

Japanese

DOUBLE VICTORY

A Multicultural History of
America in World War II

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"we were in the same position as the Japanese," he said. She added: "The only difference was they put them into camps. They lost more than we did." Also noting the difference in the ways the government handled the Italians and the Japanese, Benito Vanni recalled that the Japanese were treated "rotten." "Right around the corner from me was a Japanese laundry, and the owner was a good friend of mine. When you went through the front of the laundry, if you had to judge a book by its cover, you'd say, 'What a dump.' But when you went past the laundry into the living quarters you had to take your shoes off. I was there when they picked him up and his whole family. He was crying. I was crying, 'cause I lost a pretty good friend."⁶⁵

Vanni's friend had been taken away, along with the other Japanese Americans on the West Coast, and forced to spend "years of infamy" imprisoned in internment camps.⁶⁶

REMEMBERING PEARL HARBOR

From Internment to Hiroshima

UNLIKE THE Germans, Italians, and other Asian groups, Japanese Americans were classified as "enemies." Beginning in February 1942, 120,000 Japanese, most of them citizens by birth, were incarcerated without due process of law. "All of this was done," reported the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians in 1982, "despite the fact that not a single documented act of espionage, sabotage or fifth column activity was committed by an American citizen of Japanese ancestry or by a resident Japanese alien on the West Coast."¹

The mass internment of Japanese Americans in 1942 and the atomic bombing of Hiroshima in 1945 followed in the wake of the shocking surprise attack on Pearl Harbor. "Infamy," Roosevelt's term in his call for a declaration of war against Japan, turned out to be a prologue to other infamies.

Reciting the Gettysburg Address in Plantation Hawaii

Shortly after he inspected the still-smoking ruins of the destroyed fleet, Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox issued a statement to the

press: "I think the most effective fifth column work of the entire war was done in Hawaii, with the possible exception of Norway." At a Cabinet meeting on December 19, Knox recommended the internment of all Japanese aliens on Oahu on an outer island.²

In a radio address aired two days later, however, the military governor of Hawaii, General Delos Emmons, assured Japanese Americans that the authorities would not take general action against them. "There is no intention or desire on the part of the federal authorities to operate mass concentration camps," declared Emmons. "No person, be he citizen or alien, need worry, provided he is not connected with subversive elements. . . . While we have been subjected to a serious attack by a ruthless and treacherous enemy, we must remember that this is America and we must do things the American Way. We must distinguish between loyalty and disloyalty among our people."³

A schism in policy was developing between Washington and Honolulu. Pursuant to Secretary Knox's recommendation, the War Department sent General Emmons a letter on January 10, 1942, asking for his view on the question of evacuating the Japanese from Oahu. Emmons replied that the proposed program would be dangerous and impractical. Such an evacuation would require badly needed construction materials and shipping space, and would also tie up troop resources needed to guard the islands. Moreover, the mass evacuation of Japanese would severely disrupt both the economy and defense of Oahu, for the Japanese represented over 90 percent of the carpenters, nearly all of the transportation workers, and a significant proportion of the agricultural laborers. Japanese labor was "absolutely essential" for the rebuilding of Pearl Harbor. Then, on February 9, the War Department ordered General Emmons to suspend all Japanese workers employed by the army. But the order was rescinded after Emmons argued that the Japanese workers were indispensable and that the "Japanese question" should be handled "by those in direct contact with the situation."⁴

On March 13, President Roosevelt, acting on the advice of his

Joint Chiefs of Staff, approved a recommendation for the evacuation of 20,000 "dangerous" Japanese from Hawaii to the mainland. Two weeks later, General Emmons reduced the number drastically to 1,550 Japanese. The War Department then circulated a report received from the Justice Department warning of a Japanese invasion of Hawaii. In a letter to Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy, Emmons showed his impatience with Washington: "The feeling that an invasion is imminent is not the belief of most of the responsible people. . . . There have been no known acts of sabotage committed in Hawaii."⁵

Emmons continued to resist pressure from the War Department in Washington to evacuate the Japanese from Hawaii. On October 29, Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson informed President Roosevelt that General Emmons intended to remove approximately 5,000 Japanese from Hawaii as shipping facilities became available. "This, General Emmons believes, will greatly simplify his problem, and considering the labor needs in the islands, is about all that he has indicated any desire to move although he has been given authority to move up to fifteen thousand." Irritated by Emmons, President Roosevelt wrote to Stimson: "I think that General Emmons should be told that the only consideration is that of the safety of the Islands and that the labor situation is not only a secondary matter but should not be given any consideration whatsoever."⁶ In the end, still insisting that there was no military necessity for mass evacuation, General Emmons ordered the internment of only 1,444 Japanese (979 aliens and 525 citizens), most of them community leaders, Buddhist priests, and Japanese-language teachers.

Business interests in Hawaii supported General Emmons's resistance to relocation. The president of the Honolulu Chamber of Commerce called for just treatment of the Japanese in Hawaii: "There are 160,000 of these people who want to live here because they like the country and like the American way of life. . . . The citizens of Japanese blood would fight as loyally for America as any other citizen. I have read or heard nothing in statements given

out by the military, local police or F.B.I. since December 7 to change my opinion. And I have gone out of my way to ask for the facts." Business leaders in Hawaii were unwilling to permit the mass uprooting of the Japanese. They knew that the evacuation of 158,000 Japanese, constituting over one-third of Hawaii's population, would decimate their labor force and destroy the economy of the islands.⁷

Meanwhile, public officials urged restraint and reason. Hawaii's congressional delegate Sam King advised the military that nothing should be done beyond apprehending known spies. Honolulu police captain John A. Burns refuted rumors of Japanese snipers firing on American soldiers during the attack on Pearl Harbor. "In spite of what . . . anyone . . . may have said about the fifth column activity in Hawaii," stated Robert L. Shivers, head of the FBI in Hawaii, "I want to emphasize that there was no such activity in Hawaii before, during or after the attack on Pearl Harbor. . . . I was in a position to know this fact. . . . Nowhere under the sun could there have been a more intelligent response to the needs of the hour than was given by the entire population of these islands."⁸

The press in Hawaii also behaved professionally and responsibly. Newspapers cautioned their readers not to spread or be influenced by rumors generated by the war situation. Within days after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the *Honolulu Star Bulletin* dismissed reports of Japanese subversion in the islands as "weird, amazing, and damaging untruths." "Beware of rumors always," urged the *Paradise of the Pacific* magazine in February 1942, "avoid them like a plague and, when possible, kill them as you would a reptile. Don't repeat for a fact anything you do not know is a fact."⁹

Meanwhile, through their actions, Japanese Americans were demonstrating their loyalty. During the morning of December 7, two thousand Nisei (American-born Japanese) serving in the U.S. Army stationed in Hawaii battled enemy planes at Pearl Harbor. Japanese civilians participated in the island's defense. They rushed to their posts as volunteer truck drivers for Oahu's Citizens' De-

fense Committee; they stood in long lines in front of Queen's Hospital, waiting to give blood to the wounded. Many of them were Issei (immigrants). "Most of us have lived longer in Hawaii than in Japan. We have an obligation to this country," they declared. "We are *yoshi* [adopted sons] of America. We want to do our part for America."¹⁰

Then that night, as the people of the islands tensely waited in the darkness for the expected invasion, thousands of Nisei members of the Hawaii Territorial Guard — youngsters from the high schools and the University of Hawaii ROTC program — guarded the power plants, reservoirs, and important waterfronts. "I jumped into my ROTC uniform and rushed up to the university campus," recalled Ted Tsukiyama. "There were reports that Japanese paratroopers had landed. Our orders were to deploy and meet the enemy and delay their advance into the city. With pounding hearts, we moved to the south end of the campus and scanned for the enemy. To put it bluntly, we were scared! But not for long. As we thought of the sneak attack that morning, a wave of fury and anger swept over us. There was not doubt or decision as we advanced. It was going to be 'either them or us.'"¹¹

When General Emmons announced that the Army needed 1,500 Nisei volunteers, 9,507 men responded. "I wanted to show something, to contribute to America," explained Minoru Hinahara, who served as a Japanese language interpreter in the U.S. 27th Army Division and participated in the invasion of Okinawa. "My parents could not become citizens but they told me, 'You fight for your country.'"¹²

Indeed, the United States had become their country. Beginning in the 1880s, 200,000 Japanese immigrants had come to Hawaii. On the sugar plantations, they found themselves pitted against workers of other nationalities. Planters had systematically developed an ethnically diverse labor force in order to create divisions among their workers and reinforce management control. A manager explained the strategy: "Keep a variety of laborers, that is different nationalities, and thus prevent any concerted action in case

of strikes, for there are few, if any, cases of Japs, Chinese, and Portuguese entering into a strike as a unit."¹³

Refusing to be exploited, Japanese plantation workers organized into a union. In 1909, they organized their first major strike to demand higher wages. Their demands reflected their transformation from sojourning laborers into settlers: "We have decided to permanently settle here [and] to unite our destiny with that of Hawaii, sharing the prosperity and adversity of Hawaii with other citizens of Hawaii." Significantly, Japanese immigrants were framing their demands in "American" terms. They argued that the deplorable conditions on the plantations perpetuated an "undemocratic and un-American" society of "plutocrats and coolies." Fair wages would encourage laborers to work more industriously and enable Hawaii to enjoy "perpetual peace and prosperity." Seeking to create "a thriving and contented middle class — the realization of the high ideal of Americanism," the strikers wanted to share in the American dream.¹⁴ In 1920, the Japanese went out on strike again, this time joining Filipino plantation workers. "When we first came to Hawaii," the strikers proudly declared, "these islands were covered with ohia forests, guava fields and areas of wild grass. Day and night did we work, cutting trees and burning grass, clearing lands and cultivating fields until we made the plantations what they are today."¹⁵

The Japanese strikers had decided to settle and raise families in their adopted country and wanted to give their children opportunities for a better life. Education, they believed, was the key to freedom from the drudgery of plantation labor. "Father made up his mind to send his children to school so far as he possibly could," said the daughter of a plantation worker. "Yet he had no idea of forcing us. Instead he employed different methods which made us want to go to school. We were made to work in the cane fields at a very early age. . . . After a day's work in the fields dad used to ask: 'Are you tired? Would you want to work in the fields when you are old enough to leave school? . . . My father did everything

in his power to make us realize that going to school would be to our advantage."¹⁶

However, the planters needed the Nisei generation as plantation laborers. In their view, these children should not be educated beyond the sixth or eighth grade, and their education should be vocational training. A visitor from the mainland noticed the presence of Japanese children on the plantations and asked a manager whether he thought the coming generation of Japanese would make intelligent citizens. "Oh, yes," he replied, "they'll make intelligent citizens all right enough, but not plantation laborers — and that's what we want."¹⁷

Many public schools, however, were not preparing Japanese children to be plantation laborers. The students were reciting the Gettysburg Address and the Declaration of Independence. "Here the children learned about democracy or at least the theory of it," said a University of Hawaii student. They were taught that honest labor, fair play, and industriousness were virtues. But they "saw that it wasn't so on the plantation." Returning from school to their plantation camps, students noticed the wide "disparity between theory and practice." This contradiction was glaring. "The public school system perhaps without realizing it," the student observed, "created unrest and disorganization."¹⁸

World War II offered the Nisei of Hawaii an opportunity to claim their identity as Americans, entitled to the rights and respect of full citizens. Enlisting in the U.S. Armed Forces, they left the plantations and went off to war. Writing from a European battlefield to a friend in the islands, a Japanese-American soldier explained his purpose for serving in the military: "My friends and my family — they mean everything to me. They are the most important reason why I am giving up my education and my happiness to go to fight a war that we never asked for. But our Country is involved in it. Not only that. By virtue of the Japanese attack on our nation, we as American citizens of Japanese ancestry have been mercilessly flogged with criticism and accusations. But I'm

not going to take it sitting down! I may not be able to come back. But that matters little. My family and friends — they are the ones who will be able to back their arguments with facts. They are the ones who will be proud. In fact, it is better that we are sent to the front and that a few of us do not return, for the testimony will be stronger in favor of the folks back home."¹⁹

*"A Tremendous Hole" in the Constitution:
Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066*

On the day after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Representative John M. Coffey of Washington declared in Congress: "It is my fervent hope and prayer that residents of the United States of Japanese extraction will not be made the victim of pogroms directed by self-proclaimed patriots and by hysterical self-anointed heroes. . . . Let us not make a mockery of our Bill of Rights by mistreating these folks. Let us rather regard them with understanding, remembering they are the victims of a Japanese war machine, with the making of the international policies of which they had nothing to do."²⁰

Federal authorities already knew that Japanese Americans could be trusted. The President had secretly arranged to have Chicago businessman Curtis Munson gather intelligence on the Japanese in the United States and assess whether they constituted an internal military threat. In his report submitted to Roosevelt on November 7, 1941, Munson informed the President that there was no need to worry about the Japanese population: "There will be no armed uprising of Japanese [in this country]. . . . For the most part the local Japanese are loyal to the United States or, at worst, hope that by remaining quiet they can avoid concentration camps or irresponsible mobs. We do not believe that they would be at least any more disloyal than any other racial group in the United States with whom we went to war."²¹

A month later the assessment of the Munson report was tested at Pearl Harbor. In his investigation of the Japanese in Hawaii and on the U.S. mainland, Lieutenant Commander K. D. Ringle of the

Office of Naval Intelligence found that the large majority were at least passively loyal to the United States. In late January 1942, Ringle estimated that only about 3,500 Japanese were potential military threats and stated there was no need for mass action against the Japanese. Meanwhile, the FBI had also conducted its own investigation. On December 10, Director J. Edgar Hoover informed Washington that "practically all" suspected individuals were in custody: 1,291 Japanese (367 in Hawaii, 924 on the mainland), 857 Germans, and 147 Italians. In a report to the Attorney General submitted in early February, Hoover concluded that the proposed mass evacuation of the Japanese for security reasons could not be justified.²²

Despite these intelligence findings, Lieutenant General John L. DeWitt, head of the Western Defense Command, behaved very differently from his counterpart in Hawaii, General Emmons. Within two weeks after the attack on Pearl Harbor, General DeWitt requested approval to conduct search-and-seizure operations in order to prevent alien Japanese from making radio transmissions to Japanese ships. The Justice Department refused to issue search warrants without probable cause, and the FBI determined that the security threat from Japanese Americans was only a perceived one. In January, the Federal Communications Commission, which had been monitoring all broadcasts, reported that the army's fears were groundless. But the army continued pursuing plans based on the assumption of Japanese disloyalty. General DeWitt also wanted authority to exclude both Japanese aliens and Americans of Japanese ancestry from restricted areas. On January 4, 1942, at a meeting of federal and state officials in his Presidio headquarters, DeWitt declared that military necessity justified the exclusion of the Japanese from the West Coast: "We are at war and this area — eight states — has been designated as a theater of operations. . . . [There are] approximately 288,000 enemy aliens . . . which we have to watch. . . . I have little confidence that the enemy aliens are law-abiding or loyal in any sense of the word. Some of them yes; many, no. Particularly the Japanese. I have no confidence in

because the white farmers can take over and produce everything the Jap grows."²⁶

State politicians joined the clamor for Japanese removal. California attorney general Earl Warren urged federal authorities to evacuate Japanese from sensitive areas on the West Coast. The Japanese "may well be the Achilles heel of the entire civilian defense effort," he warned. "Unless something is done it may bring about a repetition of Pearl Harbor." In letters to the secretary of war and the FBI director, January 16, Congressman Leland Ford of Los Angeles demanded that "all Japanese, whether citizens or not, be placed in concentration camps." Two weeks later, several congressmen from the Pacific Coast states asked President Roosevelt to grant the War Department "immediate and complete control over all alien enemies, as well as United States citizens holding dual citizenship in any enemy country, with full power and authority" to evacuate and intern them.²⁷

On February 1, in a telephone conversation with Provost Marshal General Allen Gullion, General DeWitt said that protection against sabotage could only be made "positive by removing those people who are aliens and who are Japs of American citizenship." Shortly after the phone call, General DeWitt sent Gullion a recommendation for the mass exclusion of Japanese Americans: "In the war in which we are now engaged racial affinities are not severed by migration. The Japanese race is an enemy race and while many second and third generation Japanese born on United States soil, possessed of United States citizenship, have become 'Americanized,' the racial strains are undiluted." On February 5, Gullion drafted a War Department proposal for the exclusion of "all persons, whether aliens or citizens . . . deemed dangerous as potential saboteurs" from designated "military areas."²⁸

In his diary on February 10, Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson wrote: "The second generation Japanese can only be evacuated either as part of a total evacuation . . . or by frankly trying to put them out on the ground that their racial characteristics are such that we cannot understand or trust even the citizen Japanese. This

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their loyalty whatsoever. I am speaking now of the native born Japanese — 117,000 — and 42,000 in California alone."²³

California newspapers also pressed for mass evacuation. On January 20, the *San Diego Union* fomented anti-Japanese hysteria: "In Hawaii . . . treachery by residents, who although of Japanese ancestry had been regarded as loyal, has played an important part in the success of Japanese attacks. . . . Every Japanese . . . should be moved out of the coastal area and to a point of safety far enough inland to nullify any inclination they may have to tamper with our safety here." In its call for Japanese removal, the *Los Angeles Times* declared: "A viper is nonetheless a viper wherever the egg is hatched — so a Japanese American, born of Japanese parents — grows up to be a Japanese, not an American."²⁴

As the news media mounted its campaign for Japanese removal, it was joined by patriotic organizations. In the *Grizzly Bear*, the Native Sons and Daughters of the Golden West told their fellow Californians: "We told you so. Had the warnings been heeded — had the federal and state authorities been 'on the alert,' and rigidly enforced the Exclusion Law and the Alien Land Law . . . had the legislation been enacted denying citizenship to offspring of all aliens ineligible to citizenship . . . had Japan been denied the privilege of using California as a breeding ground for dual-citizens (Nisei); — the treacherous Japs probably would not have attacked Pearl Harbor December 7, 1941, and this country would not today be at war with Japan."²⁵

Demands for the evacuation of the Japanese also came from agricultural interests such as the Grower-Shipper Vegetable Association, the Western Growers Protective Association, and the California Farm Bureau Federation. "We've been charged with wanting to get rid of the Japs for selfish reasons," the Grower-Shipper Vegetable Association stated in the *Saturday Evening Post* in May. "We might as well be honest. We do. It's a question of whether the white man lives on the Pacific Coast or the brown man. They came into this valley to work, and they stayed to take over. . . . If all the Japs were removed tomorrow, we'd never miss them in two weeks,

latter is the fact but I am afraid it will make a tremendous hole in our constitutional system to apply it."²⁹

President Roosevelt was willing to risk damage to the Constitution. In fact, he had been considering the internment of Japanese Americans for several years. On August 10, 1936, Roosevelt had written a memorandum to the chief of naval operations: "One obvious thought occurs to me — that every Japanese citizen or non-citizen on the island of Oahu who meets these Japanese ships or has any connection with their officers or men should be secretly but definitely identified and his or her name placed on a special list of those who would be the first to be placed in a concentration camp in the event of trouble." Thus, five years before the attack on Pearl Harbor, Roosevelt was already considering the imprisonment of Japanese aliens and citizens in a "concentration camp" without due process.³⁰

On February 19, in Executive Order 9066, Roosevelt directed the secretary of war to prescribe military areas "with respect to which, the right of any person to enter, remain in, or leave shall be subject to whatever restrictions the Secretary of War or the appropriate Military Commander may impose in his discretion." The order did not specify the Japanese as the group to be excluded. But they were the target. A few months later, when President Roosevelt learned about discussions in the War Department to apply the order to Germans and Italians on the East Coast, he wrote to inform Stimson that he considered enemy alien control to be "primarily a civilian matter except in the case of the Japanese mass evacuation on the Pacific Coast."³¹

Immediately, General DeWitt began to implement the executive order. A year later, he told a congressional committee: "You needn't worry about the Italians at all except in certain cases. Also, the same for the Germans except in individual cases. But we must worry about the Japanese all the time until he is wiped off the map. Sabotage and espionage will make problems as long as he is allowed in this area — problems which I don't want to have to worry about." At a press conference after this meeting, DeWitt

told reporters that the Japanese should not be allowed to return to the West Coast because "a Jap is a Jap."³²

Internment: "Huge Dreams" Destroyed

Decades of Japanese struggle to settle in America had come to an abrupt end. Immigrants from Japan had begun arriving in the 1880s, and by 1920, the Japanese population on the U.S. mainland had reached 138,834. They had been drawn here by stories of fantastic American wages. Inota Tawa calculated that as a laborer in America he could save in one year almost 1,000 yen — an amount equal to the income of a governor in Japan. He begged his parents: "By all means let me go to America." To prospective Japanese migrants, "money grew on trees" in the country across the Pacific. They carried an excited expectation:

Huge dreams of fortune
Go with me to foreign lands,
Across the ocean.³³

Concentrated in the Pacific Coast states, many Japanese immigrants became farmers, growing short-term crops like berries and truck vegetables. Japanese agriculture flourished. In 1900, the Japanese owned or leased twenty-nine farms with a total of 4,698 acres in California. Within five years, the total acreage had jumped to 61,858 and increased again to 194,742 by 1910. Ten years later, the Japanese controlled a total of 458,056 acres. By 1940 they grew 95 percent of fresh snap beans, 67 percent of fresh tomatoes, 95 percent of spring and summer celery, 44 percent of onions, and 40 percent of fresh green peas. Issei men and women had converted the marshes of the San Joaquin Valley, the dusty lands of the Sacramento Valley, and the deserts of the Imperial Valley into lush and profitable agricultural fields and orchards. Pursuing a dream that Jefferson would have admired, they were mixing their labor with the soil and becoming Americans.

But the Japanese were not accepted as Americans. In 1913, the California legislature enacted the Alien Land Law, denying them the right to own land because they were "aliens ineligible to citizenship."

Challenging the 1790 Naturalization Act, Takao Ozawa petitioned the court for his right to naturalized citizenship. On October 14, 1914, he filed an application for United States citizenship. Ozawa was confident he was qualified. After arriving here as a student in 1894, he had graduated from high school in Berkeley, California, and had attended the University of California for three years. He then moved to Honolulu, where he worked for an American company and settled down to raise a family. After his application was denied, Ozawa challenged the rejection in the U.S. District Court for the Territory of Hawaii. But the court ruled that Ozawa was not eligible for naturalized citizenship. The petitioner was, the court declared, "in every way eminently qualified under the statutes to become an American citizen," "except" one — he was not "white."³⁴

Six years later, the case went before the Supreme Court. Ozawa informed the Court that he was a person of good character. Honest and industrious, he did not drink liquor, smoke, or gamble. More important, "at heart" he was "a true American." His family belonged to an American church and his children attended an American school. He spoke the "American language" at home, and his children could not speak Japanese. Loyal to the United States, Ozawa stated he was indebted to "our Uncle Sam" for the opportunity the country had given him. But Ozawa lost his petition. Ozawa was not entitled to naturalized citizenship, the Supreme Court held, because he was "clearly" "not Caucasian."³⁵

Two years later, Congress enacted the National Origins Act. Under the 2 percent provision for the quota for a nationality group based on the 1890 census, Japan would have been allowed only an insignificant number of forty immigrants annually. But the law included a special provision that prohibited the entry of "aliens ineligible to citizenship," a code phrase for the Japanese. Thus the ban

was total. After the Ozawa decision and the 1924 immigration law, Issei felt despair.

America . . . once

A dream of hope and longing,

Now a life of tears.³⁶

Facing overwhelming discrimination, immigrant Japanese feared they would have no future in their adopted land, except through their children. Representing a rapidly growing group within the Japanese community, the Nisei constituted 63 percent of the Japanese population on the eve of World War II. Through their children, parents hoped, the Japanese would someday find tolerance in America. English-speaking and educated in American schools, the second-generation Japanese would teach white Americans about the culture of Japan and the hopes of the immigrant generation. As "intermediaries," they would "interpret" the East to the West and the West to the East. The Nisei would be the "bridge" to the larger society.³⁷

"You are American citizens," the Issei reminded their children time and again like a litany. "You have an opportunity your parents never had. Go to school and study. Don't miss that opportunity when it comes." The parents were willing to give up their own comforts, even necessities, for the education of their children.

Alien hardships

Made bearable by the hope

I hold for my children.³⁸

However, American-born Japanese discovered that education did not make much difference. They graduated from high school with good grades, even honors, and many completed college. The average educational level of Nisei was two years of college, well above the national average. Still they found themselves cut off from employment opportunities. A study of 161 Nisei who gradu-

ated from the University of California between 1925 and 1935 found that only 25 percent were employed in professional vocations for which they had been trained. Twenty-five percent worked in family business or trades that did not require a college education, and 40 percent had dead-end jobs. University job placement offices repeatedly reported virtually no employment prospects for Japanese-American graduates.³⁹ Many became discouraged. "I am a fruitstand worker," wrote one Nisei in a local newspaper. "It is not a very attractive nor distinguished occupation, and most certainly unappealing in print. I would much rather it were doctor or lawyer . . . but my aspirations of developing into such [were] frustrated long ago by circumstances . . . [and] I am only what I am, a professional carrot washer."⁴⁰

The problem for the Nisei generation went far beyond the matter of jobs. It was also profoundly cultural, involving the very definition of who was an American. In his essay "The Rising Son of the Rising Sun," published in *New Outlook* in 1934, Aiji Tashiro explained why Japanese Americans were viewed as strangers. "The Jablioskis, Idovitches, and Johannsmanns streaming over from Europe," he pointed out, "[were able] to slip unobtrusively into the clothes of 'dyed-in-the-wool' Americans by the simple expedient of dropping their guttural speech and changing their names to Jones, Brown or Smith." Tashiro knew it would make no difference if he changed his name to Taylor. He spoke English fluently and had even adopted American slang, dress, and mannerisms. But "outwardly" he "possessed the marked characteristics of the race." To be accepted as American seemed hopeless. "The voice of the flute has long been the unfathomable voice of the East beating upon the West with futility."⁴¹

But the Nisei did not wish to be completely assimilated, to become simply "American." They felt they were a complex combination of the two cultures, and they should be allowed to embrace their twoness. Everything they had learned at school about the United States had taken "root," and they felt they were Americans. Nevertheless, many of them did not want to reject the culture

of their parents. James Sakamoto explained how the Nisei had a "natural love" for the country of their birth as well as for the land of their parents. Deep within, the Nisei stood on the "border line" that separated the "Orient" from the "Occident," the "streams of two great civilizations — the old Japanese culture with its formal traditions and the newer American civilization with its individual freedom."⁴²

This hope to be both Japanese and American was suddenly shattered in February 1942. In the view of policymakers like General DeWitt, American-born Japanese were still "Japanese." Under General DeWitt's command, the military ordered a curfew for all persons of Japanese ancestry and posted the following order on telephone poles and storefronts: "Pursuant to the provisions of Civilian Exclusion Order No. 27, this Headquarters, dated April 30, 1942, all persons of Japanese ancestry, both alien and non-alien, will be evacuated from the above area by 12 o' clock noon, P. W. T., Thursday May 7, 1942."⁴³

The evacuees were instructed to bring their bedding, toilet articles, extra clothing, and utensils. "No pets of any kind will be permitted." Japanese stood in silent numbness before the notices. Years later, Congressman Robert Matsui, who was a baby in 1942, asked: "How could I as a 6-month-old child born in this country be declared by my own Government to be an enemy alien?" But the order applied to everyone, including children, and even babies were taken out of orphanages.⁴⁴

"Doesn't my citizenship mean a single blessed thing to anyone?" asked Monica Sone's brother in distress. "Several weeks before May, soldiers came around and posted notices on telephone poles," said Takae Washizu. "It was sad for me to leave the place where I had been living for such a long time. Staring at the ceiling in bed at night, I wondered who would take care of my cherry tree and my house after we moved out."⁴⁵

Believing the military orders were unconstitutional, Minoru Yasui of Portland refused to obey the curfew order: "It was my belief that no military authority has the right to subject any United States

citizen to any requirement that does not equally apply to all other U.S. citizens. If we believe in America, if we believe in equality and democracy, if we believe in law and justice, then each of us, when we see or believe errors are being made, has an obligation to make every effort to correct them." Meanwhile Fred Korematsu in California and Gordon Hirabayashi in Washington refused to report to the evacuation center. "As an American citizen," Hirabayashi explained, "I wanted to uphold the principles of the Constitution, and the curfew and evacuation orders which singled out a group on the basis of ethnicity violated them. It was not acceptable to me to be less than a full citizen in a white man's country." The three men were arrested and convicted. Sent to prison, they took their cases to the Supreme Court, which upheld their convictions, declaring that the government's policies were based on military necessity.⁴⁶

Most Japanese, however, felt they had no choice but to comply with the evacuation orders. Instructed that they would be allowed to take only what they could carry, they had to sell most of their possessions — their refrigerators, cars, furniture, radios, pianos, farms, and houses. "I remember how agonizing was my despair," recounted Tom Hayase, "to be given only about six days in which to dispose of our property." "It is difficult to describe the feeling of despair and humiliation experienced by all of us," said another evacuee, "as we watched the Caucasians coming to look over our possessions and offering such nominal amounts knowing we had no recourse but to accept whatever they were offering because we did not know what the future held for us."⁴⁷

At control centers, the evacuees were registered and each family was assigned a number. "Henry went to the Control Station to register the family," remembered Monica Sone. "He came home with twenty tags, all numbered '10710,' tags to be attached to each piece of baggage, and one to hang from our coat lapels. From then on, we were known as Family #10710." When they reported at the train stations, they found themselves surrounded by soldiers with

rifles and bayonets. "I looked at Santa Clara's streets from the train over the subway," wrote Norman Mineta's father in a letter to friends in San Jose. "I thought this might be the last look at my loved home city. My heart almost broke, and suddenly hot tears just came pouring out. . . ." More than their homes and possessions had been taken from them. "On May 16, 1942, my mother, two sisters, niece, nephew, and I left . . . by train," said Teru Watanabe. "Father joined us later. Brother left earlier by bus. We took whatever we could carry. So much we left behind, but the most valuable thing I lost was my freedom."⁴⁸

When they arrived at assembly centers, the evacuees were shocked to discover that they were to be housed at stockyards, fairgrounds, and race tracks. "The assembly center was filthy, smelly, and dirty. There were roughly two thousand people packed in one large building. No beds were provided, so they gave us gunny sacks to fill with straw, that was our bed." Stables served as housing. "Where a horse or cow had been kept, a Japanese American family was moved in." "Suddenly you realized that human beings were being put behind fences just like on the farm where we had horses and pigs in corrals."⁴⁹

After several weeks in the assembly centers, the evacuees were transported by trains to ten internment camps — Topaz in Utah, Poston and Gila River in Arizona, Amache in Colorado, Jerome and Rohwer in Arkansas, Minidoka in Idaho, Manzanar and Tule Lake in California, and Heart Mountain in Wyoming.

Most of the camps were located in remote desert areas. "We did not know where we were," remembered an internee. "No houses were in sight, no trees or anything green — only scrubby sagebrush and an occasional low cactus, and mostly dry, baked earth." Hundreds of miles of sandy wasteland surrounded them. "We felt as if we were standing in a gigantic sand-mixing machine as the sixty-mile gale lifted the loose earth up into the sky, obliterating everything," recalled Monica Sone. "Sand filled our mouths and nostrils and stung our faces and hands like a thousand darting needles."

dles."⁵⁰ Twenty-four-year-old Tsuyako "Sox" Kitashima cried herself to sleep the first night, thinking, "I can't believe I'm in America."⁵¹

The camp was linear, with barracks in orderly rows, bounded by barbed-wire fences with guard towers. Each barrack was about 20 by 120 feet, divided into four or six rooms. Usually a family was housed in one room, 20 by 20 feet. The room had "a pot bellied stove, a single electric light hanging from the ceiling, an Army cot for each person and a blanket for the bed."⁵²

Every morning at 7 A.M., the internees were awakened by a siren. In large mess halls, they ate at long tables, parents often sitting at separate tables from their children, especially the teenagers. After eating breakfast in a cafeteria, the children went to school, where they began the day by saluting the flag of the United States and then singing "My country, 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty." Looking beyond the flagpole, they saw the barbed wire, the watch towers, and the armed guards. "I was too young to understand," stated George Takei years later, "but I remember soldiers carrying rifles, and I remember being afraid."⁵³

Young married couples worried about having children born in the camps. "When I was pregnant with my second child, that's when I flipped," said a Nisei woman. "I guess that's when the reality really hit me. I thought to myself, gosh, what am I doing getting pregnant. I told my husband, 'This is crazy. You realize there's no future for us and what are we having kids for?'"⁵⁴

An even greater craziness seemed to crash down on the Nisei when the government decided to force them to serve in the U.S. Armed Forces. In September 1942, the Selective Service had classified all young men of Japanese ancestry as 4-C, enemy aliens. A month later, however, the director of the Office of War Information recommended that President Roosevelt authorize the enlistment of Nisei: "Loyal American citizens of Japanese descent should be permitted, after an individual test, to enlist in the Army and Navy. . . . This matter is of great interest to OWI. Japanese propaganda to the Philippines, Burma, and elsewhere

insists that this is a racial war. We can combat this effectively with counter propaganda only if our deeds permit us to tell the truth." Roosevelt understood the need for "counter propaganda." In December the army developed a plan for forming an all Japanese-American combat team.⁵⁵

On February 6, 1943, the government began requiring all internees to answer loyalty questionnaires. Question 27 asked draft-age males: "Are you willing to serve in the armed forces of the United States on combat duty, wherever ordered?" Question 28 asked all internees: "Will you swear unqualified allegiance to the United States of America and faithfully defend the United States from any or all attack by foreign or domestic forces, and forswear any form of allegiance or obedience to the Japanese emperor, or any other foreign government, power or organization?"⁵⁶

Forced to sign the loyalty questionnaire, young men pondered:

Loyalty, disloyalty,

If asked,

What should I answer?⁵⁷

The Divided Soul of the Nisei Generation

Twenty-two percent of the 21,000 Japanese males eligible to register for the draft answered "No," gave a qualified answer, or made no response. "Well, I am one of those that said 'No, no' on the questions, one of the 'No, no' boys," explained Albert Nakai, "and it is not that I was proud about it, it was just that our legal rights were violated and I wanted to fight back." When he was told the Army wanted Japanese to volunteer for a special combat unit, Dunks Oshima retorted: "What do they take us for? Saps? First, they change my army status to 4-C because of my ancestry, run me out of town, and now they want me to volunteer for a suicide squad so I could get killed for this damn democracy. That's going some, for sheer brass!"⁵⁸

At Heart Mountain internment camp, Frank Emi studied the

questionnaire. "The more I looked at it the more disgusted I became," recalled Emi, who at the time was a young father with a wife and two children. "We were treated more like enemy aliens than American citizens. And now this [the loyalty questionnaire]." Emi decided to post his answer on the mess hall door: "Under the present conditions and circumstances, I am unable to answer these questions." Shortly afterward, he attended a mass meeting, where he heard a stirring speech by Kiyoshi Okamoto. An engineer from Hawaii who had moved to the mainland and become a high school teacher, Okamoto declared that as American citizens the internees should stand up for their constitutional rights. "At first we were naive and just felt the questionnaire was unfair," said Emi. "But Okamoto taught us about the Constitution and it came to have great meaning as we began to resist."⁵⁹

Emi and several resisters organized the Fair Play Committee and declared they would not cooperate with the draft unless their citizenship rights first were restored. Three hundred Nisei refused to be inducted, protesting the violation of their constitutional rights.⁶⁰

Worried, government authorities acted quickly to repress the protest. Emi and six other leaders of the Heart Mountain Fair Play Committee were arrested and indicted for conspiracy to violate the Selective Service Act and for counseling others to resist the draft. In court they argued that the draft law as applied to Japanese Americans in the internment camps was morally wrong and unconstitutional. "We, the members of the FPC are not afraid to go to war — we are not afraid to risk our lives for our country," they had declared in their statement of resistance. "We would gladly sacrifice our lives to protect and uphold the principles and ideals of our country as set forth in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, for on its inviolability depends the freedom, liberty, justice, and protection of all people including Japanese-Americans and all other minority groups."⁶¹ Emi and the others were found guilty and sentenced to four years at Leavenworth Federal Penitentiary.

A citizen by birth, Joseph Kurihara also protested the violation

of his constitutional rights. He had grown up in Hawaii, where he had learned what it meant to be an American. "We, the boys of conglomerated races, were brought up under the careful guidance of American teachers, strictly following the principle of American democracy," he wrote in his autobiography. "Let it be white, black, brown, or yellow, we were all treated alike. This glorious paradise of the Pacific was the true melting pot of human races." As a young man, Kurihara decided he wanted to study medicine and moved to California, where he experienced discrimination repeatedly. During World War I, he decided to join the U.S. Armed Forces. While in basic training, Kurihara was befriended by Dr. Homer Knight and William Green. "I made several visits to their homes. On every occasion, I was treated like a prince. I felt happy. I solemnly vowed to fight and die for the U.S. and those good people, whose genuine kindness touched the very bottom of my heart."

Kurihara fought in France and Germany. "For several months I was stationed in Coblenz with the army of occupation. . . . I found out that the German people were just as human as any other race. . . . At every mealtime, the little German girls and boys were lining the walk to the garbage can for whatever scraps the boys were throwing away. I could not bear to see these little ones suffer, so I always made it my duty to ask for as much as my plate would hold and gave it to them." Kurihara reflected on the scenes of destruction. "Wherever I went, I saw the ugly scars of war, reminding me of the cannibalistic deeds of man only more cruel and complete in civilized manner. It was horrible to think that the more the world progresses in science, the more devilish it gets. I shudder from thoughts what the next war would be."

After returning from the war, Kurihara completed degree programs at California Community College in Los Angeles; then he operated a small produce business and studied navigation. In 1941, he was working on a tuna fishing boat. His boat was near the Galapagos Islands when he heard the news of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. The captain decided to return to California.

"On the way above Cedros Islands," Kurihara recalled, "we saw American planes scouting the sea and reporting the movements of all vessels. It was thrilling to see them flying. I felt very proud of them."

When his boat entered San Diego Harbor, it was boarded by F.B.I. agents. One of them yelled at him: "Hey! you Jap, I want some information. You better tell me everything, or I'll kick you in the ———." His blood "boiling," Kurihara replied: "What did you call me? If you want any information from me, you better learn to address a man properly." During the interrogation, Kurihara was asked:

"Have you been a good American citizen?"

"I was and I am."

"Will you fight for this country?"

"If I am needed, I am ready."

"Were you a soldier of any country?"

"Yes, I am a veteran of the Foreign War, U.S. Army."

For security, federal authorities prohibited Japanese from working on boats, but Kurihara applied for a permit to work at sea again. The port master said: "No permit for any Jap." At the end of a heated exchange, Kurihara exploded: "Say officer I wore that uniform when you were still unborn, served in the U.S. Army and fought for Democracy. . . . I may be a Jap in feature but I am an American. Understand!"

Kurihara then experienced a crueler insult: he was removed to the internment camp at Manzanar. There he fumed and agitated against cooperation with the government authorities. He led a movement of workers demanding fair wages for the labor they were doing in camp. Trying to organize them into a union, Kurihara declared that as citizens they were entitled to the same pay they would have received outside of camp. Even behind barbed wire, he argued, Japanese Americans should insist on equal treatment under the law as workers.

When he was released from the internment camp at the end of the war, Kurihara renounced his U.S. citizenship. "America, the

standard bearer of democracy had committed the most heinous crime in its history, imprinting in my mind . . . the dread that even democracy is a demon in time of war," he explained. "It is my sincere desire to see this government of the United States some day repair the wrong in full." His renunciation expressed his total disappointment in a country whose ideals he cherished. "This decision was not that of today or that of yesterday," he wrote. "It dates back to the day when General DeWitt ordered evacuation." When General DeWitt declared that "a Jap is a Jap. Once a Jap, always a Jap," "I then swore to become a Jap one hundred percent, and never to do another's day's work to help this country fight this war." In February 1946 Kurihara sailed to Japan, a country he had not yet even visited.⁶² For Kurihara, his self-imposed exile was his way of showing his anger at his country for betraying not only him but also its own constitutional principles.

During the war, however, 33,000 Japanese Americans made other choices: they decided to seek equality and justice by serving in the U.S. Armed Forces. "We shared a common commitment to what we perceived to be a right and a duty," said Akiji Yoshimura. "Perhaps most important, each of us in our way looked beyond the 'barbed wires' [of the internment camps] to a better America."⁶³

Several thousand Japanese-American soldiers were assigned to the Military Intelligence Service, functioning as interpreters and translators on the Pacific front. Armed with Japanese-language skills, they provided an invaluable service. They translated captured Japanese documents, including battle plans, lists of Imperial Navy ships, and Japanese secret codes. One of their officers described their heroic work with Merrill's Marauders in Burma: "During battles they crawled up close enough to be able to hear Jap officers' commands and to make verbal translations to our soldiers. They tapped lines, listened in on radios, translated documents and papers, made spot translations of messages and field orders."⁶⁴

As members of the MIS, Japanese Americans participated in the

invasion of Okinawa. Two of them, Hiroshi Kobashigawa and Frank Higashi were worried about their families living in Okinawa. Both of them had been born in the United States and had parents who had returned to Okinawa before the outbreak of the war. When American soldiers landed in Okinawa, they found the people hiding in caves. Okinawans had been told by the Japanese military that it would be better for them to be dead than to be captured; the people were afraid of being tortured, raped, and killed by the Americans. In his family's home village, Kobashigawa was relieved to find his mother, sister, and three younger brothers safe in a civilian refugee camp. Higashi found his father in the hills of northern Okinawa during a mop-up operation and carried him on his back to the village. Nisei soldiers were also able to persuade many Japanese soldiers to surrender. General Charles Willoughby, chief of intelligence in the Pacific, estimated that the contributions of these Nisei soldiers shortened the war by two years.⁶⁵

Japanese-American soldiers also helped win the war in Europe. In 1942, while General DeWitt was evacuating the Japanese on the West Coast, General Emmons organized a battalion of Hawaiian Nisei — the 100th Battalion. After training in Wisconsin and Mississippi, 1,400 men of the 100th Battalion were sent to North Africa. In September 1943, they participated in the invasion of Italy, where 300 of them were killed and 650 wounded. The 100th Battalion was called the "Purple Heart Battalion." In June, the 100th Battalion merged with the newly arrived 442nd Regimental Combat Team, composed of Nisei from Hawaii and also from internment camps. While German Americans and Italian Americans served in integrated military units, Japanese Americans were assigned to a separate fighting team — the 442nd.

In Europe, Japanese-American soldiers experienced bloody fighting at Luciana, Livorno, and the Arno River, where casualties totaled 1,272 men — more than one-fourth of the regiment. After the battle at the Arno River, they were sent to France, where they took the town of Bruyères from the German troops in heavy house-to-house fighting.

Next the 442nd was ordered to rescue the Texan "Lost Battalion," 211 men surrounded by German troops in the Vosges Mountains. "If we advanced a hundred yards, that was a good day's job," recalled a soldier describing the rescue mission. "We'd dig in again, move up another hundred yards, and dig in. That's how we went. It took us a whole week to get to the Lost Battalion. It was just a tree-to-tree fight." At the end of a week of fighting, the 442nd had suffered eight hundred casualties. When the trapped Texans finally saw the Japanese-American soldiers, some broke into sobs. One of the rescued soldiers remembered the moment: "[The Germans] would hit us from one flank and then the other, then from the front and the rear . . . we were never so glad to see anyone as those fighting Japanese Americans."⁶⁶ The rescuers had made a tremendous sacrifice in this battle. "Just think of all those people — of the 990 that went over [with me], not more than 200 of them came back without getting hit," said veteran Shig Doi. "If you look at the 442nd boys, don't look at their faces, look at their bodies. They got hit hard, some lost their limbs."⁶⁷

One of the soldiers of the 442nd was Daniel Inouye. His father had emigrated from Japan after a fire had broken out in the Inouye family home and spread to nearby houses. In order to pay for the damage, the family sent their eldest son, Asakichi, to Hawaii to work on the sugar plantations. He planned to return to Japan after the family debt had been paid. But he stayed and made his home in Hawaii, where Daniel was born.

After the attack on Pearl Harbor, Asakichi Inouye asked his son: "You know what *on* means in Japanese?" Daniel answered: "Yes. *On* is at the heart of Japanese culture. *On* requires that when one man is aided by another he incurs a debt that is never canceled, one that must be repaid at every opportunity without stint or reservation." His father then said: "The Inouyes have great *on* for America. It has been good to us. And now . . . it is you who must try to return the goodness of this country."⁶⁸

In the service of his country, Inouye fought in the battle of the Gothic Line in northern Italy, and then in April 1945, he partici-

pated in the assault against German troops on Mount Nebbione. "Come on, you guys, go for broke!" his buddies shouted as they charged directly into the fire of enemy machine guns. Captain Inouye crawled to the flank of an emplacement and pulled the pin on his grenade. "As I drew my arm back, all in a flash of light and dark I saw him, that faceless German."

And even as I cocked my arm to throw, he fired and his rifle grenade smashed into my right elbow and exploded and all but tore my arm off. I looked at it, stunned and unbelieving. It dangled there by a few bloody shreds of tissue, my grenade still clenched in a fist that suddenly didn't belong to me any more. . . . I swung around to pry the grenade out of that dead fist with my left hand. Then I had it free and I turned to throw and the German was reloading his rifle. But this time I beat him. My grenade blew up in his face and I stumbled to my feet, closing on the bunker, firing my tommy gun left-handed, the useless right arm slapping red and wet against my side.⁶⁹

For the seriously wounded Captain Inouye, the war was over. He had given his right arm in defense of his country. On his way back to Hawaii, however, Inouye still experienced racial rejection when he tried to get a haircut in San Francisco. Entering a barber shop with his empty right sleeve pinned to his army jacket covered with ribbons and medals for his military heroism, Captain Inouye was told: "We don't serve Japs here."⁷⁰

Inouye belonged to the most decorated unit in United States military history. They had earned 18,143 individual decorations — including 1 Congressional Medal of Honor, 47 Distinguished Service Crosses, 350 Silver Stars, 810 Bronze Stars, and more than 3,600 Purple Hearts. Japanese-American soldiers had suffered 9,486 casualties, including 600 killed.⁷¹ "They bought an awful hunk of America with their blood," declared General Joseph Stilwell. "You're damn right those Nisei boys have a place in the

American heart, now and forever."⁷² When the 442nd regiment returned, President Harry Truman welcomed them by declaring: "You fought for the free nations of the world . . . you fought not only the enemy, you fought prejudice — and you won."⁷³

A Mushroom Cloud: The Black Rain of Prejudice

As it turned out, however, prejudice was present in the making of Truman's decision to drop the atomic bomb on Hiroshima.

In his memoirs published in 1955, Truman explained that he had made the decision in order to avoid an invasion of Japan and thus save "half a million" American lives in the final effort to end the war.⁷⁴ Repeatedly he denied feeling sorry for dropping the atomic bomb. When asked in an interview whether the decision was a morally difficult one to make, the President shot back: "Hell no, I made it like that," as he snapped his fingers.⁷⁵ Reporter Merle Miller observed: "If there was one subject on which Mr. Truman was not going to have any second thoughts, it was the Bomb. If he'd said it once, he said it a hundred times, almost always the same words. The Bomb ended the war. If we had to invade Japan, half a million soldiers on both sides would have been killed. . . . It was as simple as that. That was all there was to it, and Mr. Truman had never lost any sleep over *that* decision."⁷⁶

What actually happened, however, was complicated and also ambiguous. The United States had initiated atomic weapons research in order to counter the possibility of a Nazi nuclear bomb. But on May 7, Germany surrendered, and Truman turned his attention to the Pacific War. In June, Truman ordered the military to calculate the cost in American lives for a planned invasion of Japan. He stated that he wanted to "know how far we could afford to go in the Japanese campaign." Aware of the bloody fighting that had already occurred in the Pacific, Truman hoped to prevent "an Okinawa from one end of Japan to the other." American ground-troop losses in Okinawa had been extremely heavy: 5,309 dead, 23,909 wounded, and 346 missing in action.⁷⁷

DOUBLE VICTORY

On June 18, Truman met with the Joint Chiefs of Staff. In response to his order, the Joint War Plans Committee prepared a report, which gave the following estimates of casualties:

Killed	Wounded	Missing	Total
40,000	150,000	3,500	193,500

This assessment was based on a plan to invade Japan's southern island of Kyushu on November 1, followed by an invasion of the Tokyo Plain on the main island of Honshu in March.⁷⁸ The estimate for the total number of soldiers who would die was not "half a million," but forty thousand.⁷⁹

At this meeting, the President was assured that the invasion of Japan would not be another Okinawa. The Kyushu assault, the military chiefs explained, would be different from the deadly battle for the conquest of Okinawa. "There had been only one way to go on Okinawa," said Admiral Ernest King. "This meant a straight frontal attack against a highly fortified position. On Kyushu, however, landings would be made on three fronts simultaneously and there would be much more room for maneuver." The planners calculated that American casualties for the Kyushu invasion would be "relatively inexpensive." According to the minutes of the meeting, Truman said he understood that "the Joint Chiefs of Staff, after weighing all possible alternative plans, were still of the unanimous opinion that the Kyushu operation was the best solution under the circumstances." Then he told the Joint Chiefs of Staff that the Kyushu plan was "all right from a military standpoint" and ordered them to "go ahead with it."⁸⁰

By the end of June, American military leaders determined that Japan had lost the war: the capacity and the will to fight no longer existed within Japan itself. Its cities had been reduced to rubble, work and life had been severely disrupted, and the people themselves were dispirited. On June 29, the Joint Chiefs of Staff discussed plans for the occupation of Japan. One of the items on the meeting's agenda read: "Prepare for sudden collapse of Japan."⁸¹

A week later, a "top secret" report prepared for the Combined Chiefs of Staff meetings at Potsdam gave an "Estimate of the Enemy Situation": "We believe that a considerable portion of the Japanese population now consider absolute military defeat to be probable. The increasing effects of sea blockade and cumulative devastation wrought by strategic bombing, which has already rendered millions homeless and has destroyed from 25% to 50% of the built-up area of Japan's most important cities, should make this realization increasingly general. An entry of the Soviet Union into the war would finally convince the Japanese of the inevitability of complete defeat. Although individual Japanese willingly sacrifice themselves in the service of the nation, we doubt that the nation as a whole is predisposed toward national suicide." The report also noted that "a conditional surrender by the Japanese Government . . . might be offered by them at any time from now until the time of the complete destruction of all Japanese power of resistance."⁸²

Agreeing with this report, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff William D. Leahy believed that an invasion of Japan was unnecessary. "I was unable to see any justification, from a national-defense point of view, for an invasion of an already thoroughly defeated Japan," he wrote in his autobiography. Leahy calculated that it would be too costly in American lives to invade Japan in order to extract an unconditional surrender. The navy alone, he thought, could bring an end to the war. A completely blockaded Japan would "fall by its own weight."⁸³ Leahy also pointed out that a conditional surrender which would allow the Japanese people to keep their emperor seemed to be consistent with the Atlantic Charter's promise that Great Britain and the United States would "respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live."⁸⁴ Thus Admiral Leahy advised Truman to accept a Japanese surrender, with a provision that would allow the emperor to remain.⁸⁵

The Joint Chiefs of Staff knew that Japan was seeking a way to negotiate a conditional surrender. United States intelligence had

intercepted Japanese diplomatic messages asking Russia to mediate the end of the conflict.⁸⁶ Japan's primary condition was the maintenance of the emperor.

After the decisive defeat of the Japanese forces at Okinawa on June 23, Secretary of War Henry Stimson advised Truman to pursue a negotiated peace. In a memorandum to the President, July 2, Stimson wrote: "I believe Japan is susceptible to reason in such a crisis to a much greater extent than is indicated by our current press and other current comment." As a visitor to Japan in the 1920s who had developed an admiration for the Japanese people, Stimson explained: "Japan is not a nation composed wholly of mad fanatics of an entirely different mentality from ours." Refusing to demonize the enemy, the secretary of war continued: "On the contrary, she has within the past century shown herself to possess extremely intelligent people, capable in an unprecedentedly short time of adopting not only the complicated technique of Occidental civilization but to a substantial extent their culture and their political and social ideas." Then Stimson proposed a strategy: the United States should give "a carefully timed warning to Japan," which would include a conditional surrender. "I personally think that if in [giving such a warning] we should add that we do not exclude a constitutional monarchy under her present dynasty, it would substantially add to the chances of acceptance."⁸⁷

In July 1945, at the Potsdam conference, Stimson worked to include in the declaration a provision for a conditional surrender. On July 24, Stimson was dismayed to learn that the President had deleted his proposal from the final version.⁸⁸ In the Potsdam Declaration of July 26, Truman issued an ultimatum to Japan to accept "unconditional surrender," or face the "utter devastation of the Japanese homeland."⁸⁹

Truman's rigid and fierce insistence on unconditional surrender reflected a vengeance-seeking and racialized remembering of Pearl Harbor. Unlike the fighting in Europe, the armed conflict in the Pacific was a race war, powered by mutual hatreds and stereotyping. On the one side, believing they belonged to the superior "Yamato

race," many Japanese viewed Americans as "brutes," "wild beasts," monsters, devils, and demons.⁹⁰ On the other side, thinking they belonged to an advanced white civilization, many Americans saw the Japanese as "demons," "ungodly," "treacherous," "savages," "subhuman," and "beasts."⁹¹ In July, *Time* magazine declared: "The ordinary unreasoning Jap is ignorant. Perhaps he is human. Nothing . . . indicates it."⁹² This negative imaging of the Japanese reflected a cultural bias that Edward Said described as "Orientalism" — the European social construction of representations of Asians as strange, exotic, inferior, different, "the Other."⁹³ During World War II, "orientalism" conditioned the contrasting ways Americans viewed the Germans and the Japanese.

"We were very patriotic," recalled Peggy Terry, who had worked in a Kentucky defense plant during the war, "and we understood that the Nazis were someone who would have to be stopped." In the movies, however, the Germans were portrayed as tall and handsome. "There'd be one meanie, a little short dumpy bad Nazi," she said. "But the main characters were good-lookin' and they looked like us." On the other hand, Terry noted, "with the Japanese, that was a whole different thing. We were just ready to wipe them out. They sure as heck didn't look like us. They were yellow little creatures that smiled when they bombed our boys."⁹⁴

War correspondent Ernie Pyle noticed how American soldiers felt differently toward the two enemies. In North Africa, he described the relations between American soldiers and German prisoners of war: "German boys were as curious about us as we were of them. Everytime I stopped, a crowd would form quickly. In almost every group was one who spoke English. In all honesty I can't say their bearing or personality was a bit different from that of a similar bunch of American prisoners. . . . The main impression I got, seeing German prisoners, was that they were human like everybody else, fundamentally friendly, a little vain." Later, when Pyle went to the Pacific front, he observed: "And another adjustment I'll have to make is the attitude toward the enemy. In Europe we felt our enemies, horrible and deadly as they were, were still

people. But out here I've already gathered the feeling that the Japanese are looked upon as something inhuman and squirmy — like some people feel about cockroaches or mice."⁹⁵

"Remember Pearl Harbor — keep 'em dying," declared a marine motto.⁹⁶ Admiral William Halsey gave his men a direct order: "Kill Japs, kill Japs, kill more Japs."⁹⁷ A marine captain declared: "We kill yellow rats. If we don't kill 'em, we won't be around for any peace. So we hate and kill — and live."⁹⁸ As he ordered his men to go into battle against the Japanese, an American admiral urged his men to go and "get some more Monkey meat."⁹⁹

Some American soldiers followed such orders literally: they sadistically collected battlefield trophies — scalps, skulls, bones, and ears. A marine at Guadalcanal bragged: "I'm going to bring back some Jap ears. Pickled."¹⁰⁰ Robert Lekachman recalled that he "didn't collect ears [of dead Japanese]." But he "knew some others did. We had been fed tales of these yellow thugs, subhumans, with teeth that resembled fangs. If a hundred thousand Japs were killed, so much the better. Two hundred thousand, even better."¹⁰¹ The gold teeth of corpses became collector's items. One soldier excitedly boasted: "They say the Japs have a lot of gold teeth. I'm going to make myself a necklace."¹⁰² Marine Eugene B. Sledge watched a fellow soldier use his knife to hammer gold teeth from the mouth of a wounded Japanese soldier who could not move his arms.¹⁰³

Comparing the Pacific war with the European war, historian John Dower wrote: "It is virtually inconceivable . . . that teeth, ears, and skulls could have been collected from German or Italian war dead and publicized in the Anglo-American countries without provoking an uproar; and in this we have yet another inkling of the racial dimensions of the war."¹⁰⁴

The taking of war trophies, especially scalps, was a legacy of an earlier racialized war — the winning of the West. "When I was a young boy," a soldier said, "we always played cowboys and Indians, and when I landed on Guadalcanal that's what I felt like —

I was playing a game, it was not real. Even though I knew it was real. . . ." Marines frequently saw the Japanese attackers as "whooping like a bunch of wild Indians."¹⁰⁵ Jungle combat against the Japanese was often characterized as "Indian fighting," and the perimeter outside American military control was called "Indian country."¹⁰⁶ Commenting on Japanese fighting skills, Colonel Milton A. Hill described the "Japs" as "good at infiltration, too; as good as Indians ever were."¹⁰⁷ Rephrasing an old frontier adage, Admiral Halsey declared: "The only good Jap is a Jap who's been dead six months."¹⁰⁸

Many soldiers fighting the Japanese on the Pacific "frontier" had fathers and grandfathers who had fought Indians. In an essay, "How We Felt About the War," published shortly after the end of the conflict, historian Allan Nevins noted the connection between the Pacific war and the American frontier experience: "Probably in all our history, no foe has been so detested as were the Japanese. Emotions forgotten since our most savage Indian wars were awakened by the ferocities of Japanese commanders."¹⁰⁹

Truman himself came from a frontier family. The Trumans had migrated to Missouri, where they participated in the winning of the West. In a letter to Bess, Truman described one of his grandmother's encounters with Indians: "Grandmother once routed a whole band of Indians with a big dog. She was all alone except for a negro woman and her two children. These Indians told her they wanted honey if she didn't give it, they would take it and her too. So they sharpened their knives on the grinding stone and then she turned loose a large dog. Away went Indians, some leaving their blankets."¹¹⁰ Truman's grandfather Solomon Young ran a wagon train from Independence, Missouri, to San Francisco. When the tired President was asked whether his grandfather had had any trouble with Indians, Truman boasted: "I never heard him say that they bothered him. There were two or three trainmasters that the Indians didn't disturb, and he was one of them. They were afraid of him. That's why. They knew he had the ammunition and the

guns, and he would shoot them if they commenced to bother him."¹¹¹ From Grandfather Young, Truman had learned a lesson: Let your enemy know you have the guns.

Migrating to Missouri, the Truman pioneers had taken slaves with them. Asked during an interview about his grandparents and slavery, Truman said: "Oh, yes. They all had slaves. They brought them out here with them from Kentucky. Most of the slaves were wedding presents."¹¹² When the Civil War came, Truman's mother supported the Confederacy. She thought it was "a good thing when Lincoln was shot," Truman told an interviewer.¹¹³ Independence, Missouri, was a segregated town: blacks lived in a neighborhood derisively called "Nigger Neck." The Trumans had black servants. Truman cherished his childhood memories of blacks, especially those of a "good old black woman" who had worked for his family as a cook and washerwoman.¹¹⁴ On January 6, 1936, Truman joked in a letter to Bess: "He and I and old Senator Coolidge and Barkley were the only ones not dressed, as Jimmy Byrnes said, like nigga preachers."¹¹⁵

Truman embraced a vision of a white "manifest destiny" for America. In a letter to Bess, June 22, 1911, Truman wrote: "I think one man is as good as another so long as he's honest and decent and not a nigger or a Chinaman. Uncle Will [Young, the Confederate veteran] says that the Lord made a white man of dust, a nigger from mud, than threw up what was left and it came down a Chinaman. He does hate Chinese and Japs. So do I. It is race prejudice I guess. But I am strongly of the opinion that negroes ought to be in Africa, yellow men in Asia, and white men in Europe and America."¹¹⁶

Although Truman did not accept social equality of the races, he believed the Constitution should be the law of the land. As a senator, he supported anti-lynching and anti-poll tax legislation. In 1940, Truman spoke out against the Klan: "I believe in the brotherhood of man, not merely the brotherhood of white men but the brotherhood of all men before the law. I believe in the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence. In giving Negroes the rights

which are theirs we are only acting in accord with our own ideals of a true democracy."¹¹⁷ Truman did not support the internment of Japanese Americans. When asked by interviewer Merle Miller to comment on Japanese-American relocation, the retired President replied: "They were concentration camps. They called it relocation, but they put them in concentration camps, and I was against it. We were in a period of emergency, but it was still the wrong thing to do. It was one place where I never went along with Roosevelt. He never should have allowed it." Referring to the fact that Americans of German and Italian descent had not been interned, Merle asked: "Do you suppose it was because Americans of Japanese descent looked different?" Truman replied: "It may have been. But the reason it happened was just the same as what we've been talking about [hysteria]. People out on the West Coast got scared, and they panicked, and they decided to get rid of the Japanese-Americans."¹¹⁸

But Truman also found himself swept into the whirlpool of racial hatreds stirred by the Pacific war. In making his decision to drop the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Truman was pulled by two different feelings — a racialized rage against the "Japs," but also a recognition of their humanity. In his diary on July 18, Truman wrote that he was certain the "Japs" would surrender when "Manhattan" [the atomic blast] appeared over their homeland. A week later, he entered his decision to drop the bomb: "This weapon is to be used against Japan between now and August 10th. I have told the Sec. of War, Mr. Stimson, to use it so that military objectives and sailors and soldiers are the target and not women and children. Even if the Japs are savages, ruthless, merciless and fanatic, we as the leader of the world for the common welfare cannot drop this terrible bomb on the old capital or the new."¹¹⁹ But then he unleashed a weapon "without mercy" on women and children in Hiroshima.¹²⁰ Justifying the destruction, Truman stated in a private letter written shortly after the atomic attack: "Nobody is more disturbed over the unwarranted attack by the Japanese on Pearl Harbor and their murder of our prisoners of war. The only

language they seem to understand is the one that we have been using to bombard them. When you have to deal with a beast you have to treat him as a beast."¹²¹

Thus, Truman had brought down on Hiroshima what he called "a rain of ruin from the air," the like of which had "never been seen on this earth."¹²² Earlier, on that morning of August 6, the people of Hiroshima had started their daily activities. Naoko Ma-
 suoka was on a school trip. She and her friends were singing, "Blossoms and buds of the young cherry tree." Around eight o'clock, she heard someone cry out: "A B-29!" "Even as this shout rang in our ears," she said later, "there was a blinding flash and I lost consciousness."¹²³ Sanae Kano also remembered seeing a "sudden flash of light." She had been eating breakfast and had her chopsticks in her mouth when it happened. Then there was "a big bang" and she almost fainted. Kano ran out of her house. "At the river, I saw people who were burned black and were crying for water. . . . Some people were in the river drinking the water. The fire wardens were shouting at them telling them that it was dangerous to drink the water. But many people went into the river anyway and drank the water and died."¹²⁴

After the horrendous blast, fires were everywhere. Within seconds, the entire city had been reduced to cinders. People were burned, covered with huge blisters. Yoshiaki Wada found many dead people lying on the bridge. "Some were burned black, some had blistered skin that was peeling off, and some had pieces of glass in them all over."¹²⁵ After the deadly brilliance, a huge mushroom-shaped cloud rose to the heavens; then a rain descended, but the water that fell from the sky was a black rain. "The wind got stronger," Yohko Kuwabara reported, "and it started raining something like ink. This strange rain came down hard out of the gray sky, like a thundershower and the drops stung as if I were being hit by pebbles."¹²⁶ Seventy thousand people were killed instantly. Only 3,243 of them were soldiers.

Three days later, another atomic bomb destroyed Nagasaki. However, the Japanese government still refused to surrender, ex-

cept on a conditional basis — the retention of the emperor. Meeting with his key policymakers, Truman had to decide whether to continue the atomic bombing or accept a conditional surrender. Admiral Leahy argued strongly for accepting the Japanese terms. "Some of those around the President wanted to demand his [Hirohito's] execution," he wrote in his memoir. "If they had prevailed, we might still be at war with Japan. His subjects would probably have fought on until every loyal Japanese was dead."¹²⁷ Leahy's view prevailed, and in the end, the surrender was not unconditional. Japan was allowed to keep the emperor system. Had this condition been included in the Potsdam Declaration, the war might have been concluded sooner, and the killing of over 200,000 civilians, most of them women and children, could have been avoided.

As the individual ultimately responsible for the horrific destruction, Truman had to face the moral issue of the atomic bombings. Beneath the buck-stops-here facade hid a sensitive interior. Truman knew he had dropped the atomic bomb not on "beasts," but on women and children. At Potsdam, the President had told Stalin he hoped only one bomb would be dropped. He had not expected the second atomic attack to occur so soon after Hiroshima, and immediately ordered the military to halt operations for a third bomb. After the destruction of Nagasaki, Truman confided to Henry Wallace that "the thought of wiping out another 100,000 people was too horrible," and that he did not like the idea of killing "all those kids."¹²⁸ When the President complained of terrible headaches, Wallace asked: "Physical or figurative?" Truman replied: "Both."¹²⁹

Several months after the atomic bombings, Truman had a private conversation with J. Robert Oppenheimer. The Los Alamos director said that his work at the weapons laboratory meant he had blood on his hands. Truman offered Oppenheimer his handkerchief: "Well, here, would you like to wipe off your hands."¹³⁰ Then Truman declared: "The blood is on my hands. Let me worry about that."¹³¹ After Oppenheimer left the Oval Office, the Presi-

dent told Dean Acheson: "I don't want to see that son of a bitch in this office ever again."¹³² On May 3, 1946, he complained again to Acheson about Oppenheimer: "He came to my office five or six months ago, and spent most of his time wringing his hands and telling me they had blood on them because of the discovery of atomic energy."¹³³ Truman recognized that Oppenheimer was merely the inventor of the bomb, and that he was the one who had made the decision to use the terrible new weapon. The "blood" of the women and "kids" killed in the atomic bombings was on his hands.

Truman's remorse was understandable. Capable of thoughtful reflection and compassion, Truman felt sadness over the horror and suffering of war. On July 16, while waiting for the report of the atomic bomb test at Alamogordo, Truman wrote a diary entry describing the "absolute ruin" he had witnessed in Berlin as he traveled to Potsdam and the sorrowful lines of refugees — old men, old women, children from tots to teens carrying their belongings to nowhere in particular.¹³⁴ Deeply moved by these scenes, he pondered the world's grim history of war: "I thought of Carthage, Baalbek, Jerusalem, Rome, Atlantis, Peking, Babylon, Nineveh; Scipio, Rameses II, Titus, Herman, Sherman, Jenghis Khan, Alexander, Darius the Great. But Hitler only destroyed Stalingrad — and Berlin. I hope for some sort of peace — but I fear that machines are ahead of morals by some centuries and when morals catch up perhaps there'll be no reason for any of it. I hope not. But we are only termites on a planet and maybe when we bore too deeply into the planet there'll [be] a reckoning — who knows?"¹³⁵

The technology of atomic weaponry was racing ahead of morals, and the reckoning turned out to be Truman's. Admiral Leahy believed that the dropping of the atomic bomb was not a military necessity. "It is my opinion," he wrote in his memoirs, "that the use of this barbarous weapon at Hiroshima and Nagasaki was of no material assistance in our war against Japan. The Japanese were already defeated and ready to surrender because of the effec-

tive sea blockade and the successful bombing with conventional weapons."¹³⁶ Moreover, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff opposed the use of the atomic bomb for a moral reason. As a soldier, he had definite ethical standards on how war should be fought. In July 1944, during a discussion with Roosevelt about the use of biological warfare, Leahy "recoiled" from the idea. "Mr. President," the admiral stated, "this [using germs and poison] would violate every Christian ethic I have ever heard of and all of the known laws of war." Leahy later applied this same religious principle to the atomic attack on Hiroshima. As a former specialist in gunnery and head of the Bureau of Ordnance, he knew how to judge weapons. "'Bomb' is the wrong word to use for this new weapon," he wrote. "It is not a bomb. It is not an explosive. It is a poisonous thing that kills people by its deadly radioactive reaction, more than by the explosive force it develops."¹³⁷ Hiroshima filled Leahy with regret. "My own feeling is that in being the first to use it," he wrote in his memoirs, "we had adopted an ethical standard common to barbarians of the Dark Ages. I was not taught to make war in that fashion, and wars cannot be won by destroying women and children." The atomic bomb was an instrument of "uncivilized warfare" — a "modern type of barbarism not worthy of Christian man."¹³⁸

Leahy's moral dismay was widely shared in American society. In a personal letter to the President on August 9, 1945, an anguished citizen protested the use of the bomb. "I think it is a disgrace that America should be involved in such a diabolical thing," wrote Anne Ford. "I had hoped and prayed that America under your leadership would be a good example to the rest of the world. I don't know what to think now."¹³⁹ Similarly, a woman from New York wrote to Truman: "I am impelled to write to you now and tell you how stunned and sick at heart I am over what our country has just done to Japan and her people — thousands of them innocent."¹⁴⁰ In letters to the *New York Times*, readers denounced the atomic attack as "a stain upon our national life," and as "simply mass murder, sheer terrorism."¹⁴¹ "Why," a citizen from St. Paul

asked in a letter to NBC news commentator H. V. Kaltenborn, "did we choose to drop our first bomb on a crowded city, where 90% of the casualties would *inevitably be civilian?*"¹⁴² Mexican-American soldier Alex Romandia was in Germany when he heard the news of Hiroshima. In a letter to his sister, he lamented that the atomic bombing made him feel "ashamed of his country for such a savage action." When Romandia returned home from the war, he had a tense conversation with his mother. He told her that he was "angry that this weapon of destruction had been used so callously." She responded that it had helped to end the war. "But, mama," Romandia exclaimed, "it was not necessary."¹⁴³ For Walter G. Taylor, a moral line had been crossed: the atomic attack constituted a war crime. "The United States of America has this day become the new master of brutality, infamy, atrocity," he charged in a letter to *Time* magazine. "Bataan, Buchenwald, Dachau, Coventry, Lidice were tea parties compared with the horror which we, the people of the United States of America, have dumped on the world in the form of atomic energy bombs. No peacetime applications of this Frankenstein monster can ever erase the crime we have committed. . . . It is no democracy where such an outrage can be committed without our consent!"¹⁴⁴

There were also expressions of moral misgivings in the mainstream media. In the *New York Times*, Hanson W. Baldwin wrote: "Yesterday man unleashed the atom to destroy man, and another chapter in human history opened, a chapter in which the weird, the strange, the horrible becomes the trite and the obvious. Yesterday we clinched victory in the Pacific, but we sowed the whirlwind. . . . We have been the first to introduce a new weapon of unknowable effects which may bring us victory quickly but which will sow the seeds of hate more widely than ever. We may yet reap the whirlwind."¹⁴⁵ The editors of *Life* magazine confessed deep disquietude: "The Second World War, which had been tapering off to a whimper is ending instead with a bang." The magazine harshly criticized the sharp rise in the air war's destruction of civilian lives. "From the very concept of strategic bombing, all the de-

velopments — night, pattern, saturation, area, indiscriminate — have led straight to Hiroshima, and Hiroshima was, and was intended to be, almost pure *Schrecklichkeit* [terror bombing]."¹⁴⁶

In December 1945, a poll conducted by *Fortune* found that only 54 percent of the respondents approved of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.¹⁴⁷ Even within an American society at war, there was still a sense of fairness and decency based on the belief in the "self-evident truth" of the "unalienable right" of all people to "life."

From minority communities arose protests against the atomic bombing. The fiery mushroom cloud had tragically illuminated the color line as "the Problem of the Twentieth Century." In an essay published in the *Chicago Defender*, W. E. B. DuBois declared that the war in the Pacific had been waged against the "colored" nation of Japan. "No matter how we explain and assess the damage, the result of thinking along the lines of race and color will affect human relations for many years and will excuse contempt and injustice toward colored skins."¹⁴⁸ On August 16, 1945, the editor of the Spanish-language *La Opinión* connected the atomic attacks to the internment of Japanese Americans: "It is painfully difficult to assess the 'effectiveness' of the bomb. Japan surrendered two days ago, but did the means justify the end? We think not. Our sympathies lie with the survivors from Hiroshima and Nagasaki who surely lost everything. This war experience has ironically fostered a bond between the Mexican-American community and the Japanese-American community. The events of internment and the zoot-suit riots share a common pattern of racism that we are all subject to."¹⁴⁹ Indeed, the atomic bombing of Hiroshima had brought the war home, back to the struggle for "double victory."