatic events which cause harm. Memories of traumatic events occasionally reemerge and paralyze victim-survivors, sometimes damaging their sense of identity, belonging, or grounding in reality. Such negative effects are dealt with by attempting to overcome the personal trauma through counseling, and it is fairly common to hear that it is unhealthy to suppress the emotions which are spurred by traumatic memory. This type of trauma is an individual psychological trauma. Some elements of individual trauma also translate to what is termed “cultural trauma,” and are important to understanding collective trauma; however, the two are not to be confused as perfectly equivalent in process, or response. Trauma is widely understood as a multifaceted mental response to distressing events or series of events, and indeed cultural trauma is equally multifaceted. However, where individual psychological trauma is experienced directly by the person who experienced the trauma, cultural trauma is created by a collective, often in an attempt to form a new group identity. A crucial point to make here is that cultural trauma often serves as a form of meaning-making for non-normal experiences, since often, a trauma can appear to an individual and to a collective as lacking any meaning or reason.
To approach the issue of Japanese American internment and Japanese Americans more precisely, scholars differentiate between the lay trauma theory and the more complex social processes which underlay cultural trauma. The term “lay trauma” refers to the broad conceptions about trauma that permeate everyday conversations and story-telling, which serves as a contrast to a more theoretical reflexive approach. Lay trauma’s primary assumption is that trauma is naturally occurring, considering its ubiquitous presence, but this assumption is rooted in fallacy. It is important to distinguish the differences between lay trauma and cultural trauma so as to avoid misunderstandings by future music scholars attempting to apply this concept to their own ethnographic experiences and communities of research. The distinction is important to the development of a foundation for musicological research about trauma, since “scholarly approaches to trauma developed thus far actually have been distorted by the powerful, common-sense understandings of trauma that have emerged in everyday life.”

Under the umbrella of lay trauma theory are both a psychoanalytic perspective, and what is termed the “enlightenment perspective.” The psychoanalytic perspective of trauma is perhaps the most widely known, since it seems to confirm the reasons for why certain traumatic events result in specific reactions by individuals. This perspective explains that trauma is a fear response, rather than an activation of rational understanding. Unconscious fears and emotions result in defense mechanisms being

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9 Jeffrey Alexander et al., Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004), 8. “Events are not inherently traumatic. Trauma is a socially mediated attribution.”

10 Ibid., 2.

11 Ibid., 3.
constructed between the trauma and the actor, distorting the event of trauma in the actor’s imagination and memory. The result is often repression of a traumatic event, where the solution becomes to “set things right” in the world as well as within the self. The “enlightenment” perspective, on the other hand, explains trauma through rational responses to sudden events, at the individual or social level. To take this perspective means that events which trigger traumas “are perceived clearly by actors,” and that those actors’ responses are logically progressive—actors will attempt to minimize the circumstances that led to the traumatic events, and will use past events to inform future thinking and decision-making.

Ethnomusicological studies which use cultural trauma have to date been few and far between. And while there is, quite appropriately, a large and growing literature on the relationships between trauma and music, many of the studies are limited to the lay conception discussed above. However, Eric Hung, in his close study of post-1980 musical responses to Japanese American internment, notes three key differences between psychological trauma and cultural trauma: cultural trauma deals with groups rather than individuals, it is not inherent within a destructive event, and once it is assimilated into group identity, the group tends to “maintain rather than overcome cultural trauma.”

In the context of the Japanese American experience, cultural trauma lacks significant exploration, though some studies have begun to make headways applying the

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12 Ibid., 5.

While the concept of trauma is understood colloquially as a sort of tragic or sudden event which impacts identity or psychological health, cultural trauma is not as easily digested or explicated. In developing an understanding of Japanese American sound worlds (which have been influenced and changed by cultural trauma), we must understand principally that cultural trauma is not naturally occurring, but instead is “constructed by society.” This form of trauma is constructed not by a single person, but by the larger community—a narrative forms which the collective then embraces as part of their identity. According to Alexander, cultural trauma occurs “...when members of a collectivity feel that they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways.” Following this model, Japanese Americans have developed and are attempting to maintain an identity which includes memories and cultural connections to the events of incarceration during WWII.

Cultural trauma manifests physically in the form of museums and museum exhibits, as well as bodily journeys of remembrance such as music-making, pilgrimages, or writing. Museums which document the imprisonment of Japanese Americans during WWII are being constructed and maintained by various Japanese American historical

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15 Alexander et al., 2.

16 Ibid., 1.
societies or institutions. The sites of some camps (including Amache) are being reconstructed, sometimes in partnerships with academic institutions that can achieve a great degree of accuracy in finding and replacing buildings long since moved, sold or destroyed. Yearly pilgrimages to the sites of the WRA concentration camps are conducted to educate the public, to allow for remembrance by former internees and their descendants, and to advocate for changes to proposed immigration laws or policies which are perceived as racist or discriminatory.

The efforts for remembrance are not solely for constructing and maintaining a collective cultural trauma, but they do highlight that regardless of the intention or even the conscious motivations, cultural trauma is nonetheless being maintained. “Maintenance” is in fact an important characteristic of cultural trauma; it operates often on an unconscious, unexplored level of the community or cultural psyche, asserting itself many years after the event deemed responsible for its existence, and translating itself through physical manifestations.

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Cultural trauma can also be divided into several recognizable phases, which can help in identifying it in communities, understanding its process, and illuminating how it impacts communities and their behaviors over time. The first stage is called “claim-making” and includes the process of the “spiral of signification,” where characterizations of an event or events are first broadcast by members of a group. This stage defines that a “fundamental injury” has been done to the group, and establishes the importance of this injury to the wider group. The second stage is the development of “carrier groups,” which are “the collective agents of the trauma process.” These carrier groups are situated in the social structure of the group, and represent the interests of all or some of the group. Often, carrier groups consist of community leaders, religious leaders, or institutions, such as activist or educational groups. The third stage asks questions in order to define a new master narrative about the trauma, and is called “cultural classification.” The group explores several key questions during this stage to inform its new identity: What is the nature of the pain? What is the nature of the victim? What is the relation of the trauma victim to the wider audience? And who or what is responsible for causing the trauma? Finally, the stage of “identity revision, memory, and routinization” completes the trauma creation process. In identity revision, the collective identity is revised to include the trauma as part of its core. This stage leads directly to a collective re-remembering of the past, as the group reconciles its past with its present and future. Then, once the collective identity has been successfully reconstructed, a period of “calming down” emerges. As Alexander writes: “the spiral of signification flattens out, affect and emotion become less enflamed, preoccupation with sacrality and pollution
fades… the ‘lessons’ of the trauma become objectified in monuments, museums, and collections of historical artifacts.”

The evidence of cultural trauma does not just appear in physical form; cultural trauma has been embodied by and transmitted through generations of Japanese Americans in musical form as well. Where Eric Hung explores direct musical responses to the events of WWII, this study evaluates the current state of Japanese American musical worlds in the form of case studies, and asserts that these musical worlds have been partly shaped by internment. Experiencing racial discrimination and violence during the war began the process of cultural trauma development, especially for those old enough to recognize the severity of the situation and remember it clearly. Even those who have never experienced internment are affected when their parents or grandparents share memories of incarceration, or when they eventually become aware of their familial or ethnic history of imprisonment through other means, and are confronted by a new part of their ethnic or personal identity.

“Remembering” Trauma

An important example of this process in force was revealed to me at the 2019 Colorado Japanese American Day of Remembrance in the History Colorado Center museum in Denver. The event and others like it testify to the cultural trauma reinforced by so-called “carrier groups.” These groups are the primary actors responsible for starting and maintaining cultural trauma, since collectives do not make decisions as such about

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20 Alexander et al., 10-24.
collective concerns.  The Day of Remembrance serves as an important social gathering for the Japanese American community, as well as a part of an activist effort to protest current U.S. immigration policy, and encourage its reform. Activists at the event are especially concerned with the asylum-seekers and others who have been imprisoned on the southern border, many of whom are interned at the Crystal City facility, which served as a Department of Justice internment camp for Japanese Americans and others during WWII. The Remembrance Day is in fact held annually on February 19th, the same day on which U.S. President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 (the 1942 executive order that enabled the forced relocation of Japanese Americans in the west to interior concentration camps). Aside from the obvious significance of marking a particular day in the yearly calendar which impacted nearly all Japanese Americans more than 75 years ago, it is also telling that this event and others are built around educating the public about Japanese American mistreatment and imprisonment during the war.

When I attended the event, there were many more hundreds of people than I expected, including people of all ages, most who appeared to be Japanese American. In fact, there was only standing room remaining for those who arrived later, despite the large size of the presentation hall. Only later did I realize that this large attendance was deeply

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21 Alexander et al., 11.

22 This event was partly sponsored by and provided a historical exhibit for display by the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles. The exhibit included photographs, physical artifacts (wood carved family name plates from the camp, clothing, utensils and tools necessary for daily life, and more), and written accounts from the concentration camps and survivors. All ten of the WRA locations were represented, and all items were displayed before the primary presentations of the day.
connected to the powerful collective identity that is still very much alive among Japanese Americans, still centering around the imprisonment of Japanese Americans during WWII.

It is no coincidence that the opening statements by the keynote speaker, Dr. Satsuki Ina, included the word ‘trauma,’ specifically in the context of the larger Japanese American community.23 As a former internee at the Tule Lake concentration camp, a practicing psychotherapist, and a documentarian of the Japanese American war experiences, Dr. Ina has reported dealing with and is still encountering symptoms of collective trauma in her own work and life; her expertise and experience in the area led to a now widely recognized video documentary which captures the journeys of healing for a group of Japanese Americans who were interned as children.24

Aside from mentioning the shared trauma of Japanese Americans, Dr. Ina also noted that forgetting (or transience) is a coping mechanism for those who were interned, and for relatives who were not interned, “forgetting” is accomplished through the silence of their elders, which in turn leaves younger generations without an understanding of the camp experiences and embodied trauma they may themselves be subjected to when discovering more of their family history. This mechanism allowed and still allows some to ignore their personal psychological trauma, but even so, the collective trauma may still be in place with their offspring and other relatives.25

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23 Dr. Satsuki Ina, Opening Statement for the Colorado Day of Remembrance 2019 (History Colorado, February 19, 2019).

24 *Children of the Camps*, directed by Stephen Holsapple, (San Francisco, CA: Center for Asian American Media (CAAM), 1999), DVD.

25 Alexander et al., 50-51.
A powerful indicator of the widespread impact of WWII incarceration actually occurred during Dr. Ina’s presentation, when she asked all present to raise their hands if they or an immediate family member had been interned in one of the concentration camps during WWII. As a caucasian researcher and “outside party” present at the event, I was one of the few to not raise my hand. The memories of camp life have been passed through generations by those who have volunteered their stories and memories, in an attempt to increase the number of people alive today who are aware of the emotional and cultural injury which forced removal caused to the broader Japanese American community. It is apparent that many Japanese Americans today are invested in resolving the personal trauma they experience as a result of incarceration, as well as maintaining their collective identity through remembrance of imprisonment.

I was also one of many pilgrims to the original site of Amache in March of 2018. Annual pilgrimages are hosted by the local high school in Granada, which maintains a student-volunteer organization led by principal John Hopper, the Amache Preservation Society. Despite there being over 7,000 former incarcerees, only two made it this year. Bob Fuchigami, at this time 90 years old, was kind enough to recount his memories of life at Amache. He later wrote to me that he could recall a wide variety of events, including hula dancing, trumpet solos, opera singers, pop vocalists, Noh performers, and some Japanese song specialists.26

Upon arrival at the former site of Amache, the gathering of between 50-70 pilgrims engaged in traditional Buddhist memorial ceremonies. Hoji is the action of

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26 Bob Fuchigami, personal email communication with the author, 2019.
expressing gratitude to the deceased, typically performed at a shrine or cemetery where the deceased is located. This particular ceremony took place at a stone obelisk memorial which honored the Japanese Americans citizens and soldiers who were interned and passed away at Amache. Oshoko is the burning of incense, and involves a certain procedure, or decorum. Every person present at this ceremony, regardless of religious affiliation, may burn incense. This ceremony specifically pays respects to the impermanent nature of life, and encourages the participants to receive truth and be mindful of one’s circumstances and history within the scope of all existence. Oshoko is also customarily accompanied by the chanting of Shoshinge, or a gatha (verse) crucial to the Buddhist faith, and involves a melodious chanting.

**Historical Context**

In order to understand how trauma is transmitted collectively through music and how musical trauma can be understood, one step we can take is to broadly compare and contrast the social, political, and musical worlds of Japanese Americans before, during, and after internment. Unfortunately, the history of Japanese American (and for that matter, Asian) immigrants to the U.S. in particular is not a pleasant or peaceful one. As demonstrated from the early days of their arrival to the end of the 20th century, Japanese Americans were widely regarded with suspicion and often segregated and mistreated. It wasn’t until the mid 19th-century that Japanese migrants began to appear in the sphere of the United States, mostly in Hawaii under labor contracts, and west coast states including
Before this time, the Japanese system of government and interference by colonizing powers discouraged immigration from the country, but in 1868, the isolationist Japanese shogunate government was replaced during the Meiji Reforms, and migration outside of the island nation consequently increased. Japanese immigrants were typically single male laborers and were generally attracted to new opportunities for work and land ownership in the United States, like many other immigrants from Asia and Europe at the time.

Many first generation Japanese immigrants (termed Issei), who were from the rural farming areas of southern Japan, found work in the agricultural sector, on farms and plantations. However, Russell Endo notes that a large number of Japanese immigrants were “literate and ambitious individuals…” and sought new forms of labor, ending up first as unskilled workers in the railroad and mining industries.

Japanese immigrant communities formed in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Seattle, which meant an increase in Japanese-owned small businesses and growing numbers of professional workers. These communities were not necessarily formed by choice however, but rather by necessity. Segregation was one of the first things a first generation Japanese immigrant would experience upon arrival in the U.S., and thanks to the Naturalization Statute of 1870, which stated that “only those of Anglo or African


28 Ibid.

descent were allowed into the naturalization process,” Asian immigrants were witheld the right of U.S. citizenship.30 Without any legal rights, Japanese immigrants were powerless to act against racist and segregationist laws or ordinances. In many cities and counties across the west, Japanese immigrants were only allowed to live in specified areas (hence growing Japanese-only communities). They also struggled to live normally, since many daily activities were also regulated by racist policies; some schools were segregated by race, and local businesses including movie theaters and shops actively discriminated against Asian immigrants by denying them services or limiting where they could go within the buildings themselves.

The period of Japanese immigration between the 1880s and the late 1930s was ultimately a limited one, as racial tensions between white Americans (who saw Asian immigrants as “invaders,” and a “yellow-peril”) and new Asian immigrants eventually led to various restrictions being placed on immigration. Some immigration laws even began to target Japanese immigrants in particular, after the Chinese Exclusion Act left a vacuum of labor which was quickly filled by Japanese immigrants.31

Japanese immigrant farmers were a particularly targeted group, since they had tremendous success in the face of the anti-Japanese policies. These farmers often ended up buying land conventionally determined ‘unsuitable,’ such as areas nearby dams and


marshes, and were able to turn them into virtual oases of life.32 Such were the successes of Japanese immigrants to the U.S. in agriculture and business even after severe immigration restrictions, that incensed white Americans deemed them a serious problem and many western states began passing various “alien land laws” to prevent those of Japanese ancestry from purchasing any land in the state whatsoever.33 But even after the Asian land laws and the Immigration Act of 1924 had gone into effect, Japanese immigrants and their children (Nisei, who were citizens as established by the U.S. Constitution, and therefore able to buy land legally) were able to substantially increase their economic prospects by pooling resources, partnering with non-Asian land owners, and purchasing land using the names of Nisei individuals. Those who held anti-Asian views only became more enraged at their perceived “losses,” and claimed that Japanese people were buying all of the prime land in the west, though lands owned by Japanese families made up a fraction of the total west coast landholdings. These racist sentiments which evolved in the U.S. led to widespread mistreatment of this ethnic group, and set the stage for the very real acts of violence against Japanese American citizens during the 1940s.

By 1941, anti-Japanese rhetoric and attitudes were commonplace among white Americans along the coast, and also among others in the central and eastern parts of the country. No longer did local groups feel the “need” to convince someone of why Japanese people were bad for the nation; it had evolved to pure racial intolerance.

32 Harvey, 7.
33 Ibid., 6.
Additionally, the nation of Japan had been taking belligerent military action in Korea and Russia, and the power of the new rising empire was already perceived as threatening. Japanese actions in Manchuria and other parts of China were particularly worrisome, as they reflected the intense nationalism and expansionist ideas which could be seen as rivaling those of the U.S.. The removal of Japanese immigrants and Japanese Americans from west coast territories seems to have been partly justified by connecting them with their homeland.³⁴As John Tateishi writes, “[Japanese people] were presumed to be a racial nest of spies and saboteurs…” for Japan, both before and after the attack on Pearl Harbor in December of 1941.³⁵ It did not help that many Japanese immigrants at the time would travel to the U.S. to work, and then return to their homes in Japan after they had gathered a sufficient level of wealth.³⁶ These factors contributed to an increased suspicion and racial intolerance for Japanese immigrants and their American-born children, who were falsely presented by newspaper publications as scheming invaders.³⁷ These behaviors were not restricted to the public, however. The federal government itself also began “preemptive” investigations into persons of Japanese ancestry along the west coast, in an attempt to identify individuals who might be a potential security risk.³⁸

³⁴ Harvey, 7.


³⁸ Tateishi, xv.
Then, as if to confirm American attitudes about the aggressive Japanese empire, Pearl Harbor was attacked without warning on the morning of December 7, 1941. Almost immediately, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and other agencies swept across the west coast, arresting many Japanese American community or religious leaders. Those with prior business connections to Japan, or anyone who had visited Japan recently (including “Kibei,” or children of Japanese immigrants who were sent by their parents to study in Japan before returning to the United States), may have had their financial assets frozen and then been interrogated or arrested without formal charges. In Hawaii, martial law was declared, and those of Japanese ancestry were required to provide proof of citizenship, lest they be declared an alien, and forbidden to withdraw any funds from bank accounts.\(^{39}\) The west coast was declared a theater of operations by the military, and while martial law was not declared, there was a much more powerful push by local organizations and cities urging for the removal of Japanese Americans. Some military leaders agreed with this argument, since so-called “fifth-column” activities on the part of Japanese Americans were now thought to be a major threat. They used the prior suspicions and intolerance toward Japanese immigrants and Japanese Americans to further their point. General John L. DeWitt, who had recently been promoted the Military Commander for the Western Defense Command, was reported as saying “The very fact that no sabotage has taken place to date is a disturbing and confirming indication that such action will be taken.”\(^{40}\) This sort of incredible logic was apparently successful in

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\(^{39}\) Harvey, 8.

\(^{40}\) Tateishi, xv.
feeding on the fears of the public and other military leaders. One now infamous column by Henry McLemore in *The Seattle Times* read:

> I am for the immediate removal of every Japanese on the West Coast to a point deep in the interior. I don't mean a nice part of the interior either. Herd 'em up, pack 'em off and give 'em the inside room in the badlands. Let 'em be pinched, hurt, hungry and dead up against it... If making one million innocent Japanese uncomfortable would prevent one scheming Japanese from costing the life of one American boy, then let the million innocents suffer.... Let us in this desperate time put first things first. And, who is to say that to the men and women of this country there is anything that comes above America? Personally, I hate the Japanese. And that goes for all of them. Let's quit worrying about hurting the enemy's feelings and start doing it.  

McLemore’s comments, considered inexcusably racist in the present, reflected widespread sentiments of many, if not most, white Americans at the time. Pearl Harbor had completed the total distortion of the public perception of Japanese Americans, following many years of segregationist treatment and distanced suspicion. Within days of the attack on Pearl Harbor, DeWitt and his colleagues had developed a basic plan for arresting and confining all enemy nationals through a process of internment. This included German and Italian citizens, but not all— they were not judged as a group based on ethnic or cultural identities; only German and Italian citizens who were known to have committed subversive acts were considered in this plan.

DeWitt’s plan was sent to the Army General Headquarters on December 19th, 1941, with the hopes of proving this “military necessity” to the military command and to President Roosevelt.  


momentum in further stirring anti-Japanese American hysteria. The American Legion, Native Sons, and Daughters of the Golden West all pressured legislators to support the removal of Japanese Americans to interior states. California Congressman Leland Ford sent a memo to the Secretary of War suggesting that Issei and Nisei be incarcerated in inland concentration camps, and that for Japanese Americans to show true loyalty to the U.S., they might even submit themselves voluntarily to this process of removal.43

There were some who resisted the strong push for Japanese American incarceration, including Attorney General Francis Biddle. In a letter to President Roosevelt, he revealed that he was aware of the ulterior racial motives of those who advocated for the removal of Japanese Americans to inland states, and advised that since there was no evidence whatsoever of planned sabotage or collaboration with the Japanese military, no action should be taken against Japanese Americans or Japanese immigrants. It seems that Roosevelt agreed, but the opinions of both the President and the Attorney General were lost among the overwhelming anti-Japanese propaganda consuming the nation.

The process of Japanese American removal from the west coast followed in steps. First, Biddle reluctantly ordered that all Japanese American citizens be removed from areas around power plants, dams, and military industry. Then a delegation of west coast congressmen passed a resolution which called for the “immediate evacuation of all persons of Japanese lineage and all others, aliens and citizen alike, whose presence shall be deemed dangerous or inimical to the defense of the United States from all strategic

43 Harvey, 19.
Yet more blows to the reputation of Japanese Americans came within the same period: the House Un-American Activities Committee developed the “Yellow Report,” a document which claimed that certain Japanese cultural traits were evidence for espionage, including the large number of Japanese fishermen in the U.S., Japanese loyalty to the Emperor of Japan, and the existence of Buddhism among Japanese Americans. The report also claimed that Japanese Americans on the West Coast had been part of an organized division of the Japanese army. On February 14th, 1942, General DeWitt appealed to the Secretary of War, Henry Stimson, and convinced him too that action must be taken. With little other option, President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 just five days later, which authorized the prescription of special military zones, from which any person could be removed for reasons of national security. While the order does not specifically mention Japanese Americans, it was clear at the time that it was meant for them. Shortly after this order, ten War Relocation Authority concentration camps began construction in some of the harshest geographic areas across the interior United States.

**Music Before Amache**

Responses to Japanese American imprisonment during the war vary between generations in the U.S., and indeed between the more defined generations of Issei (first-generation Japanese immigrants) and Nisei (second-generation Japanese Americans

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44 Harvey, 22.

born in the U.S.). The differences between the two generations and their perspectives on incarceration are a result of many factors, but it is important to note that differences in how each generation broadly operated and thought began long before the war, and continue to the present day. Issei are those Japanese immigrants who first established a presence in the U.S. in the mid-late 19th century. Broadly speaking, these people brought with them traditional Japanese customs and ways of life, which they attempted to maintain as they settled mostly in Hawaii, and along the western coast in California, Oregon, and Washington.

Nisei had a radically different experience in both their introduction to the U.S., and to their assimilation into national culture. Born and raised among white peers with a keen interest in maintaining a cultural and racial superiority, Nisei were encouraged by American society to reject Japanese traditions in favor of adopting the latest cultural fads and the highly promoted American attitudes of firm individualism and national pride. While some Nisei may have been influenced by this sort of cultural propaganda, many actually participated actively in Japanese traditions, and contributed to the growth of Japanese arts in the U.S., including koto playing, kabuki theatre, shamisen, and Japanese classical dance. Some Issei parents felt strongly about their children being exposed to too much American influence, which could result in a loss of Japanese cultural knowledge and appreciation, so their children were sent to Japan for their formal

education. Those who returned after their education in Japan to pursue lives in the U.S. were termed “Kibei.” At the same time, Issei attempted to assimilate within American culture, and also encouraged their children to do the same; their Nisei children were enrolled in classical piano, voice, and violin lessons, learning the music of European and American classical composers. The conflict between U.S. culture and Japanese culture remained an ever-present issue into the 1930’s when Japanese arts in the country reached their peak.

The attitudes and actions of Japanese Americans in the U.S. during the late 1930’s then, spoke to their desire to maintain their Japanese cultural identity and remain loyal to tradition. But when war between Japan and the U.S. began in 1942, the divide between the two generations of Issei and Nisei widened rapidly, and began to separate parents from children in both cultural and political worlds.

General DeWitt’s Public Proclamation No. 1 established Military Areas No. 1 and 2, and led to the arrest of many Issei community leaders immediately following the events at Pearl Harbor. Issei were stripped of their authority and social roles within the Japanese American community, as their lack of citizenship in the U.S. inflamed opinions about their corresponding lack of loyalty to the country. When community leaders and prominent businessmen were taken from their communities, few were left who could effectively rally the communities to protest this treatment or develop a concerted plan to

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48 Harvey, 8.
maintain their morale.\textsuperscript{49} The Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) was placed in a very difficult position at the time; if it attempted to oppose “evacuation” of Japanese and Japanese American people or other policies aimed at restricted Japanese American movement and freedom, it would seem to take a pro-Japanese (or anti-American) stance. If it did not put up a fight however, everything that the organization had worked for might be lost, and take many years to recover.\textsuperscript{50} Ultimately, the JACL asked that all of its members and other Japanese and Japanese American people in the U.S. cooperate with the U.S. government, believing that:

\begin{quote}
It is difficult for us to conceive that our government, with its vaunted heritage of democratic ideals, would break down the equality that has always existed between its citizens and discriminate against one bloc of them. We trust that the sacrifices which all of us may be called upon to make will create a greater and more unified America when we have won the war.\textsuperscript{51}
\end{quote}

As American citizens, Nisei held certain privileges beyond their parents. They were generally treated with slightly less hostility before the war, and while their “true” loyalties were still questioned by the American public and the government, their education in the United States was considered to be a positive, since they were seen as more likely to share “American values” and pride. When they arrived at the temporary detention centers before being sent to concentration camps, families experienced breakdowns of traditional family values and cohesion. Employment and caretaking were

\textsuperscript{49} Harvey, 19. \\
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., 28. \\
\textsuperscript{51} Lewis Woodspecial, “Army gets power to move citizens or aliens inland; President's Order Is Designed Primarily to Allow Round-Up of West Coast Japanese,” \textit{New York Times}, February 21, 1942.
no longer major parts of daily life at the centers. Because the WRA provided food to the families, many typical daily concerns were no longer relevant in the detention situation. This left Issei parents with little to no power over their family’s activities due to the sudden loss of caregiver responsibilities and the natural authority these responsibilities allotted. Still, Nisei did experience mistreatment and in some cases felt strongly that they were the generation most impacted by forced removal:

It may be interesting to know that the “reaction of the Japanese to the social and economic problems” is divided between the first and second generation Japanese. The second generation, being citizens of this country, are vastly different in their mental make-up compared to those of the first generation, which includes the parents, mothers, and older men and women who have no citizenship in this country.

Socially and economically, the Issei has less hardship than the Nisei because the Issei has been confined in the homogeneous group similar to surroundings at home; whereas, the Nisei has been used to associating with the Caucasian society. The major complaints among this group is the fact that their association with Caucasian friends, teachers and acquaintances has been limited and they are about to lose all contact with them.

Furthermore, the Nisei, being of a rather independent nature, do not feel that this evacuation and confined life is doing their initiative and talents any justice. It is the desire of the majority of this group to relocate themselves in various parts of the state as soon as permission can be granted and reasonable assurance of a livelihood can be secured... Many of the Nisei are experiencing novel problems for they have not been accustomed to associating purely with Japanese society. Their speech, manners, and associations with the older groups in general make them feel rather out of place. Their place, definitely, is with the democratic American society.\(^{52}\)

Additionally, all that Japanese Americans had owned before the war was either stored, sold at extremely low prices to white American neighbors, or even given away, and the properties and businesses of Issei and Nisei in the west were looted, stolen, or purchased at bargain prices.\(^{53}\) All of these circumstances contributed to expanding the generational


\(^{53}\) Harvey, 40-44.
gap between Issei and Nisei, which made moments where cross-generational integration
was achieved, like the teaching and performance of traditional Japanese arts to Nisei and
the learning and appreciation of American art forms on the part of the Issei, particularly
important to how Japanese Americans would make music after the camps.

Redress Efforts

Despite common protests by Japanese Americans during WWII, successful
responses to internment were not really seen until at least two decades after the war,
when the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s inspired some Japanese Americans to seek
restitution from the U.S. government for the crimes of forced removal and imprisonment
of Japanese American citizens. However, some former internees disagreed with the
idea that restitution was necessary, as they believed the actions of the government were
justified during a war-time scenario. A demonstration of the divide between the two
groups can be seen in the responses to questions 27 and 28 of the "Statement of United
States Citizen of Japanese Ancestry" issued to all adult internees. This statement later
became known as the "loyalty questionnaire," because of its overt nationalist language:

Question 27: Are you willing to serve in the armed forces of the United States on combat
duty, wherever ordered? Question 28: Will you swear unqualified allegiances to the
United States of America and faithfully defend the United States from any and all attack
by foreign or domestic forces, and forswear any form of allegiance or obedience to the
Japanese emperor, or other foreign government, power or organization?

Roughly 20 percent of all respondents answered in the negative for one or both of these
questions, some as a statement of protest against their imprisoners, and others due to
confusion about the questions’ meaning or their interpretation that an answer of ‘yes’ would implicate them as disloyal to the U.S. or as volunteering to enlist in the armed services. Those who intentionally answered ‘no’ to both questions as a form of protest were known as ‘no-nos,’ and the difference between Japanese Americans who wished to “demonstrate” their loyalty to the U.S. through answers of ‘yes,’ and the ‘no-nos’ caused a lasting schism which further increased tensions in the camps and after the war.\(^54\)

Nonetheless, legal redress regarding the actions of the United States government and the War Relocation Authority began in the late 1970s, and in 1980 culminated in an investigation by a special commission into the government’s rationale behind internment of Japanese Americans during WWII.\(^55\) Following the recommendations of the investigating commission, the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, which included a formal apology by the U.S. for the “grave injustice” of forced removal and internment of Japanese Americans, was passed into law. The law also set aside funds to be used as a form of reparation, with each formerly imprisoned person receiving a payment of $20,000. To some activists, it appeared that the payments acted like “hush money,” asking Japanese Americans to accept the apology of the United States government and move on with their lives. This reparation seemed to appease many Japanese American survivors, who consequently abstained (or continued to abstain) from disclosing their experiences. The silencing of the interned was thought to be complete. However, many


activists continued to seek further justice by challenging the United States’ former Supreme Court decisions that validated Japanese American internment, such as *Korematsu v. United States*.

Still, this formal redress could not repair the cultural and social losses of many of those who were imprisoned. Some began to share their experiences and advocate for education on the issues of immigration and racism in the U.S. Further redress and activist efforts have continued into the present, and are explored in greater detail in the conclusion of this work.

**Music and Life at Amache and other Concentration camps**

Musical life at the ten WRA camps was surprisingly vibrant. In fact, Japanese musical genres, which had begun declining in the U.S., were revived through camp performances. Minako Waseda keenly notes that the unusual circumstances of internment “created conditions which fostered musical activity.” Not only was a variety of music regularly taught and performed, but for most of the WRA camps, musical activity of any kind was *encouraged* for the sake of morale. The directors of the camps thought it wise to allow the incarcerated Japanese Americans to frequently engage in musical activity, so as

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57 Waseda, 180-182.
to prevent malcontent ‘fifth-column’ activities, and rebellion. As a result of the realization that recreation was important to morale and stability of the camps, the WRA and the camp administrative bureaus established both Recreation and Music Departments in each location, which were given the resources necessary to hire educators and coaches for various activities, including music.

Three primary conditions existed for thriving musical life in the camps, which Waseda details:

1) The sudden high concentration of Japanese American population in a condensed location. Before the war, Japanese Americans generally lived in West coast states, but compact ethnic communities (“Japan-towns”) were not numerous, and in fact, most Japanese Americans lived far apart from each other on farms or even in separate areas of a city. For many, especially young children, the concentration camps were the first places where Japanese culture and Japanese Americans were predominant. By their very definition, the concentration camps of the WRA succeeded in literally placing together people who were culturally and ethnically similar into small geographic areas.

2) The abundance of free time available to internees. The WRA’s stipulations for locating their concentration camps included considerations for self-sustainability and the ability of the local area to provide sufficient space and transportation, so volunteer or

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59 Japantown in San Francisco was perhaps the largest community of Japanese Americans between 1906 and 1942, but was one of the few instances of such a community.
forced labor wasn’t generally required to build an entire city from nothing.\textsuperscript{60} With the U.S. government providing food services, housing, medical care, and even clothing allowances, many incoming incarceratedes (especially women, who at the time generally handled cooking and cleaning for a household) had very little else to do. Most men found jobs in the agricultural sector at their respective camp, though it wasn’t always required, and the WRA used skilled doctors and dentists from among the internees to provide medical care for the camp. Importantly, the Nisei children and young adults of the camps had a great deal of time outside of school to explore their interests, including swing dance, traditional Japanese arts, and sports.\textsuperscript{61}

3) The stresses of the grim situation and difficulties with camp life. Early on in the war, the WRA was accused by both the public and the press of “coddling” the Japanese American incarceratedes with high-cost meals and supplies, and, since many incarceratedes were employed by the WRA to perform tasks at the camps, many thought that Japanese Americans in the camps were being paid more than the war situation demanded of patriotic Americans. To prevent further accusations, the WRA restricted unskilled incarceratede pay to just $14 a month, and skilled laborers were capped at $19 a month, deliberately lower than the minimum pay for American GIs. Additionally, just 50 cents

\textsuperscript{60} Greg Robinson, “War Relocation Authority,” \url{https://encyclopedia.densho.org/War_Relocation_Authority/}. However, there were some camps, including Manzanar, which due to material and labor shortages at the start of the war, were still incomplete in construction, and Japanese American volunteers helped to finish building.

\textsuperscript{61} Zachary Stark, “Wrestling with Tradition: Japanese Activities at Amache, a WWII Incarceration Facility” (master’s thesis, University of Denver, 2015), 131-168; Harvey, 44. Stark’s thesis in particular discusses in detail the traditions of Bon Odori and Kabuki theatre as practiced at Amache, and provides a multitude of photographic and textual examples of musical and dramatic arts performed during the war. Stark also engages in a necessary discussion of the intergenerational involvement of incarceratedes in both activities.
was spent on all daily meals per person, which meant that food quality suffered greatly in the camps.\textsuperscript{62}

One additional and vitally important condition is discussed by Jane Dusselier in her work; art and music-making served also as means of dealing with trauma and reclaiming identity.\textsuperscript{63} The early days of the camps were particularly difficult for incarcerees. Some later reported witnessing violence, nervous breakdowns, and threats of riot before music and other recreational activities had been established.\textsuperscript{64} And as previously stated, the very process of being labeled “enemies” or “traitors” of the state, rounded up by federal agents, and shipped to isolated prisons without trial, without much of their belongings, and occasionally without their families or at least family cohesion, had injured the morale of many Issei and Nisei who deemed themselves loyal and ethical denizens of the United States.

Amache, or the “Granada Relocation Center,” as it was named by the WRA, is located approximately 140 miles east of the nearest large town, Pueblo, CO, in the eastern plains of the state. The land there is arid, with the most common plant life being wild grasses, sagebrush, and cactuses. Michi Tashiro, who spent three years at Amache, recounted experiences of the frequent sandstorms and intense heat waves there, also


\textsuperscript{64} Waseda, 181.
noting the rather unwelcoming local critters of the dry, sandy area.65 Yuriko “Lily” Nakai Havey also described the sandstorms at the camp: “A roiling brown cloud whooshed across the [window] pane, eclipsing the barrack only a few yards away… Sand rasped against the windows, sounding like mice scratching for shelter.”66 All three of these conditions contributed to a strong surge toward the dissemination and performance of both traditional Japanese musics as well as American popular forms of entertainment, including “dance bands” at the camps.67

The range of musical activities was limited by the resources available to the individual camp administrations, as well as by the belongings brought or shipped to camp by the internees. Many brought along their shakuhachi, or traditional Japanese bamboo flutes, even if they did not typically play them, because they were small and easy to transport. Others had larger instruments such as koto (a traditional stringed instrument, and the national instrument of Japan) or even traditional Japanese costumes and materials sent after they had arrived in camp. In some cases, skilled artisans and practitioners of traditional Japanese music were able to reconstruct instruments like the shamisen (a three-stringed plucked string instrument) from the unused construction materials and other trinkets around the camp.68 When materials ran out, or when the reconstructed


67 Waseda, 180.

68 Waseda, 188.
instruments were insufficient for performance, performers would recreate the sounds with their mouths instead, a practice of *kuchi-jamisen*.69

Music at Amache was much the same as the other ten WRA camps, with internees allowed general freedom to produce what shows and performances they desired using whatever resources they had at their disposal. Programs for performance events (*engei-kai*) show a variety of both traditional Japanese musical arts, as well as western classical music performances such as piano sonatas written by Ludwig v. Beethoven, or violin sonatas written by Johannes Brahms. Incarceres also performed popular contemporary songs or jazz tunes, which had become national hits when they were recorded by Elle Fitzgerald, Nat King Cole, Bud Freeman, Bing Crosby, Frank Sinatra, and others (see Figure 1). The program unfortunately shows only vague descriptions of each performance, and while I presume there are many possible reasons for the lack of specificity, the two most likely seem to be: that the lack of specific musical catalogs/sheet music may have prevented titles of works or their composers from being known by audiences or performers or both, and thus being included on the program. Or, more simply, that the nature of these talent shows, which were often loosely-organized, simply enabled flexibility in what was performed and perhaps a sense among all involved that

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69 Ibid., 186. The practice of *kuchi-jamisen* can be translated as “spoken instrument,” and involves the vocal imitation of the timbre and typical sounds of instruments.
such information was not required, either because the works were well-known, or because of the circumstances of being incarcerated.\textsuperscript{70}

It should be added that Amache, unlike other camps, also was in the unique situation of being located less than a mile from the nearby small town of Granada (hence the original name “Granada Relocation Center”) and also the larger city of Lamar, CO. The proximity of the camp to the towns eventually led to travel restrictions being lifted between the three places. Amache incarcerees were able to go back and forth with special passes, purchasing records, sheet music, and even materials for instrument-making. Yukino Harada discusses being able to travel to the more distant Lamar via truck in her 2003 interview, and Lily Havey confirms this freedom of movement and her purchasing of music in Granada in her communication with Marta Roberston.\textsuperscript{71}

\textsuperscript{70} Arts and Craft Program, Granada Pioneer, Vol. 1, No. 45, March 6, 1943, https://www.loc.gov/resource/sn83025522/1943-03-06/ed-1/?sp=10&q=music&r=-0.254,0.258,1.641,1.043.0.

Figure 1. Arts and crafts program from Amache, March 6, 1943. “Arts and Craft Program,” Granada Pioneer, Vol. I, No. 45, March 6, 1943, https://www.loc.gov/resource/sn83025522/1943-03-06/ed-1/?sp=10&q=music&r=-0.254,0.258,1.641,1.043.0.

Few sources are available from which to gather detailed information about musical life at Amache, aside from the recollections of former internees themselves,
letters and written documents from internees, and from various governmental or press
documents from 1942-1945. From extant pages of the *Granada Pioneer* (the newspaper
of Amache), the earliest mention of musical activity of any kind appears to be from
October 31, 1942, just two months following its establishment. At this time as well,
Amache had reached its peak of 7,318 incarcerees.

It appears that in addition to music performance, listening sessions were part of
daily life at Amache. The language of the mention suggests that this activity had been
occurring with some regularity before this particular issue was printed: “Music
appreciation programs, presented by Rev. Chiaki Kusuhara, at his home, 10H-6D, every
Friday evening, are being attended by more than 30 music lovers…” The very next
sentence in that same issue reveals that the music was that of Western classical
composers: “Recorded selections of Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Tschaikowsky, and other
noted composers are played.”

The announcements about music appreciation nights at Amache are consistently
repeated in later issues of the *Granada Pioneer*, and suggest that incarcerees actively
discussed the music recordings they consumed. As the music appreciation hours
continued, the selection of music expanded to include popular jazz charts.

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https://www.loc.gov/resource/sn83025522/1942-10-31/ed-1/?sp=5&q=music&r=0.195,0.727,1.094,0.632,0

https://www.loc.gov/resource/sn83025522/1943-08-25/ed-1/?sp=7&q=music+appreciation&r=-0.571,0.22,2.143,1.362,0; “Claim Music Hour Success,” Granada Pioneer, Vol. II, No. 49, April 22, 1944,
https://www.loc.gov/resource/sn83025522/1943-02-23/ed-1/?sp=3&q=music+appreciation&r=-0.098,0.705,1.492,0.948,0; “Music Hour Slates,” Granada Pioneer, Vol. I, No. 96, September 1, 1943,
https://www.loc.gov/resource/sn83025522/1943-09-01/ed-1/?sp=8&q=music+appreciation&r=-0.264,-0.04
It is most likely that the reasons for this particular activity and this particular set of recordings are two-fold: first, Japanese Americans at the camp were invested in demonstrating their loyalty to the U.S. through acts of cultural assimilation, including participation in American sports and arts. Paired with this was the WRA’s mission to “Americanize” incarcerees through exposure to American cultural values.\(^\text{74}\) By listening regularly to American orchestras, valued European and American composers, and American jazz bands, the incarcerees who attended these hours were demonstrating their active participation in American musical culture, thus performing a kind of cultural loyalty. Second, any connections to Japan became taboo to own or enjoy (at least in the beginning). Although records of Japanese arts and radio programs had become widely available throughout the 1930s, many did not attempt to bring these to camp if they owned them. Wakita Kayoko (a shakuhachi teacher), in an interview with Minako Waseda, recounts that her father deliberately destroyed all of his Japanese cultural artifacts and personal notes due to his fear of those items being confiscated or leading him to jail.\(^\text{75}\) It is also necessary to note that only those records donated or purchased by the WRA administration, for sale in the nearby town of Granada, or brought by the few who risked transporting the fragile vinyls by train, were available at Amache.\(^\text{76}\)


\(^{76}\) Ibid., 176-178.
Once life at Amache became normalized among the incarcerees and the staff, and attitudes about Japanese cultural connections were somewhat calmed, traditional Japanese arts became extraordinarily popular at Amache, especially for Issei incarcerees. In fact, a few music appreciation nights were dedicated to Issei enjoyment of Japanese music recordings, appearing to contradict the promotion of American styles of music in the camp. According to the *Granada Pioneer* printed for November 21 and December 9, 1942: “Activities For Adults Planned: Shibai and a phonograph record hour of Japanese music are among the activities planned for the Issei, it was announced by the recreation department.”

Nisei were also highly involved in the education and performance of traditional music and dance. In Table 1, I have adopted Waseda’s format for listing prominent teachers and performers of the various Japanese arts at Amache. This table partly reveals the extent to which traditional Japanese arts were practiced specifically at Amache. The presence of certain expressive arts at the camp, like naniwa-bushi (a type of narrative singing), reveal that music-making wasn’t always strictly to keep from boredom; these genres with symbolic messages and relatable stories about difficult choices or situations served as a means for incarcerated Japanese Americans to express their frustration or hardship with terrible living conditions and their unethical treatment by the government and their white peers.

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Table 1: Japanese Performance Arts Teachers and Groups at Amache

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Name of Teacher or Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drama (Kabuki, Noh, etc.)</td>
<td>Koshiro Kumagai\textsuperscript{78}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fujima Kansuma (from Rohwer)\textsuperscript{79}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buyo dance / Drama</td>
<td>Yukino Okubo\textsuperscript{80}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naniwa-bushi (narrative singing)</td>
<td>Unknown\textsuperscript{81}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shomyo (Buddhist chant)</td>
<td>Mary Watanabe\textsuperscript{82}</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


\textsuperscript{80} Shirley Muramoto Wong, *Hidden Legacy: Japanese Traditional Performing Arts in the World War II Internment Camps*, (2014; Oakland, CA: Murasaki Productions LLC), DVD.

\textsuperscript{81} “Talent Revue at Block 111I Tonight,” *Granada Pioneer*, Vol. II, No. 27, February 5, 1944, https://digitized.library.fresnostate.edu/digital/collection/SVJAinWWII/id/2361/rec/1. While names of practitioners of naniwa-bushi at Amache were not located, the recorded practice of naniwa-bushi at the camp is notable for two primary reasons: first, naniwa-bushi is a genre of “traditional” music that extends into the modern, and in fact has embraced technological means of performance, lasting into the modern era by relying on audio and video technology for dissemination. This mixed-generation music curiously parallels a need for cross-generational communication and understanding in internment camps, where older and younger generations often found themselves at odds. And second, the genre strongly emphasizes tragic stories about loyalty and giri-ninjo (the combined sense of obligation/duty (towards one’s parents, government, and so on) in conflict with one’s true feelings — feelings that may be more selfish or morally contradict one’s duties or societal expectations. Often, giri-ninjo includes stories of young yakuza disobeying their superiors’ orders to punish someone because that someone is unable to pay them. This has been referred to as the “Romeo-Juliet sense” by some, since there is little else to compare the complex term with in the West. This genre encapsulates well the dual-loyalties which many Japanese Americans were burdened with at the camps that they were forcibly relocated to by a government to which they were already loyal. See: William Malm, *Japanese Music and Musical Instruments* (Rutland, Vermont: Charles E Tuttle Company, 1959), 188-189; also see Ruth Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, (Boston: Mariner Books, 1946).


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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Biwa</strong> (lute used for performed narrative or court music) &amp; <strong>Shigin</strong> (melodic poetry)</th>
<th>Gakuhojo Sawa\textsuperscript{83}</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Japanese Classical Dance / Bon Odori Dance** | Hirotaka Okubo\textsuperscript{84}  
Fujima Kansuma (from Rohwer)\textsuperscript{85}  
Yukino Harada\textsuperscript{86}  
Reiko Iwanaga\textsuperscript{87} |
| **Koto** (stringed instrument typically used for court music or depictions of romantic epics) | Mrs. Ai Okumura\textsuperscript{88} |
| **Taiko** (drumming) | Yujin (Eugene) Gondo\textsuperscript{89} |
| **Yokyoku** (Utai) | Yoshihisa Yaminaka\textsuperscript{90} |

Three types of musical events were the most important at Amache, two of which belong to the categories above. According to Japanese Buddhist tradition, **Bon Odori**, or **Obon**, is a three-day festival for honoring and remembering the dead (also called the Festival of Lanterns, due to the practice of **mukae-bon**), or lighting lanterns in honor of


\textsuperscript{84} Joe McClelland, *Hirotaka Okubo (foreground) at the Bon Odori dance, August 14, sponsored by the Granada Buddhist Church. Other dancers are shown in the background.*, Online Archive of California, photograph, https://oac.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/t6d5nb33n/?order=2&brand=oac4.


\textsuperscript{86} Shirley Muramoto Wong, *Hidden Legacy: Japanese Traditional Performing Arts in the World War II Internment Camps*, (2014; Oakland, CA: Murasaki Productions LLC), DVD.

\textsuperscript{87} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{89} Ibid.

ancestors), and is typically celebrated annually around the 15th of August. One of the crucial elements in the Obon for participants is a particular dance, the Ondo. This dance varies from region to region in Japan, and each camp would have had to negotiate how the dance would be done, since the incarcerees and their families had ancestral ties to a wide range of regions of Japan. As such, the ondo dance would have been a prime opportunity for the different generations of incarcerees to cooperate and interact with one another. The music of Obon is equally diverse between regions, typically consisting of various min yo, or Japanese folk-songs, but can also include songs of significance to the spiritual messages of the festival. The practice of taiko drumming, which will be discussed in significant detail later as it offers insights into Japanese American cultural trauma, typically operates as the means of keeping rhythm in Obon.

In the camps, including Amache, Obon was also celebrated on other important days of the year, including July 4th, and Labor Day and also on other special occasions, like memorial services or following major events. Some of the only records of Obon at Amache capture the festival in 1943, though it would have also likely been celebrated the previous year and was certainly celebrated in 1944 and 1945. As seen in Figure 2, Obon at Amache attracted nearly one thousand participants, many of whom were dressed in traditional kimono or yukata (traditional Japanese styles of robe) as they danced.

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91 Waseda, 188.
92 Ibid.
Figure 2. Mention of Obon festival in Granada Pioneer, August 18, 1943.
Text: “Obon Festival is Big Success. The second and final night of the Bon Odori was successfully held Monday, on the 10F baseball grounds, after being postponed a day because of rain. Close to a thousand participants, the majority of them dressed in colorful kimonos, danced in three concentric circles. The Buddhists, sponsors of the odori, supplied the ondoists with generous pieces of watermelon at the close of the evening’s activities.” “Obon Festival is Big Success,” Granada Pioneer, Vol. 1, No. 92, August 18, 1943, https://digitized.library.fresnostate.edu/digital/collection/SVJAinWWII/id/1817.

Figure 3 also reveals that Amache likely did not have all the appropriate musical instruments or performers for their Obon celebrations in 1943, as audio recordings played over the loudspeakers and two prominent musicians at camp were the sole sources of musical material the night of the ondo dance. The two played on drums borrowed from the high school band, as traditional taiko drums were not available.
Aside from the Obon festivals, Amache enjoyed engei-kai (as evident from Figure 1). Engei-kai typically involve a series of different Japanese and non-Japanese performances, musical or non-musical, and can be compared to talent shows.⁹³ In fact, the Granada Pioneer appears to exclusively list any engei-kai as ‘talent shows.’ A large number of these shows included the most popular Japanese art form among Issei: kabuki theater. Kabuki is a traditional Japanese dramatic art form, which involves acting, music, narration, stage production, and dance. Each production takes many people and hours to

⁹³ Waseda, 189.
prepare and perform. Despite its smaller size in comparison to other camps, Amache held a large number of *kabuki* performances.\textsuperscript{94}

In addition to the traditional Japanese performing arts discussed above, Amache incarcerees were also able to participate in western classical and popular music traditions. Wind band, orchestra, choir, and glee programs were set up through extra-curricular organizations at the high school and through the two main religious groups there, the Buddhist church, and the Christian church (Figures 4 and 5 are photographic examples of the attendance/membership for these musical arts at Amache).

Figure 4. Choir rehearsal at Amache, December 10, 1942. Text: “A choral group of 200 volunteer voices practicing for a Christmas Carol and program. The group will, on Christmas Eve, divide into four sections. Each section will assemble at the four corners of the center and slowly converge toward a central point, singing carols. A Christmas Eve party of community singing will be held.” Tom Parker, “E-458,” photograph, from Online Archive of California, War Relocation Authority Photographs of Japanese-American Evacuation and Resettlement, https://oac.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/t0m3n99cp/?order=2&brand=oa4.

Nisei frequently attended dances which featured jazz or swing music, especially after Amache High School was built in early 1943. Recreation and mess halls often also served as performance and dance spaces. Amache’s dance bands included The Music Makers, led by Nob Kuwatani, which was surprisingly well-equipped, including saxophones, trombones, trumpets, string bass, piano, and drums.\textsuperscript{95} George Hirano recalls:

\begin{quote}
We had a bunch of guys on our block that were talented… They all came together to form a dance band called the Music Makers… It was a big swing band—we had a lot of fun with that. We used to go to the mess hall and take all the tables out, put corn meal on the cement floor and use it as a dance floor.\textsuperscript{96}
\end{quote}

It is clear that demand for dance bands was high at Amache, as The Music Makers performed regularly, and were mentioned often in the newspaper.\textsuperscript{97} Another band, which appears to have gone by several different names, was led by “Brush” Arai, who according to a piece on him in the camp newspaper, was Hawaiian. Sometimes mentioned as the ABC boys, or the Aloha Serenaders (due to Arai’s origins), the band performed at various

\textsuperscript{95} Harvey, 109-110.

\textsuperscript{96} Harvey, interview with G. Hirano.

social functions, providing popular swing charts for their fellow incarcerees. It may also be the case that the band was composed of other Hawaiian incarcerees.\textsuperscript{98}

The educational system at Amache also contributed to musical life there. After Amache high school was built, Orin Wade “Tad” Hascall was appointed music director, and quickly organized a high school string orchestra and band program.\textsuperscript{99} In fact, Mr. Hascall even developed the Amache high school marching band in the summers after 1942, and was a key part of forming the drum and bugle corps of the Amache Boy Scout troop.\textsuperscript{100} With the resources at his disposal from the WRA, it appears that Mr. Hascall became deeply involved with western music ensembles at Amache. In addition to leading the school ensembles, he also founded and taught an adult beginner wind band.\textsuperscript{101} Each ensemble under Mr. Hascall’s baton was given ample performance opportunities and developed a high reputation among incarcerees.\textsuperscript{102}


Working with Mr. Hascall in the other western music areas were Noreen Klein, who was the glee choir director, Coradell Crain, who assisted with the junior high ensembles, and Herbert K. Walther, the principal of Amache High School, who was trained in music.\textsuperscript{103} A revealing note to make here is that in maintaining these ensembles and a sense of normalcy at the camps, many teachers were able to operate them as if they were a typical school group, travelling outside of the camp to state music competitions and festivals, as the glee choir did successfully in 1943.\textsuperscript{104}

The other organization which requires mention was the Amache Boy Scouts District (see Figure 6 on next page), which was formed shortly after Amache’s opening in 1942, and was a particular source of pride for Amacheans. There were several separate troops at the camp, and all contributed significantly to musical life at the camps.\textsuperscript{105} As mentioned before, the boy scouts were able to participate in Tad Hascall’s summer drum and bugle corps, but they also served a variety of other roles at the camp, most notably as leaders of camp parades, and as the honorary group for memorial services for any military service-people from Amache who were killed in action.\textsuperscript{106}

\begin{footnotes}


\end{footnotes}
One of the biggest events of the summers at Amache would have been the Summer Carnival, where the “boy scout band” performed, along with many of the ensembles mentioned before: the junior high and high school bands, Brush Arai and his dance band, and those who danced odori. For many at Amache, but especially Nisei, the learning of these various western art forms and their involvement in American institutions like the Boy Scouts helped to assimilate them within American white society, and furthered their sense of dual-identity. After the war, when the process of cultural trauma had developed more fully in the Japanese American community, memories of these recreational activities contributed to the development of the new master narrative; the Japanese American youth had been groomed in American culture and beliefs about

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liberty, individuality, and national pride, “despite the fact that their most basic rights had been ignored.”

Life at Amache was filled with sounds, and with little else to do, the incarcerees of Amache dedicated themselves to learning and performing a massive range of musical genres, both Japanese and American. Music of any kind was tolerated and promoted in the camp as good for morale, and it did achieve this, but also resulted in an overall positive growth of musical knowledge and inter-generational relations. The differences between Issei and Nisei paralleled the differences between American culture and Japanese culture, but the combined effort of incarcerees to achieve worthwhile performances of musics from both cultures speaks to what it meant for many of them to be Japanese American; the label did not represent a separation between the two cultural worlds, but their connection. Japanese Americans could not be forced to be wholly American, nor did they consider themselves wholly Japanese. Many Japanese Americans instead learned to embrace elements of both nations and cultures over time.

Music and Life After Amache

Even as the WRA concentration camps were filled with incarcerees, the government had begun the process of “resettlement” to areas outside of the west coast. Japanese American incarcerees were steadily released from imprisonment to pursue new

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lives within a still hostile United States. Nisei college students were the first to leave the camps, destined for various universities around the country. These educated Nisei were not viewed as threatening to the U.S., since most had been born in the country and never left, and as such were seen as “untainted” by undemocratic and imperialistic ideas from Japan. The agricultural and manufacturing sectors were sorely lacking in manpower, so other incarcerees were released through work programs, which assigned them to farms and factories during the course of the war.\(^{109}\)

After Amache and the other concentration camps closed in 1945, life did not necessarily return to normal for all. In fact, some Japanese American families and communities struggled to recover economically and socially. After being isolated in the camps for most of the duration of WWII, incarcerees arrived in a post-war world which still did not accept them, and in some areas, considered them as “conquered.” Former incarcerees largely returned without incident to their homes and businesses. However, some families did find that much of what they had owned before the war was missing or vandalized. Some organizations and individuals who despised the return of Japanese Americans to their communities engaged in acts of terror and violent discrimination, though these incidents were rare. Other Japanese American families returned to their former hometowns only to have to look for new homes and new forms of work because their lands were now slated for new shopping or urban developments, or because of anti-Japanese attitudes still existent in rural farming areas. The alien land laws in many

states were actually still in effect, so many farmers who wished to purchase land could not do so.\textsuperscript{110}

Fortunately, anti-Japanese American feelings did not last long, as political and religious leaders in many areas advocated for tolerance, and welcomed former incarcerees back to their states and cities. Widespread knowledge of Japanese American soldiers and their patriotic deeds in battle against the Third Reich had also contributed to a softening of racial tensions, and to a rise in appreciation for Japanese American sacrifices during the war (see Figure 7, which shows a memorial service for a soldier from Amache, which had the highest rate of military volunteers among all WRA camps).

Figure 7. Memorial service for Amache servicemen killed in action, ca. 1944-1945. Note: Amache had the highest rate of military volunteerism of all the camps. A total of 953 men and women from Amache volunteered or were drafted for military service during WWII. Of this number, 105 were wounded and 31 killed in action. George Ochibuko, photograph, from Densho Digital Repository, \textit{George Ochikubo Collection}, \url{http://ddr.densho.org/ddr-densho-159-142/}.

\textsuperscript{110} Brian Niiya, “Return to West Coast,” \url{https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Return_to_West_Coast/}. 

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Still, Japanese Americans returning home were not about to reinflame tensions by speaking Japanese or practicing Japanese arts. This led to decades of Japanese American “silence” as they attempted to assimilate within American normative culture, and move beyond the experiences of incarceration.
The “Taiko Boom”

The 1960s civil rights movements brought new questions to the fore for Japanese American communities of the time. Why was Japanese American incarceration not officially recognized as a mistake by the U.S. government? What kinds of effects did incarceration have on family values and health, and for that matter, what about the effects it had on the Japanese American experience as a whole? Third-generation Japanese Americans (Sansei) took up the cause along with some of their parents and grandparents. As children of Nisei incarcerated, Sansei were largely encouraged to blend into American society, but this separation from their cultural heritage left many without a strong foundation for developing identity.\footnote{Terada Yoshitaka, “Shifting Identities of Taiko Music In North America,” in \textit{Transcending Boundaries: Asian Music in North America}, ed. Terada Yoshitaka, (Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology, 2001), 37-60.} When civil rights stirred up various questions about racial identity in the U.S., many Sansei chose to explore their heritage more deeply for the first time. One of the most accessible, and importantly, one of the most meaningful ways of doing so at the time, was through the performance of Taiko.

Taiko drumming (taiko meaning “large drum”) has developed to the extent that it is the most widely recognized and performed Japanese art in the United States today (though in many ways, it has become a uniquely Japanese American art as well). As such, I argue that the “taiko boom” as it has been called, is a result of the process of musical
trauma within Japanese American sound worlds. According to my research and extensive discussions with current taiko performers from the Denver area, many whose parents or relatives were incarcerated during the war, taiko provides a connection to their cultural and ethnic heritage that would otherwise be lost to them, while also promoting a remembrance of the past and empowering the present. The issues explored in this section focus on the relationship between taiko and race (and the body), taiko and gender, and finally taiko and the past. I use three case study ethnographic interviews to inform my conclusions, but most importantly, to give space for the thoughts and experiences of three Japanese American women who play and teach taiko today. I ultimately conclude that taiko and its performance in the United States today is a direct musical response to the trauma of Japanese American internment and historical marginalization, enabling performers and listeners alike to simultaneously embrace and express both their Japanese and American selves.

The practice of taiko, like most traditional Japanese arts, is deeply rooted in the physical place of Japan, and as such is also deeply connected with Japanese national identity. Traditionally, it was played solo, and almost always by a Japanese male in the style of *Miya-daiko* (temple drumming, due to its use in Buddhist temples and festivals like *Obon*). In the United States, taiko had been performed since the very beginning of Japanese immigration in this way, but the war and incarceration led to changes in taiko’s performance and also increased the number of those who could or wanted to perform it. Japanese American morale had been damaged and an entire generation nearly silenced. A male Japanese jazz drummer named Daihachi Oguchi invented the *Kumi-Daiko* style
(ensemble taiko) shortly after WWII, modeling it after a drum set, with an array of
different sized drums with a range of pitch centers, and introduced it across Japan. Seiichi
Tanaka, or “Tanaka-sensei” as he is called, learned this style of ensemble drumming,
integrated it with other styles (Osuwa Daiko, Oedo Sukeroku, and Gojinjyo-daiko) to
form his own unique style, and then immigrated to the west coast of the U.S. in 1951,
where he founded the very first group taiko studio in the country, the San Francisco Taiko
Dojo.

Japanese Americans who had throughout the 1950s experienced a dramatic quiet
immediately gravitated toward the new sound. The assimilation of Japanese Americans
into American culture had perhaps gone too far, and the connection to Japanese culture
was the first post-war casualty for the newest Sansei generation, who largely desired to
renew this connection.

Kris Marubayashi, whose parents were Nisei incarcerees, is now a taiko
performer and educator, as well as a highly successful ceramic artist. Of the incarceration
and subsequent silencing of Japanese Americans she remarked, “That’s the first way you
conquer people. You take away their language, you take away their culture. Then they
don’t have anything. There’s no ‘them’ to be ‘them.’”\textsuperscript{112} Sansei were left in a void of
identity—they could not be Japanese, and yet they could not be entirely “American” due
to their race and cultural history. Marubayashi’s musical experiences growing up could be
said to be fairly representative of many Sansei at the time: “My oldest sister… took piano

\textsuperscript{112} Kris Murabayashi, interview with author, May 2019.
lessons. And I started when I was five when I started taking piano lessons. It was all classical. And actually, most of the music my parents—my parents had a record player, and they mostly played classical music… There were these little edges of other music that creeped in.”

Western classical music was part of Marubayashi’s life until early college, as she continued to participate in school orchestras as a cellist. Her parents generally supported her pursuit of the arts, and she was thus enabled to develop her social life around belonging within the school orchestra student community.

When it was introduced in the late 1960s, ensemble taiko offered everything a young Asian-American could want in regards to reclaiming or renewing their cultural heritage: it was a vigorous, lively art, filled with power and strong voice, filling the silence of Japanese American trauma with a resounding confidence and strikes of resistance. And while Asian-American men were the primary demographic performing taiko at the time, it was not long until the “taiko boom” also became the “woman’s taiko boom,” with Asian-American women starting their own all-female groups, joining open groups in large numbers, and even developing their own styles of taiko drumming.

At the same time, Marubayashi’s childhood reflected the differences between those families who returned to farming areas after the war, and those who returned to city centers. It was likely that rural or suburban areas required Japanese American families to suppress aspects of their culture even more than urban areas immediately following the war when things were still a bit tense. Her parents moved to a suburb of New York City

113 Ibid.
where she was born and raised without as many hostile attitudes directed at her due to her race—I might suppose that the movement to a state in the far eastern U.S. also radically changed how important racial differences in the community were there. In the eastern U.S., the presence of Japanese Americans during the war wasn’t quite as high, and therefore did not undergo quite the same levels of mass intolerance as the west coast (note however, that Japanese confinement on Ellis Island was well known).\textsuperscript{114} Her racial identity didn’t even occur to her until she enrolled at San Francisco State University, where her peers informed her that she should be offended by certain phrases or words which were racially offensive to Japanese Americans: “I hadn’t realized at that point why I felt so different from other people. It wasn’t until I got to college that I realized, “Oh yeah, you’re Japanese American”… maybe that was part of being different.”\textsuperscript{115}

Joining a taiko group in California allowed Marubayashi a chance to explore a different part of her American identity, which she found provided a dramatic new physicality and to her performances than her cello playing before: “Even though I performed when I was in orchestras, it wasn’t until I played taiko that I really got some love for performing. I mean, just playing to the audience and just being crazy… there’s something about the physicality of it… there’s something when you can connect to the audience that makes it special too- and connecting with your fellow performers.”\textsuperscript{116}

\textsuperscript{114} Further information can be found in Anna Pegler-Gordon’s essay “New York has a Concentration Camp of its Own: Japanese confinement on Ellis Island during World War II,” \textit{Journal of Asian American Studies}, 20, no. 3, October 2017, 373-404.

\textsuperscript{115} Kris Murabayashi, interview with author, May 2019.

\textsuperscript{116} Ibid.
The direct relationship of the Asian-American body with taiko is partly a consequence of taiko’s emphasis on gesture and physical strength. As mentioned before, the taiko drums tend to be much larger than other types of drums, and require a great deal of energy and effort to play—performers must use the bachi (drum sticks) as an extension of their own body, and ensemble taiko in the U.S. certainly elevates loud sounds over soft ones. As taiko player and scholar Shawn Bender notes, the larger taiko drums are played by mallets, which are much bigger than orchestral or jazz drumsticks. What matters in taiko playing is volume and power (and with these, mental and physical resilience), instead of speed or dexterity.\textsuperscript{117}

Another important element in ensemble taiko playing is the tight choreography required for performers to play together, and the prevailing pedagogy considers the size and shape of the Japanese body to be ideally suited for taiko performance. As an art form derived from Buddhist tradition, taiko is highly spiritual as well, and great focus is placed on performers’ embodiment of spirit and “roots.”\textsuperscript{118}

Murabayashi’s own interest in taiko was largely tied to her racial identity and her ancestral “roots.” “In pursuit of who I am as a Sansei…there’s a reason why I gravitated toward the taiko and also decided to take up shamisen. You know, I’m not playing the banjo… I’m playing the shamisen! I guess it’s my way to still keep the positive aspects of

\textsuperscript{117} Shawn Bender, \textit{Taiko Boom: Japanese Drumming in Place and Motion} (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2012), 121.

\textsuperscript{118} Bender, 120-139.
Japanese culture alive…”¹¹⁹ She and other Sansei strongly believe that one can be firmly American, and also able to call themselves Japanese at the same time—the cultural trauma inflicted upon the Japanese American community created a desperate need in later generations for solidarity and a stronger sense of collective identity. In other words, one can be Japanese American separately from having to divide the two identities and struggle to decide which they are closer to. The Japanese American identity today is often one which recognizes the physical traits of the Japanese body, but also accepts that the body is not the sole determinant of identity formation. This translates to taiko drumming, as it has evolved in the United States among Sansei to include jazz rhythms, greater theatrics, and open involvement by people of various backgrounds and identities. These concepts are also explored and confirmed in Tsuda’s study of the transnational identities adopted by Japanese Americans.¹²⁰

Murabayashi’s experiences and introductions to taiko are a result of her conscious efforts to seek out Japanese culture and revive a sense of cultural and racial identity within her own life. I argue that her story can serve as a case study for how cultural trauma can result in the seeking out of new musical forms of self-expression, especially as they pertain to race and ethnicity. But the question of how cultural trauma resulting from incarceration and historical marginalization has impacted the Japanese American community does not stop there. Nor do the questions about the relationships between


taiko drumming and the Asian-American body. They also extend into issues of gender, as
the differences between male and female Japanese American experiences before, during,
and after WWII help to explain the “taiko boom” and the role of women in it.

Though some Japanese American Issei and Nisei women were able to break
traditionally restrictive norms and expectations for women during the war, some only
knew to play their assigned roles in the camps. In other words, Japanese American
women generally experienced some of the harshest censorship and treatment, since they
were part of two intersecting historically marginalized groups. In my observations and
conversations with female taiko players, it seems that many women are attracted to the
sense of physical power the drums and music provide to them, which translates into
self-confidence and power in their own social worlds. Deborah Wong might corroborate
this point, as she noticed that Japanese American women were drawn to the taiko drums
present in the film Rising Sun (1993). It is necessary to investigate how Japanese
women tend to perceive taiko in terms of their womanhood, since most popular
conceptions of it (including the submissive, dependant image of the Japanese woman

1990); Dana Shew, “Feminine Identity Confined: The Archaeology of Japanese Women at Amache, a
WWII Internment Camp” (master’s thesis, University of Denver, 2010). Both Nakano’s and Shew’s works
reveal that many Japanese American women exhibited great adaptability and resilience during internment,
and took advantage of their time in incarceration to expand their skills and empower themselves. In fact,
some women were able to tour the WRA camps as performers, including Fujima Kansuma. Shew
specifically examines how women at Amache accomplished the construction of new, empowered identities
during the war.

122 Deborah Wong, Speak it Louder: Asian-Americans Making Music (New York and London: Routledge,
2004), 216.
which is portrayed in *Rising Sun*) have it as a masculine, militaristic art, reflecting
Japan’s own violent and loyal militarism during WWII.\textsuperscript{123}

In fact, this militaristic perspective seems to ignore the historical and spiritual
pillars of taiko drumming. Of the aggressive portrayal of taiko in *Rising Sun*, Wong’s
teacher, Rev. Tom, commented that it was a “completely inappropriate representation of
taiko.” This is because, as Wong reflects:

...taiko is constructed as both masculine and sinister; this particular confluence of
gender and race presented through taiko is built up out of older tropes that ‘work’
because they are so terribly familiar. The (White) viewer of *Rising Sun* is clearly
meant to understand taiko as a mimetic stand-in for Japan, and a masculinist,
dangerous Japan at that.\textsuperscript{124}

Many of the problems of public perception of taiko seem to stem from not just
problematic racial stereotyping, but also from the forcing of the masculine label upon the
art (thereby ignoring the prominent role of women in helping to define and perform taiko
in the modern era, and regarding the female as the “lesser” among genders). Immediately
following the war, American media and organizations “feminized” Japan—as the United
States had won the war, Japan was the “conquered” nation, now weak and dependent on
the U.S. for support. The misogynist attitudes of much of the U.S. at the time aligned
Japan’s inferiority with woman’s inferiority to man. Popular films, including *Japanese

\textsuperscript{123} Bender, 170. In particular, the term “Banzai” (which was understood as “Long Live His/her Imperial
Majesty the Emperor/Empress”) became the representation of American perceptions of Japanese zealotry
and imperialist attitudes, since it served throughout the war as a sort of battle-cry for Japanese soldiers,
especially when they were charging American battle positions. It is also often suggested that Kamikaze
pilots would yell “banzai” just before diving into enemy ships and installations. American media used this
term frequently in film, radio, and television as a tool for evoking hostile feelings during violent scenes.

\textsuperscript{124} Wong, 212.
War Bride (1952), The Teahouse of the August Moon (1956), and Sayonara (1957), all were popular portrayals of caucasian U.S. men dominating or at the very least holding power (in these cases, the power of “love” and “sexuality”) over a timid, submissive Japanese woman. This in itself presents a good picture of how Japanese and Japanese American women were viewed. Their role was on the side of the stage, out of the way, taking care of the household as the invisible and silent “stewardess.” There is no doubt that these sorts of media representations have had an impact on Japanese American women’s view of themselves.

Wong speculates that the Japanese American woman may have been attracted to taiko because of its “strength, control, and loudness.” And indeed taiko has partly grown so large in the U.S. today (it is estimated that there are now over 1,000 independent taiko groups in the United States) because of the large number of women learning and performing the art. While I do not go so far as to suggest that women’s social and political empowerment was or is the only reason for taiko’s popularity among Japanese American women, it would be wrong to say it is not among the primary reasons.

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125 Ibid., 218. Wong asks, even in 2004, “How many of us were taught to keep our knees together and to speak softly?”


127 Wong, 216.

for taiko’s growth and successes. There is an overwhelming sense that taiko has been re-shaped in the United States as a musical practice of empowerment, and obviously, empowerment speaks most to those with the least power—after the war, the Japanese American woman was among the most exploited of people.

Taiko opens up the body, can include theatrical yelling in Japanese (kakegoe), and calls the performer to move around their surrounding physical space in new ways. Wong argues that while women who play taiko “may not necessarily self-identify as feminists, [she does] think that taiko is a sounded bodily channel for addressing the ongoing gendered dialectic of the Asian vs. the Asian American.”

In my conversations with Toni Yagami, a Denver-area taiko performer and teacher, I heard echoes of Wong’s own words. But as a Colorado native, and primarily someone who now engages in matsuri (festivals), Yagami added her own unique thoughts: “I think a lot of the women in the states… who were brought up to be the ‘quiet, Japanese female,’ started to say ‘I can do this.’ Their biggest thing was that ‘we are not kazari, which means that ‘I’m just not the decoration on stage. I’m a player. I’m not just decoration.’” Fortunately for Yagami, she was raised by a morally and socially strong mother, who encouraged “non-traditional” roles for her daughter. As a result, Yagami only experienced this sort of “decoration” treatment as a young girl while

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129 Wong, 218.

130 Toni Yagami, interview with author, June 2019.
dancing in *kimono* during festivals: “I was always taught, don’t be held back by anybody… If there was something I wanted to do, I just did it…”\textsuperscript{131}

American ensemble taiko did not in itself promote women’s empowerment, however. In many ways, the opening of taiko ensembles to those not of Japanese ancestry has encouraged the art to expand its opportunities for all and enable women to perform their ‘own’ music. In recounting her experiences with a famous taiko ensemble in Japan, Yagami compared how many Japanese women still played the “backstage” role with those who are still reluctant to take center stage in the U.S. today, despite the existence of numerous women’s empowerment movements within taiko communities: “When we would stay with Kodo… when we went in [19]’84, the women played the same songs… they weren’t strong. They were weaker than the men. And when we as the females said, ‘Why aren’t they playing on stage, playing the drums? They know the songs.’ And the response was (and it was true), ‘They’re not as strong, and the balance if this guy is playing and they’re playing, is not even.’ And you know, they have to make it even. They said, ‘Well if they could play as strong…’ And then we [Yagami’s troupe] started playing, they said ‘Oh, maybe we should send our women to the States…’ But when you talk to [some] Japanese American women, they still take that backseat role, and I think it’s a lot of the non-Japanese women that are playing taiko, that are pushing [for female empowerment in taiko]…”\textsuperscript{132}

\textsuperscript{131} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{132} Ibid.
Yet even as some Japanese American women may still seem reluctant to explore their strengths through taiko, many, many more are using taiko to educate others, empower themselves, and enliven taiko performance in the United States. While the female Japanese body has in the past been construed as one only capable of certain kinds of work (textile, cooking, and secretarial duties), today, ensemble taiko drumming in the U.S. appears to be unveiling the leadership potential of some Japanese American women.

The final element of taiko I explore here is its origins and development within the spiritual practice of Obon. The reasons for this lie in Obon’s central focus on honoring the spirits of one’s ancestors, of the past, and as such its close relationship with memory. Taiko plays one of the most important roles in executing Obon successfully, so it seems relevant to at least briefly make some connections between the instrument, the festival, and Japanese American incarceration during WWII.

Person C (who has asked to remain anonymous in this research), is another active Denver area taiko player who connects Japanese American artists with one another across the country. They explained in depth how taiko is played in modern day Obon festivals as accompaniment to bon-odori dance: In Obon, families engage in a remembrance of their recently passed, as well as more distant ancestors who contributed to one’s life and success in the present day. The connection between past, present, and future is communicated to all in attendance through an incense-burning ritual and the chanting of shigen. Gratitude for the present is offered to the deceased in prayer, and the future is recognized as influenced by the present. A great deal of emphasis is placed on “traditional” Japanese ideals about honor, duty, and respect. As a member of one of the
younger generations of Japanese Americans, Person C understands that the experience
during the festival is vital for the connection between more recent generations and older
or past generations of Japanese Americans.

However, taiko has evolved from its traditional roots in Obon as well. The
practice of kumi-daiko in the United States and elsewhere can be a competitive,
sport-like, and dramatic (as in drama) endeavor, with dojos across the nation performing
in highly choreographed and decorative routines, dressed in traditional Japanese clothing,
or even in elaborate costumes which appeal to audiences or relate to the program being
performed. Taiko performances have even begun to incorporate other instruments to add
flair and texture.133

Person C illuminates what is perhaps one of the most important “obvious”
elements of taiko at this stage: that it is a music for, about, and of connection. That is,
kumi-daiko especially requires players to practice and perform in a way that creates and
strengthens the psychological, cultural, and historical bonds to each other, to their
community, and to their ancestors. Person C related their own experiences with taiko in
this vein: “Another element of taiko is community. And they’re basically simultaneously

133 See 洗足学園音楽大学/SENZOKU GAKUEN college of Music, 林英哲 / 海の豊饒 (和太鼓アンサンブル) Eitetsu Hayashi // Fertility of the Sea (Taiko), Youtube video, 10 minutes 41 seconds, Posted April
6, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZagsLrNzg3I; and The Bloodfarm, Japanese Taiko Drums -
Pro Series (1/9), Youtube video, 15 minutes, Posted April 23, 2012, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BZDhUAE9vzo. The first video serves as an example of the intense
choreography and the specific costumes or wear which many taiko performances now include to attract
wider audiences and assist in disseminating specific emotional or spiritual meaning. The second video
reveals the extent to which some taiko performances can appear to be dramatic performances akin to opera
or musical dramas, as well as the inclusion of instruments other than the taiko drum. Around the 10 minute,
20 second mark, a series of “solos” initiate, much in the same way as standard jazz solos, where each
performer has an opportunity to feature their unique musical skills and sounds.
taiko as an art form, as well as community groups. The community groups mostly came out of the Buddhist temples. There were a lot of ways after the war that communities came together... supported one another. One way [was] taiko.**

Without speculating too far beyond the traditional purpose and meaning of *Obon*, through the theory of Cultural Trauma, we might be able to understand modern day taiko as a reaction to the history of Japanese American mistreatment, especially at Amache and other concentration camps. As a particularly physical musical art, taiko has perhaps unconsciously evolved toward becoming a martial art. This art serves to root Asian-Americans, and particularly newer generations of Japanese Americans, to their cultural lineage, while also perpetuating a new group identity. The idea of maintaining this dual-connection is appealing, since it unifies a particularly mistreated group, and allows for extension of one’s personal and community identity through shared trauma, whether personally experienced, or through memories and musical traditions passed from generation to generation.

**Other Recent Musical Responses to Internment**

Though taiko has been explored here concerning its relationship with internment, two other forms of musical expression deserve special mention, as they are more obviously direct responses from Japanese Americans and others to the tragedies and impacts of internment. The first, a 2012 musical based on the real life experiences of Star

**134** Interview with author, July 2019.
Trek star and LGBTQ+ proponent George Takei, is titled very simply “Allegiance,” but the simple title belies a complex and dark chapter of American history told through the memories of a beloved celebrity.

The second is the Minidoka Swing Band, formed in 2007 with the explicit mission to “encourage youth to remember the perseverance and accomplishments of those who were interned at U.S. Internment Camps during World War II.”¹³⁵ Early in its development, the band maintained a focus on the lives of incarcerees during WWII, with an aim to memorialize the struggles and tragedy of imprisonment of American citizens, or even simply those whom great suspicion was laid upon for no reason other than their physical characteristics.

Conclusion

The incarceration of more than 120,000+ Japanese American citizens between 1942 and 1945 has played a major role in the development and maintenance of a transgenerational cultural trauma, which was a crucial determinant for the future of Japanese American music-making. In many cases, Japanese American former incarcerees and their children sought out western forms of musical expression while shedding much of their ethnic and racial identities. Assimilation into American culture was a priority for survival and part of how cultural trauma in fact operates among populations. This research has specifically explored the case of Amache as it serves to explain what kinds of musical activities were present within the WRA-run Japanese American incarceration camps. The musical activities at Amache also offer comparisons to the modern day musical worlds of Japanese Americans who sought to reclaim their ethnic and racial heritage following the suppression of both following the war. Taiko in particular, as the most visible Japanese art in the U.S. today, may be traced to the process of cultural trauma, since it reflects later generations’ desires to “maintain” a memory of incarceration and empower themselves through its public performance and education.

The questions which await further exploration beyond the scope of this research offer great opportunities for the field of ethnomusicology: Where does cultural trauma end, if it does at all? Some generations of people are not as concerned as others about
their embodied trauma, as was the case with many Nisei, who chose to move past the troubles of incarceration and resolved to erase many aspects of their cultural identity in order to achieve a sense of belonging within the larger social collective. And yet, Sansei, many of whom were deprived of traditions and racial identity through their Nisei parents' efforts, have revived efforts to document and remember the mistake of incarceration. In doing so, many Sansei gravitated toward a variation of an ancient Japanese musical art, thereby expressing their connection to Japan in a uniquely musical manner.

It may also be no surprise that many Issei and Nisei who before had not shared their stories are doing so in collaboration with other generations of Japanese Americans, as current issues of immigration have recently drawn comparisons between their experiences of incarceration and embodied trauma and those of South and Central-American immigrants facing imprisonment and harsh conditions at the southern U.S. border today. In a familiar twist of repeating history, so-called “detention facilities” are now holding many thousands of asylum-seekers across the United States.

In Dilley, Tx, just forty-five miles from one of the INS internment camps of WWII (Crystal City), another location holds up to 2,400 people. This site is centered in an inhospitable geographic area, where it is incredibly hot and arid in the summers, and bitter cold in the winter. There is also little vegetation or natural protection from the elements. The facility, which consists primarily of tents and barrack buildings, holds mostly mothers and their children from Central and South American who have fled from violence or harsh living conditions in their home countries. Just as during WWII, this facility has been termed with what many consider to be euphemistic language. Kay
Murdza, a Japanese American immigration advocate whose father was incarcerated in a similar facility during WWII, remarked, “The government calls this facility the ‘South Texas Family Residential Center.’ But those of us who know its effects on the mothers and children detained there know that it's a jail.”\textsuperscript{136} It is important to note however, that the government does not directly operate the facility; according to the Bob Libal, the executive director of Grassroots Leadership, “This facility is operated by the world’s largest for-profit prison corporation, which is called Corrections Corp of America (rebranded CoreCivic), that signed a billion dollar contract to operate it so the detention of immigrant families is both a moral abomination and very big business.”\textsuperscript{137}

Many protesters, including the Japanese Americans who traveled to the Dilley facility, take particular issue with the fact that children are often separated from the rest of their family. Various reports suggested that up to 2,654 children were separated from their parents while held in detention centers.\textsuperscript{138} Dr. Satsuki Ina, mentioned earlier in this thesis, led the “Crystal City Pilgrimage Committee” in a protest at the Dilley facility in 2019, one of the largest and most organized of its kind. The protest included a memorial at the site of the former Crystal City concentration camp nearby, as well as a meeting


with Texas legislators. Bob Libal noted that the protest was to be “incredibly powerful, and it’s going to be heard by people who are inside (Dilley).” Protestors and supporters of immigrant rights in fact developed ways in which their concern for those inside the facility as well as their support for them would be both seen and heard. Supporter Mike Ishii developed “Tsuru For Solidarity,” a campaign to have 10,000 paper cranes (or *tsuru*) folded and used at the protest as a representation of solidarity among protestors and those within the facility. More than 25,000 cranes from across the United States and Japan were sent to the Grassroots Leadership office for the protest. Notably, many cranes were also sent from inmates at San Quentin State Prison. The cranes were then hung along the wire fencing and barbed wire surrounding the Dilley facility to give hope and happiness to the incarcerated people who could look outside and see them.

In another effort to make sure the protestor’s cause was heard, members of One World Taiko and Soh Daiko brought and performed taiko drums outside of the facility.\textsuperscript{139} In this powerful gesture, Japanese Americans engage in a connection across cultures and time in musical form, connecting taiko with incarceration in a direct way. Taiko practice in the United States is bound to the experiences of incarceration, and in part, gains vitality from the memories of incarceration. In this demonstration of advocacy through sound, Japanese Americans honor history while fighting for the future.

Importantly, protestors also sang a traditional Japanese children’s song, “Katsu ga naru,” (or “our shoes ring”), which is said to have been a common song Japanese parents

\textsuperscript{139} Texas Public Radio, A Drumbeat of Support and Hope, *Youtube* video, 2 minutes 44 seconds, posted April 5, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=51&t=v=6Q8DhZymTw8&feature=emb_title.
sang for their children in their imprisonment during WWII. Among other attempts to reach out to those detained behind the barbed wire, Holly Yasui, the daughter of Minoru Yasui, who had challenged the constitutionality of the curfew during World War II, wrote a bilingual letter to the children of the Dilley camp. The letter in part reads, “We want to support you as some groups supported us, Japanese Americans, during the war when we needed it most. We want our country to live up to its principles of justice and democratic ideals that attracted our ancestors to this land.”

Japanese American communities and organizations, in remembering and maintaining their cultural trauma, have staged multiple peaceful protests at sites across the southern U.S. border, sharing their stories of incarceration during WWII, and advocating for the U.S. government to treat those who are incarcerated today fairly and humanely. The Japanese American community seems to be well-aware of the transgenerational impacts of incarceration. During the protest, Sean Miura summarized the feelings and rationale of many of his fellow protestors:

We talk about these detention centers in the abstract. We talk about separation of families as a concept, and I think, for a number of reasons, we choose not to ground it in reality. But these are actual people being impacted in devastating ways that are going to have a generational impact and there are implications for not only for themselves but for the entire country and the world.\(^\text{146}\)

The Japanese American community at large sees this situation as similar to their own experiences with the violation of human rights, and as such, it seems the wound of embodied trauma has been re-opened or newly discovered for many.

It seems clear that Japanese Americans and others who have experienced discrimination and internment in the United States will continue to advocate for remembrance of what they perceive as crimes, and for the prevention of similar events. In elaborating the story of Amache’s music, and those who embraced Japanese forms of music-making following the war, it is hoped that history may not repeat itself in the same way, and that justice is provided to those who suffer from being charged with the crime of being “un-American.”
Bibliography


*History and Memory.* Directed by Rea Tajiri. Women Make Movies, 1991. DVD.


Appendix

Interview Guide

1. Please tell me about yourself. Who is ________?
2. What can you remember about your earliest musical activities? Can you tell me about how you learned about music, and what kind of music it was?
3. What are your current musical activities? How (and how often) do you engage with music?
4. What about your musical life is important to you?
5. How important is music in your life? What does music mean to you?
6. Do you feel that your musical world has changed at any point in your life? How?
7. How does your family interact with music?
8. How do you think about Japanese American music? What does Japanese American music mean to you?
9. Is maintaining Japanese culture and knowledge important to you?
10. Is maintaining Japanese American culture and knowledge important to you?
11. Does your family talk about, or has your family ever talked about imprisonment during WWII?
12. Can you speak about your family/personal history in an internment camp during WWII?
13. In regards to your musical experiences in life, do you think there is a relationship between your musical tastes, performances, etc. have with past incarceration? How so?
14. How do you think the events at Amache or other WWII incarceration facilities has impacted your musical activities, if at all?
15. Do you think your musical activities can be explained by describing them as impacted by cultural trauma resulting from imprisonment during WWII?
16. How do you feel about the treatment of Japanese Americans during WWII?
17. Do you feel that you have lost anything musically as a result of Japanese American imprisonment during WWII?
18. Do you feel that you have gained anything musically as a result of Japanese American imprisonment during WWII?
19. Do you think that without the experiences at Amache or other facilities that your musical activities personally or the Japanese-American community’s musical identity at large would be different?