

A Place Like This:

An Environmental Justice History of the Owens Valley—
Water in Indigenous, Colonial, and Manzanar Stories

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	5
Preface.....	6
Introduction: Constructing an Environmental Justice Framework.....	12
I. Defining Histories and Frameworks.....	16
An Environmental Justice Framework—Review of Literature.....	18
Critical Race Theory and Historical Perspectives.....	29
II. To a Place Like This: Applying and Reconstructing Environmental Justice Frameworks.....	31
Chapter 1: A Legend of the People—(Re)framing Nü'ma History (1000—1900)	37
I. Nü'ma History and Irrigation Techniques (Pre 1830s).....	39
II. (De)Colonial Struggles (1830s—1900).....	43
III. Representations in Environmental History (1900—today).....	56
Chapter 2: Water and Empire—The Battle Between Agriculture and Urban Development (1846—1940).....	65
I. Domination of Mexico.....	66
II. An Agricultural Empire in the Desert.....	67
Dreams of an Agricultural Empire: late 19 th Century.....	67
Building an Agricultural Empire: Chaffey's Irrigation Colony.....	69
Organizing an Agricultural Empire: Powell's Commonwealth and Stewart's Private Tenure.....	71
III. Urban Water Imperialism and the End of an Era of Irrigation.....	77
Conditions of Los Angeles in the late 1800s.....	77
Los Angeles Declares a Water War: 1874—1899.....	79
Urban Water Imperialists: Eaton and Mulholland and Lippincott 1898—1905.....	80
Los Angeles Aqueduct: Planning 1905—1908.....	88
Los Angeles Aqueduct Construction: 1908—1913.....	94
Owens Valley Legacies of Distrust and Resistance 1920s—1941.....	97
IV. Conclusion.....	106
Chapter 3: To A Place Like This... (1940-1942).....	108
I. To the Land of Opportunity.....	109
II. "The Lost American Citizens"	111
III. Determining the Site Location.....	117
IV. Multiple Fronts of Resistance.....	121
V. Acquiescence of Manzanar.....	126
VI. The Terror of Water.....	129
VII. Dust.....	131
VIII. Conclusion	137

Chapter 4: Plots of Resistance-Gardening, Fishing and Reservoir Construction as Defiant (1942-1946).....	139
I. Introduction.....	139
II. Barbed Wire Gardens: Plots of Defiance and Rows of Dignity.....	149
Introduction.....	150
Historical Context.....	151
Layout of Manzanar.....	154
Building Homes in Hell: The Process of Domestication with Personal Gardens.....	157
A. Victory Gardens.....	159
B. Ornamental Gardens.....	161
Plotting Defiance: Community, Competition, and Political Resistance in Mess Hall Gardens.....	165
A. 3 Sac Pond.....	166
B. 3-4 Garden.....	171
Cultivating Wellness: Health and Healing in Public Projects..	177
A. Hospital Gardens.....	178
B. Pleasure Park.....	180
C. Agricultural Projects.....	185
D. Lawns.....	190
Role of the War Relocation Authority (WRA)	191
Conclusion.....	192
III. Rods of Resistance: Barbed Hooks from Behind Barbed Wire.....	196
Introduction.....	196
Historical Context.....	196
General Fishing at Manzanar.....	197
Location.....	198
Bairs Creek.....	201
George Creek.....	203
Shepherd Creek.....	206
Golden Beyond.....	210
Conclusion.....	213
IV. The Writings on the Wall: Inscriptions in the Reservoir.....	214
V. Conclusion	224
Conclusion: Beyond A Place Like This.....	226
Afterword.....	232
Bibliography.....	235
Appendixes.....	250
Appendix A: The Principles of Environmental Justice	250
Appendix B: Outline of Issues from Principles of Environmental Justice.....	252
Appendix C: Theoretical Frameworks.....	255
Appendix D: Words of Resistance.....	266

Dedicated to my grandmother, Sue Kunitomi Embrey
*Your forty-plus years of dedication to fighting for justice never cease to inspire and amaze me.
Please know your fighting spirit and baka guts courage live on. Love you always.*



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Preface

*This is my daily mask
daughter, sister
wife, mother
poet, teacher
grandmother.*

*My mask is control
concealment
endurance
my mask is escape
from my
self.*

Mitsuye Yamada, *Masks of a Woman*, I.¹

I stood in front of the plot labeled Block 20, Apartment 1, Building 5 with the 102-degree Owens Valley sun relentlessly beating down on my face; fine sand particles had worked their way into my mouth. I stood staring into the empty space where a barrack measuring twenty by twenty-five feet once stood, and no matter how hard I tried to clean my mouth, I could still feel the grit of sand between my teeth. A small dust storm brewed next to me and as waves of sand began to cover me in a bleak, dry cloak. I starred hard, trying to recreate a place my grandmother was forced to call home for almost a year of her life, as beads of sweat began rolling down my forehead, picking up the dust to form a streaked mask across my cheeks. But the cloak and mask were no shield from the desert sun, burning down high above the 14,505 foot peak of Mount Whitney without a cloud in the sky to filter its rays. The dry wind gusted past me, draining all the moistures from my skin and adding another layer to my mask before allowing the particles to settle again on the patches of sagebrush dispersed throughout the encampment. I tried to image what it would've been like to live in 'a place like this,' knowing I'd have to use an outside spigot to rinse my mouth or wash off the sand now caked thick on my face and limbs because there was

¹ Yamada, Mitsuye. Desert Run: Poems and Stories. "Mask of a Woman, I." Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1988.

no running water inside the barracks. A place I would have been forced to come to within four days of notice bringing only what I could carry and forced to leave the family grocery store and all the rest behind, without the promise of ever being able to return home.

My grandmother was a few years younger than I am now, only nineteen years old and less than a year after graduating high school when she and her family were forced to evacuate their home in Los Angeles' Little Tokyo and relocate to Block 20, Apartment 1, Building 5 in the 'Manzanar War Relocation Center' set in heart of the Owens Valley desert. She remembered waking up early on the morning of March 9th, 1942 to ride a train for eight hours from Los Angeles to Lone Pine station before boarding a bus with blacked out windows for the drive north and east to the high desert to finally arrive at Manzanar Concentration Camp. But her "journey into exile" did not end with her arrival at Manzanar.² My grandmother and sixteen other family members including mother, siblings, cousins and in-laws had to wait in line with 300 other Japanese and Japanese Americans who had also come that day from Little Tokyo to register their family internment number with the War Relocation Authority and be designated a barrack. She was given number 2614-D, which replaced her name, Sue Kunitomi, in the eyes of the federal government. They then endured a cursory medical examination, which consisted primarily of a tetanus shot, before being allowed to find their way through the dark along the rows and rows of identical, unlabeled barracks to Block 20, Apartment 1, Building 5—the 500 square foot room that would house eight members of a family. When they first entered the small room furnished with canvas army cots and mattresses not yet filled with hay, my grandmother recalled her mother sitting down and saying in Japanese まあ、こんなところに？ [Ma, konna toko ni?],

² Embrey, Sue Kunitomi. The Manzanar Committee. "National Park Service Opening of the Manzanar Interpretive Center." April 24, 2004. Retrieved: September 29, 2008
<<http://www.manzanarcommittee.org/pilgrimages/manz2004/Speech-embrey.html>>

loosely translated to “Mmm, a place like this?”³ It wasn’t until the next day, however, that Sue was able to witness the natural landscape where she was now imprisoned. “The Sunday morning when we first arrived, we went out to look for water... We didn’t really know till the next morning where we were. It turned out to be a fairly nice day till breakfast and then the sandstorm came up and we could not see anything,” she explained.⁴

The natural environment made a huge impact on shaping my grandmother’s experience in camp. She explained to me this significance in one of the first times she ever talked about camp in her adult life: “I hate the wind,” my grandmother exclaimed voice low but clear. Her next-door neighbor was just trying to make small talk, commenting how she enjoyed the light breeze that blew through their Echo Park neighborhood near downtown Los Angeles. Surprised by the seriousness in my grandmother’s voice, the woman inquired “Why?” to which my grandmother simply replied, “I hate the wind because it reminds me of Manzanar.” Speaking about the traumatic experience of forced relocation and incarceration did not come easy for my grandmother, one of the first of her generation to speak out.⁵ In 1969, Sue returned to the Owens Valley desert for the first time since her incarceration there twenty-seven years earlier. This visit was pivotal in helping her understand the importance of speaking out against the injustices of World War II incarceration, driving her to dedicate her life to ensuring that the history of Manzanar would never be forgotten. She co-founded the Manzanar Committee in Los Angeles and was responsible for organizing the annual Manzanar Pilgrimage for 37 years, which was a critical step in educating and engaging the next generation of activists who fought for wartime

³ Embrey, S. “National Park Service Opening of the Manzanar Interpretive Center.”

⁴ Embrey, Sue Kunitomi. Unpublished Interview. Interviewer Diana Meyers Bahr. January 9, 2003.

Embrey, Sue Kunitomi. Interview. University of California, Los Angeles, September 11, 1997. Interviewer: Glen Kitayama. Densho Digital Archive, Densho Visual History Collection; Densho ID: denshovh-esue-01.

⁵ Embrey, Bruce. “Nisei Activist and Educator Sue Kunitomi Embrey Dies at 83 The Manzanar Committee” Press Release. May 19, 2006. Retrieved on: September 29, 2008. <<http://www.discovernikkei.org/forum/en/node/1154>>

redress and civil rights, as well as creating a space for the healing of a silenced generation. Additionally, her dedication to political lobbying was instrumental in the designation of Manzanar as a State Historic Landmark in 1972 and a National Historic Landmark in 1985. Ultimately, Sue and the Manzanar Committee were able to realize her goal by successfully lobbying the U.S. Congress to establish the Manzanar National Historic Site in 1992.⁶ She explained to me that it was essential that the federal government be the body to formally recognize Manzanar and be responsible for its preservation because it was Executive Order 9066 signed by President Roosevelt that constructed the War Relocation Authority and mandated the mass incarceration of Japanese and Japanese Americans living on the west coast. Despite being told, “in no uncertain terms” by members of the Japanese-American community, “Don’t bring up the past and don’t talk about the camps,” Sue understood the greater significance of education and political resistance.⁷

My grandmother’s story and the history of 117,000 Japanese and Japanese Americans is not one that is often discussed within environmental studies, let alone made the focus of a senior thesis at Pomona College. Part of that is due to the limitation within the field of what is recognized as legitimate knowledge. Historically dominant academia, and specifically mainstream environmental studies, has silenced, ignored, and erased histories of people of color. This is in part due to its correlation with the mainstream environmental movement, which has predominantly been developed by middle-class, White men to focus on “wilderness preservation, wildlife conservation, habitat protection, and outdoor recreation issues.”⁸ The lived experiences

⁶ Embrey, S. “National Park Service Opening of the Manzanar Interpretive Center.”

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Dorceta Taylor recognizes that the wilderness/wildlife/recreation path of environmental activism developed a strong reform agenda, which “seeks limited or incremental change in the system. Such movements do not utter outright objections of the system; rather, they seek to work within the system to neutralize or amends wrongs or to reduce or eliminate perceived threats.”

of my grandmother and 117,000 other people of Japanese ancestry during World War II will be connected to indigenous and (de)colonial histories of the Owens Valley by analyzing the flow of water through these stories. This is a direct challenge to the construction of what is deemed legitimate knowledge within this discipline to incorporate the lives and histories of people of color, greater struggles of social justice, and non-traditional forms of theory including poetry, art, creative expression and personal experiences. This thesis is part of a larger project of producing the knowledge that integrates supposedly unrelated disciplines—Environmental Analysis, Asian American Studies, and Indigenous Histories.

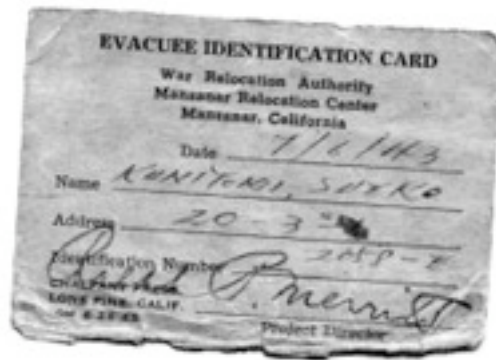
My grandmother understood the importance of the role of education in personal and societal transformation. As a young girl, Sue was repeatedly told by her father: “you have two strikes against you; first you are a Japanese and second you are a woman.”⁹ Despite encountering discouraging warnings within her own home and generational, cultural, racialized and gendered dynamics that encouraged her to remain silent, Sue Kunitomi Embrey transgressed boundaries set for her and embarked on a path towards decolonization and liberation. My grandmother understood self-identified Black, lesbian, feminist, poet, warrior Audre Lorde’s words: “your silence will not protect you” and chose instead a path of self and community empowerment and resistance to social injustice. When asked why it is important to remember Manzanar, Sue Kunitomi Embrey replied: “My answer is that stories like this need to be told, and too many of us have passed away without telling our stories.”¹⁰ Although my grandmother passed away in May of 2006, her words, stories and legacy offer powerful lessons for people of diverse struggles.

Taylor, Dorceta. “The Rise of the Environmental Justice Paradigm: Injustice Framing and the Social Construction of Environmental Discourses.” *American Behavioral Scientist*. Vol 43, Num 4. January 2000. (521)

⁹ Embrey, B. “Nisei Activist and Educator Sue Kunitomi Embrey Dies at 83 The Manzanar Committee.”

¹⁰ Embrey, S. “National Park Service Opening of the Manzanar Interpretive Center.”

As I stood at Block 20, Apartment 1, Building 5, with beads of sweat and sand dripping down my face and the tingling sensation of my burning skin as I baked under the Owens Valley desert sun, I could almost see my grandmother. I could see her walking under the beating desert sun, slipping underneath an apple tree in a neighboring community garden to get some relief and hide in the shade, before continuing on to her job at the *Manzanar Free Press* to document camp life and develop her political voice from behind barbed wire. Sue would stand on this land again years later and be honored for her efforts to move mountains. No dust storms can sweep away nor any water wash away this history or her legacy.



Introduction:

Constructing an Environmental Justice Framework

*Out of the desert's bosom, storm swept with wind and dust;
Out of smiles and curses, of tears and cries, forlorn;
Mixed with broken laughter, forced because they must;
Toil, sweat and bleeding wounds, red and raw and torn.
Out on the desert's bosom—a new town is born.*

James Shinkai, *Manzanar Free Press* March 20th 1943¹¹



Couched between the Sierra Nevada to the west and Inyo Mountains to the east, the Owens Valley stretches almost 100 miles, shimmering with brilliance from the reflection of the high noon sun off of the Owens River. Once home to hundreds of bird species, salamanders, snakes, mule deer, and black-tailed rabbits that found shelter and food in willow trees, sagebrush shrub and large central lake, the arid desert blossomed with life—largely sustained by the streams that drained off the eastern mountains. Mount Whitney towers high above the sparkling valley floor, the tallest summit in the continuous United States adorned with its snow-capped peaks for most months of the year. Streams flow bursting off the ragged cliffs with the approach of warmer months and promises of extreme temperatures, winding their way to the valley floor before collecting in what used to known as the Owens Lake.¹² This delicate ecosystem, home first to the Nü'ma Peoples, then colonial agricultural farmers and later raped of its water resources before

¹¹ "Special Anniversary Edition" *Manzanar Free Press*, March 20, 1943, Vol III No 23.

<http://www.nps.gov/archive/manz/MFP/mfp-v3-n23.htm>

Embrey (1972) as cited in Tamura, Anna Hosticka. "Gardens below the Watchtower: Gardens and Meaning in World War II Japanese American Incarceration Camps." *Landscape Journal*. 23:1–04 (2004) p44.

¹² The Owens Valley Committee. "Owens Valley Overview." 2001. Accessed: February 5, 2009.

<http://www.ovcweb.org/OwensValley/OwensValley.html>

being transformed into a profit driven eco-tourist attraction, was—according to the United States federal government—the ideal location for nothing less than a concentration camp.

In 1942, a town was born in the heart of the Owens Valley desert and at its peak contained 10,046 prisoners, the most densely populated and shortest-lived community in the history of the valley; its first residents, forcibly relocated to the site on March 21, 1942, were forced to leave by November 21, 1945.¹³ Most of its population had been transported from Los Angeles, where they had worked as agricultural laborers, nursery propagators, and landscape architects. Mary Nishi Ishizuka vividly remembers sixteen years of watering rows upon rows of kentia palms that towered over the handcrafted bonsai lining the lathe house at her father's Pacific Rose Nursery in West Los Angeles. Although the carefully crafted rose buds would soon find their way to "upscale hotels, lodges, and big homes" of the neighboring upper-middle class, predominantly white Hollywood, Westwood and Bel Air, Mary Nishi Ishizuka would join 8,828 people of Japanese ancestry in a the 220 mile trek from Los Angeles to the Owens Valley desert.¹⁴ Mary and her family—minus her father, Kuichiro Nishi, who had been arrested by the FBI in the middle of the night after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, several months before

¹³ Although official WRA language called the first prisoners "volunteers" as they arrived in camp early to assist with construction efforts, there was nothing voluntary about their relocation. Many prisoners stayed in the Owens Valley until they were escorted off the site because they had nowhere else to go and were at least guaranteed food and shelter while at Manzanar.

Smithsonian National Museum of American History. "A More Perfect Union: Japanese Americans and the U.S. Constitution." October 2001. Accessed: February 5, 2009.

<http://americanhistory.si.edu/perfectunion/resources/history.htm>

¹⁴ Japanese American National Museum. "REgenerations Oral History Project: Rebuilding Japanese American Families, Communities, and Civil Rights in the Resettlement Era" Los Angeles Region: Volume II. Interviewer: James Gatewood, Interviewee: Mary (Nishi) Ishizuka Date: May 27, 1998.

<http://www.calisphere.universityofcalifornia.edu/jarda/>

Unrau, Harlan D. Manzanar National Historic Site, California: The Evacuation and Relocation of Persons of Japanese Ancestry During World War II: a Historical Study of the Manzanar War Relocation Center. Denver, CO: U.S. Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service, 1996. Retrieved: March 28, 2008. Chapter 9

<http://www.nps.gov/archive/manz/hrs/hrs9.htm>

President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066¹⁵—would start building their home and gardens at Manzanar War Relocation Center on April 28, 1942.¹⁶ Utilizing indigenous Paiute irrigation techniques and infrastructure that had survived in the valley for hundreds of years, the Nishi family would continue to graft roses and build gardens in the camp “for the enjoyment of the people and to the memory of the time of our residence here,” as one engraved memorial stone explained.¹⁷ Over 15,000 wild rose shoots were planted at the firebreak between Blocks 23 and 33, later earning the garden the name of Rose Park.¹⁸ These plants in addition to rock gardens, small lakes with tumbling waterfalls and traditional Japanese teahouses helped the Nishi family and others who had been unconstitutionally incarcerated at Manzanar endure and resist great injustice.¹⁹

The first town to grace the Owens Valley floor was inhabited by Nü'ma or Owens Valley Paiute Peoples who first entered the valley thousands of years before Manzanar was constructed. Drawn to the region because of the abundant water supplies and food sources, Nü'ma Peoples lived predominantly around the Owens River. They developed advanced irrigation technique complete with ditches and channels that extended for miles to extend water to outlying areas encouraging the cultivation of seed and fruit-bearing plants. By the time the first white colonizers arrived in the region, Nü'ma Peoples had irrigated “nearly all the arable land in that section of the county” as noted by the Indian Affairs Commission’s Indian Agent Warren

¹⁵ FBI Washington DC WGR. Letter to FBI Los Angeles Director. Dec 7 1941. Federal Bureau Of Investigation, U.S. Department of Justice, Communications Section. Retrieved: March 28, 2008. <<http://home.comcast.net/~eo9066/1941/41-12/IA015.html>>

¹⁶ Japanese American National Museum. “REgenerations Oral History Project.”

FBI Washington DC WGR. Letter to FBI Los Angeles Director.

¹⁷ Unrau, Chapter 9.

¹⁸ Burton, Jeffery F., Eleanor Roosevelt, and Irene J. Cohen. *Confinement and Ethnicity: An Overview of World War II Japanese American Relocation Sites*. The Scott and Laurie Oki series in Asian American studies. Seattle: University of Washington Press, September, 2002.

<http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/anthropology74/ce8a.htm>

¹⁹ Levine, Ketznel. “Tending ‘Defiant Gardens’ During Wartime.” National Public Radio, Nation. May 29, 2006. <<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5435131>>

Wasson in 1862.²⁰ Land prospecting in the Owens Valley began with the dawn of Manifest Destiny. Years of colonization and domination replaced Owens Valley Paiute towns with Irrigation Colonies, orchard and farming communities, and later prospects for the Los Angeles Aqueduct. After a long battle over the rights to the water between the rival empires of agricultural and urban development, the city of Los Angeles came out victorious and construction of the 223-mile aqueduct to feed the city's booming population and imperial agenda ensued. The first water rushed down the final channel on November 5, 1913, marking the end to the infamous Owens Valley Water Wars.²¹ It would take less than a decade to dry the great Owens Lake, which at its historic high in 1878, encompassed 110 square miles and was 50 feet deep.²² Without the necessary water supply, the great apple orchards for which Manzanar was named began to wither away; but the stark beauty of the Sierra Nevada Range, brought to life with majestic sunsets every night, remained and became a central draw for urban tourists—promoting the development of the last town to form before the establishment of the Manzanar Concentration Camp.

Manzanar was neither the first instance of forced relocation in the history of the Owens Valley nor the first time that incarceration was tied directly to the region's water flow. These stories are neither unrelated nor coincidental, but rather are different manifestations of domination of people and resources in Owens Valley history. Public agencies including the U.S. military, Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LA DWP) and War Relocation Authority (WRA) have implemented imperial agendas with the

²⁰ Warren Wasson (1863) as quoted in Steward, Julian H. "Basin Plateau Aboriginal Sociopolitical Group." Smithsonian Institute, Bureau of American Ethnology. Vol 120. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1938. (53)

²¹ Nadeua, The Water Seekers, 60–63.

²² Harrington, Bob. "Owens Lake: To Dust Bowl and Back?" *Southwest Hydrology*, Inyo County Water District July/August 2004, p 22—23. Retrieved: February 6, 2009.
<http://www.swhydro.arizona.edu/archive/V3_N4/feature4.pdf>

assistance of federal and local laws and sometimes the President. The systematic exploitation of people of color and low-income communities in the Owens Valley is directly tied to the domination of natural resources—predominantly water—and the building of hegemonic control and empire. These projects were always met with resistance. Although these struggles took on many forms, communities that were being oppressed fought against their domination—often creatively reclaiming and diverting the much sought after water resources. Their collective efforts and liberation struggles also tie together the histories of the Owens Valley. Water is a resource no one can live without, especially not in a desert climate.



I. Defining Histories and Frameworks

The history of the Manzanar Incarceration Camp does not start in 1942; nonetheless, some historians do not look earlier than the 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor to understand its history. The field of Asian American Studies has called for a more comprehensive historical context to understand building tensions within the United States against people of Japanese ancestry, but

often does not incorporate the patterns of unjust relocation and incarceration that occurred within the Owens Valley dating back to the mid 19th century. Environmental historians, who focus on the infamous water wars that plagued the Owens Valley for close to a century, often do not incorporate these “Lost Years” in their analyses.²³ Anthropological accounts of Native American histories do not project forward to see the parallels between what happened to the Nü’ma and people of Japanese ancestry. These stories are intricately and fundamentally linked and by following the flow of water through an Environmental Justice framework, these connections can be best elucidated. Building upon different theoretical frameworks—including interpretations from Asian American Studies, Environmental History, and the National Park Service (NPS)—an Environmental Justice framework provides the opportunity for these disciplines and institutions to be comprehensively incorporated. Although each discipline and institution addresses the history of the Owens Valley from the late nineteenth-century to mid-twentieth, each has constructed different frameworks to analyze the socio-environmental history of Manzanar.²⁴ Unfortunately, these frameworks have largely stayed within their respective fields with little discussion ensuing between Asian American Studies and Environmental History, for example, and these academic perspectives and the NPS. The lack of genuine interdisciplinary work on

²³ *The Lost Years 1942—1946* is the title of book written by Sue Kunitomi Embrey, my grandmother regarding the history of Manzanar.

²⁴ Each discipline offers its own interpretations and corresponding representations that are important in informing current conceptions of the history of the Owens Valley. The field of Asian American Studies, for example, has been fundamental in positioning U.S. based concentration camps during World War II in historical context, including developing comprehensive analyses of how political economies and socio-cultural attitudes of the time contributed to mass incarceration. The history of the Owens Valley water wars concerning the role of power, natural resource distribution, and government, public, and private interests has been covered extensively by environmental historians and widely publicized with the 1974 film *Chinatown*. The National Park Service, while playing a very different role than the two academic fields, stands to “preserves America’s memory” by presenting interpretations of Manzanar from multiple perspectives. This interpretation while drawing on multiple sources shies away from socio-political critiques of institutional and systemic causes of domination. Lynch, Alisa. Personal interview. June 27, 2008.

Manzanar reflects greater disconnects between environmental and social justice movements generally, which is especially noticeable within the institution of academia.²⁵

An Environmental Justice Framework—Review of Literature

Environmental and social justice movements have long histories of mobilizing peoples and developing corresponding ideologies within the United States, however, rarely do these movements and frameworks communicate with one another, let alone collaborate. Within the past three decades, a different and new ideological framework has emerged that links concerns of the social well-being and the environment in ways that had previously not been articulated. This framework is referred to as the environmental justice paradigm (EJP).²⁶ Environmental justice thought has emerged as a major component of the environmental discourse within the past twenty years; however, much of the literature that has been published has focused predominantly on events of the environmental justice movement (EJM) and does not articulate corresponding theoretical frameworks and ideologies. Dr. Dorceta Taylor explains: “Despite the fact that the EJM has profound effects on environmental research, policy making, and the environmental movement, little attention has been paid to the ideological foundations of the EJM.”²⁷ In the following section, I will outline major theoretical ideologies that correspond to the EJP as defined by two main theorists—Dr. Dorceta Taylor and Dr. David Pellow, both major activist-scholars in the field of Environmental Justice.

²⁵ The lack of interdisciplinary work between academic fields of ethnic studies and environmental studies is rooted in the same issues that are analyzed within an environmental justice paradigm. The discipline of environmental history as part of the mainstream environmental movement has continually ignored people of color, rendering both people of color and issues that disproportionately impact communities of color invisible. This has been extensively discussed by environmental justice theorists including: Robert Bullard, Dorceta Taylor, Luke Cole, Sheila Foster, David Pellow, Robert Brulle, Bunyan Bryant, Elaine Hockman, Sherry Cable, Tamara Mix, and Donald Hastings.

²⁶ Taylor, Dorceta. “The Rise of the Environmental Justice Paradigm: Injustice Framing and the Social Construction of Environmental Discourses.” American Behavioral Scientist Vol 43, No 4. January 2000. p 508-580

²⁷ Taylor, 508.

Taylor begins her article, “The Rise of the Environmental Justice Paradigm: Injustice Framing and the Social Construction of Environmental Discourses,” by defining some key components of her argument, perhaps most importantly, that she uses a social-constructionist perspective. This perspective defines paradigms as “ideological packages expressing bodies of thought and change over time and according to the actors developing the paradigms.”²⁸ The environment is also understood as a social construction, and so she argues “environmental problems,” accordingly are actually “social problems.”²⁹ Taylor continues by outlining different ways of categorizing social movements and social structures, and defines four general types of movements that can be identified: “(a) alternative, (b) reformative, (c) redemptive, and (d) transformative.” “The alternative movement” she explains, “seeks partial change in individuals,” with examples such as self-help movements concerning alcohol or drug addiction. The redemptive movement, on the other hand, “seeks total change at the individual level because social ills are rooted in individual behavior and beliefs.” Examples including religious movements and cults often use this approach. Movements that seek to make greater social change often either fit into the classification of reformative or transformative movements, where the former seeks “limited or incremental changes in the system” and the latter “seeks broad or sweeping changes in the social structure and its ideological foundation.”³⁰ Within these definitions, Taylor defines the mainstream environmental movement as reformative and social movements such as EJM as transformative. This categorical system allows the ideologies and goals of each respective movement to be understood more comprehensively and analyzed accordingly.

²⁸ Ibid. 508

²⁹ Environmental problems are further defined as “socially constructed claims defined through collective processes.” Taylor, 509

³⁰ Taylor, 521

The way these movements are framed, that is “the process by which individuals and groups identify, interpret, and express social and political grievances,” also exposes important components of the ideologies behind the mainstream environmental movement and the environmental justice movement.³¹ While environmental activists have used frameworks and arguments that highlight injustice for more than a century, the way that these issues have typically been articulated is limited. This is aligned with the general type of movement that the mainstream environmental movement falls into, which does not seek fundamental structural change. Taylor continues to explain how activists from preservationists to conservationists, including George Perkins Marsh, John Muir, T. Gilbert Perkins, Gifford Pinchot, Aldo Leopold, and Robert Marshall, and more recently Rachel Carson, have used ideologies that acknowledge injustices; however, they are predominantly framed in the context of “humans harming nature and the inequalities of intergenerational and intra-generational resource consumption.”³² One of the most recent articulations of the injustice frame within the greater environmental movement has come from environmental justice activist-theorists. There is a fundamental difference in the way that the EJM has constructed its environmental framing, however, in that unlike previous movements, the injustice frame is made explicit—“a master frame so to speak.” Taylor explains: “It is the first sector of the environmental movement to examine the human-human and human-nature relationships through the lens of race, class, and gender.”³³ By examining the “simultaneity of oppression”—the concept that domination can arise from multiple sources that are interlocking and inseparable—the EJM exposes “how discrimination results in humans harming each other, how racial minorities bear the brunt of discrimination, and how

³¹ Taylor, 511

³² Taylor, 522

³³ Ibid. 523

discriminatory practices hasten the degradation of the environments.”³⁴ Incorporating analyses of the actions of corporate and governmental on the aggrieved communities is also another critical component to this framework.³⁵

Most researchers of environmental activism and the environmental movement focus their analyses on historical accounts that advance a single dominant narrative. This narrative, which Taylor refers to as the wilderness/wildlife/recreation path, focuses primarily on issues of wilderness preservation, wildlife conservation, habitat protection, and outdoor recreation. Accordingly, this branch of environmentalism is predominantly chosen by middle-class, White males, although more middle-class, White females also became participants as the 20th century progressed, because of their positionality (social location) within history and has developed a strong reform agenda. Taylor explains that this narrative and corresponding paradigm is “currently the dominant sector of the environmental movement” and therefore referred to as mainstream environmentalism.³⁶ Environmental experiences of people of color are notably different from that of Whites, Taylor explains. Therefore, it is not surprising that the ways people of color engage in environmental activism differ from those constructed by middle- and working-class Whites.³⁷ These phenomena can be tracked back to historical relationships between Whites, people of color, and the land.

Throughout history, Whites have accumulated and controlled resources by appropriating land and labor and by controlling the movement of people of color. In addition, the period of conquest was characterized by destruction of indigenous cultural systems. Whites, however, were free to express themselves and develop the kind of relationships with the land as they saw fit. Although some exploited the land, others sought alternative ways of relating to the land. The latter developed paradigms to reflect their beliefs. People of color did not have these choices. Since the 17th century, people of color have been enslaved, pushed onto reservations, forcibly removed from their territories, interned,

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Taylor, 525

³⁷ Taylor, 533

or made to toil under harsh conditions (with limited opportunities for upward mobility). In fact, if land was not appropriated from people of color through treaties, warfare or “purchase,” there were a variety of legal and crooked means through which they lost land or were prevented from acquiring it.³⁸

Accordingly, environmental discourses of people of color are framed around three key concepts: autonomy or self-determination, land rights, and civil or human rights.³⁹ These struggles are not found in any meaningful way within the mainstream environmental movement and are often disregarded as irrelevant to environmental activism. Freedom and autonomy were privileges that White men who had access to wealth who were (and still are) responsible for the construction of mainstream environmental paradigms had taken for granted.⁴⁰

Struggles of environmental justice have been critical components in the politics and activism of communities of color for centuries, although previously may have not been labeled as such. Taylor explains: “The historical record shows that since the 1800s, people of color have tried to improve housing conditions among slaves, have opposed the abrogation of treat rights and the sharecropping system, have gone to extreme lengths to acquire land, and have fought for worker rights.”⁴¹ This history and legacy of working for equitable and just access to and control over environmental goods and resources has continued steadily for the centuries and materialized into its own comprehensive movement with increased momentum and visibility under the name of Environmental Justice in the early 1970s and late 1980s.⁴² Terms including environmental racism, environmental injustice, and environmental equity (which was later replaced with environmental justice) emerged simultaneously as activists, scholars, and policy makers began dedicating their attention and resources to these concerns.

³⁸ Taylor, 533-534

³⁹ Taylor 533

⁴⁰ Taylor, 534

⁴¹ Taylor, 534-535

⁴² Pellow, David and Robert J Brulle. “Power, Justice, and the Environment: Toward Critical Environmental Justice Studies.” *Power, Justice and the Environment: A Critical Appraisal of the Environmental Justice Movement* Ed. David Pellow and Robert J Brulle. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2005. 7

Several ground-breaking studies were conducted that explored the relationship between race and the distribution of/exposure to environmental hazards: U.S. General Account Office (US GAO) report in 1983 and the United Church of Christ (UCC) report *Toxic Waste and Race in the United States* published in 1987.⁴³ These studies explicitly connected the increased likelihood of being exposed to toxic waste and other hazard environmental conditions on the basis of race in the United States. In addition to mounting EJ activism and literature, these publications stood as the foundation for organizing The 1991 First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in Washington D.C. It was at this conference where over 1,000 activists from across the United States and the world gathered to discuss the future of the EJ movement and define The *Principles of Environmental Justice* were defined.⁴⁴

The *Principles of Environmental Justice* are the backbone for the EJ movement, Taylor argues, and accordingly should be the center for an environmental justice ideological framework that explicitly links ecological, labor, and social justice concerns will emerge. Ranging from local, regional, national, to international in scope and crossing racial and social class lines, the *Principles* can be organized according to six major thematic components: (a) ecological principles; (b) justice and environmental rights; (c) autonomy/self-determination; (d) corporate-community relations; (e) policy, politics, and economic pressures; and (f) social movement

⁴³ U.S. Government Accounting Office (GAO), *Siting of Hazardous Waste Landfills and Their Correlation with Racial and Economic Status of Surrounding Communities* (GAO/RCED-83-168) (U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1983)

United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice, *Toxic Waste and Race in the United States: A National Report on the Racial and Socioeconomic Characteristics of Communities with Hazardous Wastes Sites* (Public Access, New York, 1987)

The UCC has published an updated version of this initial report, *Toxic Waste and Race at 20* which can be found at: <http://www.ucc.org/assets/pdfs/toxic20.pdf>

⁴⁴ The Principles of Environmental Justice can be found in the Appendix A. National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit. The Principles of Environmental Justice. Washington DC. October 27, 1991.

<<http://www.ejnet.org/ej/principles.html>>

building.⁴⁵ Within these six major thematic categories, smaller components and themes (which constitute minor frames) emerge and contribute to further refining the framing of the issues. Taylor argues that together the master frame and minor frames of the EJP comprise a very complex ideological body of thought.⁴⁶

Some of the minor themes present within these six components are important to expound upon as they directly relate to the purpose and framework of this thesis.⁴⁷ Issues of environmental justice are grounded in eco-centric principles and affirm the unity and interdependence of all species. Recognizing the historic and current patterns of inequitable distribution of environmental resources, the *Principles* call for fair access to the full range of resources. Concurrently, issues of justice—including the rights to clean air, land, water, and food; the right to be free from human experimentation and ecological destruction; and the right to live, work, and play in clean and safe environments—are all affirmed by the *Principles*. Autonomy plays a significant role in the EJP, especially as it relates to the recognizing of treaties between indigenous peoples and the U.S. government. Similarly, self-determination—“the rights of people of color to determine their own political, economic, and cultural futures”—also involves processes of reflection and self-healing. Directly opposing military occupation, political repression, and exploitation of people and natural resources, the *Principles* call for the end of domination from government institutions and corporate industries alike, and advocates for strong social-movement building efforts to further these goals.⁴⁸ The environmental justice paradigm (re)envisions and (re)constructs ideologies from environmental and social justice frameworks

⁴⁵ Taylor, 539-539

⁴⁶ Taylor, 539

⁴⁷ For a full overview of these minor themes, please reference Appendix B.

⁴⁸ Taylor, 542

into a comprehensive master framework that can, and must, be integrated into discourses on social-environmental concerns.

Dr. David Pellow constructs his environmental justice framework differently than Dr. Taylor; while recognizing the centrality of the *Principles*, Pellow instead chooses to focus his framework on three key phenomena he notices across EJ struggles. In his article, “Environmental Inequality Formation,” Pellow argues that before discussing environmental justice frameworks, working definitions of terms environmental racism and environmental injustice, environmental justice, and environmental inequality must be clearly established.⁴⁹ One of the few examples where a scholar defines these terms is in Bunyan Bryant’s book *Environmental Justice* (1995). He defines environmental racism as follows:

It is an extension of racism. It refers to those institutional rules, regulations, and policies of government or corporate decisions that deliberately target certain communities for less desirable land uses, resulting in the disproportionate exposure of toxic and hazardous waste on communities based upon prescribed biological characteristics. Environmental racism is the unequal protection against toxic and hazardous waste exposure and the systematic exclusion of people of color from decisions affecting their communities.⁵⁰

This phenomenon is an example of environmental injustice, which addresses the burdening of a particular social group not necessarily racially determined with environmental hazards. Pellow continues to define what EJM activists fight for, that is—environmental justice, again by quoting Bryant:

Environmental Justice (EJ)... refers to those cultural norms and values, rules, regulations, behaviors, policies, and decisions to support sustainable communities where people can interact with confidence that the environment is safe, nurturing, and productive. Environmental Justice is served when people can realize their highest potential... EJ is supported by decent paying safe jobs; quality schools and recreation; decent housing and adequate health care; democratic decision-making and personal empowerment; and communities free of violence, drugs, and poverty. These are communities where both

⁴⁹ Pellow, David. “Environmental Inequality Formation: Towards a Theory of Environmental Injustice.” *American Behavioral Science* 43, 4:581-601. 2001.

⁵⁰ Bryant, (1995) 6; cited from Pellow, 582.

cultural and biological diversity are respected and highly revered and where distributed justice prevails.⁵¹

While environmental racism is focused on problem identification, environmental justice focuses on problem solving, Pellow explains.

A third term, however, that is used less frequently within the discourse on environmental justice is environmental inequality. Pellow argues that this term while focusing on “broader dimensions of the intersections between environmental quality and social hierarchies, ... addresses more structural questions that focus on social inequity (the unequal distribution of power and resources in society) and environmental burdens.” This definition expands environmental racism not only to mention the impact of toxic and hazardous waste distribution on racially defined communities, but also to include the inequitable distribution of environmental goods and harms to specific social groups. Pellow argues that analyses of environmental inequality should be at the center of the environmental justice paradigm—in a process he calls environmental inequality formation.

When addressing questions of how environmental inequality in general and environmental racism in particular emerge and are produced, Pellow explains that overly simplistic ‘perpetrator-victim scenarios’ often emerge as the explanations. “Scholars have argued that environmental inequalities occur when the poor or people of color are dumped on or exposed to hazards because they are less powerful than corporations and the state.”⁵² Although much of this explanation may be correct, it ignores important details including the role of key players, historical context, and significant variability that is presented in different cases. Pellow’s environmental inequality formation (EIF) has three major components: “(a) the need to redefine environmental inequality as a sociohistorical process rather than simply viewing it as a discrete

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Pellow, 587

event... (b) the need to understand that environmental inequality involved multiple stakeholder groups with contradictory and shifting interests and allegiances rather than simply viewing environmental inequality as the result of perpetrator-victim scenarios... and (c) viewing ecology of hazardous production and consumption through a life-cycle analysis...rather than focusing only on one location or site of conflict.”⁵³ The EIF perspective reconceptualizes environmental inequality as a process (contributing the use of the word formation) thereby exposing theories, methodologies, and policies inherent in this framework.

Pellow argues that environmental inequalities are continually evolving over time as hazards, resources, and people shift in their spatial locations and visibilities; all the while, they are continually subjected to ongoing social constructions by different stakeholders.⁵⁴ Analyzing multiple stakeholder activity can expose how environmental inequalities are not always simply imposed unilaterally by one stakeholder on another, but instead emerge out of complex processes involving negotiations and conflict between many stakeholders. Pellow continues to explain that by incorporating a dimension of agency in this analysis forces a reconfiguration from the perspective of would-be victims, targets, or survivors. Explaining, “many scholarly accounts of environmental inequality are problematic because they present the target populations of environmental inequality as simply passive, reactive, or invisible... [The EIF perspective] is a model wherein many stakeholders are viewed in their full complexity and would-be victims become active agents in resisting and shaping environmental inequalities as they emerge.”⁵⁵ The final component of this framework is the incorporation of the life-cycle analysis, which requires scholars to examine the full costs and benefits—that is the ecology—of production and consumption. “Because people and ecosystems are affected at every point along the production-

⁵³ Pellow 588

⁵⁴ Pellow, 590

⁵⁵ Pellow, 549

consumption continuum, we are in need of a life-cycle approach to environmental inequality,” Pellow explains.⁵⁶ Life cycle analyses under EIF incorporate not only ecological impacts, but would account for social, political, and economic consequences as well.

The EIF framework allows “*all of history*” to be reinterpreted from an environmental inequality perspective. Far from a contemporary problem, Pellow explains: “since the dawn of human history environmental inequality has been with us. It did not begin with the production of toxic waste in the post-World War II era. Similarly, everyday and popular resistance to environmental inequalities did not begin with the anti-toxics and environmental justice movements of the 1970s and 1980s. As long as there has been environmental inequality, there has been resistance to it.”⁵⁷ Placing contemporary struggles in historical contexts helps scholars and activists better understand the systemic ways environmental inequalities reproduce themselves. In conclusion, Pellow explains: “EIF occurs when different stakeholders struggle for access to scarce resources within the political economy, and the benefits and costs of those resources become distributed unevenly.”⁵⁸ Pellow’s comprehensive and systematic model articulates a clear approach to better understanding environmental justice frameworks, thereby allowing theoretical claims and knowledge about the environmental justice movement to be collectively documented.

Both Dr. Dorceta Taylor and Dr. David Pellow provide groundbreaking theoretical contributions to developing environmental justice frameworks, an area that has been largely ignored by environmental justice (EJ) scholars and activists. While Taylor focuses specifically on issued based components, naming six key topics that were outlined at the 1991 National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, Pellow posits a new way of constructing EJ

⁵⁶ Pellow, 595

⁵⁷ Pellow, 591-592

⁵⁸ Pellow, 589

frameworks around elements of EJ struggles—that of the environmental inequality formation (EIF). Dr. Barbara Deutsch Lynch also calls for more research by EJ scholars on diverse environmental discourse that emerge in marginalized communities. She argues:

“If environmental discourses are culturally grounded, they will differ in content along class and ethnic lines. Where power in society is unequally distributed, not all environmental discourses will be heard equally. Thus, questions of environmental justice must address not only the effects of particular land uses or environmental policies on diverse groups in society, but the likelihood that alternative environmental discourse will be heard and valued. As Wilson concludes, ‘the culture of nature—the ways we think, teach, talk about, and construct the natural world—is as important a terrain for struggle as the land itself.’”⁵⁹

Throughout this thesis, major components from these theoretical frameworks will be integrated and applied to incorporate issues from multiple disciplines; analyzing the key concepts of agency and socio-historical context that are highlighted by Pellow along with the focus on multiple sites of EJ struggles by Taylor help construct an environmental justice discourse in the Owens Valley.

Critical Race Theory and Historical Perspectives

Although these two environmental justice frameworks highly influence the organization and theoretical application that I use throughout this thesis, disciplines of critical race theory and transnational feminist theory also have played a formative role in constructing how I approach history and the institution of the academy. Pellow calls for EJ struggles to be placed in socio-historical context, however, he provides very little explanation for how to apply this process. Here is when I turn to departments of Ethnic Studies and Gender & Women Studies, and to a lesser but still significant degree Queer Studies, to help construct my historical analysis. Key components that are highlighted within these disciplines include the importance of analyzing the historical constructions of race and gender as a ranking system. Through multiple critiques of the

⁵⁹ Lynch, Barbara Deutsch. “The Garden and the Sea: U.S. Latino Environmental Discourses and Mainstream Environmentalism.” *Social Problems*, Vol. 40, No. 1. University of California Press on behalf of the Society for the Study of Social Problems Special Issue on Environmental Justice (February 1993). 110
<<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3097029?seq=6>>

historical construction of race, patterns emerge that tie white supremacist paradigms with global systems of capitalism, colonialism and imperialism, patriarchy, and heteronormativity. These interlocking systems of domination infiltrate the history of the Owens Valley and must be directly addressed accordingly.⁶⁰ Another critical component that is highlighted in these disciplines is a critique of the construction of “legitimate” knowledge. Despite claims by mainstream paradigms, knowledge is never a meaningless, apolitical process of the simple telling of the ‘truth.’ Within the academy, limitations on what is deemed appropriate and relevant are imposed in hegemonic ways. Furthermore, problematic representations (especially of people of color, women, non-citizens, low-income people, queers, and other marginalized communities) are normalized in culture to signify white supremacist, capitalist, patriarchal and heteronormative meanings. The interrogation of mainstream representations and incorporation of unconventional forms of knowledge—predominantly in the form of creative expression—are incorporated as critical elements of this project. For a more comprehensive overview of these theories, please see Appendix C.

This project also has great personal significance to me as it includes my family history. My family including my grandmother, Sue Kunitomi Embrey, her siblings and her mother were incarcerated at the Manzanar Concentration Camp. The extent of the impact this event had on their lives is unfathomable and after years of silence, my grandmother was driven to dedicate her life to preserving this history. Throughout my academic experiences at Pomona College, I have often had to turn to classes specifically listed under Ethnic Studies (both Asian American studies and Chican@/Latin@ Studies) to learn about my family’s history and struggle. Although this has recently began to change as more courses in environmental studies thoughtfully incorporate

⁶⁰ Although these interlocking systems of domination permeate the entire history of the region, in this analysis I directly address the impacts of white supremacy, capitalism and colonialism in constructing the history, with some discussion of patriarchy as well.

histories of people of color, this thesis is part of a larger demand calling for the further integration of these histories and voices within the discipline of Environmental Analysis.

II. To a Place Like This: Applying and (Re)Constructing Environmental Justice Frameworks

For the purpose of this thesis, I will apply the major theoretical components of EJ frameworks and critical race theory to a historical analysis of the water transfers and patterns of forced relocation in the Owens Valley. Key thematic concepts from the Principles of Environmental Justice emerge in the historical struggles for autonomy, access and control over water resources, and emancipation from unconstitutional incarceration. Resistance efforts are linked to other historical manifestations of struggles for environmental justice throughout the decades as well as to current activist fights. The three main components from Environmental Inequality Formation (EIF) are extensively incorporated into the sociohistorical analysis of the Owens Valley. The dynamic and sometimes contradictory character of stakeholders, perhaps more appropriately called historical actors, is woven throughout the narrative of forced relocation and incarceration, where previously exploited communities are driven to support the exploitation of the next. Ecological and social impacts of transferring water resources around and out of the Owens Valley are analyzed in a life-cycle assessment, tying together social, environmental and political histories.

Applying an environmental justice framework also demands a (re)definition and (re)construction of theory and knowledge. Critiques of interlocking systems of domination must be incorporated into all disciplines, not simply fields of Ethnic Studies (including Asian American Studies, Black Studies, Chican@ Latin@ Studies, and Native American studies) Gender and Women Studies, Queer Studies, and other departments/courses developed by/about

marginalized peoples.⁶¹ The uses of representations and language in signifying meaning are especially important to investigate and interrogate in these disciplines in order to analyze and interrupt the functions of power within the production of knowledge. Voices and histories of people of color are re-centered throughout this thesis, with oral histories and journal reflections providing invaluable resources and insights into the experiences of relocated and incarcerated peoples. By fostering the development of critical consciousness, the production of more *just* knowledge as opposed to “legitimate” knowledge is promoted. When critical thinking and critique as opposed to regurgitation and mimicry is validated in educational institutions, questions regarding who is producing knowledge and about whom are brought to the forefront of discourse in academia. Environmental justice frameworks recognize the role of institutionally enforced racist hiring practices within institutions of higher learning, for example, as contributing to the systematic silencing of people of color’s voices within mainstream disciplines.

There is great power in language. Throughout this thesis, words and terminologies that may not be typically implemented in analyses of environmental history are incorporated to connect theoretical principles from various disciplines. Some terms and concepts that require additional explanation include the use of the word environment. Environmental justice advocates have constructed a much broader definition of “environment” than is typically used in mainstream environmental movements to include “where we live, where we work, where we

⁶¹ Anthropology, biology, sociology, history, economics, politics, and environmental studies alike are disciplines that are directly connected to a history of reproducing interlocking systems of domination, especially those in regard to the construction of race as a ranking system, in order to maintain power structures in society.⁶¹ The power of the institution of academia is in part produced from its construction of legitimate knowledge, which in turn becomes normalized parts of culture. Within this, the knowledge of, by, for, and about white(nes)s is constructed as more valuable⁶¹ and normative, while people of color are made invisible and silenced or presented for the purpose of comparison to white(nes)s within mainstream discourses.

play, and where we learn.”⁶² This definition more appropriately aligns with the goals of environmental justice since it demands the preservation and protection of homes and communities in conjunction with natural landscapes.⁶³ The process of integrating traditional indigenous names to the Owens Valley is another way language is used to produce just knowledge, although resources documenting Paiute language are very limited. In regard to Manzanar, the terms “concentration camp” (as opposed to “relocation center” or “internment camp”) and “prisoner” (as opposed to “internee”) are employed to contextualize Manzanar in a history of patterns of forced relocation and incarceration in the Owens Valley during a time of strong anti-Japanese sentiment. Much debate has ensued over the use of this terminology since historical preservation efforts for Manzanar began, however, the use of the term concentration camp has a strong history in relation to Manzanar; individuals and publications including: President Franklin D. Roosevelt (10/20/42, 11/21/44), President Harry S. Truman (4/59), General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Assistant Chief of Staff (3/28/42), Attorney General Francis Biddle (12/3/44), Life Magazine (4/6/42), San Francisco Chronicle, front page editorial (2/1/42), U.S. Supreme Court Justices, and congressmen all employed this terminology during the years that Manzanar was under operation.⁶⁴ Donna Nagata explains the use of the term “relocation camp” is a euphemism that ignores the material conditions of incarceration that “actually fit the definition of a concentration camp.”⁶⁵ Even less common is the dialogue regarding the use of the term “prisoner” to reference the 117,000 unconstitutionally incarcerated people of Japanese ancestry. The Merriam Webster Dictionary defines prisoner as “a person deprived of liberty and

⁶² Cole, Luke W., and Sheila R. Foster. From the Ground Up: Environmental Racism and the Rise of the Environmental Justice Movement. Critical America. New York: New York University Press, 2001. 16

⁶³ Another great resource analyzing terms of wilderness and wildness is:

Cronon, William. The Trouble with Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature. New York: Norton, 1995.

⁶⁴ For continued discussion of the use of this terminology, please reference R. Daniels (1986) and publications such as: <<http://www.pbs.org/weekendexplorer/california/mammoth/manzanar.htm>>

⁶⁵ Nagata, Donna. “Coping with Internment: A Nisei Woman’s Perspective.” Women Creating Lives Ed. Carole E Franz and Abigail L Stewart. Boulder: Westview Press Inc. 1994.

kept under involuntary restraint, confinement, or custody.”⁶⁶ This definition describes exactly the circumstances under which people were incarcerated at Manzanar and is much more powerful at exposing the severity of the situation than the term “internee.”

Prisoners at Manzanar Concentration Camp and other marginalized communities who endured environmental inequity in the Owens Valley were not simply victims but survivors who engaged in resistance. While taking on many forms, this resistance often presented itself as creative expression. These non-traditional forms of knowledge including visual art, poetry, gardens, and other forms of creative expression are redefined to be included as theory in this history. Self-identified Black, lesbian, feminist, poet, warrior Audre Lorde theorizes on the crucial quality of poetry for resistance struggles, explaining: “Poetry is an absolute necessity of our living because it delineates...all the rest has been programmed. We have been taught how to understand, and in terms that will insure not creativity, but the status quo.”⁶⁷ She continues to argue that poetry is an essential tool for women’s survival:

For women, then, poetry is not a luxury. It is a vital necessity of our existence. It forms the quality of the light within which we predicate our hopes and dreams toward survival and change, first made into language, then into idea, then into more tangible action. Poetry is the way we help give name to the nameless so it can be thought. The farthest horizons of our hopes and fears are cobbled by our poems, carved from the rock experiences of our daily lives.⁶⁸

Many survivors of Japanese and Japanese American World War II concentration camps have written poetry—in mainstream publications, within Asian American writers collectives, and within the comfort or confines of their homes; in English, Japanese, and a combination of both languages, to process their collective and personal experiences of incarceration. These words function as a survival guide for a generation who was forced to live behind barbed wire on the

⁶⁶ “Prisoner” Merriam-Webster. 11th edition. 2009 <<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/prisoner>>

⁶⁷ Hammond, Karla. “An Interview with Audre Lorde.” *American Poetry Review* March/April 1980: 18-21.

⁶⁸ Lorde, Audre. “Poetry Is Not a Luxury.” *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. Freedom, CA: Crossing Press, 1984. 36-39

basis of their racially defined identities. Descendants of Nü'ma Peoples have also written poetry, words that (re)write their families into existence and keep alive creation myths and memories of colonization. These poems help current generations heal from historical wrongs. The words and theories expressed throughout many of these poems are integrated directly into this thesis as a way of redefining theory to incorporate creative expressions and marginalized peoples' voices. The resistance struggles that met the domination and power at every step of the way from colonization till unconstitutional incarceration are another central theme throughout Owens Valley history.

Following in the footsteps of my grandmother, Sue Kunitomi Embrey, I analyze patterns of forced relocation and incarceration on and off of the land in conjunction with the flow of water in and out of the Owens Valley. Chapter 1 focuses on the indigenous history of this region, outlining the legends of the Nü'ma or Owens Valley Paiute Peoples in relation to the abundant water resource before and after colonial encounters. This chapter of history exposes the foundation for subsequent relocation and incarceration efforts in the valley, as well as resistance techniques implemented in environmental justice struggles. Chapter 2 continues with the legacy of empire building that ensued in relation to the distribution of water resources between competing agricultural and urban developments in Southern California. Key stakeholders, including the federal and local governments and residents of the Owens Valley and Los Angeles area, help set the stage to make the valley an "ideal" location for the construction of a WWII Concentration Camp. Chapter 3 primarily focuses on the direct historical context for Manzanar in relation to the history of people of Japanese ancestry in the United States and responses that various stakeholders had to a proposal for a concentration camp, while Chapter 4 outlines how

those Japanese and Japanese-Americans incarcerated in the Owens Valley ultimately used water as a means of resistance. By following the flow of water, the patterns of forced relocation, incarceration and labor that make ripples in Owens Valley history are ultimately exposed as inseparable (intricately and fundamentally linked) stories.



69

⁶⁹ <http://www.owensvalleyhistory.com/manzanar6/manzanar05.jpg>

Chapter 1: A Legend of the People: (Re)framing Nü'ma History 1000—1900

*I'll tell you of the Paiute,
Of a legend of the People.
Where they stood, stared in fascination
In terror and consternation.
Where a bird like creature rose above water,
The rising misty water.
'twas the image of NATA-GO-SHA,
The terror of the waters.
From the depths of the pot holes or volcanos [sic]
Where forth come those eery [sic] voices.
Those sounds of bloody screeching,
A screaming 'mid the willows,
Thrashing in the tules
On the margin of the water,
On the mirror smooth waters.
The sounds, roaring up the canyons,
Echoing in the pine trees.
Hearing was believing,
Seeing was deceiving,
So terrible was the creature
That lived in the still and misty waters.*
Namu, *A Legend of the People*⁷⁰

The Nü'ma (Owens Valley Paiute Peoples) lived in the environmentally diverse and resource abundant Owens Valley River bed region for thousands of years before white settlers colonized their lands.⁷¹ Although there is some debate on whether these peoples met Spanish conquistadors, their encounter with fur trappers and surveyors in the mid-1820s and ranching and farming communities throughout the latter half of 19th century is extensively documented.⁷²

Paiute poet Namu describes her ancestor's reaction to these colonizers who infiltrated the Owens

⁷⁰ Namu (Putname, Yvonne). *Footsteps in the Sun*. Yuma, Arizona: Southwest Printers, 1967. (11)

⁷¹ Sited next to Mt. Whitney, the tallest peak in the continental United States, in one of the most volcanic regions in California; these peoples lived on in an environmentally diverse area abundant with pine nuts, obsidian quarries, and perhaps most importantly—water.

⁷¹ Dean, Sharon E. et al. *Weaving a Legacy: Indian baskets & the people of Owens Valley, California*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press. 2004.

⁷² Pritzker, Barry. *A Native American Encyclopedia: History, Culture, and Peoples*. New York, Oxford University Press, 2000. (227)
Dean, 16.

Valley, bringing with them herds of cattle, the U.S. Army and disease, by retelling a Paiute legend of Nata-go-sha, “[t]he terror of the waters.”⁷³ Repeating the Nü’ma oral history tradition, Namu retells the story of the terrible creature that dwelled in the Owens Lake while drawing symbolism between it and the recently arrived colonizers. The precious environmental resources in the valley on which Paiute Peoples depended were trampled and devoured by cattle, appropriated and privatized by white settlers, forcing the indigenous communities to develop new ways to survive.

In this chapter I reframe Nü’ma history and examine the correlation between environmental resource exploitation and a history of genocide and colonization, while re-centering indigenous voices and experiences. Anthropologists including Julian Steward (1933) and Sharon Dean (2004) have studied Nü’ma Peoples but often designate them as “objects of study”⁷⁴ as opposed to active producers with agency. In this chapter, I hope to restore some of the agency by incorporating Paiute oral histories into the text, especially focusing on stories of resistance to forced relocation and labor exploitation. Finally after setting the historical context of the late 19th century colonization of the Owens Valley, I analyze the representations of these indigenous peoples within dominant ideologies as constructed by some anthropologists and environmental historians.⁷⁵ Throughout this chapter, I have only begun to unpack some of the issues that presented themselves for both indigenous Paiute peoples and newly arrived white

⁷³ Namu. Footsteps in the Sun. (11)

⁷⁴ Mihesuah, Devon Abbott. Natives and Academics: Researching and Writing about American Indians. University of Nebraska Press, 1998. (x)

⁷⁵ For the purpose of this thesis, I have analyzed the following texts:

Bahr, Diana. Viola Martinez, California Paiute: Living in Two Worlds (2003)

Dean Sharon E, et al. Weaving a Legacy: Indian Baskets & the People of Owens Valley, California. (2004)

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miners, ranchers, and farmers; a much more in depth analysis of this time is necessary to produce a just history.⁷⁶

I. Nü'ma History and Irrigation Techniques (Pre-1830s)

The indigenous peoples who are now subsumed under the name Owens Valley Paiute⁷⁷ include at least forty distinct groups that lived in the Owens Valley region for approximately ten thousand years prior to the colonization of the western United States.⁷⁸ Referring to themselves as “Nü'ma” or “Nünü”, meaning “The People,”⁷⁹ groups of Paiutes lived in cooperative band organizations that shared a common name, system of governance, and ownership based system for distributing territory.⁸⁰ These self-sustaining communities developed from the abundance of natural resources in the region, especially the plentiful water that flowed in snow-fed streams down from the Sierra Nevada.⁸¹ Water played a significant role in determining where Owens

⁷⁶ For a more comprehensive analysis of this please see John Walton's Conquest and Incorporation Chapter in Western Times and Water Wars.

⁷⁷ According to anthropological classifications, Owens Valley Paiutes are part of a greater collection of Northern Paiute peoples who shared similar language patterns living throughout regions in California, Nevada, and Oregon.

⁷⁸ Steward (1933) gives the following names for forty communities in the Owens Valley:

Ahagwa, on Division Creek. Antelope Springs, native name not recorded. Hudu matu, on Cottonwood Creek. Hunadudugo, camp near Wyman Creek. Ka'nasi, camp at Dead Horse Meadow on Wyman Creek. Mogahu' pina, scattered along Hogback, Lone Pine, Tuttle, and Diez Creeks. Mogohopinan watu, on Richter Creek. Muhu witu, on Tinnemaha Creek. Nataka' matu, at Independence. Nuvahu' matu, near Thibaut Creek. Oza'n witu, southeast of Deep Springs Lake. Padohahu matu, on Goodale Creek. Pahago watu, on Tuttle Creek. Pakwazi' natu, at Olancha. Pa'natu, on Owens River, near mouth of Birch Creek. Pau'wahapu, at Hines Spring. Pawona witu, on Bishop Creek below Bishop. Pa'yapo'o'ha, south of Bishop. Pazi'wapi'nwuna, at Independence. Posi'da witu, on Baker Creek. Suhubadopa, at Fish Springs Creek, at least in prehistoric times. Suhu'budu mutu, on Carroll Creek. Suvuvakwazi natu, on Wyman Creek. Tanova witu, south of Independence. Ti'numaha witu, on Tinnemaha Creek. To'owiawatu, at Symmes Creek. Totsitupi, on Thibaut Creek. To'vowaha'matu, at Big Pine on Big Pine Creek. Tsagapu witu, at Shepherd Creek. Tsaki'shaduka, near Old Fort Independence. Tsaksha witu, at Fort Independence. Tsa'wawua'a, on Bishop Creek. Tsigoki, beyond Owens ranch, east of Bishop. Tuhunitogo, near upper course of Birch Creek. Tuinu'hu, on Sawmill Creek. Tunwa'pu, at the mouth of Taboose Creek. Tupico, on Birch Creek, west of Hunadudugo. Tupuzi witu, at George's Creek. Waushova witu, on Lone Pine Creek. An unnamed site west of Deep Springs Lake.

Steward, Julian H. Ethnography of the Owens Valley Paiute. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1933.

⁷⁹ Dean, (2)

⁸⁰ Steward, Julian H. “Basin Plateau Aboriginal Sociopolitical Group.” Smithsonian Institute, Bureau of American Ethnology. Vol. 120. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1938. (51)

⁸¹ National Park Service. Cultural Landscape Report: Manzanar National Historic Site. Washington DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2006. (8)

Valley Paiute communities were located and influencing the development of agricultural techniques and typical diets, as well as contributing to the development of higher density Owens Valley Paiute communities compared to neighboring Northern Paiute and Shoshone Peoples. According to some analyses of their naming practices, the word ‘Paiute’ may be translated to “Water Ute”, further articulating the influence water had on these peoples.⁸²



Map of Distribution of Paiutes Peoples in the Owens Valley region⁸³

Nü'ma communities were primarily located along streams near the lower edge of the alluvial fan, approximately two to four miles from the Owens River. These sites afforded them both excellent water resources and all essential food within twenty miles of their communities.⁸⁴ Accomplished horticulturalists, Nü'ma peoples constructed and maintained extensive irrigation

⁸² Indian Tribal Records, Access Genealogy. “Paiute Indian Tribe History”. 2008. Retrieved: April 18, 2008. < <http://www.accessgenealogy.com/native/tribes/paiute/paiutehistory.htm> >

⁸³ Steward. “Basin Plateau Aboriginal Sociopolitical Group.” (55)

⁸⁴ Steward. “Basin Plateau Aboriginal Sociopolitical Group.” (50)

systems throughout the Owens Valley, some dating back to 1000 CE.⁸⁵ This was primarily accomplished by building diversion dams and digging ditches to divert water from Sierra streams to low-lying areas, encouraging the cultivation of seed and fruit bearing plants.⁸⁶ Some of these ditches extended more than several miles in length, extensively covering the region.⁸⁷ Indian Affairs Commission's Indian Agent Warren Wasson noted the widespread distribution of these irrigation systems, as he explained in 1862, "These Indians have dug ditches and irrigated nearly all the arable land in that section of the county."⁸⁸ Through highly developed agricultural techniques, Nü'ma peoples were able to develop a unique and highly organized and sustainable society.

Irrigation systems were highly regulated through a democratic system of governance. Either the *poginabi* (main headman) or *tuvaiguu* (publicly elected irrigator) was responsible for designing, constructing, and maintaining the irrigation systems; s/he would sometimes distribute this work to other members of the community, especially for more complicated projects.⁸⁹ This highly developed irrigation systems was unique to Owens Valley Paiutes. Anthropologist Sharon Dean notes, "Owens Valley Paiute were apparently the only group in the Great Basin to carry out a form of irrigation. The practice was widespread in Owens Valley and well developed by the time of contact with non-Indians."⁹⁰ Paiute peoples effectively manipulated the natural resources in their surrounding environment to develop an advanced society that boomed for years.⁹¹

⁸⁵ Bahr, Diana. Viola Martinez, California Paiute: Living in Two Worlds. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press. 2003. (22)

⁸⁶ Dean. Weaving a Legacy: Indian baskets & the people of Owens Valley, California. (3)

⁸⁷ Ibid (3)

⁸⁸ Warren Wasson (1863) as quoted in Steward, Julian H. "Basin Plateau Aboriginal Sociopolitical Group." (53)

⁸⁹ Dean. Weaving a Legacy: Indian baskets & the people of Owens Valley, California (3)

⁹⁰ Ibid. (3)

⁹¹ This does not, however, prevent anthropologist John H. Steward, who extensively studied Paiute Peoples, from theorizing that irrigation techniques were first developed by Spaniards or "Americans" who entered the valley after the 1850s, stating "Although this irrigation was previously considered to be aboriginal there is some possibility that it was introduced by Americans, who penetrated the valley after 1850, or by Spaniards who had settled at least the

Although much information on the population of Paiute peoples before white colonists arrived is not available, some theories on the influence of water resources on population density of the region have been made. Compared to other Northern Paiute populations, Owens Valley Paiute Peoples lived in more permanent communities, exploiting the natural resources directly surrounding their homes as opposed to traveling very far to gather sustenance goods. Irrigation ditches were directed toward the pine trees and rice grass fields to increase the crops' yield. In the fall, Paiute communities would gather pine nuts in an annual harvest. Discussing its significance in their diet and culture, Sheila Gustie recalls, "They'd make a big family thing out of it. We'd make sure we'd be up there to join in."⁹² The fertility of their surrounding natural environment allowed the region to support a much denser population than in the western region of California.⁹³ Anthropologist Steward notes, "The villages were comparatively large and closely spaced on Owens River and the Sierra streams."⁹⁴ This assertion is reflected in the population estimates of the Owens Valley Paiute Peoples in 1860 with 1,000 people living within a 2,125 square miles area, providing a population density of 1 person every 2.1 square miles, one of the highest among indigenous peoples in the California, Nevada, and Oregon region.⁹⁵ The significance of water on determining the location, diet, agricultural techniques, and population density of Owens Valley Paiute Peoples is clear and continued to influence the decisions of those living in the Owens Valley throughout the late 19th century.⁹⁶

southern portion of it much earlier." (53) He makes this claim directly before quoting Wasson, which functions to question the validity of the statement that Nü'ma Peoples were indeed a developed enough society to implement wide-scale irrigation.

⁹² Bahr. *Viola Martinez, California Paiute: Living in Two Worlds*. (47)

⁹³ Steward. "Basin Plateau Aboriginal Sociopolitical Group." (233)

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* (233-234)

⁹⁵ *Ibid.* (48)

⁹⁶ Please note that throughout the remainder of the text, the term Paiute Peoples is used to refer to only the communities living within the Owens Valley region, not all Northern and Southern Paiute Peoples who live(d) throughout California, Nevada, Oregon, Arizona and Utah.

II. (De)Colonial Struggles (1830s—1900)

The 19th century colonization of the western United States was an operation conceived and implemented by the government, using military force and politico-economic policy. Waves of settlers, miners, traders, ranchers, and soldiers alike invaded the Owens Valley, systematically displacing and exploiting the indigenous Paiute Peoples who lived in the region. These parties were often sent explicitly by the state as part of its “colonial mode of domination.”⁹⁷

Colonization in the American West manifested itself in ways similar to European expansion, with the indigenous community subdued by force and their land and labor exploited in the interest of a foreign political and economic power. This government-initiated system incorporated the colonized land and peoples as the dominant suppliers of commodities to metropolitan monopolies, thereby creating a system of dependency that is executed by a settler population. Furthermore, the local frontier economy was insecure, as profits were continually exported to urban, national, and international markets and local growth suppressed. This left the settler population, functional pawns in the game of conquest, without comparative profit or power, further promoting the execution of an ideology that constructed a social order in which settlers are superior.⁹⁸ Ideologies of conquest by institutional forces and on local levels to dominate indigenous peoples and land function simultaneously in cooperation with each other to construct the Colonial West.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Walton, John. Western Times and Water Wars: State, Culture, and Rebellion in California. Berkeley: University of California Press. 1992. (11)

⁹⁸ I understand this social order to be constructed historically through religion and science as a justification for international colonization and imperialism. This is discussed more thoroughly in the Introduction.

⁹⁹ Much of this argument was adapted from Walton’s theory on the ‘Conquest and Incorporation’ of the American West as described his second chapter of his book. Walton, John. Western Times and Water Wars: State, Culture, and Rebellion in California. Berkeley: University of California Press. 1992. (11–54).

Some of the first non-Native Peoples to enter the Owens Valley region are thought to be trappers from the Pacific Northwest.¹⁰⁰ In 1834, while returning from a beaver-trapping trip commissioned by the U.S. Army Captain Benjamin Bonneville, expedition leader Joseph Reddeford Walker guided a group through the Owens Valley. One member of his party noted during trip, “we occasionally found the traces of Indians, but as yet, we have not been able to gain an audience with any of them, as they flee to the mountain as soon as we approach.”¹⁰¹ But it was not long before that White settlers met Nü’ma Peoples—in relative amity, conflict, and ultimately exploitative relationships. Settlers’ perceptions of indigenous peoples transformed to develop the type of relationship they wanted, but was continually defined by the ideological assertion of their superiority. Walker’s group also commented extensively on the natural environment of the Owens Valley calling it “a sandy waste,” which lacked sufficient water or grass for livestock. Interactions between settlers and the Paiute Peoples and the natural environment of the Owens Valley, was in turn, regulated by the federal government as part of its larger project of colonialism and domination of the American West.

During the 1850s, the newly established state of California sought to survey its land, especially along its eastern border. As part of a contract with the U.S. Government, A. W. von Schmidt surveyed the area between Mono Lake and Owens Lake for the State of California in 1855. He was one of the first to comment extensively on the Paiute peoples as well as the natural resources of the area. Describing the indigenous peoples living in the Owens Valley as “a fine looking set of men,” von Schmidt categorizes the 1,000 Paiute Peoples as belonging to the Mono

¹⁰⁰ Either fur trapper Peter Skene Ogden from the Hudson Bay Company in the Pacific Northwest in 1824 or explorer Jedediah Strong Smith in 1827 is recognized as the earliest known non-Native person to enter the Owens Valley region.

Dean. Weaving a Legacy: Indian baskets & the people of Owens Valley, California. (16)

¹⁰¹ Despite not actually meeting any of the Nü’ma peoples, Walker’s second expedition to the Owens Valley passed judgments on the indigenous peoples’ character, calling them a “numerous ”and “badly disposed” group. Ewers (1995) as quoted in Dean, Sharon E. et al. Weaving a Legacy: Indian baskets & the people of Owens Valley, California. (17)

Tribe.¹⁰² He continued to discuss their agricultural practices and standard diet, documenting the extensive irrigation system Nü'ma Peoples installed throughout the region.¹⁰³ Von Schmidt's description of the natural environment of the Owens Valley changed with the more time he spent in the region and in accordance with the goals of the State of California. He originally found the region to be inhospitable, declaring all the areas outside of the Round and Long Valleys "entirely worthless." "On a general average the country forming Owens Valley is worthless to the white man, both in soil and climate," he continued.¹⁰⁴ His classification changed, however, as the potential for miners and ranchers to occupy the Eastern California region emerged. Now categorizing the natural environment as having abundant resources with "soil 1st rate [and] fine grass," von Schmidt promoted the occupation of the Owens Valley by traders and ranchers.¹⁰⁵

Alongside the occupation of the eastern California region, was the desire of the government to protect its settlers (pawns). In July of 1859, after receiving numerous complaints of missing livestock, U.S. Army Captain J. W. Davidson of Fort Tejon led a punitive expedition to the Owens Valley in pursuit of alleged Paiute horse thieves. Upon finding very few horses in the Valley, Davidson concentrated his efforts on exploration of the area and close observation of the peoples living in it.¹⁰⁶ He observed, "these Indians are not only not horse thieves, but their true character is that of an interesting, peaceful, industrious people, deserving the protection and watchful care of the Government."¹⁰⁷ Implicit within this argument was a policy of paternalism.

¹⁰² Unrau, Harlan D. Manzanar National Historic Site, California: The Evacuation and Relocation of Persons of Japanese Ancestry During World War II: a Historical Study of the Manzanar War Relocation Center. Denver, CO: U.S. Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service, 1996. Retrieved: March 28, 2008. (Chapter 6, page C.)

Walton. Western Times and Water Wars: State, Culture, and Rebellion in California. (13)

¹⁰³ Dean. Weaving a Legacy: Indian baskets & the people of Owens Valley, California. (17)

¹⁰⁴ Unrau, Manzanar National Historic Site, California Chapter 6, page C.

¹⁰⁵ Dean. Weaving a Legacy: Indian baskets & the people of Owens Valley, California. (17)

¹⁰⁶ Unrau, Manzanar National Historic Site, California. Chapter 6, page C.

¹⁰⁷ Walton, John. Western Times and Water Wars: State, Culture, and Rebellion in California. (17)

Other surveyors of the Owens Valley reported similar perceptions of Nü'ma Peoples as a non-self sufficient society. One observation, for example, claimed that in 1858, “a delegation of Owens Valley Paiute traveled some distance to Fort Tejon and ‘asked [for] assistance to put in crops next season, also someone to instruct them in agriculture, etc.’”¹⁰⁸ These representations functioned to erase the complex irrigation-systems that Nü'ma Peoples had developed for hundreds of years throughout the region and characterize them as an insufficient and dependent group, “essentially a child of nature.”¹⁰⁹ Children who needed to be taken care of by the state. By not recognizing their accomplishments as a community that developed irrigation in the Owens Valley, white settlers were able to justify the construction of a reservation in the region.

In February 1859, a proposal to establish a reservation on 22,300 acres of southern Owens Valley land near Independence was presented by the U.S. Army and Office of Indian Affairs.¹¹⁰ Surveyor Davidson concluded that this area specifically was an ideal location for a Native American reservation largely because of the abundance of natural resources, especially water, in the area and had the acres set apart from development or settlement.¹¹¹ He explained, the “country is large enough, and fruitful enough, not only for them, but for all the Indians of the Southern part of California. [When] properly managed, [a reservation] should cost nothing to the Government but the first outfit. [After the first harvest, it] should be self-sustaining, for the means are here and nothing is lacking but their proper application.”¹¹² The proposal for a reservation, therefore, was dependent upon the abundance of water in the region, which Davidson described as “the finest watered portion of the lower half of the state.”¹¹³ The same

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. (16)

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Unrau, Manzanar National Historic Site, California Chapter 6, page A-C.

¹¹¹ Ibid. Chapter 6, page C.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

water resource which indigenous peoples had used to cultivate agriculture in the Owens Valley for thousands of years. However, as colonizers systematically denied the quality of the self-sufficient agrarian society Nü'ma Peoples had developed, they continued to justify their incarceration. "For all explanations of the essential weakness of savage society had as a basic tenet the assumption that Indians were not farmers, and all plans for civilizing Indians assumed they needed to be farmers."¹¹⁴ The federal government first introduced forced relocation in the Owens Valley in 1859.

Between 1857 and 1859 as the Era of Gold Rush Era continued, mining communities that had already developed in the northern part of the state continued to spread to the Eastern California region in search of gold. Eventually establishing mining towns of several thousand people near the Owens Valley region, some prospectors developed relationships with Paiute Peoples in hopes of more successfully finding gold. Paiute woman, Viola Martinez, recalled one of these interactions:

She had these vials. Glass vials, little vials. I would say maybe one-half inch, three-quarter inch in diameter. They were full of this gold dirt...fine gold sand. I had no idea at the time what they were. They knew where to go. They knew exactly where to go. And they never, ever told anyone...now my cousin Nick had to know where [the gold] was, but he never, ever apparently told anybody. Isn't that something?¹¹⁵

In order to protect their communities and the land they lived on, Owens Valley Paiute Peoples developed various modes of resistance to the continual attack by the colonizing populations—first miners and following ranching and farming communities.

The increased presence of white settlers in the area in addition to reports documenting the abundant environmental resources of the Owens Valley further encouraged cattle ranchers to settle the area as well. The first permanent settlers arrived in the Owens Valley in 1861 and

¹¹⁴ Walton, John. Western Times and Water Wars: State, Culture, and Rebellion in California. (16)

¹¹⁵ Bahr. Viola Martinez, California Paiute: Living in Two Worlds. (21)

continued to rapidly increase. This increased population of colonizers in the Owens Valley put tremendous strains on the Nü'ma Peoples—especially concerning food cultivation. By March 1860, serious mining and ranching activity developed in the area surrounding Owens Valley region and in August 1861, Charles Putnam established the first permanent settlement by whites in the Owens Valley.¹¹⁶ A Paiute woman named Mattie Bulpitt recalled the years of early settlement as follows:

Then the white men begin to come, one at first, then more and more, and from then on the valley was thickly settled with white people. The cattle begin to arrive with the settlers, little at first, then they begin to multiply. Through all this the Indians were very friendly, never complaining of the cattle and horses which roamed over their taboose [tubers] and sunflowers and other seeds producing food for the Indians. They used to irrigate these fields. Eventually the white man began to tell the Indians what to do. They told him not to pick the seeds because if we pick seeds from the plant, more plants will not grow. And when they go out to irrigate their seed beds, the white man says not to take any of the water. If you do my horses and cattle will not have anything to eat. Always the same story. Until the white man become abusive and was using force to keep the Indians from harvesting the seeds when they ripen. They begin to have a hard time because they were drive away from these places where they gathered different seeds for food. The conditions got worse when the Indians begin to get hungry.¹¹⁷

Conflict developed in the Owens Valley between the Nü'ma peoples and recently arrived colonizers and culminated into an all out war between 1862 and 1865.¹¹⁸ In cycles of violence that spurred retaliation on both sides, peace treaties were continually made and broken. In January 1862, after several bloody attacks that left a Paiute man and rancher dead, a truce was established “to let what is past be buried in oblivion.” This agreement did not last even a month.¹¹⁹ Soon coalitions of Paiute peoples and other neighboring indigenous communities were able to gain control of the Owens Valley, which resulted in settlers calling the U.S. Army for

¹¹⁶ Walton, John. Western Times and Water Wars: State, Culture, and Rebellion in California. 17

¹¹⁷ Mattie Bulpitt (1930) quoted in Walton, John. Western Times and Water Wars: State, Culture, and Rebellion in California. 17—18

¹¹⁸ For a comprehensive overview of these conflicts, please consult the second chapter of John Walton's Western Times, Water Wars (1992).

¹¹⁹ Dean. Weaving a Legacy: Indian baskets & the people of Owens Valley, California. 20

assistance in April 1862. Throughout the remainder of 1862 and well into 1863, open warfare prevailed causing both parties to sustain significance losses. Indigenous peoples in the Owens Valley region were able to prevent the settlers from developing the region until the summer of 1863 when they could no longer sustain armed resistance.¹²⁰ Captain Moses A. McLaughlin initiated a “scorched earth” campaign, commanding U.S. soldiers to burn all Paiute food caches, imprison and kill many Paiute men, and rape Paiute women. Unlike previous military leadership, no form of government protection was offered to Paiutes.¹²¹

In June 1863, hostilities ceased and groups of indigenous peoples began to surrender in groups at Camp Independence. These peoples were then held captive, some locked in chains to the adequate facility and it was not long before the 908 men, women, and children filled the camp.¹²² On July 11, 1863, lacking sufficient food supplies, Col. R. C. Drum led the forced relocation of Paiute, Shoshone, Yukot, Kawaiisu, and Tubatulabal Peoples from Camp Independence to San Sebastian Reservation—a 250 miles journey southwest of the Owens Valley. Along the way to Fort Tejon, indigenous peoples continued to resist their incarceration and removal from their traditional lands. “The only thing we could figure out was that we were going to be killed, and [we] were stubborn in obeying orders,” Ben Tibbits, a Nü’ma man recalled.¹²³ Some were able to escape, while others were killed or died along the way. Jeanie Cashbaugh a young Nü’ma girl during the forced removal vividly recalled a soldier stabbing her grandmother through her heart before her very eyes. It was then her family decided to escape:

We traveled for days...at last nature played its part and opened a way for us, we crawled close together in the brush taking care that the two soldiers who were looking for us would not find us. I saw them coming near, just 50 feet away. I felt chills run through me,

¹²⁰ Ibid. 22

¹²¹ Walton. Western Times and Water Wars: State, Culture, and Rebellion in California. (21)

¹²² Dean. Weaving a Legacy: Indian baskets & the people of Owens Valley, California. (22)

¹²³ Walton. Western Times and Water Wars: State, Culture, and Rebellion in California. (21)

death was to claim us...the soldiers turned away, took another route, and we knew we were safe.¹²⁴

Indigenous peoples continued to escape once they arrived at San Sebastian Reservation, and by January of 1864, only 380 Nü'ma People—predominantly older men and women with small children, remained incarcerated in the reservation. During the three years of conflict, over 250 indigenous peoples and 60 whites in the Owens Valley lost their lives.¹²⁵ Most of the displaced Nü'ma Peoples returned to the Owens Valley to find their homes to be a very different place.

Ultimately, white settlers had achieved a contested domination of the valley, which was now open to settlement under public land laws. Beginning in 1863, there were three major ways that whites could legally acquire land: purchase it directly from the state of California, make a federal claim under the Preemption Act of the 1830s, or make a federal claim from the 1862 Homestead Act.¹²⁶ Within the first decade, white settlers filed 182 claims mostly under the federal legislation.¹²⁷ By 1864, when Paiute communities who escaped from the reservation were returning to their homelands, tens of thousands of cattle grazed around the valley marking the permanence of the farm and ranch communities that were established after indigenous peoples were cleared out of the territory. Towns and modern amenities began to spring up throughout the region, with the estimated number of cultivated acres increasing from 2,000 in 1867 to 5,000 in 1869.¹²⁸ In 1867, fences enclosed approximately 2,000 acres of Inyo County and 6,000 acres in

¹²⁴ Dean. Weaving a Legacy: Indian baskets & the people of Owens Valley, California. (22)

¹²⁵ Ibid. (24)

Walton. Western Times and Water Wars: State, Culture, and Rebellion in California. (22)

¹²⁶ Walton. Western Times and Water Wars: State, Culture, and Rebellion in California. (22)

¹²⁷ Of the total claims, 92% were from federal legislation, 54% under the preemption method and 38% by homesteading.

Ibid. (22)

¹²⁸ Dean. Weaving a Legacy: Indian baskets & the people of Owens Valley, California (23)

Mono County.¹²⁹ With the influx of white settlers to the Owens Valley, however, came the need for labor.

Nü'ma peoples who had escaped from the San Sebastian Reservation returned to a very different place than the one they had been forced to leave. Dispossessed of their land and in search of a means to continue to survive, Owens Valley Paiute Peoples lived in small camp communities on the outskirts of white settlements. These experienced cultivators were systematically “disenfranchised by the laws under which settlement was proceeding [and] subjugated by the army” leaving them not many options within the newly constructed society. Reflecting on the “irony” of the situation her family was in, Viola Martinez explained:

To think that here is this fertile valley with a natural hot springs for the use of the people who have been living there for centuries, using it certain times of the year when they were able to grow the crops they were going to prepare for winter usage... Then to come back to find it occupied by foreigners and told it was no longer theirs. Eventually working it out with [a white rancher] so they could live there for a dollar year, when originally it was theirs. He should be paying them for the privileges that he had taken.¹³⁰

In a process described as a “complex combination of slavery, peonage, and free labor, defined by white and Indian perceptions and needs,” Paiute peoples began working as low-wage workers on their recently dispossessed land.¹³¹ The state of the political economy in the Owens Valley ultimately contributed to the revoking of the proposal for a reservation in the Owens Valley in 1864. For the state of California, the exploitation of environmental and human resources was a larger priority than protecting indigenous peoples. With the development of the low-wage, Paiute labor-based economy, a way for white settlers to accomplish both emerged.¹³²

The development of the low-wage economy was promoted by white representations of Paiute Peoples. While still referred to as a “treacherous race” and the “worst class,”¹³³ the

¹²⁹ Unrau, *Manzanar National Historic Site, California* Chapter 6, page A.

¹³⁰ Bahr, *Viola Martinez, California Paiute: Living in Two Worlds*. (22)

¹³¹ Walton, *Western Times and Water Wars: State, Culture, and Rebellion in California* (24)

¹³² *Ibid.* (25)

¹³³ *Ibid.*

exploitation of Paiute labor was justified by descriptions of their physical strength. Biologically defined as “hardworking” and an “industrious people”, Paiute Peoples were employed on ranches and farms throughout the region.¹³⁴ “Those who are in the valley prefer peace and to work, which they do for fifty cents a day and hogadie (food),” which was a relatively low wage even by the standards of the time.¹³⁵ Some settlers in the Owens Valley region were not pleased with the developing system and complained: “the farmers are falling back on the slow and uncertain Piutes and Piutessess for help.”¹³⁶

The Shepard Ranch was one of the most recognized in the region for hiring Paiute peoples and establishing a colonial relationship between the white settlers and indigenous population. After establishing his homestead in 1864 on 164 acres, John Shepard, his wife and eight children continued to expand their ranch and gain more control over water rights in the region; he eventually owned over 2,000 acres in the valley, controlling about two-thirds of the water rights on Shepard Creek.¹³⁷ To run his ranch, Shepard depended heavily upon Paiute labor, hiring men and women from the large camp abutting the lands to the west of his ranch.¹³⁸

Paiute labor was distributed along gender lines, enforcing a racialized and gendered separation of work not customary to the community.¹³⁹ Paiute women were primarily hired to perform domestic tasks, including laundry and general cleaning, as well as agricultural tasks such as winnowing grain and thrashing wheat. The *Inyo Independent* local newspaper reported, “In carrying on his extensive farming operations, Mr. Earl has to depend almost exclusively on

¹³⁴ Ibid. (13)

¹³⁵ Ibid. (25)

¹³⁶ Ibid. (25)

¹³⁷ This marked the beginning of the water rights war that continued well into the next century.

Burton, Jeffery F. *Three farewells to Manzanar: the archeology of Manzanar National Historic Site, California*. Tucson, Ariz: Western Archeological and Conservation Center, National Park Service, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1996. (129)

¹³⁸ Approximately 30 women of the 100 Paiute villagers worked on Shepard’s ranch.

¹³⁸ Unrau Manzanar National Historic Site, California. Chapter 6, page A.

¹³⁹ Burton, Three Farewells to Manzanar (129)

Indians, and female Indians at that, for laborers. In fact, farmhands and miners both are very scarce in this country; not at all equal to the demand, so these Indians, even of the female persuasion, are mighty handy *things* to have around the house.” [emphasis added]¹⁴⁰ Paiute men were also hired for agricultural labor, especially irrigation and ranch work.¹⁴¹ Larger ranches in the Owens Valley employed permanent crews of Paiute men to tend cattle herds, break horses, clear new land, and irrigate. “When I became a young man I was employed at the saw mill,” Ben Tibbitts, a Paiute man explained. “I earned 25 to 50 cents. Later the ranchers began to hire haying hands. An irrigator received 25 cents a day, and the haying crew would receive 75 cents a day. We worked from daylight to dark, and worked only to satisfy our master.”¹⁴² Although the wage differences between Paiute laborers and white laborers in the valley were “noticeable but not extreme,” in part because of frequent labor shortages in the valley, the justification for the labor exploitation was expressed along specific racialized and gendered constructions of Paiute Peoples.¹⁴³ “The bucks understood irrigating better than the white men and the mahalas [Paiute women] were faithful, good servants,” one employer explained.¹⁴⁴ Statements like these were made on the premise of the biologically determined ability of Paiutes to “understand” the natural environment, emphasizing their ‘natural’ closeness and affinity to the land as well.

An important component to the development of the colonial relationship between the white employers and Paiute laborers was the renaming of indigenous populations. As a way of marking control over the labor force, white farmers and ranchers assigned white names, often their own, to the Paiute peoples who worked on their newly appropriated land. In identifying her aunt Mary Ann’s brothers, Viola Martinez explained:

¹⁴⁰ *Inyo Independent* from June 8, 1872 as quoted in Walton, 25.

¹⁴¹ Burton, *Three Farewells to Manzanar* (129)

¹⁴² Ben Tibbitts quoted in Walton. *Western Times and Water Wars: State, Culture, and Rebellion in California*. (26)

¹⁴³ Ibid. (30)

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. (29)

The first ones I met that I realized were brothers to my aunt were George Washington, who was given that name by the rancher her worked for because he resembled George Washington, and Frank Couch, Uncle George's brother. He, too, acquired his name in the same manner because Indian names were hard to pronounce. It was easier to do this. When they once established themselves as part of the ranch group, why that was what took place.¹⁴⁵

This naming process was a critical component to "the forced adaptation to wage labor on farms and ranches" that most employers in the valley practiced,¹⁴⁶ functioning to strip Paiute People's of their identity and culture and force them into the colonial society.

By engaging in the low-wage economy, Paiute Peoples were able to remain on the land they had lived on for centuries.¹⁴⁷ This did not, however, simply translate to Paiute Peoples surrendering to their colonization. On the contrary, Paiute Peoples manipulated the structures that were established by the white settlers to maintain family connections. Viola Martinez recalled the process her uncle and family endured:

My uncle Bob Somerville said this [land] is where we always lived. This [rancher] came in there, decided he wanted it, took it over, and started to farm it...[The rancher] let [my relatives] work for him. My uncle said, "We didn't have any place to go but they let us work for him...My brother George [Washington] went to [the rancher] and said that he wanted all of us to be able to live together and what could we do about it?" They worked it out and paid a dollar a year. I said, "Uncle Bob, you paid a dollar a year to live there?" He told me: "Yes, lots of money. A dollar a year, lots of money."¹⁴⁸

Paiute Peoples served as an integral part of the agricultural and economic development of the Owens Valley region, continuing to cultivate the land they were forcibly displaced from, but this labor did not come without continued resistance. Perhaps one of the clearest markers of continued tension in the valley was the armed enforcement of the region until 1877, which

¹⁴⁵ Bahr. Viola Martinez, California Paiute: Living in Two Worlds. (27)

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Donald Pisani argues that it is misleading to view indigenous peoples as "as *either* farmers or wage earners" explaining that many combined the two. Furthermore, he stresses the importance of complicating the claim that Native Americans "had no other choice" than to become wage laborers; "Labor off the reservations frequently complemented agricultural income, and Indians found working for wages highly compatible with a traditional economy of hunting and gathering."

Pisani, Donald J. "The Dilemma of Indian Water Policy: 1887-1928." In Fluid Arguments: Five Centuries of Western Water Conflict. Ed. Char Miller. University of Arizona press, 2001. (78-94).

¹⁴⁸ Bahr. Viola Martinez, California Paiute: Living in Two Worlds. (22)

provided fifteen years of constant military intervention for the protection of white settlers, despite the formal agreement to cease fighting between Owens Valley Paiutes and white settlers in June of 1863. Throughout the 1860s and 1870s, numerous reports of Paiute Peoples stealing cattle, agricultural crops, and money from white settlers continued to emerge. Other means of resistance—including refusal to assimilate and continued practice of historical traditions functioned as daily forms of resistance by Paiute Peoples. In one example in the 1870s, a white settler reported, “The Piutes [*sic*] *en mass* have skedaddled to the mountains to harvest the abundant crop of pine nuts with which trees are loaded this year,” abandoning their work in ranches and homesteads to celebrate with their families the fall pine-nut harvest.¹⁴⁹ Another means of everyday resistance was taking pride in one’s work. “Indian pride of work was an expression of recusancy—an implied refutation of white superiority expressed in making a better haystack or displaying greater proficiency at irrigation and wheat winnowing. Resistance in diverse forms of pride, sabotage, recalcitrance, and withdrawal suggest that tensions pervaded the field of labor relations and that domination never succeeded in taking over the Indian’s consciousness.”¹⁵⁰

Throughout the end of the 19th century, the state continued to increase control over the Owens Valley region and the indigenous peoples who lived in it. From attempting to initiate another forced relocation to Tule Reservation in 1873 to establishing Indian schools and supporting Christian missionaries in 1896, Paiute peoples were continually and forcibly relocated. This occurred simultaneously with the increased occupation of the region by white ranching and farming communities. Due to economic, social, and environmental factors, including a growing population from the mining boom and a drought in western California from

¹⁴⁹ Walton. Western Times and Water Wars: State, Culture, and Rebellion in California. (36)

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. (37)

1862 to 1864, agricultural production and livestock raising in the area expanded in the 1860s and continued to grow for the next forty years. By 1893, the number of family settlements in the Owens Valley grew to 28, with cattle herds and bands of sheep raised on the homesteads, in addition to orchards of apples, pears, peaches, apricots, nectarines, plums, and cherry trees, which depended on forced Paiute labor to irrigate and harvest.¹⁵¹

The colonization of the Paiute Peoples marked the beginning of a pattern of forced relocation and labor in the Owens Valley that would continue to reproduce itself for decades. Based on historically constructed and institutionally enforced interlocking systems of domination, the plight of enslaved, dislocated and exploited indigenous peoples in this region often developed in relation to the access and control of the water resources. Analyzing representations of Owens Valley Paiutes by white settlers and later anthropologists and environmental historians, especially in relation to the natural environment, is one way to expose these systems. Throughout the history of domination, Paiute Peoples continually resisted colonization efforts; by re-centering indigenous poetry, voices, and experiences, I hope to restore agency to a population that has been systematically silenced.

III. Representations in Environmental History (representation from 1900—Today)

Native American Peoples' histories have been systematically erased and exploited at the convenience of the producers of mainstream academia.¹⁵² Reproducing white supremacist systems of knowledge that devalue indigenous histories, experiences, and voices,¹⁵³ dominant ideologies within mainstream academic disciplines often continue to use research methodologies

¹⁵¹ Unrau, *Manzanar National Historic Site, California* Chapter 6, page C.

¹⁵² Smith, Linda Tuhiwai. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. New York: Palgrave Press, 1999. (22)

¹⁵³ It is important to note that I am not discussing the intent of these authors, but rather the work that their published pieces do, as explained in the Introduction.

that silence Native American peoples, designating them as “objects of study”¹⁵⁴ as opposed to active producers with agency.¹⁵⁵ Indigenous theorist Linda Tuhiwai Smith explains, “The negation of indigenous views of history was a critical part of asserting colonial ideology, partly because such views were regarded as clearly ‘primitive’ and ‘incorrect’ and mostly because they challenged and resisted the mission of colonization.”¹⁵⁶ This ultimately functions as a continual manifestation of the genocide indigenous peoples suffered (and continue to endure) under the colonization of the United States.¹⁵⁷

The exclusion of indigenous peoples from Western histories¹⁵⁸ is more multifaceted than an absolute erasure or failure to mention these peoples. Instead, Western histories systematically exclude the voices and experiences of indigenous peoples throughout their texts, often opting to designate only the first chapter in a textbook to Native Americans, never to mention them again.¹⁵⁹ The stories that are included in these sections are told from the perspective of the (white) colonizers¹⁶⁰ and do not incorporate knowledge produced by indigenous peoples,¹⁶¹ ultimately failing to incorporate Native Americans into the spaces that are supposedly designated for them. Smith charges, “the West... desire[s], extract[s] and claim[s] ownership of our ways of knowing, our imagery, the things we create and produce, and then simultaneously reject[s] the people who created and developed those ideas and seek[s] to deny them future opportunities to

¹⁵⁴ Mihesuah. Natives and Academics: Researching and Writing about American Indians. (x)

¹⁵⁵ Smith. Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples. (28)

¹⁵⁶ Ibid. (29)

¹⁵⁷ Hooks, Gregory and Chad Smith. “The Treadmill of Destruction: National Sacrifice Areas and Native Americans.” *American Sociological Review* Vol. 69, No 4. August 2004. p 558—575

¹⁵⁸ Smith uses the term Western histories to describe dominant ideologies and discourses within mainstream disciplines that continue the domination and subjugation of indigenous peoples.

¹⁵⁹ Mihesuah, Devon Abbott and Angela Cavender Wilson. Indigenizing the Academy: Transforming Scholarship and Empowering Communities. U of Nebraska Press, 2004.

¹⁶⁰ Smith, Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples. (29)

¹⁶¹ Indigenous peoples have been constructing their own histories for centuries, but often not in ways that are recognized as legitimate knowledge by mainstream, Western academia. More recently, however, Native American and Indigenous studies have emerged as academic disciplines that challenge these historical constructions of knowledge yet continue to be excluded from discourses on indigenous peoples.

be creators of their own culture and own nations.”¹⁶² Knowledge produced by accredited scientific researchers, often anthropologists, is valued over indigenous knowledge and repeatedly used in Western discourses on indigenous peoples, constructing representations of them that rearticulate colonial explanations for their domination.¹⁶³ Furthermore, stories of resistance to colonization by indigenous peoples are rarely included in Western environmental histories,¹⁶⁴ maintaining their objectified status. Colonial Western frameworks that use history as a modernist project, “which has developed alongside imperial beliefs about the Other,”¹⁶⁵ reproduce knowledge that justified the domination of indigenous peoples centuries earlier.

By erasing indigenous peoples’ voices and resistance struggles from U.S. history and manipulating their representation to defend their domination, Western producers of knowledge systematically reproduce ideologies based on interlocking systems of domination.¹⁶⁶ These ideologies often base their representations on the definition of race as a biologically determined, socially inherent quality that signifies historically constructed racialized and gendered hierarchies. Historically, racialized and gendered ranking systems were constructed on the premise of five principles promised from the study of physiognomy: the measure of one’s physical appearance could determine the value of their intelligence, aesthetic quality, morality,

¹⁶² Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. (1)

¹⁶³ Mihesuah. *Indigenizing the Academy: Transforming Scholarship and Empowering Communities*.

¹⁶⁴ One manifestation of this is that throughout all of the environmental history texts analyzed in this thesis (for list see above), only one—Walton’s *Western Times and Water Wars* mentions indigenous resistance to colonization. The history of the “Indian Wars” is explicitly excluded in the National Park Service’s publications—*Cultural Landscape Report and Historical Study*.

¹⁶⁵ Smith acknowledges nine major interconnected components of Western history:

The idea that history: is a totalizing discourse, is a universal history, is one large chronology, is about development, is about a self-actualizing human subject, can be told in one coherent narrative, is a discipline is innocent, is constructed around binary categories, and is patriarchal.

Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. (26)

¹⁶⁶ Mihesuah. *Natives and Academics: Researching and Writing about American Indians*.

Wilson, Waziyatawin Angela and Michael Yellow Bird. “For Indigenous Eyes Only: A Decolonization Handbook. Santa Fe, New Mexico: School of American Research Press, 2005.

Smith. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*.

sexuality, and culture.¹⁶⁷ Indigenous peoples were historically characterized as “naturally” inferior to whites, and therefore inherently closer to nature.¹⁶⁸

Dominant discourses within Anthropology, Environmental History, and the National Park Service¹⁶⁹ produce a variety of representations of Native Americans; however, these representations often subscribe to a white supremacist ideology constructed centuries before. Much of the language employed in these disciplines, for example, is reminiscent of the language used by white colonists (surveyors, miners, farmers, ranchers, army personnel, etc.) when they first arrived in the Owens Valley and wrote about Paiute Peoples. Representations ranging from “an interesting, peaceful, industrious people” (1859)¹⁷⁰ to “low” “mean” “degraded” and “miserable Indians” (1829)¹⁷¹ and “dark loathsome, ignorant, and sunken into the depths of degradation” (1859)¹⁷² continued to be reproduced by anthropologists in the 20th century.¹⁷³ These colonial characterizations are then repeated in Environmental History and National Park Service (NPS) publications, which primarily site older anthropological studies, especially publications by Julian Steward in the 1930s, when discussing Owens Valley Paiute Peoples. More recent frameworks within Anthropology that recognize the role of power and privilege in their research methodologies or publications from Native American Studies are often not included in these texts, rendering the colonial ideologies as the legitimate knowledge on

¹⁶⁷ For more information on these five principles and the overall framework that I employ in this thesis please review the introduction.

¹⁶⁸ Eze, Emmanuel. Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1997.

¹⁶⁹ Major producers of knowledge that I have examined include Julian H Stewart (1933), Thomas Fletcher (1987), Martha Knack (2001), Diana Bahr (2003), and Sharon E. Dean (2004) in Anthropology; Hoffman (1981), Kahrl (1982), Walton (1992), Reisner (1993), Miller (2000), and Hundley (2001), in Environmental History; Three Farewells to Manzanar (1996), Confinement and Ethnicity (2000), Historic Resource Study (2002), and Cultural Landscape Report (2006) by the National Park Service.

¹⁷⁰ Walton. Western Times and Water Wars: State, Culture, and Rebellion in California. (13)

¹⁷¹ Knack, Martha C. Boundaries Between: The Southern Paiutes 1775-1995. London: University of Nebraska Press. 2001. (37)

¹⁷² Ibid. (49)

¹⁷³ Smith. Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples.

indigenous peoples.¹⁷⁴ The dominant Western perspective continues to permeate histories on the Owens Valley region and it is only by interrogating these images that the historical context upon which they are constructed is exposed.¹⁷⁵

Anthropologists advanced the myth of the noble savage in the mid-19th century as part of a discourse within the discipline for specific racist “political purposes.” [A]nthropology’s oldest and most successful hoax,” Ethnomusicologist Ter Ellingson explains, is “still widely believed today, almost a century and a half since its creation.”¹⁷⁶ Repeatedly (re)constructing representations of indigenous peoples as having ‘natural’ intelligence or innate, untutored wisdom; strong physical health; and living in harmony with nature, Anthropologists theorize colonial romantic nostalgia while also reproducing racial hierarchies based on the principles of physiognomy.¹⁷⁷ These studies conducted by accredited social scientists are prioritized as legitimate knowledge within academia and both significantly influenced and were influenced by the ways 19th century colonists in the Owens Valley regarded Paiute Peoples. Ultimately, white colonizers used these representations were used to justify their domination.

Within the discipline of Environmental History, a similar discourse has emerged that discusses the quality of indigenous people’s character in relation to the natural environment. The development of the myth of ecological noble savage reproduces the representations of indigenous peoples from Anthropology’s noble savage myth and incorporates the role of sustaining the natural environment. The traditional ecological knowledge of indigenous peoples,

¹⁷⁴ Environmental historian Worster, for example, only cites publications from Anthropologist Steward when discussing Paiute Peoples.

¹⁷⁵ It is important to remember, as Cheryl Smith explains: “colonialism, racism, and cultural imperialism do not occur only in society, outside the gates of universities.” Smith. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. (37)

¹⁷⁶ Ellingson, Ter. *The Myth of the Noble Savage*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001.

¹⁷⁷ These attributes were collected from various texts and online sources, but especially Wikipedia®, to gauge what common perceptions of attributes associated with noble savages would be.

a term constructed by the field of Ethnoecology in the 1980s,¹⁷⁸ is part of this myth and suggests that indigenous peoples inherently possess a way of interacting and living with the natural environment,¹⁷⁹ far superior to “civilized” or “modern” societies because in essence it is more sustainable.¹⁸⁰ This lifestyle is supposedly inherently bound in the culture of indigenous peoples, reflecting their close relationship with wilderness, but actually stands to reproduce racial hierarchies that devalue people placed closer to minerals than God.¹⁸¹ Ultimately, this theory is based on a construction of indigenous peoples as outside of modern society and closer to the natural environment, reproducing 17th century hierarchies of the Great Chain of Being in the 21st century discourse on environmentalism.¹⁸²

Nineteenth century colonists characterized Owens Valley Paiute Peoples as inferior, justifying their forced relocation and labor exploitation on the basis of the categorization of their race. Constructing a philosophy of paternalism, colonists characterized Paiute Peoples as a dependent and underdeveloped society of people, undermining the history of their irrigation practices. Anthropologist Julian Steward continued to replicate the image of Paiute Peoples as an underdeveloped society 75 years later when he claimed, “The Owens Valley Paiute were thus on the verge of horticulture but did not quite achieve it.”¹⁸³ This phrase is reproduced in most anthropologist and environmental history texts produced after 1933 that discuss Paiutes,

¹⁷⁸ Major contributors to this discipline include Robert Earle Johannes, 1989; Julian T Inglis, 1993; Nancy M. Williams, 1993; Jose Mailhot, 1994; M. Kat Anderson, 2006; Charles R. Menzies, 2006; and Fikret Berkes, 2008.

¹⁷⁹ Natural environment here is narrowly defined as wilderness without people, only including the natural environmental resources of plants, animals, minerals, etc. not the places people live, work, learn, and play as defined by Environmental Justice frameworks.

¹⁸⁰ Recognize the “lifestyles [“Tribal” and indigenous peoples] can offer modern societies [regarding] management of resources in complex forest, mountain and dryland ecosystems,” exclaims the World Commission on Environment and Development, *Our Common Future* Oxford University Press, 1987. (12) Ultimately, proponents of this theory call for current societies to begin incorporating these values and practices into their lives.

¹⁸¹ For more details of this the construction of this racial hierarchy please see the Introduction.

¹⁸² The history of 17th century racial and gendered hierarchies and the Great Chain of Being are discussed in length in Appendix C.

¹⁸³ Steward. Ethnography of the Owens Valley Paiute. (248)

maintaining their representation as a “primitive” society and erasing their contribution of developing the irrigation system that continues to be used today.

Paiute Peoples’ domination continues to be justified by colonists and anthropologists through the biological construction of race. Replicating earlier century racial hierarchies that defined people from the Americas as “small, ill made, and ugly” colonists of the Owens Valley used descriptions of Paiute Peoples as physically strong and hardworking—“savages [who are] large, strong, [and] well made”—to justify the exploitation of their labor in the development of the low-wage economy.¹⁸⁴ Similarly, anthropologist Sharon Dean (2004) commented on the physical characteristic of Paiute Peoples in their ability to construct mile long irrigation ditches before the advent of the industrial era. This not only reproduces biologically determined constructions of race, but also characterizes these indigenous peoples as close to the natural environment, functioning to recall 15th century physiognomists’ racial hierarchies. Ideologies that promote Aristotle’s idea “That men of little genius, and great bodily strength, are by nature destined to serve, and those of better capacity, to command; that the natives of Greece, and of some other countries, being naturally superior in genius, have a natural right to empire; and that the rest of mankind, being naturally stupid, are destined to labour and slavery,” ultimately justify forced labor practices of the 19th and 20th centuries.

Besides reproducing century-old representations of Paiute peoples that justify their forced relocation and labor exploitation, mainstream ideologies in dominant discourses on Owens Valley history characterize the relationship between the colonizers and the colonized as very amicable. The National Park Service (NPS), for example, seemingly excuses the exploitative quality of the relationship between Paiute and colonists with the statement that some settlers

¹⁸⁴ de Buffon, Comte and George-Louis Leclerc. “The Geographical and Cultural Distrubtion of Mankind” 1748, as quoted in Eze, Emmanuel. Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1997. (16).

understood “white mistreatment of Indians.”¹⁸⁵ In discussing the practice of Paiute Peoples adopting the white surname of their employers, the NPS explains that this was “the custom in the valley” and “a sign of respect on the part of the Indians.”¹⁸⁶ This explanation ignores the role of colonialism and white supremacy in impacting these relationships and excuses the cultural imperialism that strips Paiute Peoples of their language. By describing this practice from the perspective of the white colonists, the NPS strips Owens Valley Paiutes of their agency, knowledge, and culture, and manipulate indigenous peoples to define American identity.¹⁸⁷

Historian Kenneth Townsend argues in his book *World War II and the American Indian* that indigenous peoples in the United States are a “forgotten minority.”¹⁸⁸ Through representations that have continued to manipulate “stereotyped images of horses, war bonnets, and tepees,” Native American peoples are banished to “belonging to a bygone era of cavalry soldiers, war parties, and savagery.” “[F]urther burdened with the misconception that [Native Americans] constituted a vanishing race as a result of increasing death rates and their melding with the general population,” the voices, experience, and lives of indigenous peoples in the U.S. have been systematically eradicated.¹⁸⁹ Instead of continuing to (re)produce histories where Native Peoples remain “a forgotten minority,” new representations that re-center the experiences and voices of Native Americans throughout history must be produced. Although there is much debate on how to best construct history and represent indigenous peoples, this chapter is my attempt to historically contextualize patterns of forced labor and relocation in relation to water in the Owens Valley while re-centering Paiute Peoples’ voices.¹⁹⁰ This process requires a continual

¹⁸⁵ Unrau, *Manzanar National Historic Site, California*. Chapter 6, page C.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*.

¹⁸⁸ Townsend, Kenneth William. *World War II and the American Indian*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000. (4)

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*.

critique of representations of Paiute Peoples by both 19th Owens Valley colonists and 20th century anthropologists, within the context of historically constructed and currently reproduced interlocking systems of domination. It also does not simply end with this chapter. To produce a text that comprehensively and critically analyzes the history of genocide in the United States, it is important to continually incorporate indigenous voices and experiences, especially around issues of resistance to colonization, throughout the entire history. Linda Tuhiwai Smith explains, “It angers us when practices linked to the last century, and the centuries before that, are still employed to deny the validity of indigenous peoples’ claims to existence, to land and territories, to the right of self-determination, and to the survival of our languages and forms of cultural knowledge, to our natural resources and systems for living within our environments.” In order to acknowledge these words, I will actively remember a “forgotten” people.

The history of the Nü'ma Peoples’ relationship with water and colonization sets up the foundation for history in the Owens Valley for centuries to follow. The physical infrastructure of water distribution and irrigation systems first developed centuries before would be reused in the 1943 agricultural fields. Patterns of forced relocation and incarceration, as well as corresponding acts of resistance, would be replicated not once, but twice in the 20th century. These histories are directly related to the control of the valley’s water and cannot be told without the corresponding manifestations.

Chapter 2: Water and Empire— The Battle Between Agriculture and Urban Development 1846 –1940

The federal government of the United States held the Owens Valley while Los Angeles raped it.
—Marrow Mayo, Los Angeles reporter, 1933¹⁹¹

Doggone the luck, I don't want to leave the Little Valley. Yesterday, in the morning, I walked in our backyard garden and the lilacs were in bloom and the apple trees were heavy with blossoms. It was peaceful and life seemed simple and easy. Across the valley the mountains were waiting and I could feel my wrist twitch to the sudden strike of a trout. Life in the great cities is too complicated. It is hard to make friends in strange places—and to find the best pools in strange streams.
—Parcher Family, Owens Valley residents, 1934¹⁹²

Ten years ago this was a wonderful valley with one-quarter of a million acres of fruit and alfalfa. But Los Angeles had to have more water for its Chamber of Commerce to drink more toasts to its growth, more water to dilute its orange juice and more water for its geraniums to delight the tourists, while the giant cottonwoods here died. So, now this is a valley of desolation.
—Will Rogers, actor, statesman and cowboy, 1930¹⁹³

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Owens Valley was the battleground for the infamous Water Wars that waged between its local residents and the city of Los Angeles. While not the first instance of conflict in the region over the invaluable resource, these Water Wars marked an era of conflict between developing agricultural and urban empires in the West. Each respective stakeholder group viewed these events according to their position in relation to water. Farmers and ranchers who made their livelihoods in the Owens Valley desert, for example, found the City of Los Angeles action's particularly brutal:

Los Angeles gets its water by one of the costliest, crookedest, most unscrupulous deals ever perpetrated. The city of Los Angeles moved through the valley like a devastating plague. It was ruthless, stupid, cruel and crooked. It stole the waters of the Owens River. It drove the people from their homes, homes that they had built from the desert. For no

¹⁹¹ Mayo, Morrow. *The Rape of Owens Valley. Los Angeles: Biography of a City*. Ed. John and Laree Caughey. Berkley: University of California Press. 1933.

¹⁹² Parcher, Marie Louise and Will C. Parcher. "I don't want to go." *Dry Ditches* Inyo Register Press, 1934. Revised Chalfant Press, 1970. (37)

¹⁹³ DeLea, Ray. "Ghosts from the Past: Construction of the Owens Valley Aqueduct." *Owens Valley History*. November 2004. Retrieved: October 19, 2008. <http://www.owensvalleyhistory.com/ghosts_of_past2/page9.html>

sound, sane reason it destroyed an agricultural section and a dozen towns. It was an obscene enterprise from beginning to end.¹⁹⁴

The farming communities in the San Fernando Valley reaped the benefits of the relatively recent flood of water hosting economic booms that stood in stark contrast to the “devastating plague” that had descended on the Little Valley. Questionably involved in these conflicts were federal and local government officials who commanded a great deal of power and invested a great deal of wealth in these regions. Although the conflict continued for years, ultimately one came out victorious, fundamentally changing the landscape of Southern California.

I. The Domination of Mexico

Approximately twenty years after the first white American colonizers entered the Owens Valley the Mexican American War broke out across Alta and Baja California. Although many historians speculate that Spanish and Mexican explorers never entered into the Owens Valley, in part based on Paiute People’s limited acquisition of the Spanish language, early Mexican maps of the region included this area.¹⁹⁵ The Sierra Nevada Range may have blocked direct conquest and fighting from spilling over into the valley for many decades, however, the Mexican American War still had great implications for the region’s future. Ending in February of 1848 with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the war ultimately ceded California and other western regions to the United States, while promising to protect pre-existing civil and property rights of Mexican and indigenous peoples who lived in the transferred territories.¹⁹⁶ This treaty, rarely honored for the indigenous communities who had lived on the land for

¹⁹⁴ Chalfant, W. A. The Story of Inyo. Los Angeles, California: Chalfant, 1933.

¹⁹⁵ Ewan, Rebecca Fish. Land Between: Owens Valley, California. John Hopkins University Press, 2000. (90)

¹⁹⁶ Davenport, John. The U.S.-Mexico Border the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. New York: Chelsea House Publications, 2004.

centuries, would ironically be cited by the city of Los Angeles in efforts to build its urban water empire.¹⁹⁷

II. An Agricultural Empire in the Desert

Dreams of an Agricultural Empire: late 19th Century

Soon after the first white settlement in the Owens Valley was established in August of 1861, more and more farmers and herders infiltrated into the region, encouraged by economic opportunities and federal support.¹⁹⁸ Demand for increased agricultural production to feed the adjacent, growing mining population was intensified with a drought throughout California from 1862 to 1864. Only two years later, ranching and fruit orchards communities were well established and thriving in the water-rich valley.¹⁹⁹ The Desert Land Act of 1877, which encouraged the economic development of arid and semi-arid lands in the Western United States by allowing white Americans to reclaim, irrigate, and cultivate government seized areas, further promoted the rapid colonization of the Owens Valley region like the Homestead Act had fifteen years prior.²⁰⁰ Large-scale agricultural developments were established in the region a year later, relying heavily upon Paiute and Mexican labor to cultivate the orchards of apples, pears, peaches, apricots, nectarines, plums, and cherry trees and tend the cattle herds and bands of sheep on the homesteads.²⁰¹ By this time, approximately 200 miles of irrigation channels based

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Walton, John. Western Times and Water Wars: State, Culture, and Rebellion in California. Berkeley: University of California Press. 1992. (17)

¹⁹⁹ Gagnon, Al. "Chronological History of the Owens Valley." Retrieved: March 4, 2009.
<http://www.owensvalleyhistory.com/stories3/chronological_history_ov.pdf>

²⁰⁰ The Desert Land Act was passed on March 3, 1877 and offered 640 acres of land to those who would pay \$1.25 an acre and irrigate the land within 3 years.

²⁰¹ Unrau, Harlan D. Manzanar National Historic Site, California: The Evacuation and Relocation of Persons of Japanese Ancestry During World War II: a Historical Study of the Manzanar War Relocation Center. Denver, CO: U.S. Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service, 1996. Retrieved: March 28, 2008.
<<http://www.nps.gov/archive/manz/hrs/hrst.htm>> 6C.

on indigenous irrigation techniques had been built, extensively watering the northern half of the Owens Valley. As the urban markets continued to grow, so did Owens Valley farmers' desire to reach them. The Carson and Colorado narrow-gauge railroad, finished in 1883, allowed for fruit, vegetable, and other farm products to be easily transported to urban markets in the north and south of the state.²⁰² However, by the 1890s, while building the foundation for agribusiness to prosper in California nearly half a century later, the orchard communities had exhausted the environmental resources to the extent that they were capable with their limited technology; this ultimately pushed orchard communities to turn to the agency that had continually supported them in their colonization and cultivation efforts—the U.S. Federal Government.²⁰³

The northern section of the Owens Valley had been blessed with land that was relatively easy to irrigate, while the southern, more arid terrain demanded a comprehensive irrigation system to sustain the valley's expansion, and was as a result less densely populated by white settlements; but these conditions would soon change at the hands of the federal government.²⁰⁴ In the 1890s, Owens Valley residents didn't have the capital—technology or money—needed to establish a comprehensive irrigation system, which thereby limited the extent to which they could cultivate the land.²⁰⁵ Coupled with an international depression in 1893, the local economy began to stagnate. As farmers were not able to meet the demand of urban consumers, investors, without notice, pulled their funding from the area.²⁰⁶ The ecology of the region also demanded a larger and centralized irrigation system to mitigate the devastating impacts of the 11-year

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Worster, Donald. Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity, and the Growth of the American West. New York: Pantheon Books, 1985. 132

²⁰⁵ Ibid 131

²⁰⁶ Ibid 130

drought cycle that dried the valley and further diminished crop production.²⁰⁷ “Lone, autonomous individuals could not conquer the desert. The ecological situation demanded group effort.”²⁰⁸ These two, simultaneous droughts, one monetary and the other ecological, did not deter the pursuit of domination and in fact left settlers “more determined in their expansiveness than ever.”²⁰⁹

Expansiveness in the Owens Valley meant water. To sustain a growing economy and community, Owens Valley residents “needed irrigation—and on a big scale, bigger than anything they had so far tried.”²¹⁰ In the late 1890s, settlers turned to the federal government for support and “raised their voices in one loud, sustained chant that could be heard all the way to Washington, D.C.: ‘We need the state!’”²¹¹ Arguing that it was the government’s responsibility to support its citizens and continue to uphold the legacy of the Homestead Act and Desert Land Act years earlier, Owens Valley residents cried out, “Ignore the empty ditches and abandoned dugouts, for there is still an empire here to make if Washington will deliver it to us.”²¹² Soon after the federal government responded by passing the National Reclamation Act of 1902, a ruling that indicated that the federal government would assume responsibility for the irrigation of Owens Valley land and would continue to significantly impact the region for years to come.²¹³ The National Reclamation Act rearticulated government sanctioned domination over the Owens Valley, and began similar to initial colonization efforts with an extensive survey and mapping

²⁰⁷ El-Ashry, Mohamed T. and Diana C. Gibbons. Water and Arid Lands of the Western United States: A World Resources Institute Book. Cambridge University Press, 1988. (237)

Worster Rivers of Empire 130

²⁰⁸ Worster Rivers of Empire. 130

²⁰⁹ Ibid. 132

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Ibid. 130-131

²¹² Ibid. 132

²¹³ Ibid. 130

project.²¹⁴ Frederick Newell, the first Reclamation Commissioner, explained that of the 100,000 total acres in the valley, there were still 60,000 available to cultivate, and so continued the manipulation of federal intervention through legislation and federal funding to support absolute control over the Owens Valley environmental resources and people.²¹⁵

Building an Agricultural Empire: Chaffey's Irrigation Colony



Water imperialist George Chaffey moved to Owens Valley in 1905, after having developed areas across Southern California and Australia, to establish his last irrigation project and answer the cry of hundreds of valley farmers. In hopes of accomplishing “one more big thing before I die,” Chaffey submitted a proposal in September of 1905 to the Bureau of Reclamation to construct a reservoir on Cottonwood Creek to serve his irrigation colony.²¹⁶ Located downstream of plans for the federally initiated irrigation projects, his project was no threat to the Bureau of Reclamation and was thereby approved. That same year, rancher John Shepherd sold his property to Chaffey, which over the next five years developed into the Owens Valley Improvement Company, the business created to operate his proposed irrigation colony by laying the groundwork for agricultural subdivision, transporting water from local streams, and planting thousands of fruit trees.²¹⁷ The 1,000-acre area was turned into a subdivided tract and town-site named Manzanar Irrigated Farms and Manzanar, respectively,

²¹⁴ Reisner, Marc. 1986. Cadillac Desert: The American West and its Disappearing Water. New York: Viking. 1993, 60.

²¹⁵ Worster, Rivers of Empire 132

²¹⁶ Kahrl, William L. Water and Power: The Conflict Over Los Angeles' Water supply in Owens Valley. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982. 219

²¹⁷ Ibid.

based off an adaptation of the Spanish word for apple orchard.²¹⁸ Although a diversity of fruits orchards were cultivated in the valley by the turn of the century, the general plan of the Owens Valley Improvement Company was to develop and expand the area's apple production because it was suited as "the most logical crop for the area because of its climate."²¹⁹ Soon announcements across San Francisco and Los Angeles advertised the opportunity for great economic success at the new Manzanar colony site, noting the area's "fine soil, abundant water, favorable climate, and proximity to markets."²²⁰ Farmers with little previous agricultural experience migrated in mass to the Owens Valley, hoping to build an agricultural empire in the desert, one funded by both private and municipal capital. But water experts from across the state were skeptical.



Organizing an Agricultural Empire: Powell's Commonwealth and Stewart's Private Tenure

One of the biggest skeptics of the agricultural empire was a man by the name of John Wesley Powell. Explaining that there was not enough water resources to irrigate even one third

²¹⁸ Unrau, Manzanar National Historic Site, California 6.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Ibid.

of the land already privately owned in the arid region, Powell astounded delegates during his last few months as director of the United States Geological Survey by exclaiming: “I tell you gentlemen you are piling up a heritage of conflict and litigation over water rights for there is not sufficient water to supply the land.”²²¹ A wild-river enthusiast, technocrat, and dedicated civil servant,²²² John Powell sought an irrigation settlement unlike many other bureaucrats of his time. A decentralized, democratic system, collectively built and controlled by those who would use it, Powell imagined an irrigated system owned by “co-operative organizations” as opposed to “great capitalists” or “the General or State governments.”²²³

Another key component to this system, however, was technological domination. Noting the end of the age of exploration, Powell was a firm believer in the development of the West as a technological civilization and hoped for a “militantly modern” society “bent on the complete domination of nature.”²²⁴ He called for the “capture rivers that were running to waste” in the West by those who would occupy its land.²²⁵ Powell continued to argue that technological domination over the natural environment would protect the area from an exploitative relationship found in “high antiquity” during practices of agriculture in the desert society. “[American] love of liberty is universal,” he explained and he believed this would be enough to guarantee “such a system cannot obtain in the United States,” all the while continuing to justify the exploitation of indigenous peoples, land, and water by American colonialists.²²⁶ Almost immediately Powell began a survey and mapping of the “new” society to determine how much water actually was running through the land.²²⁷

²²¹ Worster, Rivers of Empire 132

²²² Ibid. 133

²²³ Ibid. 134

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Ibid. 133

²²⁶ Ibid. 135

²²⁷ Ibid.

Senator William Stewart of Nevada was among those who opposed Powell's plans for an irrigation survey of the Owens Valley region, citing it as a form of "socialism" that would taint the land of self-made men.²²⁸ Part of Powell's irrigation survey proposal included a seven to eight year term during which no private interest would have any access to the region. This concept was fundamentally opposed to the way that Senator Stewart had organized his political career, "unquestionably devoted to serving the money interests."²²⁹ Instead Stewart called for "a West that would be wide open to men of large ideas and heavy pockets, a West that would be developed fast, where fortunes could be made tomorrow. Naturally, he assumed that was what his constituents wanted too, certainly the constituents whose voices he heard."²³⁰ This led Stewart and a number of Senators and Representatives from across Western states to oppose Powell's proposal and mapping project and construct a special Senate Committee on irrigation, of which Senator Stewart would be the chair. In August and September of 1889, the committee embarked on a tour around the western United States supposedly to gather more information on the necessity of Powell's proposal. Instead, the committee tried to prevent Powell from surveying the area by holding a set of hearings in January 1890 that called into question the need for irrigation funds to be spent on topographic maps and criticized the delay "over locking up resources for a few years while experts tried to rationalize the process of settlement."²³¹ Ultimately, resistance to Powell was unsuccessful in terminating his survey project. Federal support by the General Land Office in addition to the Attorney General and President Harrison was announced in their federal authorization of Powell's survey, which effectively repealed every land law (including the Homestead Act and Desert Land Act) in the region. Senator

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Ibid. 135-136

²³⁰ Ibid. 136

²³¹ Ibid 137

Stewart's opposition to Powell significantly impacted the plans for irrigation surveys, cutting funds for the proposal drastically, which eventually caused Director Powell's resignation from the U.S. Geological Survey in 1894.²³²

The maps that Powell created after completing a survey of the 1,340,000 square mile area were the guides that he used to recommend how to best organize irrigation communities in California.²³³ Rather than depend on the prevailing township and county system, Powell advocated a restructuring of California society into two to three hundred "hydrographic basins" or "watershed units" along which new irrigation and drainage networks could be developed with technological advances. "I early recognized," he explained in the 1890 hearings, "that ultimately these natural features would present conditions which would control the engineering problems of irrigation and which would ultimately control the institutional or legal problems."²³⁴ Powell proposed a strategy of ecological adaptation for maximum resource exploitation; and according to his surveys, there was plenty of space on which to establish this system. In an article in *Century*, Powell reported 100 million acres of arid land to be redeemed, enough for approximately 1.25 million farm families. These families across the state in their respective hydrographic basins would constitute "a commonwealth within itself"—Powell's ideal irrigation system.

"Hands off!" Powell exclaimed. "Furnish the people with institutions of justice, and let them do the work for themselves."²³⁵ This was one of the founding principles of Powell's

²³² Ibid.

²³³ The 1,340,000 square mile area that Powell surveyed ranged east along the hundredth meridian and on the west from Monterey Bay inland, east along the Sacramento Valley and north along the Cascade Mountains to the Columbia.

Worster *Rivers of Empire* 138

²³⁴ Worster explains, "The watershed gives shape to the technology that conquers it, and the efficient functioning of that technology requires a society organized along watershed lines, so that the jurisdiction of laws and courts and community planning are coextensive with the resource base." *Rivers of Empire* 138

²³⁵ Worster *Rivers of Empire* 140

commonwealth, a system based on “the democratic qualities of autonomy and self-determination, of decentralization of authority and power.”²³⁶ In this society, those who were to live on the arid soil would construct their irrigation infrastructure, ranging from head gates to weirs, and use their labor instead of private or federally provided capital. Tasks that were beyond their capacity could be contracted out to private corporations, using their water rights as security. For Powell, it was the perfect system; one where people, not government or capitalists, would dominate the wild waters of the West, holding with them the love of liberty that would differentiate them from repressive irrigation societies of the past. The role of the government would not be to construct infrastructure or provide funding for irrigation systems, but furnish the communities with the best scientific information available, similar to what Powell was attempting to accomplish with his surveys and maps of the area.²³⁷ This structure of society would need a new water law, one that extended throughout the entire arid region and unified contradictory historical rulings.²³⁸ But this was a task much easier said than done.

Powell continued to argue for the construction of a commonwealth system in the hearings on irrigation in 1890, proclaiming, “The conclusions which I have reached are not hasty, for I have give to the subject the best thought and energy of my life.”²³⁹ Senator Stewart soon retorted to Powell’s proposal with a sharp critique on the time wasted on “generalities.” “What we want now is to hear from any person present who has practical ideas as to what can and ought to be done to facilitate irrigation.”²⁴⁰ Land and water available for exploitation immediately, not a time

²³⁶ Ibid. 141

²³⁷ Ibid. 140

²³⁸ The water law that Powell advocated is summarized by Worster as follows:

“Rights of the use of water would be assigned according to the district of origin. Headwater districts should have first claim, for the contributed most to the river current. Water rights would thus be unalterably fused with land ownership, ending the threat of separable monopoly control over the rights to that critical commodity.” Rivers of Empire 139

²³⁹ Worster Rivers of Empire 140

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

consuming laborious process of the federal government conveying information to inexperienced farmers was what Stewart demanded. Powell's proposal was ultimately rejected on the basis of being too impractical. But, as Worster explains, "Powell's watershed settlement plan could have been as practical as people in the West wanted to make it. That is all practicality ever is, a matter of definition and acceptance, of willingness to work for one scheme rather than another."²⁴¹

There were, however, some obstacles to Powell's proposed system—the first, namely history. The rewriting of California water law into a single, regulation, that tied water rights with property rights would erase prior legislation and treaties established to distribute this natural resource. How this would impact already existing settlements was not clear, especially in relation to the Paiute indigenous peoples who had been displaced from the Owens Valley region half a century prior. Farmers in the Juarez neighborhood of Mexico were contesting the proper upholding of Mexican water law established under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo at the time, demanding reparations from the United States government and would not have stood to lose any more of the already scarce resource. The complicated and sometimes contradictory history of existing water claims would make the implementation of the watershed district system, with its new proposed hierarchy of water precedence, very difficult to introduce.²⁴²

Another major factor that Powell acknowledged complicated his ideal commonwealth was the issue of decision-making power. After a tragic dam accident left 2,000 people drowned in Pennsylvania in 1889, Powell conceded that he could not leave the new power of the commonwealth system "carelessly in the hands of ordinary people" and instead would assign a group of experts as external decision makers to the positions of oversight and management of the

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Ibid. 141

irrigation systems.²⁴³ Powell did not trust the federal government or capitalists to produce a just society, nor could he now trust common farmers to construct and operate the new technology. So instead, he opted to encourage “an elite cadre of technocrats” to guide the project and “trusting these technocrats as he trusted himself, Powell could not see the potential for profoundly antidemocratic tendencies in that situation.”²⁴⁴

Powell’s vision of a “commonwealth within itself” was ruined by the history and culture of the West and by his contradictory dedication to the absolute technological domination over nature. As soon as the United States Reclamation Service was established in 1902 under the U.S. Geological Survey, it “found itself working on behalf of the wealthy and powerful and against the interests of the constituency it was created to protect, the small western irrigation farmer.”²⁴⁵ Soon transforming into The Bureau of Reclamation, the agency’s decision to continue with a more typical irrigation system and allow private monopolization of the Owens Valley by agents including George Chaffey continued in the early 20th century until it encountered another proposal, one from a relatively small village in the south of the state named Los Angeles.

III. Urban Water Imperialism and the End of an Era of Irrigation

Conditions of Los Angeles in the late 1800s

While the Owens Valley region continued to grow and became more dependent on water resources in the late 19th century, so too did the town of Los Angeles, located some 250 miles southwest of the region. Starting as an agricultural community with only 1,600 residents in 1850 when California gained its statehood, Los Angeles’ water supply was soon insufficient to sustain its population and subsequently efforts to extend irrigation for continued agricultural

²⁴³ Ibid. 142

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Reisner Cadillac Desert 102

development began. In 1873, the city council announced: “Extending irrigation is of the most vital importance to the future of...Los Angeles, and which requires the earnest attention of this body.”²⁴⁶ The approximately 4,500 irrigated acres in the region were constructed and maintained by a predominantly Native American labor force in the publicly controlled water system.²⁴⁷ By 1880, some 50,000 people inhabited the town, prompting a shift from an agricultural to a commercial society. The mayor announced in 1887, “The necessity of irrigation within the city limits does not now exist to any great extent as most of the vineyards or orchards have been subdivided and made into residence sites for our rapidly increasing population.”²⁴⁸ Water, however, would continue to be in high demand.

Los Angeles in the late 19th century was a city characterized by intense growth. Attracted by its rapid development, more and more people flocked to the region. The population had reached 100,000 people by 1900 and would double in the following four years.²⁴⁹ Encouraged by the cities’ rapid development, local leaders “viewed growth as an end in itself,” and promoted the increased settlement and development of the region, with water the key to sustaining it.²⁵⁰ In addition to the higher demand of water from the booming population, a drought hit Los Angeles, further limiting water resources. In a decision that would impact the structure of Los Angeles for the next century and a half, Los Angeles city officials resolved to develop not only a more secure water supply for the region, but also a more expansive one. In 1874, the city “declared war” on upstream water users by beginning a campaign to control the Los Angeles River. This was a direct response to the increased water diversions in the Owens Valley, which threatened current

²⁴⁶ Hundley, Norris. The Great Thirst: Californians and Water, 1770s to 1990s. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992. 123

²⁴⁷ Hundley The Great Thirst 123

²⁴⁸ Ibid. 124

²⁴⁹ Reisner Cadillac Desert 104

²⁵⁰ Hundley The Great Thirst 122

municipal revenue and opportunities for future growth.²⁵¹ Public, not private, entities therefore were responsible for the pursuit of an empire in the region, as they aimed to control even more distant water sources with the support of the federal government and public treasury.²⁵²

Los Angeles Declares a Water War: 1874—1899

The Water Wars between Los Angeles and the Owens Valley were declared in 1874 and continued to manifest themselves as a form of urban water imperialism.²⁵³ Characterized by three major components—litigation on water rights, the building of infrastructure such as aqueducts, irrigation channels, levees, and dams, and land expansion and consolidation practices—public entities built an urban empire in Los Angeles through the domination of water. After having resolved to gain more water resources for the city, officials began a legal battle to claim more water rights on their behalf; what ensued was a long litigation battle that would ultimately structure the expansive legacy of Los Angeles.

The Los Angeles City Attorney Godfrey’s mission was to acquire *all* of the water in the Los Angeles River for his community. Calling on the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo that had been signed 26 years earlier to mark the end of the Mexican-American War, the city claimed that the United States had to recognize Mexican property rights in its acquired territories.²⁵⁴ “Pueblo de Los Angeles,” Attorney Godfrey announced in July 1874, “was, from its first settlement, the owner of...all of the water flowing in...[the] river.”²⁵⁵ This use of Pueblo water rights came as a direct challenge to the claim of riparian laws or “the right to reasonable use” that local farmers had employed to gain access to water resources.²⁵⁶ In a series of lawsuits that spanned two

²⁵¹ Ibid. 127

²⁵² Ibid. 122

²⁵³ Environmental historian Hundley coins and explains the term “urban water imperialism” in his fourth chapter “Urban Imperialism: A Tale of Two Cities” in his text The Great Thirst

²⁵⁴ Hundley The Great Thirst 130

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Ibid. 131

decades, the city of Los Angeles continued to argue that it was the rightful owner of all of the water in the Los Angeles River, even sometimes implementing tactics such as rewriting legislation and selling prohibited downstream water surpluses to advance its case.²⁵⁷ Although it was a costly venture, the city eventually won the rights to “all the waters of the river” in a landmark case *Vernon Irrigation Co. vs. Los Angeles* in 1895, which declared support for communal over individual water rights. The case did have one stipulation: Los Angeles’ “right could be asserted only to the amount needed to supply the wants of the inhabitants.”²⁵⁸ While this condition appeared on the surface to set a limit to the extent that the city of Los Angeles could control water rights, local officials developed another scheme: annexation. “Expanding the city’s boundaries was at once seen as a way of justifying—indeed requiring—more water to build an even more magnificent metropolis. As one official noted, ‘If you don’t get the water, you won’t need it.’”²⁵⁹ The roots of empire continued to take hold.

Urban Water Imperialists: Eaton and Mulholland and Lippincott 1898—1905

One of the main engineers of the urban water empire was a man by the name of Fred Eaton. Born in Los Angeles six years after California gained its statehood, Eaton became the superintendent for Los Angeles City Water Company at the age of twenty-seven. In 1898, at the age of forty-two, Eaton became the Mayor of Los Angeles and made it his personal duty to build the city into an expansive urban empire.²⁶⁰ He was one of the first people to realize that there was not a sufficient water supply available to Los Angeles for unrestrained growth, especially since the groundwater residents were dependent upon and quickly using was a reserve

²⁵⁷ Ibid. 131, 135

²⁵⁸ Ibid. 136

²⁵⁹ Ibid. 139

²⁶⁰ Reisner *Cadillac Desert* 60

accumulated over tens of thousands of years.²⁶¹ Eaton advocated for the seizure of water from the Owens Valley in the 1890s at the City of Los Angeles Water Company and had estimated enough water to support at least a million Los Angeles residents.²⁶² Not even the 250-mile distance separating the city of Los Angeles from the Owens Valley water supply was insurmountable according to Eaton. The elevation of the Owens Valley region, approximately 4,000 feet above sea level, compared to that of Los Angeles, at only a few feet, presented an unbelievable solution—the water could “arrive of its own power” by a gravity-fed canal.²⁶³ Now all that was left was to convince the residents of Los Angeles and the federal government, and Eaton had found just the man to do it.

William Mulholland, an Irish immigrant who Eaton named his successor when he left the position of superintendent in 1886 to pursue politics, had originally considered Eaton’s proposal for the Owens Valley unrealistic. “We have enough water here in the [Los Angeles] River to supply the city for the next fifty years,” Mulholland explained in 1893. “You are wrong,” Eaton replied. “You have not lived in this country as long as I have. I was born here and have seen dry years, years that you know nothing about. Wait and see.”²⁶⁴ Eaton’s vision of the Los Angeles Empire and its inadequate water supply eventually resonated with Mulholland as a severe drought set in across Southern California from 1900 to 1904. The final year of the drought became too much for the city to bear, forcing the private Los Angeles City Water Company to transform into the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LA DWP).²⁶⁵ In its first issued public report, Mulholland, who remained in command of the agency in part because he knew the

²⁶¹ Ibid. 61

²⁶² Ibid. 61

²⁶³ Ibid. 61

²⁶⁴ Hundley *The Great Thirst* 144

²⁶⁵ Reisner *Cadillac Desert* 62

entire system and was a poor note keeper,²⁶⁶ explained, “The time has come when we shall have to supplement its flow from some other source.”²⁶⁷ But it was not time so much as the desire to build an empire out of Los Angeles for which water was necessary. After surveying five possible site locations, Mulholland agreed with Eaton’s proposal and set his sights on the Owens Valley.²⁶⁸



Fred Eaton and William Mulholland

Mulholland believed that water from the Owens Valley could support a population of two million—twice what Eaton had projected several years earlier. This resource would also allow the Los Angeles’ “boundaries...[to] be greatly extended,” providing an invaluable asset to a population approximately ten times the size of the city at the turn of the 20th century.²⁶⁹ The benefits Owens Valley water would provide the city of Los Angeles and several key players were immeasurable, however the methods ultimately used to acquire this resource, while officially upholding all laws of the time, remains morally questionable.²⁷⁰ “Los Angeles

²⁶⁶ Ibid. 64

²⁶⁷ Hundley *The Great Thirst* 141

²⁶⁸ Ibid. 141

²⁶⁹ Ibid. 145

²⁷⁰ Reisner *Cadillac Desert* 62

employed chicanery, subterfuge spies, bribery, a campaign of divide-and-conquer, and a strategy of lies to get the water it needed. In the end, it milked the valley bone-dry, impoverishing it, while the water made a number of prominent Los Angeleans very, very rich,” environmental historian Marc Reisner explains.²⁷¹ The development of the great city of Los Angeles would come at the expense of Owens Valley residents—from the white farmers and ranchers seeking fortunes from the water to the indigenous Paiute Peoples who had lived in the region for generations.

The possession of Owens Valley water by the city of Los Angeles meant very different things for the two men. Mulholland continued to advocate for the control of more water as a means of serving his great city, while Eaton’s fervor was based on the hope of attaining personal wealth.²⁷² It was not before long that these conflicting ambitions, though ultimately supporting the same vision of empire for Los Angeles, conflicted. In a confidential meeting in November of 1904, the Reclamation Service explained to the two men that “[it] could not aid the City of Los Angeles unless the project was exclusively a municipal one,” essentially warning Eaton against his profit-driven scheme to purchase land and water rights in the Owens Valley area with the intent of selling it back to the city at a high profit.²⁷³ After reevaluating the Agency’s demand, the city of Los Angeles made an arrangement to have Eaton under the guise of a private citizen purchase water rights on behalf of the city at no personal profit. Eaton agreed to this secret arrangement, but in actuality he planned to continue his moneymaking scheme although now he had to keep it a secret from his lifelong friend; Mulholland would not find out until a year later.

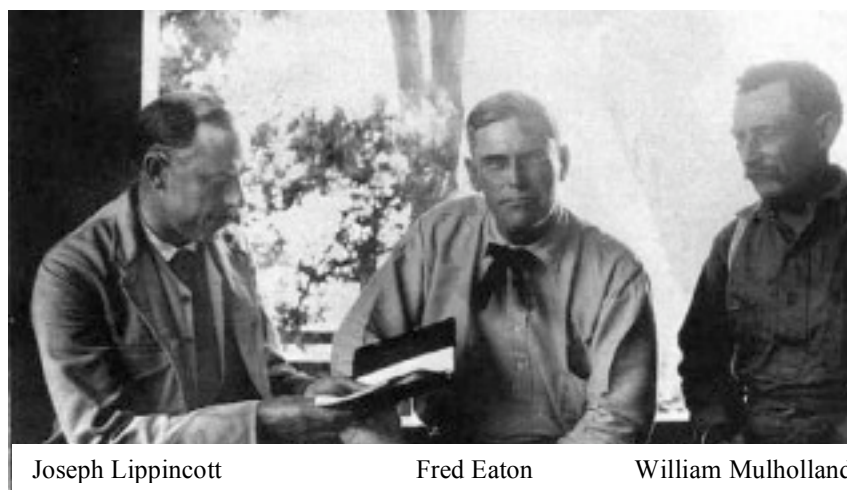
²⁷¹ Ibid. 62

²⁷² Hundley The Great Thirst 146
Reisner Cadillac Desert 63

²⁷³ Hundley The Great Thirst 146

The Reclamation Agency's strong condemnation of corruption and private economic gain was rather ironic since one of its main officials was guilty of just that.

As the city of Los Angeles' interest peaked in the Owens Valley, the Bureau of Reclamation had also been surveying the area in the interest of developing an irrigation system for its farming community in response to their demands for government support. In the summer of 1903, Owens Valley residents welcomed the arrival of Joseph B. Lippincott, the Reclamation Service's supervising engineer. Little did they know, however, that he was a man with "sharply divided loyalties," more a friend of the city of Los Angeles than the Reclamation Bureau and already at odds with George Chaffey and the Manzanar Irrigation Colony.²⁷⁴ Not even two years passed before Lippincott brought his good friend, Fred Eaton up to the Owens Valley, an area that he had his sights on for some time. On their third venture, Lippincott introduced Eaton to an Owens Valley rancher by the name of Thomas Rickey.²⁷⁵ Claiming to want to begin a cattle ranching career, Eaton closely inspected Rickey's property and imagined the land overflowing with water from the neighboring Owens Valley River; Lippincott and he had found the site for the Los Angeles reservoir.²⁷⁶



Joseph Lippincott

Fred Eaton

William Mulholland

²⁷⁴ Ibid. 148

²⁷⁵ Reisner Cadillac Desert 63

²⁷⁶ Ibid. 64

In the winter of 1904, developments for the Owens Valley irrigation project were delayed and Lippincott had to send the majority of his staff to Arizona to work on another irrigation project, decreasing the number of Reclamation Bureau agents to address issues for the Owens Valley. Lippincott received applications from two newly formed power companies in early 1905 asking for the right to cross federal lands.²⁷⁷ Among all the engineers in Los Angeles and San Francisco from which he could have chosen, Lippincott opted to hire “his old friend and professional associate” Fred Eaton in a decision that left his supervisors astonished. “I fail to understand in what capacity he is acting,” explained Bureau Director Arthur Davis.²⁷⁸ Not surprisingly, the first few days of Eaton’s investigation in the valley did not relate to hydroelectric plans. Instead, he took advantage of his position to gather information on land ownership, water rights, stream flows, etc. in the Owens Valley, essential information for the City of Los Angeles’ plans that he would not otherwise have access to as a private citizen. Once he finally addressed the issue relating to the power companies requests, the Bureau of Reclamation was in for another surprise. Despite a relatively straightforward solution for the agency to resolve the conflicting power-license applications, Eaton decided to favor the more troublesome company and recommended to grant access to a power company that had just so happened to be founded by an Owens Valley rancher named Thomas Rickey. A few weeks later, Lippincott formally approved Eaton’s recommendation and solidified the scheme.²⁷⁹

The arrangement between the city of Los Angeles and the Bureau of Reclamation, that is to say Eaton and Lippincott, was reciprocal. On March 6th, 1905, exactly three days after Lippincott had hired Eaton as his “personal representative” to address the issue of the power company applications in the Owens Valley, the city of Los Angeles quietly hired its own

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

consultant to explore its best options for the acquisition water resources.²⁸⁰ The city decided to hire the Reclamation Service's Supervising Engineer Joseph Lippincott through his private consulting practice. Lippincott was paid "an absurdly grandiose commission of \$2,500, more than half of his annual salary" for only a couple of weeks of work and predictably cited water from the Owens Valley.²⁸¹ Most city officials, including LA DWP Chief Engineer Mulholland were unaware of the extent of the collusion between Eaton and Lippincott, but as questions rose in the Owens Valley, the Bureau of Reclamation organized an investigation in July of 1905. The investigation continued in the form of a panel to recommend how the agency should proceed with irrigation plans for the Owens Valley. Lippincott served on the panel as the senior engineer and continued to argue in favor of abandoning a federal irrigation program.²⁸² By using his extensive knowledge of the area and position of power to persuade other panelists, eventually an agreement was reached to temporarily halt proposals for valley irrigation projects; but it included a stipulation that the City of Los Angeles would have to demonstrate its need for Owens Valley water and its resources available to enact the enormous task. The war was almost over, and the city of Los Angeles was winning.

Eaton returned to the Owens Valley four months after consulting for the Reclamation Agency to visit Rancher Rickey. Bringing with him the bribe of the Bureau sanctioned permit that allowed Rickey's power company permission to cross federal lands, Eaton was confident that he would soon own the key water rights for the city. Much to his surprise, Ranger Rickey refused to sell his property. There was a growing sentiment in the valley of distrust and anger towards government officials as irrigation plans that would benefit valley farmers were abandoned for a city 250 miles away. Wilfred Waterston, the president of Inyo County Bank,

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ Ibid.

²⁸² Ibid. 68

exclaimed, “You’ve paid high prices not because you’re dumb but because you’re smart. You’re masquerading as investors and all you’re going to invest in is our ruin.”²⁸³ Eventually, Eaton’s high prices won out and Rickey agreed to sell his land and corresponding water rights for a total of \$450,000 in 1905. The agreement for Eaton to buy Owens Valley property and corresponding water rights on behalf of the city had proceeded with the utmost secrecy and haste. Immediately after securing the Rickey property, Eaton contacted Mulholland and the two met in the following days to arrange the Los Angeles Empire.

Now owning the key water rights in the Owens Valley, Eaton went back on his original deal with Mulholland to sell the city Owens Valley land and corresponding water rights at cost. He knew how valuable the water was to the city and had no intention of divesting himself of the opportunity for great wealth, especially since his prior scheme had failed.²⁸⁴ In late June 1905, Eaton instead offered the city “a perpetual right and easement” to construct a small dam on half of the Rickey property at the same price of \$450,000. To solidify the deal, Eaton threatened to sell the property to a group of eager private buyers, which had the potential to jeopardize the Reclamation Service’s qualification that the project had to be entirely municipally owned and controlled.²⁸⁵ Mulholland and the Board of Water Commissioners had to act quickly and were forced to accept Eaton’s demands. Water Commissioner John M. Elliot explained, “There was a fear that if other parties obtained the rights of the...reservoir they might, in the future, interfere with the City’s water supply, and ...for that reason alone, if for no other, it was wise for us to take every precaution to protect the City in the future.”²⁸⁶ Finally on July 29, 1905, Mulholland

²⁸³ Ibid. 67

²⁸⁴ Hundley The Great Thirst 148

²⁸⁵ Ibid. 149

²⁸⁶ Ibid. 150

announced to all of the City Water Commissioners: “The last spike has been driven. The options are all secured.”²⁸⁷

Los Angeles Aqueduct: Planning 1905—1908

With the land and water rights of the Owens Valley assured, the city of Los Angeles continued to proceed with its imperial agenda. But before water would move freely in the urban empire, city officials would need to convince both its residents and the federal government of its need for the resource.²⁸⁸ In addition to these two obstacles, resistance from local Owens Valley ranchers and farmers mounted in response to the threat of drying up their livelihoods. “The majority of the people of Owens valley thinking there is sufficient water in Owens River for the needed supply of your city and the irrigation of the fertile lands of the Owens River valley for the next fifty years, if properly stored and economically used,” explained an article titled “A Lone Pine View” in the local Inyo *Independent* newspaper on March 9, 1906. It continued: “Now the residents of the Owens valley would like to solve this problem: ‘Will the citizens of Los Angeles be satisfied with water for the use of the City, or will they seek to acquire and monopolize the waters of Owens valley and distribute them through the county of Los Angeles and let the now cultivated and fertile lands of the valley lapse to desert again.’”²⁸⁹ Tension between the promised agricultural and urban empires rose as plans for an aqueduct across Southern California proceeded.

Between the two, the issue of funding for the aqueduct was more pressing for the city of Los Angeles and so it was acted upon first. Uncharacteristic of the time, Mulholland boldly demanded all of the funding be secured before construction of the enormous project began.²⁹⁰ In

²⁸⁷ Reisner *Cadillac Desert* 70

²⁸⁸ Hundley *The Great Thirst* 151

²⁸⁹ Newspaper Inyo *Independent*; “A Lone Pine View” 3/9/1906

²⁹⁰ Hundley *The Great Thirst* 151

order to gain the \$25 million necessary to pay off the secretly obtained Owens Valley land and water rights and cover construction costs, Mulholland developed an elaborate scheme to give the impression of a water crisis.²⁹¹ This involved convincing the Los Angeles electorate that there was a water famine in the city, while bountiful resources sitting not too far away in the Owens Valley essentially begging to be claimed. Mulholland pleaded, “If we could only make the people see the precarious condition in which Los Angeles stands! If we could only pound it into them!”²⁹² That was exactly what he had planned to do, as he continued to announce the pressing water emergency that residents of Los Angeles supposedly faced in the early 20th century.

While the next round of the cyclical drought characteristic of Southern California had hit Los Angeles at the turn of the century, claims of a major water crisis that the city allegedly faced was a politically motivated and “manufactured” tactic.²⁹³ In late 1905, Mulholland exclaimed, “If Los Angeles runs out of water for one week the city within a year will not have a population of 100,000 people.” This statement among others helped and a small panic began to set in across the city; there was already a population of 200,000 at the time of his announcement.²⁹⁴ Few people knew, however, that Mulholland’s “private figures were grossly at odds with his public pronouncements.”²⁹⁵ In fact, as head of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power he realized that there was a water surplus in the city enough to support its population growth over the next eight years during aqueduct construction to approximately 500,000 people without any serious crisis.²⁹⁶

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² Ibid. 153

²⁹³ Ibid.

“The crisis was, in large part, a manufactured one, created to instill the public with a sense of panic and help Eaton acquire a maximum number of water rights in the Owens Valley.” Reisner Cadillac Desert 73

²⁹⁴ Hundley The Great Thirst 153

²⁹⁵ Reisner Cadillac Desert 73

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

The Department of Water and Power also published several reports that cited the extensive water resources in the Owens Valley that could provide the city “as much and as good water as it will at any time require.”²⁹⁷ Articles in local newspapers such as the *Los Angeles Herald* announced, “lawns ...could be kept perennially green as emerald and greater Los Angeles could go swimming in its metropolitan progress.”²⁹⁸ The drive for expansion and commitment to growth was strongly supported by residents of Los Angeles County who believed that the entire area would benefit from the construction of the aqueduct.²⁹⁹ The Los Angeles newspaper the *Examiner* explained that water resources in the Owens Valley would be enough to supply “a city of 2,000,000 population” and would also accommodate the “annexation [of] nearby towns, thereby greatly reducing the cost [of the project].”³⁰⁰ The sense of panic from the manufactured water crisis was assuaged with the promise from Mulholland that “every acre of dry land in Los Angeles county will be provided with sufficient water.”³⁰¹ But the water was actually needed for the building of the city’s empire, not to support its current population.³⁰²

By the first election on September 7, 1905, the Los Angeles electorate was overwhelmingly supportive of the \$1.5 million bond initiative. The impact of LA DWP publications and local newspapers in stirring up anxiety over the water famine coincided well with the weather that week.³⁰³ The temperature climbed to 101 degrees the week before the election, and with the four proceeding months without a drop of rain, LA residents were pushed to their limits.³⁰⁴ The initiative passed in a landslide, with a 14 to 1 ratio of ballots cast to support

²⁹⁷ Hundley *The Great Thirst* 152

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ Ibid. 151

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

³⁰¹ Ibid. 152

³⁰² Ibid. 154

³⁰³ Ibid. 153

³⁰⁴ ” Reisner *Cadillac Desert* 77

the bond.³⁰⁵ Excitement continued to buzz around the city with citizens calling for a celebration organized by the City Council in December 1905.³⁰⁶ The second bond measure for \$23 million to be dedicated for the aqueduct's construction also was overwhelmingly supported and passed with a 10 to 1 ratio.³⁰⁷ After having secured the necessary funding for the project, Mulholland turned to federal approval.

Approval for the project by the Congress would prove more difficult than convincing the Los Angeles electorate.³⁰⁸ Most of the 250 miles between the Owens Valley and Los Angeles belonged to the government so the city would need to appeal for rights-of-way on the land.³⁰⁹ Another issue that the Mulholland and the LA DWP would have to negotiate was the Bureau of Reclamation's proposed irrigation project in the Owens Valley, which had only been temporarily stopped, not deauthorized. If this land were returned to the public domain, the Homestead Act and Desert Land Act would once again promote the repopulation of the valley and buying of water rights.³¹⁰ Resistance by Owens Valley farmers and ranchers also intensified; "they insist that it is the duty of the United States Government to oppose any diversion of water to be used in the irrigation of distant lands, and to proceed with its project to use the water on the lands nearest to the river, and to which it can be conducted with the least expense and the least waste," explained an article in the *San Francisco Chronicle* on September 1, 1905, a week before the bond issue passed.³¹¹ But the city of Los Angeles had a strong supporter in the Congress. Senator Frank Flint of California, an advocate of urban water development in general, introduced a bill to give the city all the rights it needed to cross federal land and to hold the previously quarantined

³⁰⁵ Hundley *The Great Thirst* 151

³⁰⁶ *Inyo Independent* "We'll Be There." December 22, 1905

³⁰⁷ Hundley *The Great Thirst* 151

³⁰⁸ Reisner *Cadillac Desert* 79

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ *San Francisco Chronicle* "More About Water," September 1, 1905

lands for an additional three years (enough time for the city to secure its final water rights).³¹² In June of 1906, the Senate quickly approved the bill and passed it along to the House Public Lands Committee where it encountered strong opposition. After much debate, the legislation was amended to provide Owens Valley residents with the first nonnegotiable right to the water, as well as prohibit the distribution of any surplus water to the San Fernando Valley.³¹³ Although the bill positioned the City of Los Angeles' right to resources as second to the Owens Valley and would have significantly inhibited its development, Mulholland accepted the compromise to buy some time.

Following an intensive coaching session from LA DWP Chief Engineer Mulholland, Senator Flint went to a late meeting to discuss the bill with President Roosevelt on June 23, 1906. He passionately argued that the compromise from the House Public Lands Committee forced the city of Los Angeles to surrender to their despairing situation. The water famine, he explained, was already impacting the city and its residents could not afford to be indefinitely filibustered in Congress.³¹⁴ Playing to the President's belief in Progressivism and the "greater good for the greatest number," Senator Flint was able to convince President Roosevelt that the water was "a thousandfold more valuable to the state and the nation if it built up a great, strong, progressive city on America's weakly defended western flank instead of maintaining a little agrarian utopia in the high desert."³¹⁵ After outcries from Owens Valley residents that the President had become "deaf" to "Inyo's demands to be treated fairly in the disposition of her waters,"³¹⁶ President Roosevelt proclaimed: "It is a hundred or thousandfold more important to

³¹² Reisner Cadillac Desert 79

³¹³ Ibid. 80

³¹⁴ Ibid. 81

³¹⁵ Ibid.

³¹⁶ *Inyo Independent* "A Theft in Water." October 3, 1908

state this water is more valuable to the people of Los Angeles than to the Owens Valley,” words mimicking Mulholland’s vision.³¹⁷

In July 1907, following President Roosevelt’s orders, the Bureau of Reclamation officially deauthorized the Owens Valley irrigation project and kept the thousands of acres of withdrawn Owens Valley land out of the hands of eager homesteaders.³¹⁸ Mulholland, while pleased with this step, asked the federal government what more it could do for the city of Los Angeles, and got a strong response from the Forest Service. Approximately 275,000 acres composing vast majority of the Owens Valley area was designated as part of the Inyo National Forest, despite the fact that the desert, with an average of six inches a rainfall a year, was too dry for trees.³¹⁹ The only trees standing in the valley were those that had been cultivated and propagated by local farmers and would soon withered as their water source was channeled 250 miles away. The designation of this land as part of the National Forest directly opposed The Organic Act that created the Forest Service because it was clear that the water resources in this land were to benefit outside urban and agricultural projects, not timber production in the valley.³²⁰ Critics from the House Public Lands Committee exclaimed, “This is not government by legislation, it is government by strangulation.”³²¹ Nonetheless, Los Angeles was granted all of the water resources it wanted to develop its empire and construction began the following year.

³¹⁷ Reisner Cadillac Desert 82

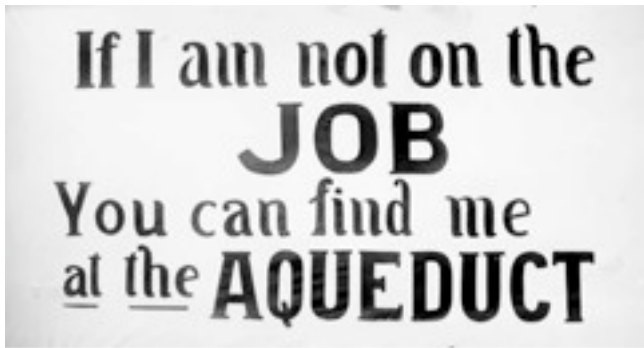
³¹⁸ Ibid. 83

³¹⁹ Unrau, Manzanar National Historic Site, California 6b.

³²⁰ The Organic Act states, “No public forest reservation shall be established expect to improve and protect the forest...or for the purpose of creating favorable conditions of water flow, and to provide a continuous supply of timber for the use and necessities of the United States; but it is not the purpose of these provisions ...to authorize the inclusion...of lands more valuable for the mineral therein, *or for agricultural purposes*, than for forest purposes” [emphasis present] Reisner Cadillac Desert 83

³²¹ Reisner Cadillac Desert 83

Los Angeles Aqueduct Construction: 1908—1913



With the funding sponsored by the Los Angeles electorate and full support from the federal government, construction on the Los Angeles Aqueduct began in 1908. The project created 3,906 new positions for initial construction³²² and eventually approximately 6,000 low-wage workers were hired and averaged \$2 to \$3 a day to construct the 223-mile aqueduct and corresponding 120 miles of railroad track, 500 miles of road and trails, 240 miles of telephone line, and 170 miles of power transmission.³²³ Six years later on November 5, 1913, the first water rushed down the final channel and marked the end of the water war—Los Angeles had won. Before the crowds of Los Angeles residents and low-wage workers, an announcement rang out: “We are gathered here today to celebrate the coming of a king—for water in Southern California is king in fact if not in name.”³²⁴ Mulholland stood high above the crowds and upon first sight of cascading river he turned to the Mayor of Los Angeles and proclaimed: “There it is. Take it!”³²⁵

Some Owens Valley residents could be found among the masses, watching their livelihoods wash down in the San Fernando Valley. Despite the completion of the aqueduct, few residents realized the full extent of the impact this project would have on their lives.³²⁶ Many of the Owens Valley ranchers had been able to sell their property and water rights to the city at a

³²² *Big Pine Herald* “Los Angeles to Begin Aqueduct.” Oct 3 1908

³²³ *Big Pine Herald* 84

³²⁴ Nadeua, Remi. *The Water Seekers*. Garden City: Doubleday and Company, 1950. 60—63

³²⁵ Hundley *The Great Thirst* 156; Reisner *Cadillac Desert* 86

³²⁶ Reisner *Cadillac Desert* 78

significant profit and were able to keep using the water until the completion of the aqueduct. The northern part of the valley had also been left relatively undisturbed by the city, which had purchased approximately forty miles along the southern banks of the Owens Valley River.³²⁷ Former Mayor Eaton had been the only one to purchase land in the upper valley, but many residents had felt assured by his presence because of his talk of developing a cattle ranch on the old Rickey property.³²⁸ Author Mary Austin who had lived in the region for many years was among the few who realized what impact the Los Angeles Aqueduct would have on her community: “The valley had died when it sold its first water rights to Los Angeles—that the city would never stop until it owned the whole river and all of the land.”³²⁹



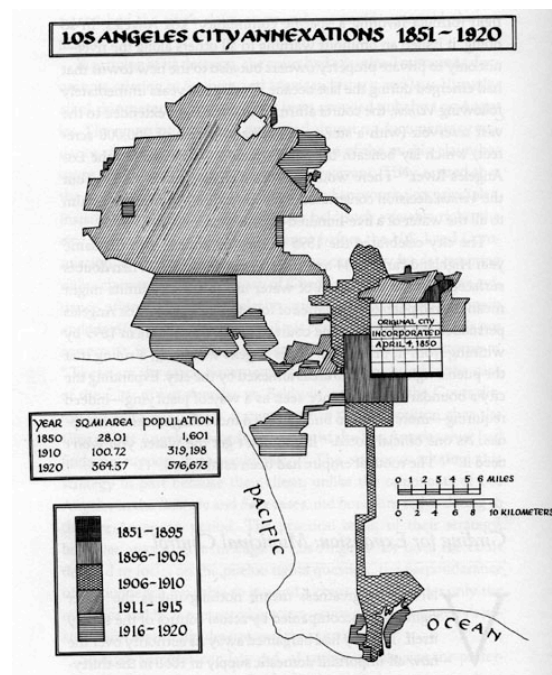
By 1913 the city of Los Angeles had more water resources than its residents could use so discussions on how to best distribute the water began. Mulholland was immediately opposed to conversations of selling the excess water for best possible profit to neighboring communities until the city needed the resource and instead argued to make the water available to communities

³²⁷ Ibid.

³²⁸ Ibid.

³²⁹ Ibid. 79

neighboring Los Angeles with the promise of annexation.³³⁰ “Instead of bringing more people to Los Angeles—which was happening anyway—*the city would go to them*. It would just loosen its borders as Mulholland loosened his silk cravat and wrap itself around the San Fernando Valley. Then it would have a new tax base, a natural underground storage reservoir, and a legitimate use of its surplus water in one fell swoop.”³³¹ A new Annexation Commission was instated and soon proclaimed, “Annexation and consolidation will give Los Angeles standing as the metropolis of the Pacific Coast...Wherever the aqueduct water is placed—be it north, south, east, or west—there will the greatest development of the future be found, and that development should be a part of, and help constitute the Greater Los Angeles that is to be.”³³² The ultimate urban expansion plan had been developed thanks to the Owens Valley water. Mulholland had lied to the Owens Valley residents when he promised to not divert the water to other irrigation communities. The “use-it-or-lose-it” principle from the doctrine of appropriative rights still influenced Western legislation on water rights and had been internalized by Mulholland and other water-conscious westerners. If the city of Los Angeles did not demonstrate that it could productively use all of the water it was stealing from the Owens Valley immediately, the resource would not be guaranteed for the future empire of Los Angeles.³³³ Throughout the early 20th century, the



³³⁰ Hundley *The Great Thirst* 157

³³¹ Reisner *Cadillac Desert* 74

³³² Hundley *The Great Thirst* 158-159

³³³ Reisner *Cadillac Desert* 78

San Fernando Valley received three times more the amount of water than the city of Los Angeles did and predominantly used it for irrigation with the number of irrigated acres increasing from 3,000 in 1913 to over 75,000 acres five years later.³³⁴ Although there is some discussion, especially from allies of Owens Valley residents, on whether or not landowners from the San Fernando Valley planned a conspiracy with the city of Los Angeles to acquire the Owens Valley water rights, ultimately, the urban water imperial empire was victorious.

The city of Los Angeles continued to grow in the early 20th century as the “glorious anomaly of a fake tropical city with a mild desert climate” attracted people from across the country.³³⁵ By 1915, the population had tripled in size and the city’s boundaries expanded from 108 square miles to 285 square miles.³³⁶ Mulholland had only expected a population of 350,000 people by 1925, but instead found a city booming with a population of 1.2 million and growing.³³⁷ The Owens Valley, however incurred the opposite issue—desertion of the desert.

Owens Valley Legacies of Distrust and Resistance 1920s—1941

A legacy of distrust and suspicion characterized Owens Valley residents during the 1920s. Although some members of the community continued to prosper either after having sold their property to the city or from the economic prosperity that came with the six years aqueduct construction, Owens Valley residents were ultimately betrayed by federal, state, and local governments.³³⁸ “It does not seem right that the city should be permitted to rob this valley of its water for the purpose of building up and exploiting agricultural land contiguous to the city,” exclaimed residents in the *Inyo Independent* on January 14, 1910. “There is not the slightest objection to the city having all the water needed for city purposes, but they should be compelled

³³⁴ Ibid. 86

³³⁵ Reisner *Cadillac Desert* 87

³³⁶ Hundley *The Great Thirst* 159

³³⁷ Reisner *Cadillac Desert* 87

³³⁸ Hundley *The Great Thirst* 163-4

to leave water enough in this valley to irrigate every foot of agricultural land in the valley. The water that is being claimed by the city is sufficient to furnish a city of a million people for a thousand years to come, and if they are permitted to take all they want it will make a permanent desert of many thousand of acres in this valley, land too, that with the water claimed by the city turned onto it, would be worth just as much acre for acre, as the land adjoining the city of Los Angeles, which they are apparently attempting to develop at the expense of Inyo county.”³³⁹

After effectively being exploited by the city of Los Angeles, abandoned by the state and federal government, and betrayed by their own local officials, Owens Valley residents took matters into their own hands. In a statement made in the local newspaper *The Big Pine Herald*, Owens Valley residents exclaimed “A Theft in Water” on October 3, 1908: “But the Owens River valley has a good many thousands of people living therein, who have made their homes here, and who are ready to defend these homes, in Congress, before the White House, through the courts, by arousing public opinion, or if necessary, by the use of armed force—not that a few thousand people could win a fight that way, but that they could get a hearing which would be fairer than any yet granted them.”³⁴⁰

Resistance to the Los Angeles aqueduct grew as the city claimed more and more water from the Owens Valley. The drought cycle began once again in 1919 and worsened between 1923 and 1925, which caused the city to divert more and more water to support its ever-growing population and annexed territories.³⁴¹ In the midst of the Owens Valley community organizing its attack on Los Angeles, the city itself was having some internal disputes. Eaton disgruntled with the lack of personal wealth that he had acquired from the water rights transactions with the city decided that he wanted to sell the Rickey Ranch property in the northern part of the valley to the

³³⁹ Inyo *Independent* January 14, 1910

³⁴⁰ *The Big Pine Herald* “A Theft in Water” on October 3, 1908

³⁴¹ Reisner *Cadillac Desert* 87

city for the creation a reservoir. The city was considering various means to increase its water resource in light of the recent droughts and expanding water-dependent population including constructing a reservoir in the valley. Since the Bureau of Reclamation and President Roosevelt had prevented the realization of his personal wealth by demanding the aqueduct project always be municipally owned, Eaton requested \$1 million from the city for the full access to his water rights and property.³⁴² This was an extreme amount of money and when Mulholland asked that his old friend consider a more reasonable offer of \$500,000, Eaton declined angrily. After disputing the issue for some time in 1917, the two friends and architects of the Los Angeles Empire stopped speaking.³⁴³

Mulholland was responsible for securing more water resources for the city of Los Angeles in response to the growing concerns over water shortages. After exhausting several external options including extracting water from the Colorado River, Los Angeles looked again towards the Owens Valley in 1923. The options of constructing a reservoir in the valley was now off the table because of the personal grudge Mulholland had developed against Eaton six years prior. Instead, the Department of Water and Power would continue the plan it knew best—land buyouts. By organizing a collective of three influential Owens Valley residents to convince the community to sell their property, Mulholland would once again have enough resources for his city and simultaneously silence the voices of resistance and solidify his control of the region.³⁴⁴ “Leave no one of the ranchers out,” Mulholland explained to the collective. “We want them all.”³⁴⁵ On March 13, 1923, the three agents went to valley and bought two-thirds of the land and water rights within a 24-hour period. In order to secure the properties, the city paid \$7,500 per

³⁴² Ibid. 88

³⁴³ Ibid.

³⁴⁴ Hundley *The Great Thirst* 164

³⁴⁵ Reisner *Cadillac Desert* 90

cubic second foot of water, which eventually totaled to more than \$1 million, Eaton's asking price for the Rickey Ranch.³⁴⁶ It was intention of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power to acquire "all water bearing lands in the Owens Valley,"³⁴⁷ including areas federally protected for the indigenous Paiute Peoples. Tactics used to acquire these lands were even more extreme than the economic pressures placed on the white farming community. On August of 1915, for example, employees from the Board of Public Works invaded a Paiute settlement with guns drawn to shut off their water supply.³⁴⁸ The manipulative tactics from various public agencies were met with resistance.

In the following three years "pockets of resistance" developed in the valley to protect the dwindling Owens Valley community from more exploitation.³⁴⁹ A series of dynamiting of the Los Angeles aqueduct continued to occur between 1924 and 1927. Inyo County residents explained that "the dynamiting...had been planned, not to destroy Los Angeles' water system, but to warn the city to stop dealing with the ranchers individually for their land and water rights."³⁵⁰ Rarely did the dynamited area cause the city to lose any water resources. Another more aggressive resistance tactic that developed in the valley was the diverting of water away from the Los Angeles aqueduct by opening of head gates and uselessly flooding it across neighboring fields. Mulholland responded to these offenses the best way that he knew how—to purchase more Owens Valley land and he offered even higher rates for the water rights.³⁵¹ Finally a majority of Owens Valley residents agreed to sell their property for the price of \$5,000

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

³⁴⁷ Walter, Nancy Peterson. "The Land Exchange Act of 1937: Creation of the Indian Reservations at Bishop, Big Pine, and Long Pine, California Through a Land Trade Between The United States of America and The City of Los Angeles." Dissertation Union Graduate School. May 1986. 170

³⁴⁸ *Owens Valley Herald* "Inyo Indians Win in Suit with City" August 18, 1916

³⁴⁹ Reisner *Cadillac Desert* 92

³⁵⁰ *Municipal League of Los Angeles* "The Owens Valley 'Revolt'" July 15, 1924

³⁵¹ Hundley *The Great Thirst* 165

per second-foot, which was twice what the city had paid previously.³⁵² This strategy of division and attrition “was especially cruel, not only because it placed an even larger burden of responsibility on the farmers and ranchers who held out, but because it pitted neighbor against neighbor, wife against husband, brother against brother.”³⁵³



Resistance methods by Owens Valley residents grew increasingly violent. The Ku Klux Klan was able to enter the valley and have high recruitment as a result of the tensions.³⁵⁴ Finally on November 16, 1924, hundreds of Owens Valley residents organized five miles north of the town of Lone Pine to divert water back into the Owens Valley River. The sheriff of Inyo County C. C. Collins reported a telegraph to the governor of California stating, “Approximately one hundred citizens have opened the Los Angeles aqueduct waste gates and are spilling the water of the aqueduct into Owens river. They are standing guard over the head gates and resisting all efforts to close it. All efforts to disperse the party have failed.”³⁵⁵ It was not before long however, that the scene turned into a “picnic” with wives, children, grandmothers, and dogs

³⁵² Reisner *Cadillac Desert* 93

³⁵³ Ibid. 90

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

³⁵⁵ *Los Angeles Examiner* “Sheriff Asks Governor for Troops to Prevent Water Row Bloodshed” November 17, 1924

joining the lawbreakers to form a group 700 strong.³⁵⁶ Once again on March 28, 1927, however, concerns that the aqueduct would “run red with human blood” arose from a shoot-to-kill sentence issued by the state for resisters who had destroyed significant portions of the aqueduct.³⁵⁷ These violent outbursts in the Owens Valley were mediated with intense propaganda campaigns by both sides. Representations of Owens Valley residents as “are not anarchists or bomb throwers, but in the main honest, hardworking American citizens” was spread by local newspapers, while the LA DWP public relations department published a pamphlet that explained “Never in its history has the Owens Valley prospered and increased in wealth as it has in the past twenty years.”³⁵⁸ After a financial scandal marking a \$2.3 million discrepancy devastated some of the main resisters in the Owens Valley, armed resistance against the city ceased and the area transformed into ghost towns.³⁵⁹



Owens Valley residents dynamiting aqueduct

Despite the newly gained water rights, the purchase of these properties placed a large burden on the city of Los Angeles as well. Responsible for paying off these purchases as well as

³⁵⁶ Reisner Cadillac Desert 90

³⁵⁷ Ibid.

³⁵⁸ Ibid. 94

³⁵⁹ Ibid. 92

their corresponding high property taxes,³⁶⁰ city officials tried to develop a profit making scheme that would also help secure their water rights, maintain the land on their new properties, and begin to develop more “amicable relationships” with the residents of these lands. In spite of the recent land purchases the city of Los Angeles decided to support agricultural development in the valley in the late 1920s.³⁶¹ Fruit raising activities in Owens Valley were confined to the area of Manzanar irrigation colony, which provided approximately 300 acres of land for orchards. By 1927, this agricultural enterprise produced a profit of \$10,000 from fruit sales alone. White Owens Valley farmers continued to employ neighboring Paiute Peoples as well as Black and Chinese laborers who had arrived in the valley with the construction of the Los Angeles aqueduct.³⁶² However, after a few prosperous years of the city sponsored agricultural project, the program was terminated as the city had “engaged in direct farming merely pending other and better arrangements.”³⁶³ Consequently, the Manzanar Water Corporation was dissolved in 1932, causing even more residences to be evacuated and left the carefully irrigated farmlands and orchards to deteriorate and be destroyed in fires and windstorms.³⁶⁴ A time of economic hardship plagued the valley and most irrigation practices had stopped by 1934.

The approximately 800 indigenous Paiute Peoples still living in the Owens Valley in the 1920s and 1930s were especially negatively impacted from the economic decline.³⁶⁵ After adapting to the low-wage labor exploitation system developed following the forced relocation of Paiute Peoples off their lands, the main sources of employment as service positions on white ranches and farms disappeared with the water.³⁶⁶ Paiute Peoples continued to enact resistance

³⁶⁰ Hundley The Great Thirst 165

³⁶¹ Ibid.

³⁶² Ibid.

³⁶³ Ibid.

³⁶⁴ Unrau, Manzanar National Historic Site, California 6.

³⁶⁵ Hundley The Great Thirst 165

³⁶⁶ Ibid.

techniques to colonization and exploitation similar to when whites first arrived in the valley seventy years prior. One successful example was a lawsuit filed against the city of Los Angeles in August of 1916 for infringing on their water rights.³⁶⁷ But struggles for the indigenous population continued through the 1930s as the city unrelentingly appropriated Owens Valley water. In 1930, the federal government formally made an appeal for “voluntary relocation” of Paiute Peoples by offering financial assistance in exchange for the ancestral land and water rights, once again rearticulating the legacy of forced relocation. A report by the Department of the Interior explained:

Since it is to be conceded that many or all of them will no doubt be a permanent fixture or problem in the Owens Valley for many years to come, this report has been prepared with the view that the Indian problem be now attacked in a serious manner in order that the present living conditions of the Indians may be bettered and their future stabilized, so that they will have something to look forward to. And to work out a satisfactory condition permitting the City of Los Angeles to conserve and to maintain the value of their water system secured by Owens River land purchase.³⁶⁸

These appeals continued until 1939 when the city finally negotiated a settlement that provided “Paiutes with better lands and assured water rights,” at least according to the Department of the Interior and Bureau of Indian Affairs.³⁶⁹

After enduring an attempted genocide, forced removal, and labor exploitation, the Owens Valley Paiute Peoples were a community who was “ignored, closed out, not regarded as the stuff from which accumulators and imperialists are made.”³⁷⁰ The federal government and agencies developed to protect these people ultimately failed; they refused to acknowledge indigenous peoples’ rights to land, self-determination, or their lives and instead endorsed corrupt deals within the political systems. Approximately three fourths of indigenous peoples living on

³⁶⁷ *Owens Valley Herald* “Inyo Indians Win in Suit with City” August 18, 1916

³⁶⁸ Walter “The Land Exchange Act of 1937” 174-175

³⁶⁹ Hundley *The Great Thirst* 165

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.* 297

reservations were located in the Western United States, but these lands were no guarantee, as they were soon “taken from them and sold to white irrigators or flooded behind damns. Their groundwater had been pumped away to adjacent interests.”³⁷¹ “Indian’s chances to make a living have vanished,” the Owens Valley Indian Council explained in a letter on December 16, 1937.³⁷² The federal government was ultimately responsible for constructing an urban empire at the expense of indigenous and rural communities, enforcing historical patterns of force relocation and exploitation.

The Owens Valley, while still located on maps, had ceased to exist as its own place.³⁷³ By 1933, Los Angeles owned 95 percent of farmland and 85 percent of town property in the Owens Valley, further incurring the responsibilities for the land and few remaining residents. After city supported agricultural development was officially suspended in 1934 and the last remaining farmer was forcibly displaced, the development of a large-scale agricultural economy was no longer feasible in the Owens Valley. Instead, the area turned towards tourism.³⁷⁴ In 1937, Inyo-Mono Associates was organized “to publicize the scenic beauty and recreational and investment opportunities of the two counties.”³⁷⁵ Representatives from Olancho, Death Valley, Panamint, Darwin, Keeler, Bishop, Lone Pine, Big Pine, and Independence participated in the organization and were successful in having major Los Angeles and San Francisco newspapers advertise the area by carrying articles about fishing and gaming locations. The association was soon able to accomplish perhaps its most important achievement of convincing the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LA DWP) to assist in the development of the region into “a

³⁷¹ Ibid.

³⁷² The Owens Valley Indian Council. Letter. December 16, 1937

³⁷³ Reisner Cadillac Desert 100

³⁷⁴ Unrau, Manzanar National Historic Site, California, 6b.

³⁷⁵ Ibid 6.

tourist haven.”³⁷⁶ During the late 1930s, the LA DWP began promoting tourism and recreation in the Owens Valley by leasing, and in some cases even selling, property back to town businessmen. Between 1938 and 1945, the city of Los Angeles sold “more than 50% of the city owned town lots” in Bishop, Big Pine, Lone Pine, and Independence.³⁷⁷ Other land areas owned by LA DWP were allocated for recreational purposes and advertised for their natural beauty and fishing and gaming opportunities. These combined effort by the Inyo-Mono Associates and its supporters and the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power proved very successful. In 1940, it was estimated that approximately one million tourists visited Owens Valley³⁷⁸. Unfortunate for most Owens Valley residents, however, this economic system would not last long.

IV. Conclusion

California in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was characterized by the drive to build empires, specifically the legacy of the Water Wars between the agricultural irrigation colonies in the Owens Valley and urban development of Los Angeles. The state functioned as an “agency for conquest” and aimed to control the limited water resources in order to support its most powerful constituents in their pursuit of domination.³⁷⁹ Predominantly public, as opposed to private entities, sought the ultimate domination over environmental resources and exploitation of indigenous and marginalized communities to execute the urban water imperialism, which would eventually defeat the agricultural empire. As goals of growth and strength were championed “an end in itself,” control over water in the deserts of southern California was the key to empire.³⁸⁰

³⁷⁶ Ibid.

³⁷⁷ Walton. Western Times and Water Wars 216-217

³⁷⁸ Walton as quoted in Unrau, Manzanar National Historic Site, California 6

³⁷⁹ Worster, Rivers of Empire 131

³⁸⁰ Hundely The Great Thirst 122

Worster, Rivers of Empire 130

“They supplied *water*, that precious substance that all cherished, for it meant survival, growth, and prosperity in an arid land,” environmental historian Hundley explains.³⁸¹ While colleague Worster continues, “The West, more than any other American region, was built by state power, state enterprise, state technology, and state bureaucracy.”³⁸²

Without support from the government, including local, state, and federal agencies, individuals alone could not have (re)colonized the West.³⁸³ From local bureaucrats, including former Los Angeles Mayor Frederick Eaton and head of Los Angeles Department of Water and Power William Mulholland, to federal government officials from the Bureau of Reclamation, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and Forestry Service in addition to President Roosevelt, urban water imperialism received tremendous government support. The roles of revising legislation on California water law and constructing infrastructure between the city of Los Angeles and the Owens Valley 250 miles away were also key factors in the conquest of the agricultural territories.³⁸⁴ In addition to these three key factors of government support, legislation, and infrastructure, the historical context of the Progressive movement, of which President Roosevelt was a key player in promoting, also helped set the stage for the rise of Los Angeles. Although John Wesley Powell’s agricultural model was supportive of the Progressive Era’s desire for growth, its exclusion of capitalists and the government from positions of decision-making power contributed to its demise as an impractical alternative. The Los Angeles electorate was instead sold on the vision of urban industrial empire which they thought would allow their community to prosper.³⁸⁵

³⁸¹ Hundley *The Great Thirst* 169

³⁸² Worster, *Rivers of Empire* 131

³⁸³ Ibid.

³⁸⁴ Ibid 132

³⁸⁵ Hundley *The Great Thirst* 169

Chapter 3: To A Place Like This... 1940-1942

民族の 一人として 荷を纏め	<i>Minzoku no hitori to shite ni o matome</i>	<i>As one of the Japanese I gather my belongings</i> by Keiho ³⁸⁶
残したは 君だけでない カリフォルニア	<i>Nokoshita wa kimi dakede nai Karifonia</i>	<i>I leave behind not only you, my California</i> by Shocho ³⁸⁷
我慢して 我慢している 皮膚の色	<i>Gaman shite Gaman shite iru hifu no iro</i>	<i>Enduring and still enduring the color of my skin</i> by Kikyo ³⁸⁸
情けない 四十年の 思い出よ	<i>Nasake nai- Yon-n ju- nen – no O mo i de yo.</i>	<i>Unrelenting... The memories of Forty years.</i> by Sue Kunitomi Embrey ³⁸⁹

Significant literature has been produced detailing the history of Japanese and Japanese American incarceration during World War II—ranging from three line haikus written by Nikkei poetry collectives such as the Pacific Asian American Women Writers–West to volumes of socio-political analyses of the events leading up to, during, and after Manzanar. The lines of these poems, written by women survivors of an unconstitutional incarceration, tell the stories and lives behind the facts and figures, baring witness to the economic, political, social, emotional and physical impacts forced relocation had on their hearts, bodies and minds. Collaboration between

³⁸⁶ Yamauchi, Wakako. “The Poetry of the Issei on the American Relocation Experience.” *CALAFIA: The California Poetry*. Ed. Ishamel Reed. Berkeley: Y’Bird Books, 1979. lxxi–lxxviii.

³⁸⁷ Ibid.

³⁸⁸ Ibid.

³⁸⁹ Embrey, Sue Kunitomi. “O mo I de: A prelude to a day of Remembrance.” Pacific Asian American Women Writers West (PAAWW-W)

activists who fought for redress and academics in Asian American Studies have greatly contributed to writing this era into American history and incorporating the voices of those wronged and critiquing the institutional and systemic power structures that allowed this grave injustice. Often an essential component of these stories is the impact that the natural environment had on the prisoners, especially the lack of water and prevalence of dust now characteristic of the Owens Valley region. However these environmental justice concerns are discussed strictly within the context of Manzanar, not their specific environmental histories. Instead of attempting to replicate this work, my examination of this historical period will be framed around the perspective of water—integrating economic, political, and social issues that interacted with its flow through this grave history.

I. To the Land of Opportunity

By the time President Roosevelt had signed Executive Order 9066, ten weeks after Pearl Harbor had been bombed, several waves of attacks against people of Japanese ancestry had been executed by the federal government. Anti-Japanese protests roared the 1890s, only a few years after significant immigration from Japan had begun. Immigration laws, including the 1907 Gentlemen's Agreement and 1924 Asian Exclusion Act, severely restricted and entirely prohibited immigration from Japan, respectively. Anti-Japanese sentiment built up quickly across the United States. The Report of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians *Personal Justice Denied* published in December 1982 explains, "Antipathy and hostility toward the ethnic Japanese was a major factor of the public life of the west coast states for more than forty years before Pearl Harbor."³⁹⁰ These sentiments were rooted in part in the

³⁹⁰ United States: Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians and Tetsuden Kashima. Personal Justice Denied. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997. 4

economic context that encouraged immigration from Japan. Most Japanese who made it over to the United States were young men from the agricultural class who brought with them “their knowledge of intensive cultivation, [which was] new to the west—including knowledge of soils, fertilizers, skill in land reclamation, irrigation and drainage.”³⁹¹ The economic situations of both countries, with rapid industrialization of Japan in the late 19th century and economic opportunities in agricultural production in the United States, especially in Hawaii—highly encouraged the mass immigration of recently displaced laborers. The influx of experienced and more easily exploitable laborers were often seen as economic threats to white American farm workers who in turn greatly contributed to anti-Japanese labor organizing efforts. These sentiments were most often expressed during times of economic hardship. “Frequently, anti-Japanese activity increased during periods of recession if competition from the ethnic Japanese was perceived as an economic threat,” the 1982 Report explains.³⁹²

The next wave of anti-Japanese activity centered in California was the passing of the Alien Land Law of 1913 (also known as the Webb-Heney Act), which prohibited future land purchases by immigrants ineligible for citizenship. This functioned to strip land ownership rights for a population highly dependent on land for agricultural and capital development. Anti-Japanese activity and sentiment continued to intensify after World War I. A coalition of four major organizations—The Native Sons (and Native Daughters) of the Golden West, The American Legion, The California State Federation of Labor and the California State Grange—led a campaign in 1920 to pass a proposition titled “Save California—Stop Absorption of State’s Best Acreage by Japanese Through Leases and Evasions of Law.”³⁹³ Similar legislation was

³⁹¹ Ibid. 30

³⁹² Ibid. 42

³⁹³ Ibid. 35

passed in Arizona, Washington and Oregon despite relatively small populations of Japanese.

Limitations on citizenship also functionally restricted Japanese power within political systems.

Nevertheless, Japanese immigrants and their children were able to create a niche in the agricultural market in the United States, which was especially focused in California where 41% of the west coast population lived in 1900 and 70% by 1940.³⁹⁴ The economic stronghold that the Japanese agricultural workers developed continued to grow, accounting for 10% of California's crop value or \$67 million in 1920 and 30–40% in 1941.³⁹⁵ The hostility and injustices Japanese farmers faced encouraged the population to enter agricultural produce distribution industries. By 1940, Japanese dominated the fruit and vegetable supply system in Los Angeles and many began to establish their own stores. The survival of these low capital investment was largely attributed to unpaid labor of family members, especially women.³⁹⁶ Significant populations of Japanese immigrants were also skilled fishermen “who eventually revolutionized the fishing industry” and worked in the fishing and fish cannery industry along the coast.³⁹⁷ Other major occupations that Japanese and Japanese-Americans held before WWII were housework and gardening.

II. “The Lost American Citizens”

I was in our store listening to a radio show. Al Jarvis' Big Band music. They interrupted the program around noon, announcing that Japanese planes had attacked Pearl Harbor. I ran next door and told my mother the news. ‘Ah,’ she said, ‘they are always saying those things to try to sell newspapers. I don't think that's true. How could they? They would be too far from Japan.’³⁹⁸

³⁹⁴ Ibid. 31

³⁹⁵ Ibid. 43

³⁹⁶ Ibid. 43

³⁹⁷ Ibid. 30

³⁹⁸ Bahr, Diana Meyers. Unquiet Nisei: An Oral History of the Life of Sue Kunitomi Embrey. New York: Palgrave, 2007.

The morning was December 7th, 1941 and my grandmother, Sue Kunitomi would not believe the news of the military attack until her brother, Jack Kunitomi ran through the door, brimming with anxious energy, shouting about the scene in Little Tokyo, Los Angeles. It was “buzzing with Caucasian policemen, FBI, and plainclothesmen,” Jack would later recall. “They were going into different shops, arresting the proprietors. Terrible confusion for all the employees. That went on through [the] evening because there were many, many shops.”³⁹⁹ Ten weeks later, on February 19, 1942, President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, effectively granting the Secretary of War and the military commanders the power to exclude all or any persons from designated areas in the name of natural defense in order to protect the nation against sabotage and espionage.

Whereas the successful prosecution of the war requires every possible protection against espionage and against sabotage to national-defense material, national-defense premises, and national-defense utilities...

Now, therefore, by the virtue of the authority vested in me as the President of the United States and Commander of the Army and Navy, I hereby authorize and direct the Secretary of War and the Military Commanders whom he may from time to time designate, whenever he or any designated Commander deems such action necessary or desirable, to prescribe military areas in such places and of such extent as he or the appropriate Military Commander may determine, from which any or all persons may be excluded, and 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.⁴⁰⁰

This declaration would prompt the establishment of the War Relocation Authority and ten concentration camps along the west coast, changing the course of history and leaving in its wake years of infamy.⁴⁰¹

³⁹⁹ Ibid. 36

⁴⁰⁰ Roosevelt, Franklin D. February 19, 1942. Quoted from Franklin D. Roosevelt Federal Library and Museum “Our Documents: Executive Order 9066” Accessed: February 5, 2009.
<http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/od9066t.html>

⁴⁰¹ Title of Michi Weglyn’s book *Years of Infamy*.



402

The convergence of white supremacy and capitalism in which governmental institutions were used to enforce modes of stripping Japanese and Japanese-Americans of their civil rights, property and fruit of their labors has a long history within the United States. The ultimate manifestation of this came with incarceration, a process that involved forcing 117,000 people of Japanese ancestry to relinquish their homes, livelihoods, and friends. Bank accounts were frozen and property seized as the government literally tore families apart—arresting community leaders and heads of households like terrorist militias in the middle of the night. To enforce the economic and political exploitation of Japanese Americans, negative media representations and yellow-peril propaganda filled the airways and press, and soon infiltrated throughout dominant discourse in the United States. Henry McLemore, a Heart syndicated columnist wrote one especially notable diatribe:

⁴⁰² Watanabe Sasaki, Yoriko. West Coast newspapers during 1942.
<<http://home.comcast.net/~eo9066/Newsclip1.html>>

The only Japanese apprehended have been the ones the FBI actually had something on. The rest of them, so help me, are free as birds. There isn't an airport in California that isn't flanked by Japanese farms. There is hardly an air field where the same situations doesn't exist...

I know this is the melting pot of the world and all men are created equal and there must be no such thing as race or creed hatred, but do those things go when a country is fighting for its life? Not in my book. No country has ever won a war because of courtesy and I trust and pray we won't be the first because of the lovely, gracious spirit...

I am for the immediate removal of every Japanese on the West Coast to a point deep inside the interior. I don't mean a nice part of the interior either. Heard '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...

Personally, I hate the Japanese. And that goes for all of them.⁴⁰³

This inflammatory language triggered anti-Japanese sentiment among non-Japanese leading some to blame people of Japanese ancestry for the attack on Pearl Harbor. In a 2003 interview, Sue Kunitomi recalled: "The story that I still hear today is that [Japanese] farmers in the pineapple and sugar plantations dug ditches with arrows pointing toward Pearl Harbor." From the first event used to justify the necessity of concentration camps, the role of Japanese agricultural workers specifically around the manipulation of water resources was a critical component to understanding questions of loyalty and political alliances. Historian Roger Daniels underscores the absurdity of the story by pointing out that Pearl Harbor "a large natural harbor containing dozens of war vessels [would have been] highly visible from the air."⁴⁰⁴ With the dawn of the lost years, Anti-Japanese tensions again began to rise, this time from both within and outside of the Japanese and Japanese-American communities.

⁴⁰³ Personal Justice Denied 72

⁴⁰⁴ Bahr Unquiet Nisei 39



Different factions began to develop within the historic Japan towns that had flourished along the West Coast. Family and cultural cohesion once characteristic of these communities was replaced with strictly politically aligned organizations; one of those groups was the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL). My grandmother, Sue Kunitomi Embrey, remembered this phenomenon in the days after the signing of Executive Order 9066: “The JACL wanted to show that they were patriotic and loyal citizens...They would turn in anybody

who seemed to be suspicious. They have a reputation even now of having sold people down the river. We knew all through the war about the JACL helping the government. They didn’t keep it a secret. Even though the national organization was claiming to be representing us, many people said they were not.”⁴⁰⁵ Buddhist ministers, judo teachers, cultural leaders, sports managers, teachers, and even the president of the Chamber of Commerce—virtually every Issei (first generation) man who was involved in his communities, was not sold down the river, but instead transported to barren, arid deserts. Barely renovated horse stalls served as temporary holding facilities or detention centers to thousands of Issei over night; by December 8th, 1942, the day after Pearl Harbor was bombed, the FBI had arrested 736 people of Japanese descent and by the end of the week the number had doubled.⁴⁰⁶ Tensions between factions of the community,

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid. 38

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid. 37

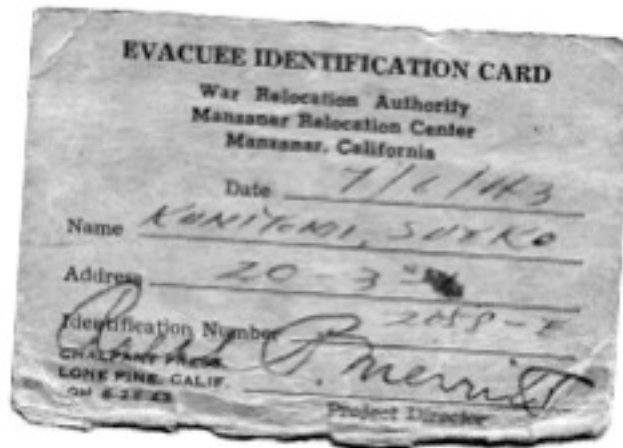
especially with JACL, continued within the camps and became a key component that contributed to the Manzanar Revolt of December 1942.⁴⁰⁷

Although relative states of chaos, distrust and fear spread across the United States, some members of the Japanese and Japanese American community were able to come together to assist one another in the impossible transition—especially notable was the “cruel overnight ouster” for those on Terminal Island, Los Angeles County. Due to LA Mayor Fletcher Bowron’s insistence, official signs posted on February 25 demanded that all people of Japanese ancestry, at this point predominantly women and children, evacuate the island within 48 hours, by midnight February 27th, 1942. Sue Embrey recalled her family’s involvement in the panic rising endeavor: “When my brothers helped move the Terminal Islanders [we were given] their fishing poles. When we were ready to leave, my mother gave them to some of our Caucasian customers. Hideo got mad and said ‘You shouldn’t have given those poles away. We may have to go fishing for our food wherever we are!’ I thought” ‘God, you mean we have to catch our own food?’ That was terrifying.”⁴⁰⁸ My grandmother did not recognize the irony of her fear at the time. Fishing in Manzanar would become an act of necessity not for physical sustenance so much as for emotional survival. Summing up the general sentiment in the weeks before being forcibly relocated to the Owens Valley desert, Sue Embrey said, “Most of us were scared. My mother was scared to death. We were wondering what would happen to us. We were Japanese, the lost American citizens.”⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁷ This event, also referred to as the Manzanar Riot, is discussed in more detail in the following chapter as well as numerous texts including *Manzanar Martyr: An Interview with Harry Y. Ueno*.

⁴⁰⁸ Bahr *Unquiet Nisei* 41

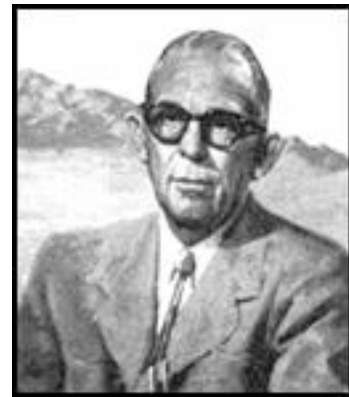
⁴⁰⁹ Ibid. 42



Sue Kunitomi's Evacuee Identification Card⁴¹⁰

III. Determining the Site Location

While Japanese and Japanese Americans were being rounded up and incarcerated in temporary detainment centers and upper-class, predominantly white California urban residents were traveling to the Owens Valley as a tourist destination to witness the heavily advertised natural beauty after the break of winter, a secret investigation was being conducted in the Owens Valley.



The signing of Executive Order 9066 instigated a month long pursuit for concentration camp sites in the Western United States under General DeWitt, of which Manzanar was the first. Two key individuals emerged as perhaps the best equipped to handle the delicate relationship between Owens Valley residents and the U.S. government—Robert L. Brown and Ralph P. Merritt. Both men were highly vested in the area, especially concerning its water, and were very knowledgeable about the environmental resources and social setting in the Owens Valley. Brown had served as the Executive Secretary and Public Relations Director of the Inyo-Mono

⁴¹⁰ Retrieved from family archive. Embrey, Sue. "Evacuee Identification Card"

Associates—the organization responsible for promoting economic development in the area through tourism, while Merritt served as Chairman of the first California statewide water committee in the 1920s and was largely responsible for the development of Central Valley Projects. Their assistance to the federal government handsomely benefited them both: Brown, who moved on to become the Reports Officer and then later the Assistant Project Director at Manzanar (from January 1943 to February 1946) and Ralph P Merritt, would serve as the Project Director at Manzanar from November 24, 1942 until the camp closed on November 21, 1945. They would eventually publish the Project Directors Final Report detailing the history of Manzanar from February 27, 1942 to March 9, 1946.⁴¹¹

Before the survey for this report officially began, the Public Relations Director of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP), Glenn Desmond contacted Brown to discuss “off the record” with Manchester Boddy, influential publisher of the *Los Angeles Daily News* and friend of the Roosevelt Administration, “a matter of great importance.” The three men met on February 26, a week after E.O. 9066 was signed, where Boddy informed the other two “that the Army had already decided on the Owens Valley as one place of ‘detention’ for as many perhaps, as 50,000 Japanese” and then proceeded to ask for suggestions on “handling the delicate relationship between the Army, the Department of Justice, the City of Los Angeles and the people of the Owens Valley.”⁴¹² With anti-Japanese propaganda at its peak and a legacy of distrust of the federal government strong in the Owens Valley region, local residents were sure to adversely react to the installment of a concentration camp in their backyards. After all, a concentration camp would surely mean the immediate halt of their only recently booming tourist

⁴¹¹ Unrau, Harlan D. Manzanar National Historic Site, California: The Evacuation and Relocation of Persons of Japanese Ancestry During World War II: a Historical Study of the Manzanar War Relocation Center. Denver, CO: U.S. Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service, 1996. Retrieved: March 28, 2008. <<http://www.nps.gov/archive/manz/hrs/hrst.htm>> 6.

⁴¹² Ibid.

economy. Immediately following their conversation, Brown organized a group of Owens Valley leaders to assist Boddy in “aid[ing] the Administration in laying the groundwork for an orderly evacuation of the Japanese by the Army, and *an orderly reception of them* where they were sent” [emphasis present]⁴¹³. Brown first contacted Ralph Merritt, a rancher near the town of Independence and the chairman of the Committee on Relations with the City of Los Angeles who represented the people of Owens Valley in their discussions “over land and Water.”⁴¹⁴ These two men then gathered a team of other Owens Valley residents overnight to form an ad hoc committee.

The following day, Merritt, Brown, and the Inyo County Supervisor led officers from the U.S. Corps of Engineer on “a detailed tour of the valley” inspecting several possible sites for the location of a concentration camp.⁴¹⁵ A several-thousand acre plot of land on the west side of the valley between the towns of Independence and Lone Pine was selected. It was an ideal location “because of its distance from any vital defense project (except the Los Angeles aqueduct), its relative inaccessibility, the ease with which it could be policed, and its general geography,” explained the official report on the following day.⁴¹⁶ This site happened to be the location of John Shepard’s homestead, which would later develop into the Manzanar irrigation colony, discussed in Chapter 2. Portions of the drainage system and concrete conduits were still intact from the early 20th century construction and the presence of this infrastructure also proved to be an important factor in determining the location of Manzanar.⁴¹⁷ Manzanar was to be an

⁴¹³ Ibid.

⁴¹⁴ Merritt has a long history of working within the valley on different projects pertaining to water including negotiating agriculture and land purchases with the City of Los Angeles. A more extensive analysis of his career in relation to water, Owens Valley, the Japanese government, and Manzanar can be found at Unrau, Manzanar National Historic Site, California.

⁴¹⁵ Unrau, Manzanar National Historic Site, California 6

⁴¹⁶ Ibid.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

agriculturally self-sufficient endeavor, and the history of successful agriculture and remaining infrastructure boded well for development.



As was extensively discussed in Chapter 1, this location is also historically important as a site of forced relocation in relation to water of the indigenous Paiute Peoples. Similar to the February 1942 ‘Manzanar War Relocation Center Proposal,’ the significance of water in determining a sustainable, inexpensive, and effective site of forced relocation was explicitly articulated in the February 1859 proposal for a Paiute Reservation. Designating the area of Manzanar as a site for detaining a population determined by their ethnic background did not start in 1942. Instead a long, intertwining history relating water and power in relation to the residents of the area significantly influenced choosing this site for WWII concentration camp.

IV. Multiple Fronts of Resistance

Although Manzanar appeared to be an ideal location from the perspective of the U.S. military, there were many who couldn't have disagreed more. Resistance to Manzanar mounted from the LA DWP and Los Angeles city officials, private corporations with vested interests in water rights, Owens Valley residents, as well as from the Japanese and Japanese-American community and their allies. The day the official military report detailing Manzanar as the site was published (February 28, 1942), controversy sparked regarding the allocation of land and water rights to develop a Japanese and Japanese American concentration camp. Without consulting the Head of the Civilian Staff of the Wartime Civil Control Administration (WCCA) and Alien Control Coordinator (ACC) Thomas C. Clark, personnel from the U.S. Corps of Engineer contacted the Chief Engineer of LADWP to discuss preliminary plans for the development of Manzanar Incarceration Camp. The Project Director's Report explains that these military officials "demanded a lease on Department of Water and Power land in the Owens Valley amounting to 8,000 acres, for a 'prison camp' for 'Japs'!"⁴¹⁸ This site stood directly against the Chief of Engineer's main interests—to protect LA water, so he responded by firmly refusing their demand and immediately took action to try to convince federal government officials and the military that a site near Parker, Arizona would be much more suited for a concentration camp.⁴¹⁹ With fear, anxiety, and anger spreading throughout communities in Owens Valley and Los Angeles, a heated controversy between residents and officials of the Owens Valley, the City of Los Angeles, and the federal government finally came to a decision in

⁴¹⁸ Ibid.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid.

March of 1942. The LADWP would lease 6,020 acres of land for construction of the ‘Manzanar War Relocation Center’ and the military would promise to safeguard their invaluable resource.⁴²⁰

Even after the allocation of LA DWP land and water, the establishment of Manzanar was by no means a peaceful process. Much of the resistance Owens Valley residents expressed towards the construction of Manzanar was founded out of fear, anxiety and anger. After surrendering their lives as farmers and ranchers to the City of Los Angeles throughout the early 20th century leaving in its wake dilapidated farmhouses and abandoned homes, sentiments of distrust towards the federal and local governments penetrated throughout the Owens Valley. By the late 1930s, the local, agriculturally based economy was replaced with government-sponsored tourism. Despite the fact that most of the products sold to tourists were not produced in the local area but actually were imported from Los Angeles, the development of infrastructure including gas stations, garages, auto stations, hotels, cafés and restaurants was a boost to the area’s economy, which was boasting almost a million visitors from Los Angeles annually by 1940.⁴²¹ The proposal to construct a “War Relocation Center” in the heart of their tourist attraction did not resonate well with Owens Valley residents, who accordingly responded with hostility by writing articles in the *Inyo Independent* local newspaper describing the “Jap menace.”⁴²² These publications were further fed by Yellow Peril Propaganda that was especially rampant around the west coast in February 1942 and were reminiscent of the 19th century reaction to the increase of people of Chinese ancestry in the valley, articulating a clear anti-Asian racist sentiment.

Economic, political and social factors influenced Owens Valley residents to vehemently oppose

⁴²⁰ At the time, two ranches were also leasing areas that were defined within the boundaries for the War Relocation Center and therefore were forced to remove themselves from that area. Unrau, Manzanar National Historic Site, California 6.

⁴²¹ Walton, John. Western Times and Water Wars: State, Culture, and Rebellion in California. Berkeley: University of California Press. 1992, (216-220).

⁴²² Ibid. 218

the construction of a concentration camp for people of Japanese ancestry, circulating around the politics of water. To the residents of the Owens Valley, Manzanar represented the third largest economic set back enforced by the Federal Government within a 20-year period.



Newspaper articles and government publications alike articulated the fear concerning Japanese and Japanese Americans, specifically regarding the danger they posed to the Owens Valley water supply. The Chief Engineer of the Department of Water and Power H. A. Van Norman, when trying to convince the federal government, military and FBI officials that sites other than Manzanar would be more fitted for a Japanese and Japanese American concentration camp, argued that the area's water supply had already been inspected by the Japanese government and therefore may be a site of national security. The details concerning construction and operation of the Los Angeles Municipal Water System had been researched by the Japanese consulate in 1934 and resulted in the hiring of twelve Japanese civil service employees by the LA DWP. The Chief Engineer strongly implied that this was part of a greater conspiracy by the

Japanese government to “sabotage the system.”⁴²³ Los Angeles Mayor Fletcher Bowron and California Congressman Leland M. Ford further articulated these concerns exclaiming that Japanese and Japanese Americans would pose physical and/or sanitation threats to the City of Los Angeles water supply. While “leading the attack against the Manzanar site,” these two public representatives “had consistently called for the evacuation and internment of persons of Japanese ancestry living on the west coast,” highlighting the economic and racial concerns underlying their declarations.⁴²⁴ Tapping into the culture of fear surrounding the war, Congressman Ford went as far as to trumpet:

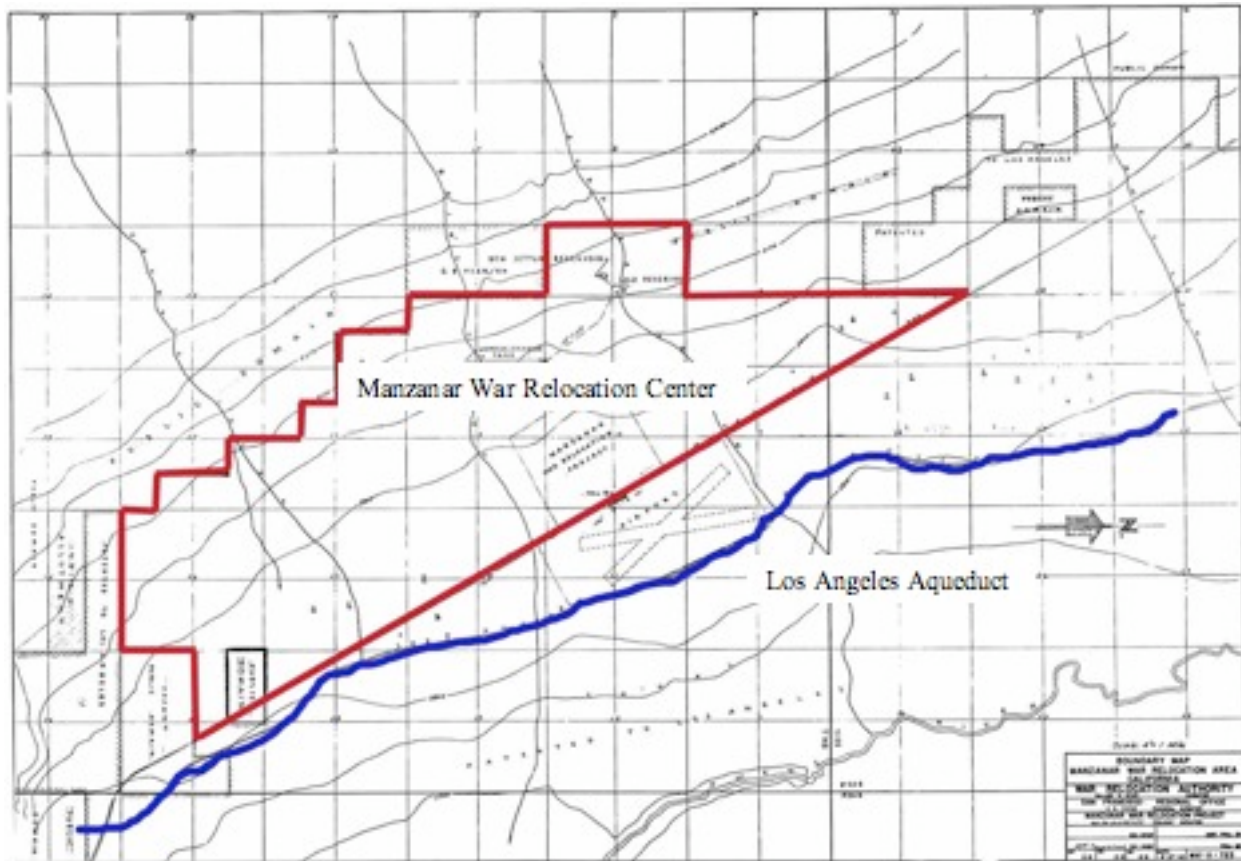
In my mind, I can see Tokio grinning with joy because of the opportunity this action will afford to sabotage the water supply of 1,500,000 people. I cannot penetrate the mind of the General [DeWitt]. He may have reasons for his action that are satisfactory to him, but I most vigorously protest this action as in my judgment as [an] inexcusable piece of stupidity. I sincerely hope that his military superiors in Washington will stop this move until a more thorough examination of the dangers inherent in the situation are investigated.⁴²⁵

Through the guise of public health and environmental preservation concerns, elected officials and business men invested in Owens Valley water rights were able to use manipulative racist fear tactics to argue against establishing a concentration camp at Manzanar, while also protecting their economic interests. Suggestions of intentional and accidental sabotage of the water supply spread throughout Owens Valley. Both those with interests in Los Angeles’ water supply and Owens Valley residents alike were able to use water as a site of resistance to Manzanar, while still supporting the forced relocation and incarceration of Japanese and Japanese Americans.

⁴²³ Unrau, Manzanar National Historic Site, California 6

⁴²⁴ Ibid.

⁴²⁵ Ibid. Quoted in Appendix 25, “The Silverman Report,” in “Project Director’s Report, Final Report, Manzanar, Vol. I, p. A169, RG 210, Entry 4b, Box 71, File, “Manzanar Final Reports.”



Modes of resistance to E.O. 9066 and incarceration took on many forms for people of Japanese descent. From the implementation of traditional cultural traits including *gaman* (silent endurance) and *Shikata ga nai* (it cannot be helped) in order to help psychologically cope with their situation to forthright lawsuits against the federal government of the United States, most notably: *Hirabayashi v. United States* (1943), *Yasui v. United States* (1943), *Korematsu v. United States* (1944), and *Ex parte Endo* (1944), Japanese Americans embodied diverse resistance strategies. There was also small but steady protest against the mass relocation and incarceration by non-Japanese U.S. citizens. Most common among church figures and academics, a “steady stream of letters and public statements... contested the enforcement of the

curfew and exclusion orders.”⁴²⁶ Sue Kunitomi Embrey explained, “A lot of people believed that if they didn’t [cooperate], they would just shoot us. We were giving up all our property, our jobs and our freedom to tell the United States that we were loyal citizens, willing to make the sacrifices. But some of us were bitter.”⁴²⁷ Ironically, it was this same language of sacrifice and patriotism that was used on Owens Valley residents as well.⁴²⁸

V. Acquiescence of Manzanar

To assist in the most orderly relocation of a population now primarily referred to by derogatory terms or as the “war enemy,” government officials from Los Angeles, the Owens Valley and at the federal level drafted a proposal to outline the impacts of Manzanar. This proposal primarily focused on City of Los Angeles’ water concerns and economic stability for residents of the Owens Valley, completely ignoring the impacts incarceration would have on generations of Japanese and Japanese Americans. Part of this proposal included the formation of the Owens Valley ad hoc committee organized by Assistant Project Director Brown and future the Project Director Merritt in late February 1942, “to draw up a program for the Japanese which would be beneficial to the Valley.”⁴²⁹ A report, ordered by Head of the Civilian Staff of the Wartime Civil Control Administration (WCCA) and Alien Control Coordinator (ACC) Thomas C. Clark, outlined several techniques to convince Los Angeles and Owens Valley communities to accept Manzanar, ranging from promises of protection to explaining how the development of a concentration camp would directly benefit the area as well. In an attempt to conceptualize the

⁴²⁶ Personal Justice Denied 113

⁴²⁷ Bahr Unquiet Nisei 45

⁴²⁸ A more comprehensive overview of Japanese resistance efforts is outlined in the following chapter.

⁴²⁹ Unrau, Manzanar National Historic Site, California 6

concentration camp as “a boon not a burden to the community,”⁴³⁰ the WCCA presented a tentative approval to the ad hoc committee of valley leaders that set up a system of public works projects incarcerated Japanese and Japanese Americans could undertake “for the permanent benefit of the valley.”⁴³¹

On March 30, 1942, the ad hoc committee met and developed a set of proposals that were forwarded to Clark two days later; the proposals were as follows: “(1) agricultural development; (2) broad gauging the railroad between Lone Pine and Mina, Nevada; (3) construction of mine to market roads for development of strategic materials and metals; (4) improvement of roads under a plan already worked out by the state Division of Highways; (5) development of small industries to be taken over by veterans after the war; (6) national forest and national park development and protection; (7) development of facilities for veteran rehabilitation; (8) development of wildlife conservation; and (9) other long range projects that may arise or have been planned by federal, state, and City of Los Angeles agencies.”⁴³² The purpose of this proposal was explicitly the exploitation of prison labor in order to gain approval from the Owens Valley communities and although it was never implemented at Manzanar, it proved quite successful.⁴³³

The concerns that Owens Valley or Los Angeles residents would lose access to the water supplied from the Sierra Nevada Mountains was continually negated by the federal government reports, making previous concerns unreasonable, although not illegitimate. Although the question of whether or not intentional or accidental sabotage was a real threat was not addressed by the federal government reports, the issues of water were handled diplomatically, “assur[ing]

⁴³⁰ Ibid.

⁴³¹ Ibid.

⁴³² Ibid.

⁴³³ This proposal was never implemented because of conflicts between WCCA and WRA, and opposition presented by Western state officials. Unrau, Manzanar National Historic Site, California 6

that adequate provision will be made and continued for protection of the Los Angeles Municipal Water Aqueduct and works appurtenant thereto against any injury or pollution by reason of the project.”⁴³⁴ These same promises were not guaranteed to those incarcerated at Manzanar, however, as several water shortages were documented during the three years the camp operated.

The chaos and tension that had been building in Owens Valley in response to the demands by the federal government to seize LA DWP land also needed to be handled directly. On March 5, 1942, Clark asked LA Mayor Bowron to gather members of the LA Board of Water and Power Commission, the Chief Engineer of the DWP, publishers of the four Los Angeles daily newspapers, and the President of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce to bring “order out of the chaos.” Throughout the meeting, Clark continually emphasized that the site of Manzanar was “was absolutely essential to the Japanese evacuation program.” The purpose of this strategic gathering was to publish a press release extensively throughout Central and Southern California to assure residents that the “military was in complete control of the project” and that “all rights of the county and towns in the valley would be fully protected.”⁴³⁵ Taking advantage of the wartime era language, the publishers of three major Owens Valley newspapers wrote an editorial on March 20th explaining the important role of Owens Valley residents in supporting the U.S. The release read:

Thus we see that the people of Inyo County have a definite part to play in the American wartime effort. Let's do the job so that the eyes of the nation and the world will be focused on the citizens of this county and outsiders will say that 'there's a group of people who are tackling a most strategic international problem and doing a great job of it.’⁴³⁶

This marked a major shift in the valley and changed the tone from one where a previous editorial observing the local residents in Owens Valley noted, “[they] wanted no prison camps, [they]

⁴³⁴ Ibid.

⁴³⁵ Ibid.

⁴³⁶ Ibid.

wanted no Japanese, and particularly [they] wanted no deal wherein any part of the City of Los Angeles was concerned” to a tone of patriotic duty.⁴³⁷ The systematic effort to change the attitude of people living in the valley, including several publications calling for the community “to realize this was a war and the acceptance of the so-called ‘prison camp’ was a necessary wartime sacrifice,” was eventually successful.⁴³⁸

VI. The Terror of Water

On March 30, 1942, with the limited approval by Owens Valley residents and Los Angeles city officials, the “compulsory mass evacuation” began. Before moving into the concentration camp, Japanese and Japanese Americans were told very little about Manzanar, especially concerning its natural environment. The secrecy was justified as a way to maintain national security efforts during the roundup, but meant that not yet incarcerated Japanese and Japanese Americans had to rely on rumors to prepare for the indefinitely defined journey to the unknown. Some of the most drastic rumors that circulated around communities included those of plans for genocide. One prisoner explained years later: “we were being put closely together, concentrated in a narrow valley between two mountains along an airplane route, so that if the coast was attacked by Japan we could be bombed and all killed.” Other rumors related this fear of mass murder directly with water. The military “would open the reservoir on us and drown us all... People expected to get killed; I expected to die here,” another unnamed prisoner explained.⁴³⁹

⁴³⁷ Ibid.

⁴³⁸ Potashin, Richard. Personal Interview. June 27, 2008.

Richard Potashin wittily notes: “The WRA had to shift the fear and paranoia to an attitude of sacrifice for the war effort. It was a Caucasian *Shikata ga nai*; it is a default *Shikata ga nai*. And the city was saying the same thing: ‘You can’t fight the army you know it’s the war. Everyone has to make sacrifices.’”

⁴³⁹ Ibid. 7

Another rumor that circulated prior to the mass evacuation was that the concentration camp site did not have sufficient water supplies. This greatly affected people who were trying to best prepare for the evacuation and sustain their families and communities. Despite only being allowed to bring what you could carry, limited to two suitcases, some people “brought innumerable bottles of water.”⁴⁴⁰ This rumor had serious material affects on people’s lives as well, preventing families from bringing emotionally or monetarily valuable things to camp and instead being forced to abandon, sell or give them away. One family that heard this rumor filled some whiskey bottles with water and was forced to throw them in a neighboring ditch because some military personnel had “accused them of having whiskey.” The boys that were caught carrying the bottles were forced to “go to the police station with them till it was straightened out,” further emphasizing their criminalized state.⁴⁴¹ For Japanese and Japanese Americans at Manzanar, water as a greater concept became a symbol of their incarceration as well as tool for their emancipation.

With only rumors to guide them through the daylong journey into the barren desert, so began the unconstitutional incarceration of Japanese and Japanese Americans.

As we boarded the bus
bags on both sides
(I had never packed
two bags before
on a vacation
lasting forever)
the Seattle Times
photographer said
Smile!
so obediently I smiled
and the caption the next day
read:

Note smiling faces

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid.

a lesson to Tokyo

Mitsuye Yamada, *Evacuation*⁴⁴²



VII. Dust

The approximately 6,000 acre area in the middle of the Owens Valley was chosen in part because the land was relatively easily acquired and already proven to be agriculturally sustainable, but its quality as a semi-arid desert that has been stripped of its life, a land where only dust and wind remained, was also key in determining Manzanar's location. The especially oppressive environments of the deep interior of the United States for which the syndicated columnist Henry McLemore had advocated were designated concentration camp sites. Perhaps one of the most noticeable and oppressive characteristics of the Owens Valley environment the prisoners encountered were the strong winds that whipped through camp in both the frigid

⁴⁴² Yamada, Mitsuye. Camp Notes and Other Poems. San Lorenzo, California: Shameless Hussy Press, 1976.

winters and scorching summers. It was the reminder of these winds that first prompted Sue Kunitomi Embrey to speak of her experience at Manzanar. “I hate the wind because it reminds me of Manzanar,” she would explain to her neighbor. But a vice that was present every season from which internees never got relief was dust.

I spent 547 sulking days here
in my own dreams
there was not much to marvel at
I thought
only miles of sagebrush and
lifeless sand.⁴⁴³

Mitsuye Yamada, *Desert Run*

Dust was a particularly invasive problem for those who lived at Manzanar. In the depths of a valley sited beneath the tallest mountain in the continental United States, much of the indigenous sagebrush and land cover had been cleared for camp construction efforts, allowing loose sand to be easily picked up in the gusts of winds. During a visit to Manzanar, Eleanor Roosevelt notes, “The dust, caused by the massive disturbance of the soil from construction of hundreds of buildings at once, eventually settled, but the harshness of the climate stayed the same.”⁴⁴⁴ While it is true that the large, brown sand particles generally subsided with time, a finer, white much more dangerous dust still penetrated the community. The previously vibrant Owens Lake located 15 miles south of Manzanar had been continually fed by a stream from the Owens River until 1924. Water diversions to the Los Angeles Aqueduct soon depleted the lake, exposing the “pervasive, unusually fine-grained, alkaline dust that infiltrates the smallest cracks and contaminates residences.”⁴⁴⁵

⁴⁴³ Yamada, Mitsuye. *Desert Run: Poems and Stories*. Latham, NY: Kitchen Table Women of Color Press, 1988. 2

⁴⁴⁴ Piper, Karen. “Manzanar” *Lost Magazine* November 2006, No. 10.

<<http://www.lostmag.com/issue10/manzanar.php>>

Roosevelt, Eleanor. “To Undo a Mistake is Always Harder than to Not Create One Originally.” *Collier's Magazine* October 10, 1943. Franklin D. Roosevelt Library (Hyde Park, New York).

⁴⁴⁵ Reheis, Marith C. “Dust Deposition Downwind of Owens (Dry) Lake, 1991-1994: Preliminary Findings.” *Journal of Geophysical Research*, v. 102 (1997), pp. 25-26 <http://geochange.er.usgs.gov/sw/impacts/geology/owens/>



This dust proved not only to be a constant annoyance to those living at Manzanar, it was also a significant health risk. The noxious, fine, white dust billowing from the dried Owens Valley Lake today remains the largest single source of particulate (PM10) pollution in the United States.⁴⁴⁶ Unknowingly those incarcerated at Manzanar were being exposed to carcinogenic trace metals of which arsenic is especially high. Eleanor Roosevelt continues, “You are enveloped in dust. It chokes you and brings about irritations of the nose and throat and here in this climate where people go to recover from respiratory ailments, you will find quite a number of hospitals around the camps, both military and non-military, with patients suffering from the irritations that the swirling dust cannot fail to bring.”⁴⁴⁷ Even today rumors claim that a significant portion of

⁴⁴⁶ Kittle, Sarah. “Survey of Reported Health Effects of Owens Lake Particulate Matter.” Great Basin Unified Air Pollution Control District. January 14, 2000

<<http://www.gbuapcd.org/Information/OwensLakeParticulateMatterHealthEffects.htm>>

⁴⁴⁷ Piper “Manzanar”

Roosevelt, E. “To Undo a Mistake...”

the 135 people who died at Manzanar suffered from respiratory-related deaths.⁴⁴⁸ Both the brown, sandy dust particles and fine, white, toxic grains proved to be a constant irritation.

Many Japanese and Japanese-Americans arrived in the middle of these infamous dust storms, already disoriented and exhausted from the long journey. George Fukasawa recalls:

We got there right in the middle of one of those windstorms that were very common in Manzanar. The dust was blowing so hard you couldn't see more than 15 feet ahead. Everybody that was out there had goggles on to protect their eyes from the dust, so they looked like a bunch of monsters from another world or something. It was a very eerie feeling to get into a place under conditions like that.⁴⁴⁹

Shira Nomura also noted the impact that the dust had on her perception of Manzanar upon her arrival:

Shortly, we saw what appeared to be at first a great ball of dirty fog off in the distance but as we approached the camp, it turned out to be one big massive dust storm kicked up by the famous Manzanar wind. We were soon engulfed in it and with visibility near zero the buses turned off Highway 395, moved past the guard house and into camp. We never saw the guard towers with mounted machine guns nor the barbed wire fences till the next day although we experienced the probing searchlights that first night. The strong wind picked up rice-sized sand from the construction area and pelted the sides of the buses like buckshot as it made its way past the barracks.⁴⁵⁰

The fight for survival and semblances of normalcy in the valley were embodied in the gusts of dust. The battles took place predominantly on three separate fronts—in the barracks, on clothing, and on prisoners' bodies themselves.

The rows of uniform barracks where all prisoners resided were a constant battle to keep clean. Tom Watanabe remembers the dust storm as an almost nightly occurrence: “You had the dust storm come through. You get half an inch of dust. You either get in bed and cover yourself with a sheet or just stand out there and suffer. You couldn't even see three feet in front of you,

⁴⁴⁸ Piper “Manzanar”

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid.

Hansen, Arthur A. Japanese American World War II Evacuation Oral History Project Westport, CT: Meckler Publishing, 1991. 236

⁴⁵⁰ Unrau, Manzanar National Historic Site, California 7E.

and then by the time the dust was settled, you had at least a half inch of dust right on your sheet when you got under it. Used to come from underneath the floor.”⁴⁵¹ The haste in which the barracks were constructed resulted in the use of green wood, which shrank as it dried, causing large cracks and opening for dust to seep in. Scrap lumber was hard to come by so prisoners used whatever materials were available to fill the holes, including discarded tin cans, packaging crates, and un-assembled furniture. When prisoners asked the administration for some forms of relief instructions were simply “to mop at least once daily and to keep everything off the floor — at least six inches off the floor.” Former prisoner Togoro Mizutani explains, “This demand was impossible because there were not enough lumber resources to build stands within the barracks and if lumber scraps were used by families without special permission ‘we would get into trouble.’”⁴⁵² Even when prisoners would go inside to get some limited relief from the natural environment, the dust was inescapable.

Women in the camp had an especially difficult time battling the oppressive element, as they were primarily responsible for cleaning and laundry. An unnamed internee explains her battle with the dust in an April 25, 1944 interview report:

Several times after I had washed and hung the clothes out to dry, a sudden wind would whip up and the ensuing dust storm would blacken the clothes. And worse yet, the sand and dust would get in the clothes and it was worse to wash them over than it was the first time. I felt like cursing, but what could I do but wash them over.⁴⁵³

⁴⁵¹ Piper “Manzanar”

Tateishi, John. And Justice for All: An Oral History of the Japanese American Detention Camps New York: Random House, 1984. 95.

⁴⁵² Even those with special permission to collect lumber were not spared from military brutality. An internee named Hikoji Takeuchi was given permission by a military personnel to collect firewood but was accordingly shot when he evidently went too close to the barbed wire fence. Story recollected from my grandmother, also published in Bahr The Unquiet Nisei: 51.

⁴⁵³ Manzanar Relocation Center, Community Analysis Section, April 25, 1944, Report No. 233, "Early Days At Manzanar (By An Evacuee)," RG 210, Entry 16, Box 348, File 63.318, No. 13. Unrau, Manzanar National Historic Site, California 7D.

Large central laundry rooms were spread throughout the camp and it was here that mostly women gathered to wash clothing by hand in large tubs with scrub boards. Drying facilities were not available so they would then carry the wet laundry back to their barracks and hang it on clotheslines that they had installed themselves. Sue Kunitomi Embrey noted, “We were doing laundry all the time in that dusty environment, especially for the babies. The parents would put little kids in the laundry tubs to give them baths.”⁴⁵⁴

Washing themselves also proved to be a difficult feat in this environment. On one particularly memorable night, Togoro Mizutani recalled that soon after midnight, the south wind gusted through the camp so that by the next morning the sun “came up through a dirty haze of dust.” Awaking to this “grimy world,” the Mizutani family found dust and dirt everywhere—“on their beds, on the floor, in their hair, crunchy between their teeth.” The restroom facilities closest to their barracks had not yet been connected with water pipes so they were forced to brave the wind and travel to the south border of the camp “where a big water pipe [serving also as the official boundary] had been tapped every few blocks with faucets.” They washed the dirt off their hands and faces, but “new dust was plastered on before they could dry themselves.” Eventually giving up, the family “eyes squinted, handkerchiefs or hands over their mouths” made their way to their mess hall for breakfast.⁴⁵⁵

Prisoners such as Joseph Yoshisuke Kurihara have described enduring the tiny particles of dust even to the extent of having to consume them. “Down in our hearts we cried and cursed this government every time when we were showered with sand. We slept in the dust; we breathed in the dust; and we ate the dust. Such abominable existence one could not forget, no matter how much we tried to be patient, understand the situation, and take it bravely,” he

⁴⁵⁴ Bahr *The Unquiet Nisei* 24

⁴⁵⁵ Unrau, *Manzanar National Historic Site, California* 7E

explains.⁴⁵⁶ Another prisoner even described drinking the dust at Manzanar: “The most unpleasant thing about camp was the dust. We had a tin cup and bowl with mild [food]. A dust storm would blow sometimes for hours, and dust would seep into everything. I would see the dust forming on the mild and I'd try to scoop it away. It got to the point where I said ‘Aah, just close your mind to it and say ‘Dust is good for you,’ and drink it.’”⁴⁵⁷ Escaping dust at Manzanar was an impossibility and soon became a vexing symbol of their incarceration.

Near the mess hall
 along the latrines
 by the laundry
 between the rows of black tar papered barracks
 the block captain galloped by
 Take cover everyone he said
 here comes a twister.

...
 This was not
 im
 prison
 ment.
 This was
 re
 location.

Mitsuye Yamada, *Desert Run*⁴⁵⁸

VIII. Conclusion

In addition to legislation barring immigration and citizenship for Japanese agricultural workers, yellow-peril cartoons, and inflammatory language, images of dust and barbed-wired fences came to represent another chapter of anti-Japanese sentiment in the United States—the grim history of incarceration. The natural environment, specifically the presence and absence of

⁴⁵⁶ Thomas, Dorothy Swaine and Richard S. Nishimoto. *The Spoilage* Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1946. 3, 69

Piper, Karen “Manzanar”

⁴⁵⁷ Levine, Ellen. *A Fence Away from Freedom: Japanese Americans and World War II* New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1995. 51.

Piper, Karen “Manzanar”

⁴⁵⁸ Yamada, Mitsuye *Desert Run*

water, continued to be a critical factor, significantly impacting the lives of people of Japanese descent in the United States. But these impacts were not strictly oppressive. Prisoners would use creative and innovative approaches to manipulate the limited water resources and transform their lives at Manzanar. These efforts would prove critical in alleviating both the physical and emotional stressors of camp life.

Flowers
faded
in a desert wind.
No flowers grow
where dust winds blow
and rain is like
a dry heave moan.

Janice Mirikitani, *Desert Flowers*⁴⁵⁹

While Mirikitani describes her first impressions of camp, collective efforts by Issei and Nisei, women, men, and children, over the next few months allowed flowers not only to grow but thrive in the spaces quartered off by barbed-wire fences. Prisoners of Manzanar quickly developed methods of resistance, often involving new uses of the water resources, to improve their lives and sustain their communities despite the harsh desert conditions. My grandmother, Sue Kunitomi Embrey, explained the significance of Manzanar's natural environment when reflecting on a conversation with her mother: "My mother never talked about it much, until one time she said, 'You know they sent us to the desert. Manzanar is a desert. And that's where they sent us.' It described it all."⁴⁶⁰

⁴⁵⁹ Mirikitani, Janice. *Ayumi: An Japanese American Anthology = Ayumi : Nikkei Beijin Bungei Shu*. San Francisco, California: The Japanese American Anthology Committee, 1980. 215

⁴⁶⁰ Bahr *The Unquiet Nisei* 218

Chapter Four: Plots of Resistance: Gardening, Fishing and Reservoir Construction as Defiant Acts 1942-1946

*Out of the desert's bosom, storm swept with wind and dust;
Out of smiles and curses, of tears and cries, forlorn;
Mixed with broken laughter, forced because they must;
Toil, sweat and bleeding wounds, red and raw and torn.
Out on the desert's bosom—a new town is born.*

*Dust clouds, like brown smoke, rise and swirl and blow.
From hidden lairs in icy crags, towering high,
Like hungry pack of wolves, the gale sweeps low,
Fangs sharp and bared, shrieking to the sky.*

*Summer with long, parched nights and days;
And heaven's bowl a shimmering blue of heat;
The thirsty hills are choked. The sun's hot blaze
Before encroaching autumn, once more retreats.
King Winter reigns upon his icy seat.*

*A year is gone. A quickening in the air.
The desert stirs beneath the freshening rain.
The scent of sage, the wild rose perfume rare,
The tumbling brooks break forth in glad refrain.
Another spring—perhaps new hope, new life again.*

James Shinkai, *Manzanar Free Press*, March 20th 1943⁴⁶¹

I. Introduction

World War II concentration camps that imprisoned Japanese and Japanese American across the western United States were places not only of forced relocation and incarceration, but also sites of resistance. Throughout the three years that Manzanar Incarceration Camp operated, Japanese and Japanese Americans lived in the Owens Valley desert. That is to say they studied in schools, worked on farms, worshiped at temples and churches, practiced baseball and kendo, fell in love, got married, had children, and died—all the while surrounded by barbed wire fences and

⁴⁶¹ Special Anniversary Edition” Manzanar Free Press, March 20, 1943, Vol III No 23. <
<http://www.nps.gov/archive/manz/MFP/mfp-v3-n23.htm> >

Tamura, Anna Hosticka. “Gardens below the Watchtower: Gardens and Meaning in World War II Japanese American Incarceration Camps.” *Landscape Journal*. 23:1–04 (2004). 44

armed guards. These “small acts of living” proved to be defiant acts of resistance for prisoners and were significantly influenced by the condition of incarceration and the harsh natural environment in which they were forced to live.⁴⁶² In the Special Anniversary Edition of the camp newspaper, the *Manzanar Free Press*, published on March 20, 1943, James Shinkai expressed some of the challenges prisoners faced. The harsh climate and dusty conditions between the “long, parched nights and days” of summer and frigid winters significantly impacted quality of life at Manzanar, especially for those residents who had come from much more temperate conditions to live in hastily established shacks in the middle of the Owens Valley. The physical and emotional challenges of living in a concentration camp where “the machine guns were facing in” left incarcerated peoples “red and raw and torn,” but were met with continual struggle by individual and collective efforts to turn the barren desert into a blossoming community full of life and hope.⁴⁶³

A trend found in historical analyses of American-based WWII concentration camps is the naïve questioning of the supposed lack of resistance efforts.⁴⁶⁴ This question fails to recognize the greater social, political, and economic context of the time, as well as erases the diversity of resistance efforts that individuals enacted before, during and after their incarceration. Their resistance was manifested in diverse, often difficult to discern ways. The difficulty in identifying resistance, psychologist Alan Wade explains, is often a result of cultural biases, “because what

⁴⁶² The term “small acts of living” was coined by Erving Goffman in his book *Asylums* (1961) and theorized about by Allan Wade, who explains: “It is true that acts of resistance are often quite literally small, in the sense that they consist of subtle and rapid, micro-level communicative behaviors... In quite another sense, however, the phrase is oxymoronic. In a context of violence or oppression, where any act of self-assertion may be met with brutal reprisals, there is no such thing as a ‘small’ act of living. Any act of resistance in such circumstances is profoundly significant, regardless of what it may appear to have accomplished.” (32)

Wade, Allan. “Small Acts of Living: Everyday Resistance to Violence and Oppression.” *Contemporary Family Therapy* 19 (1) Human Sciences Press, Inc. March 1997.

<<http://www.springerlink.com/content/gq752t4391168221/fulltext.pdf>>

⁴⁶³ Shiozaki, Cory. Personal interview. December 22, 2008.

⁴⁶⁴ Yoo, David. “Captivating Memories: Museology, Concentration Camps, and Japanese American History.” *American Quarterly* 48.4 (1996) 682

counts as resistance, at least in North American popular culture, is typically based on the model of male-to-male combat which presumes roughly equal strength between combatants. Unless a person fights back physically, it is assumed that she did not resist. This view excludes most forms of resistance.”⁴⁶⁵ Instead of accepting the strictly overt and physically violent definition of resistance, Wade offers a more subtle definition: “any mental or behavior act through which a person attempts to expose, withstand, repel, stop, prevent, abstain from, strive against, impede, refuse to comply with, or oppose any forms of violence or oppression (including any type of disrespect), or the conditions that make such acts possible, may be understood as a form of resistance.”⁴⁶⁶ In a concentration camp like Manzanar, therefore, daily acts of maintaining personal identity and culture become essential defiant acts. Ideologies of white supremacy and imperialism dominated camp culture, prohibiting prisoners from teaching, publishing, writing, and reading Japanese language, in addition to banning Japanese language assemblage, worship, cultural events, and recreation.⁴⁶⁷ Consequently, resistance to incarceration and white supremacy took the form of celebrating Japanese cultural traditions and resisting mass assimilation into white American cultural identity.⁴⁶⁸

Many ethnic and cultural studies theorists have written about the importance of culture, identity, language, and collective memory as forms of resistance for racially marginalized peoples to white supremacist ideologies. bell hooks summarizes (1989): “As subjects, people have the right to define their own reality, establish their own identities, name their history. As objects, one’s reality is defined by others, one’s identity created by others, one’s history named only in ways that define one’s relationship to those that are subject.” She highlights the central

⁴⁶⁵ Wade “Small Acts of Living” 25

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁷ Mizuno, Takeya. “Government Suppression of the Japanese Language in World War II Assembly Camps.” *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* January 1, 2003.

⁴⁶⁸ hooks, bell. Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black. Boston, MA: South End Press, 1989. 42

themes of agency and voice, as well as the production of knowledge, in for marginalized peoples defending their communities. By (re)creating their landscapes, experiences, and ways of viewing the world, prisoners at Manzanar used culture and identity as key tools for resistance.

These acts of resistance often were not explicitly overt, and instead manifested as daily acts of living. “Persons subjected to violence and other forms of oppression also face the very real threat of retaliation for any act of self determination,” Wade argues. “For this reason, open defiance is the least common form of resistance.”⁴⁶⁹ This was especially true in the context of WWII Japanese American incarceration in which 117,000 people living in the United States, approximately two-thirds of whom were U.S. citizens, went widely unopposed by the general American public with the justification of military necessity capitalizing on a culture of fear and history of anti-Asian-American racism.⁴⁷⁰ Outright refusal to comply with an executive military order for a marginalized community now being named “the enemy” was not a feasible solution would have probably sparked more violence and retaliation. Professor Lawson Fusao Inada wittily exposes yet another factor in this context in his poem, *The Legend of Protest*:

The F.B.I. swooped in early,
taking our elders in the process—

for “subversive” that and this

People ask: “Why didn’t you protest?”
Well, you might say: “They had *hostages*.”⁴⁷¹

The naïve questioning of the lack of overt acts of resistance ignores the conditions people of Japanese ancestry were facing in the weeks before relocation, unduly shifts blame onto them, and ignores resistance efforts before, during, and after incarceration.

⁴⁶⁹ Wade “Small Acts of Living” 29-30

⁴⁷⁰ Yoo “Captivating Memories” 682

⁴⁷¹ Inada, Lawson Fusao. “The Legend of Protest” *Legends from Camp: Poems*. Minneapolis: Coffee House Press, 1992. 9

Wade continues to outline five major characteristics of resistance to violence and oppression: spontaneous and opportunistic; remarkably prudent; extremely determined; not based on expectation of success; and pervasive and daily.⁴⁷² These characteristics of resistance were repeatedly noted in collective and individual acts, despite the diversity of forms that often manifested a “tactical awareness” in response to the specific contexts. Because these defiant acts often cannot be overt for fear of retaliation, Wade explains: “[the acts of resistance] inevitably entail a measure of deceit [which allows the resisters to] conceal and protect their true thoughts and intentions.”⁴⁷³ Small, covert actions became the heart of resistance efforts at Manzanar—living life with joy despite enduring unconstitutional incarceration and a harsh desert climate, celebrating culture and religious traditions despite regulations explicitly prohibiting so, and building community despite strong discouragement from armed guards—all manifested as defiant acts. Without putting Japanese and Japanese-American incarceration into its historical context that acknowledges the social, political, and economic conditions that the Issei and Nisei encountered, questions of how resistance manifested behind barbed wire cannot be answered.

The way that people of Japanese ancestry are represented in texts that discuss their incarceration also influences the way that resistance is interpreted. Japanese and Japanese Americans are often characterized as closely adhering to two essentialized Japanese cultural traits: *Shikata ga nai* and *Gaman*. Many texts such as the National Park Service’s Cultural Landscape Report rely on this overly simplistic and monolithic construction of traditional Japanese cultural identity to explain these terms. “In various ways, Japanese American cultural values helped some adjust to camp life. Two Japanese mottos that were especially relevant throughout the internment period were: *Shikata ga nai* (it cannot be helped, or, it is inevitable)

⁴⁷² Wade “Small Acts of Living” 29

⁴⁷³ Ibid. 30

and *Gaman* (silent endurance). This mentality was the foundation on which the internees transformed Manzanar into a living Japanese American community.”⁴⁷⁴ Kenneth Helphand also explains: “Shocked and even bewildered by their incarceration and treatment by their government, the evacuated population responded in ways that brought to the fore fundamental aspects of cultural identity. An attitude of acceptance and resignation, of *Shikata ga nai*—‘it cannot be helped’ was coupled with the trait of *Gaman*—‘perseverance and fortitude.’”⁴⁷⁵ Through a contemporary Western viewpoint, definitions of *Shikata ga nai* translate into a fatalism of hopeless acceptance that ultimately disempowers and misinterprets Japanese and Japanese American experiences. These experiences in turn are generalized as essential characteristics of Japanese culture.

But *Shikata ga nai* cannot be mistaken for mere fatalism.⁴⁷⁶ As opposed to simply succumbing to despair and complacency, this philosophy was a way for some people of Japanese ancestry to come to terms with the condition of their incarceration and develop strategies on how to continue living. Professor Jane Iwamura argues:

The intentional logic behind *Shikata ga nai* is that one should not concentrate on the things one cannot change. As such, it bespeaks a spiritual philosophy that allows one to focus on the things one can do something about. The principle is also provisionally applied. As circumstances allowed for greater action, *Shikata ga nai* does not relieve one of responsibility. Its ultimate aim is not to debilitate, but rather to revitalize in the face of adversities that seem beyond one’s control.⁴⁷⁷

In 1942, people of Japanese ancestry living in the United States had very little recourse and were served well by a philosophy that encouraged the community to “concentrate on survival, rather than on the things they lost.”⁴⁷⁸ Reconstructing *Shikata ga nai* to afford agency and hope

⁴⁷⁴ NPS. Cultural Landscape Report, p 70

⁴⁷⁵ Helphand, Kenneth I. *Defiant Gardens: Making Gardens in Wartime*. San Antonio, Tex: Trinity University Press, 2006. 157

⁴⁷⁶ Iwamura, Jane Naomi. “Critical Faith: Japanese Americans and the Birth of a New Civil Religion.” *Critical Faith* The American Studies Association. 1997. 944

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid.

functions to disassociate the term with Western constructions of passivity, and instead move towards a framework that recognizes the diversity of responses and resistance efforts Japanese/Americans enacted in the 1940s.

Gaman, too, must be understood as its adherents employed and embodied the concept—as contributing to the establishment of endurance, agency, and resistance.⁴⁷⁹ UCLA Sociologist Harry H. L. Kitano (1976) explains that *Gaman* is a concept that refers to “internalization of and suppression of anger and emotion.”⁴⁸⁰ Similarly, Donna K. Nataga defines *Gaman* as “a Japanese term that refers to stoic patience and the suppression of emotion.”⁴⁸¹ The silent characteristic of this philosophy is underlined by Kitano, Nataga and the NPS, among others, and further constructs stereotypes of Japanese as non-confrontational and passive. The question of what is defined as silence and passivity compared to viable forms of resistance arises once again.⁴⁸² Instead of these monolithic and absolute definitions of *Gaman* that strip agency and voice from responses to WWII incarceration, author Delphine Hirasuna calls for a more complex construction of the philosophy in her book *The Art of Gaman*, in which she defines *Gaman* as “enduring what seems unbearable with dignity and grace.”⁴⁸³ Similarly, Professor Betty S. Furuta argues that instead of mistakenly viewing *Gaman* as “a lack of assertiveness or initiative,” it is best understood as “strength in the face of difficulty and suffering.”⁴⁸⁴ These (re)conceptions of *Gaman* contribute to the establishment of agency and active—although perhaps not explicitly

⁴⁷⁹ Nataga, Donna K. “Coping with Internment: A Nisei Woman’s Perspective.” In *Women Creating Lives: Identities, Resilience, and Resistance* ed. Carol E Franz and Abigail J Stewards, 115-126. Boulder: Westview Press, 1994.

⁴⁸⁰ Niiya, Brian. “Gaman.” *Japanese American History: An A-to-Z Reference from 1868 to the Present*. New York: Facts on File, 1993. 143

⁴⁸¹ Nataga “Coping with Internment” 123

⁴⁸² Please see preceding passage discussing Allan Wade’s definition of resistance.

⁴⁸³ Hirasuna, Delphine, and Kit Hinrichs. *The Art of Gaman: Arts and Crafts from the Japanese American Internment Camps, 1942-1946*. Berkeley, Calif: Ten Speed Press, 2005.

⁴⁸⁴ Niiya. “Gaman.” 143

verbal—forms of resistance that prisoners incarcerated at Manzanar and other World War II concentration camps were able to enact.

The articulation of these cultural philosophies was formative during and after the incarceration experience for many people of Japanese ancestry, continually prompting the examination of what was possible given the circumstances at the individual and communal levels. Some Japanese and Japanese Americans living behind barbed wire employed terms such as *Shikata ga nai* and *Gaman*, as noted most clearly perhaps in Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston's text *A Farewell to Manzanar*, while others did not necessarily name their actions as such until after incarceration.⁴⁸⁵ Nonetheless, the complexity and depth embedded within these philosophical principles must be fully examined to restore Japanese and Japanese American agency in regards to acts of resistance to incarceration. Poet Steve Wake reflected:

Issei, Nisei, jitterbug, Kibei, Hoshidan, loyal, betrayed, inu, patriot, pragmatist.
We will survive.

Shikata ga nai – go with the flow, it can't be changed. Gaman – be strong, persevere.
How we survive.⁴⁸⁶

“That is, alongside each history of violence and oppression, there runs a parallel history of prudent, creative, and determined resistance.”⁴⁸⁷

In most discussions of acts of resistance to WWII incarceration only the most explicit examples of protest are named. During the years behind barbed wire, several lawsuits were brought before the Supreme Court to challenge the constitutionality of Japanese and Japanese-American incarceration, but these rulings, including *Korematsu vs. United States* and *Hirabashi*

⁴⁸⁵ Nagata quotes former prisoner Sachi Kaneshiro's response to camp in the following passage: “My father used to say in response to the slightest pain, ‘You have to endure.’ I’m quite sure it helped me cope. It wasn’t a conscious thing and it’s only in retrospect that I’ve come to realize that I learned to *gaman* in camp.” Nataga, “Coping with Internment” 123

⁴⁸⁶ Wake, Steve. “A Short Walk – A Journey Through Life.” Noon in Redding, California July 6, 2008. <http://www.tulelake.org/pilgrimage_pictures/PDF_files/Walk_Journey-by_SteveWake.pdf>

⁴⁸⁷ Wade “Small Acts of Living” 23

vs United States, ultimately upheld E.O. 9066. These lawsuits mark some of the most outright opposition to incarceration by people of Japanese ancestry, but resistance was not limited to the courtroom. Japanese and Japanese Americans responded to their unconstitutional incarceration in diverse ways. Ranging from those who responded “No-No” to the 27th and 28th questions on the loyalty oath questionnaire administered in February of 1943⁴⁸⁸ to those who enlisted in the 442nd infantry to fight on behalf of the United States army,⁴⁸⁹ from those who worked stitching camouflage nets for the U.S. military to those who documented their lives with contraband cameras or in the camp newspaper, *The Free Press*, resistance to incarceration took on many different forms. However, even beyond these larger declarations of political allegiance and national identity, prisoners continued daily acts of resistance. At Manzanar, this often manifested in relation to the water resources in the Owens Valley. Opposition grew in the firebreaks between barracks, was snuck under barbed wire fences and was literally written into the walls of the reservoir. The act of living behind barbed wire became a form of resistance where prisoners often turned to creative projects to push beyond the physical confines of barbed-wire boundaries and emotional limitations imposed by the armed guards. For those incarcerated at Manzanar, daily activities of gardening and fishing were now acts of survival, healing, and a declaration of

⁴⁸⁸ In February 1943, the War Relocation Authority (WRA) began administering a questionnaire that became known as the “loyalty oath questionnaire” and required all those 17 years of age and older to answer. Answers to two questions specifically became a focus of concern for many prisoners and would be used to decide whether someone was loyal or disloyal to the United States. The last two questions read:

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 allegiance 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 to the Japanese Emperor or any other foreign government, power, or organization?

Responding “no-no” to these questions often resulted in people being transported to Tule Lake Incarceration Camp. For more information please visit:

Densho. “The Question of Loyalty.” The Board of Trustees of The Leland Stanford Junior University 2003.

<<http://www.densho.org/learning/spice/lesson5/5reading5.asp>>

⁴⁸⁹ On February 1, 1943, the same month the “Loyalty Questionnaire” was administered, President Roosevelt announced the formation of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, which would allow Japanese Americans, including those held in incarceration camps, to ‘volunteer’ for a racially segregated U.S. Army unit. The 442nd became the most highly decorated unit for its size and length of service in U.S. military history.

self and community. Water, therefore, played a pivotal role in navigating daily life and acts of defiance at Manzanar.



490

⁴⁹⁰ Miyatake, Toyo. Manzanar War Relocation Center; Toyo Miyatake Photograph Collection, Toyo Miyatake Studio, San Gabriel, California.

II: Barbed Wire Gardens: Plots of Defiance, Rows of Dignity and Pools/Blades of Strength

*This could be the land
where everything grows.
Bulldozers had sifted up
large piece of parched woods and
worthless rocks.
Bilateral builds to be are not yet.*

*Meanwhile on this dust
I counted seven shapes
of sturdy grey and greens
some small and slender
vertical parallels.
No one planted them here with squared T's.
Some weblike tentacles reaching out
Toward rounded rotundas.*

Molded by no one.

*Here
starshaped with tiny speckles,
are these the intruder in my garden
of new seedlings?
My garden carefully fed and fettered?
Of course.
I pronounced their execution
with a pinch of my fingers.*

*But here
among a myriad of friends
they flourished in weedy wilderness,
boldly gracing several acres
of untended land.
Tomorrow they shall be banished from their home.*

*And watered by many droplets
of human sweat
will sprout another college
where
disciplined minds finely honed
will grow
in carefully
planted rows.*

No room for random weeds.

The Foundation by Mitsuye Yamada 1973⁴⁹¹

⁴⁹¹ Yamada, Mitsuye. Camp Notes and Other Poems. San Lorenzo, California: Shameless Hussy Press, 1976

Introduction

Manzanar was once the land where everything grew—irrigation lines first watered pine trees, wild onion, and rice grasses and later were replaced by apple, pear and peach orchards and potato, corn and vegetable gardens, only to have these perfected rows and fields uprooted and abandoned thirty years later. In 1942, almost overnight, the fields of grey and green sagebrush were bursting with “bilateral buildings,” hastily constructed barracks that stood shaking in the windy desert valley below the Sierra Nevada Range. Gardens were squeezed between the makeshift homes, rested on improvised windowsills, decorated administrative corners and garnished the outskirts of camp, bringing cultivated life back into the Owens Valley. Mitsuye Yamada adeptly explains how these plots, “boldly gracing several acres / of untended land,” were able to flourish in the harsh conditions of the Owens Valley desert—because they were nurtured by “the many droplets / of human sweat” of those incarcerated at Manzanar, a population who lived under constant fear of never knowing when they would once again be uprooted and forcibly removed.

Yamada is among many artists and academics who have examined the role of the gardens in the World War II Japanese/American Incarceration Camps. Although traditional literature on the camp experience has often limited scholarship to the analysis of the oppressive environment, only describing “the camp landscape as cruel places comprised of tarpaper barracks, surrounded by barbed wire fences and watchtowers, and located in remote and desolate areas,” some scholars have complicated these analyses of the environment by examining elements of agency.⁴⁹² As opposed to strictly focusing on elements of confinement, landscape architecture scholarship specifically has highlighted gardens as sites of agency, healing and resistance to

⁴⁹² Tamura, Anna Hosticka. “Gardens Below the Watchtower: Gardens and Meaning in World War II Japanese American Incarceration Camps.” Landscape Journal. 23:1–04 (2004). 1

explore the complexities of the interaction between the incarceration camp and physical landscape.⁴⁹³ It is through this theoretical framework that I will analyze the gardens of Manzanar.

While gardens are found within all ten concentration camps, this act was especially important for Manzanar and has been accordingly extensively researched by the National Park Service.⁴⁹⁴ The first plots were created almost immediately, commencing with the completion of barrack construction in late spring of 1942 and continued to grow during all three years the camp operated.⁴⁹⁵ Gardens were extensive and diverse throughout Manzanar, sprouting up in whatever spaces people could gain control over. Because of the difference in environments and natural resource available to the prisoners, gardens behind barbed wire had to be well adapted to the specific natural environment of the Owens Valley desert. These conditions were able to liberate and constrain the types of gardens that incarcerated Japanese and Japanese Americans built. The historical context for how these gardens manifested provides essential insights into their designs and purposes.

Historical Context

Gardens played a critical role for Japanese and Japanese Americans before they were forcibly relocated and incarcerated in 1942. Due to racially exclusive immigration and naturalization laws and an economic market that began demanding cheap exploitable labor, Japanese continued to immigrate to the United States in the late 19th and early 20th centuries to work as agriculture laborers.⁴⁹⁶ Despite economic and legal barriers, people of Japanese ancestry

⁴⁹³ Tamura argues that the fields of ethnic studies, sociology, and history often oversimplify analyses of the environment in their scholarship on WWII Japanese/American Incarceration Camps. Some theorists within various fields who have incorporated analyses of power and resistance in their work on camp gardens include Kenneth Helphand, Lynne Horiuchi, Patricia Limerick, Gary Okihiri, and Anna Tamura.

⁴⁹⁴ Helphand, Kenneth I. Defiant Gardens: Making Gardens in Wartime. San Antonio, Tex: Trinity University Press, 2006. 176.

⁴⁹⁵ Tamura, "Gardens Below the Watchtower" 7

⁴⁹⁶ Densho. "Reading: The Issei Immigrants and Civil Rights." The Leland Stanford Junior University, 2003. <<http://www.densho.org/learning/spice/lesson2/2reading2.asp>>

began carving out a niche within the agricultural sector; by 1920 they controlled approximately 10% of the U.S. agricultural market and this percentage only continued to grow over the next two decades.⁴⁹⁷ But the discriminatory land laws eventually began to take a toll on communities; as laws that prohibited land ownership and anti-Japanese labor organizing continued to be implemented, many agricultural laborers transitioned to the closely related field of gardening. By 1934, approximately one third (1,500 out of 5,125) of the Japanese American labor force living in Los Angeles was gardeners.⁴⁹⁸

Japanese-styled gardens had gained popularity with their first introduction to the United States in the Chicago's Worlds Fair in 1893. From the very beginning of their introduction, Japanese-style gardens functioned as symbols of economic gain, orientalism, and prestige. Often considered "quaint, exotic, and sophisticated in their aesthetics" for replicating the traditional Japanese style in the United States, these gardens were designed and maintained by Japanese immigrants while predominantly located in upper class, white communities. This racially and socio-economically defined system highlights the power relations inherent in the early history of early Japanese-style gardens.⁴⁹⁹ Japanese gardens continued to be constructed as symbols of wealth and prestige for upper-class, predominantly white communities and provided "marketable, acceptable, and profitable profession[s]" for Japanese in the United States.⁵⁰⁰ By the 1920s, the "cultural niche" of agricultural labor and gardening has developed along the west coast so that Japanese gardeners were in high demand and created an "ethnic monopoly" in the industry.⁵⁰¹ Issei had a range of experience gardening from personal hobby beds to landscape

⁴⁹⁷ Densho. The Japanese American Legacy Project. "Causes of Incarceration: Economic Motives—Farming Competition." 2008. <<http://densho.org/causes/default.asp> >

⁴⁹⁸ Helphand, *Defiant Gardens* 157-159

⁴⁹⁹ Tamura, "Gardens Below the Watchtower" 5.

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁰¹ National Park Service. *Cultural Landscape Report: Manzanar National Historic Site*. Washington DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2006. 115

laborers to formally educated nursery and landscape businesspeople.⁵⁰² By the time Executive Order 9066 was signed, 43% of West Coast Japanese Americans were employed in agriculture and 26% were in agriculture-related activities and businesses, including gardening.⁵⁰³

Another essential component to examine is the role that agriculture played in determining the site location of Manzanar. According to the National Park Service, the War Civilian Control Agency (WCCA, founded on April 9, 1942) and the War Relocation Authority (WRA, founded on March 18, 1942) “made self-sustaining agricultural and production an explicit goal for each of the relocation centers.”⁵⁰⁴ The irrigation infrastructure first developed by the Paiute indigenous peoples that later expanded to a drainage system with concrete conduits in the Manzanar Irrigation Colony during the early 20th century was still intact when camp locations were being determined and provided extra incentive for choosing the Owens Valley as a preferred location for a WWII Concentration Camp. The potential for agricultural success had been determined long before.⁵⁰⁵ From the perspective of the WRA and federal government, these preexisting structures could be easily manipulated to develop a fruitful agricultural system within camp and provide employment to the thousands of former farmers and gardens, thereby limiting camp maintenance costs and aid in the war effort.⁵⁰⁶

Out of all of the incarceration camps, Manzanar was home to the largest group of professional gardeners, with approximately 60% of those incarcerated having worked in agriculture-related business, including farming and gardening. The combination of this specific demographic, the availability of water resources from neighboring creeks, and the already

⁵⁰² Tamura, “Gardens Below the Watchtower” 5

⁵⁰³ Helphand, Defiant Gardens 157-159

⁵⁰⁴ NPS. Cultural Landscape Report 38-39

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁶ Unrau, Harlan D. Manzanar National Historic Site, California: The Evacuation and Relocation of Persons of Japanese Ancestry During World War II: a Historical Study of the Manzanar War Relocation Center. Denver, CO: U.S. Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service, 1996. Retrieved: March 28, 2008. <<http://www.nps.gov/archive/manz/hrs/hrst.htm>>

irrigated land provided an optimal landscape for the development of gardens within camp. Once Japanese and Japanese Americans arrived in the Owens Valley in spring of 1942 to find the harsh conditions of arid sagebrush desert and accompanying dust storms, some went to work to transforming the natural environment surrounding their new homes. For three years, prisoners continued to cultivate the land, despite never knowing if they would be around to harvest the crops or see the blossoming flowers the next season. Approximately half of the barracks were estimated to have had constructed personal and communal gardens by the time camp closed in November of 1945.⁵⁰⁷ Gardening efforts in camp were not only limited to individual plots of vegetables and flowers at the entrance to the barrack apartments, however. In addition to the personal victory gardens, outdoor living areas were decorated with indigenous and foreign plants and water features, mess hall gardens were constructed to provide shaded seating areas, and green grassy lawns soon covered larger plots of land.⁵⁰⁸ These diverse and numerous plots have contributed to Manzanar being recognized as the camp with “the largest number and most sophisticated ornamental gardens of the ten incarceration camps.”⁵⁰⁹

Layout of Manzanar

Manzanar, like the other WWII Japanese/American Incarceration Camps, was organized according to the standard camp layout by the War Relocation Authority (WRA) with rows upon rows of uniform barracks lined up to form blocks that ran parallel to the U.S. 395 Highway. The 550-acre area was completely enclosed by a barbed wire fence and eight forty-foot armed guard towers. This arrangement combined elements from other such mass housing facilities including military bases, prisons, farm worker’s housing, and Native American reservations.⁵¹⁰ From its

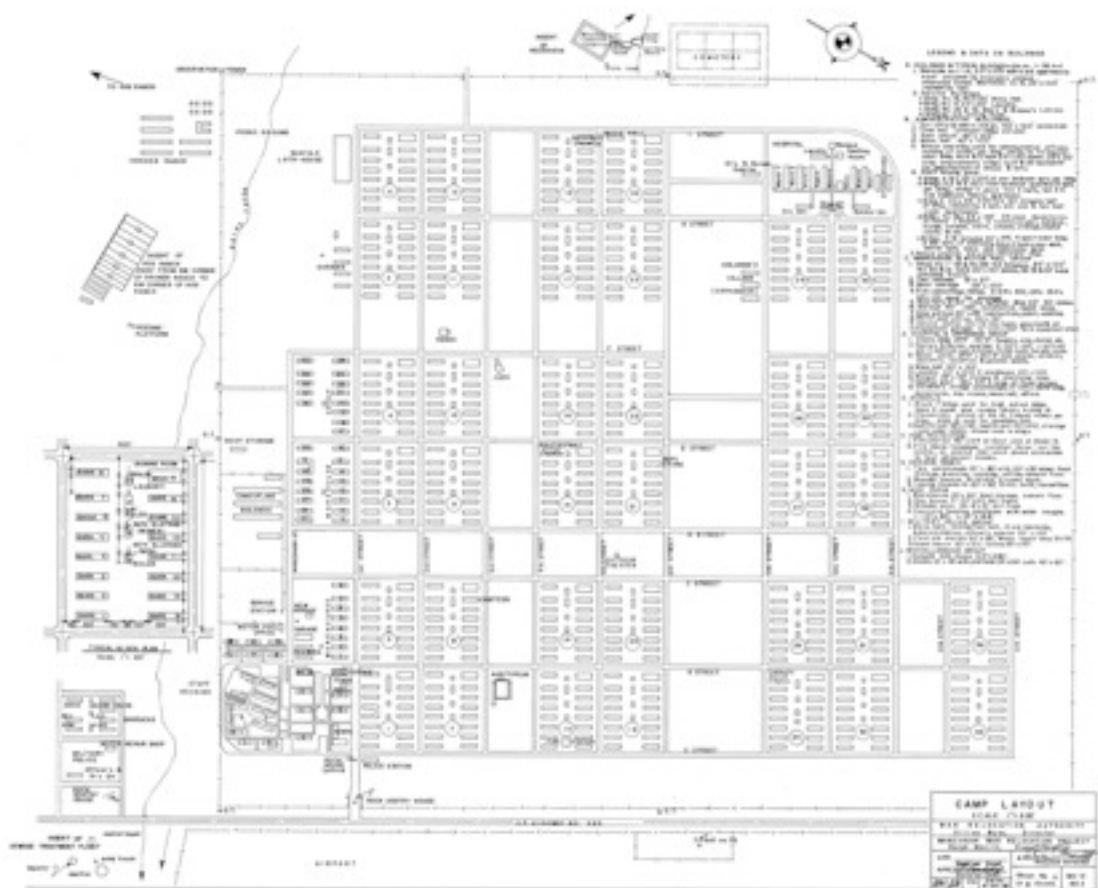
⁵⁰⁷ NPS. Cultural Landscape Report, 46

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid. 70-71

⁵⁰⁹ Tamura, “Gardens Below the Watchtower” 9-10

⁵¹⁰ Helphand, Defiant Gardens 165

homogeneous design, the layout of the camp had an implicit order; one that ranged from the individual spaces of barracks holding eight person families to blocks, the collections of barracks for multifamily housing units, to a collection of communal spaces spread throughout the camp.⁵¹¹ “Like the military layout itself, there was an implied hierarchy of space, ranging from the social relations of the individual or family unity to the inhabitants of a block to the larger community. The prisoners were given an empty frame that they then modified and filled.”⁵¹² It was within the spaces of this void that gardens began to grow, sprouting new life from their emotional landscape into the physical environment.



⁵¹¹ Ibid.

⁵¹² Ibid.

Gardens grown behind barbed wire can never simply be standard hobby plots devoid of greater meaning. Nonetheless, Manzanar gardens are usually represented primarily as “aesthetically sophisticated landscapes ...[that provide] tranquil and serene places designed for strolling and meditation. Rarely are Japanese gardens politicized.”⁵¹³ These representations fall far short of understanding the nature of the gardens in Manzanar; to deny the political meaning that lay between the rows of *kabocha* or surrounding rosebushes would be to erase the agency of those incarcerated at Manzanar. “The camp gardens evoke complex sociological interactions and factions; conditions spawned by a community in turmoil. The camp gardens exhibited tension between camp authorities and inmates; between Japanese immigrants and their Japanese American descendants; between male and female gender roles; and between resisters of the incarceration, those who were compliant, and those who remained staunchly patriotic.”⁵¹⁴ Recognizing the political expression inherent in Japanese/American camp gardens contradicts the naïve assumption that silence and passivity—which spawned from overly simplistic definitions of Japanese cultural traits of *Shikata ga nai* and *Gaman*—dominated camp life. Instead through incorporating the historical context that laid the soil foundation for Japanese and Japanese American gardening, an analysis of these plots exposes how incarcerated peoples were able to transform their imprisoning surrounding environment into blossoming beds. Camp gardens spawned individual and communal healing; they were spaces to tend a flourishing culture, nurture flowering creative expression, and cultivate plots of resistance.

⁵¹³ Tamura, “Gardens Below the Watchtower” 1

⁵¹⁴ Ibid.



515

Building Homes in Hell: The Process of Domestication with Personal Gardens

As soon as Japanese and Japanese Americans became prisoners in Manzanar Concentration Camp, they began the process of “domesticating an inhospitable environment.”⁵¹⁶ This process of domestication was especially important within the areas that were designated as personal living spaces, the empty plots of land surrounding each of the barracks and distributed between blocks. Responses to the emotional and economic traumas of being stripped of home and property immediately began to manifest in the limited spaces prisoners could control. Due to the restricted layout of the camp, which could be most severely felt within the over crowded barracks, these outdoor spaces were critical locations for personal space and expression. Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston noted, “once the weather warmed up, it was an out-of-doors life, where you

⁵¹⁵ NPS Cultural Landscape Report p147

⁵¹⁶ Helphand, Defiant Gardens 164

only went ‘home’ at night, when you finally had to: 10,000 people on an endless promenade inside the square mile of barbed wire that was the wall around our city.”⁵¹⁷

Efforts to domesticate and decorate barracks began immediately. Prisoners build front porches from scrap lumber, affixed curtains to windows, and redecorated the interior of their apartments to improve living conditions. Although these steps were not limited to crop cultivation, gardens played an integral role in the domestication the desert. After constructing “a quintessential American front porch” from scrounged scrap lumber, a prisoner explained that the transformation of the government issued barrack into his family’s new home was not complete without the addition of a lawn.⁵¹⁸ The construction of gardens and lawns continued to spread throughout the camp, but were most highly concentrated in the areas surrounding the barracks; plots began sprouting in whatever spaces could be appropriated—in front of apartments, between barracks, and in the fire blocks between barracks. By mid June 1942, only a few months after the first Japanese and Japanese Americans had been brought to Manzanar, gardens were being cultivated throughout the camp and there were over 100 residential lawns on record.⁵¹⁹ These residential plots continued to gain popularity and a survey of the gardens completed a year after Manzanar opened noted that “an average of five out of 14 barracks—or nearly every other apartment building—at Manzanar had some planting around it.”⁵²⁰ “These small gardens are evidence of place-making on a personal scale. The style, appearance, and function of these gardens depended on individual motivation and personal preferences” and were quite diverse.⁵²¹ The most common personal gardens throughout camp were part of the Victory Garden program.

⁵¹⁷ Ibid. 162-163

⁵¹⁸ Ibid. 164

⁵¹⁹ NPS. Cultural Landscape Report, 139-140

⁵²⁰ Ibid 46

⁵²¹ Ibid. 139

A. Victory Gardens

The personal gardens cultivated at Manzanar were as diverse as the Japanese and Japanese Americans incarcerated there. After witnessing the popularity of gardens in personal spaces, the Community Activities Section instituted a Victory Garden program to provide prisoners small plots to cultivate for personal use.⁵²² Based off of the larger WWI and WWII models, personal plots could be cultivated to limit expenses and contribute to the general war effort. However, as Helphand pointed out, “The irony of victory gardens for an interned population was dramatic.”⁵²³ Nonetheless, this program was immensely popular, with over 120 families enrolling and paying a nominal rental fee of thirty-five cents a month to gain the right to garden a 30’ x 50’ plot. Prisoners grew their own “vegetables for vitamins, flowers for morale, and gardening for recreation”⁵²⁴ despite knowing that they might not be able “to reap the fruits of their harvest before being uprooted again.”⁵²⁵

Often located in the firebreaks between barracks, victory gardens were continually tended; in the summers of 1942 and 1943, prisoner gardeners developed water schedules to regulate irrigation hours and the victory garden irrigation ditches’ maintenance.⁵²⁶ “Spurred by competitive pride,” prisoner Okubo explained, “great care and attention were given to [victory gardens] by the owners...The best were those of former gardeners and nurserymen.”⁵²⁷ One prisoner reflected, “We had a plot of land...that was the beauty of that particular area...the irrigation canal was coming down the hill with water from the Sierra and we were able to irrigate very effectively that way.”⁵²⁸ Even from behind barbed wire, Japanese and Japanese Americans

⁵²² Ibid. 66-67

⁵²³ Helphand, *Defiant Gardens* 157

⁵²⁴ NPS. Cultural Landscape Report 67

⁵²⁵ Helphand, *Defiant Gardens* 157

⁵²⁶ NPS. Cultural Landscape Report, p 67

⁵²⁷ Helphand, *Defiant Gardens* 159

⁵²⁸ NPS. Cultural Landscape Report, 67-68

were able to manipulate the water resources and natural environment to produce crops to nourish their communities.

Victory gardens provided prisoners the physical space to cultivate crops. In these smaller plots, prisoners could grow whatever plants they desired as opposed to strictly relying on the crops produced in the camp's agricultural fields or provided by the military.⁵²⁹ As the National Park Service explains, "The meals served in the mess halls were based on standard American military menus, with preserved meats, vegetables, and heavy starches, and many prisoners, particularly the *Issei*, were not accustomed to the diet. By raising vegetables, particularly Japanese vegetables, they could supplement their diet with food reminiscent of home."⁵³⁰ Within a year of operating, the program had expanded so extensively that some community groups were able to cultivate gardens large enough to provide fresh produce to the mess halls to supplement the military rations on a larger scale as well. Surplus vegetables produced from these plots were sold to fundraise for Community Activities Committee.⁵³¹ The Victory Gardens were also prime locations for prisoners to experiment with different crops and determine which were the most fruitful in the Owens Valley soil and climate. The most successful and popular crops were then subsequently planted in mass the larger agricultural fields.⁵³² Manzanar Victory Gardens provided invaluable health benefits to the entire community and especially the elderly *Issei* who were more susceptible to health challenges in the new environment.

⁵²⁹ Ibid. 67

⁵³⁰ Ibid. 160

⁵³¹ Ibid. 67-68

⁵³² Ibid. 67



533

B. Ornamental Gardens

In addition to the Victory Garden program, incarcerated peoples began taking control over communal spaces and transforming them into spectacular Japanese/American styled gardens, reminders of the many homes they had left behind. Ornamental gardens that incorporated stylistic elements of Japanese, American, and Japanese-American design were built around the barracks. These ornamental gardens included features such as ponds, small bridges, paved paths, rock features, in addition to flowering plants and vegetables.⁵³⁴ Stylistically different than the Victory Garden plots, these ornamental gardens often were characterized by a combination of flowers and vegetables that adorned small plots near the entrances of gardens, bringing life and a sense of home to the barren desert. Vegetation that were often found in these plots included potatoes, onions, cucumbers, Chinese cabbage, and watermelon, as well as chrysanthemums, nasturtiums, carnations, and roses.⁵³⁵ Rocks, water features, and indigenous plants species were also used in some of these gardens, combining elements from the natural

⁵³³ Adams, Ansel. Courtesy of Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division LC-DIG-ppprs-00211 DLC. Farm workers are harvesting in the fields. Mt. Williamson is in the background. 1943.

<<http://americanhistory.about.com/library/photos/blmanzanarphfarming3.htm>>

⁵³⁴ NPS. Cultural Landscape Report 2.

⁵³⁵ Ibid. 46

environment of the Owens Valley with plants that had been brought into camp and propagated in the Manzanar nursery. Of all of these components of the ornamental gardens, water features were especially appreciated in the arid landscapes and highlighted the multi-generational aspect of the gardeners. “Ponds are essential in traditional Japanese design,” Helphand explains, “but fountains were new elements, part of a still-evolving Japanese American design style.”⁵³⁶ The incorporation of all of these different elements in personal ornamental gardens reflected the specific context under which they were designed. Contrary to the diversity and complexity of the ornamental gardens, incarcerated Japanese American gardens were highly influenced by the limited supplies that could be gathered within the camp boundaries. Found materials including tin cans, pebbles, bottle caps, and glass were integrated and reflected the nature of incarceration.⁵³⁷ By recreating their surrounding physical environment, incarcerated Japanese and Japanese-Americans were able to creatively respond to their incarceration and regain some control over their lives and landscapes, all the while creating their newest ‘home’.

These plots provided a variety of benefits for prisoners, beyond simply aesthetic, ornamental value. On a more practical level, gardens were crucial in distinguishing barracks and personalizing physical spaces. The rows and rows of 120 by 20 foot buildings that were assembled in mass were identical, which made distinguishing one building from the next rather difficult. Decorations of the outside of barracks, especially gardens, became important ways for people to establish home and a place of belonging. This process of domestication was especially important within the context of forcibly relocated peoples. Japanese and Japanese Americans had just lost their “homes”—both in the physical and more sentimental value of the word. Material possessions and rights to land were taken along with community relationships, daily lives, and a

⁵³⁶ Helphand, *Defiant Gardens* 167

⁵³⁷ NPS. Cultural Landscape Report, 160

sense of place belonging. Stripped too from this population were gardens—the occupations and livelihoods peoples had constructed for themselves for decades in addition to the personal plots that adorned their homes. Gardening, therefore, provided the perfect opportunity to recreate some of what was lost by forced relocation. “Although internees had little opportunity to bring personal property with them, they could possess the gardens...Because size was not critical, the smallest space could be appropriated: residential barracks gardens ranged from only two by four feet to as large as twenty by forty.”⁵³⁸ Domestication for an incarcerated peoples meant regaining the control over the natural environment and their lives to (re)construct the land that the federal government had declared would now be their home. “Camps were ‘home,’ but only for an indeterminable period. Internees worked to create cultural setting that fostered a semblance of normalcy under abnormal and unjust conditions.”⁵³⁹ It is through these domestication efforts, of watering victory garden plots and redesigning and constructing water features, that Japanese and Japanese Americans effectively implemented *Shikata ga nai* and *Gaman*.

The domesticating of Manzanar through gardening had varying significance for prisoners depending on their generation and gender. “For Issei, it was a memory, often of childhood homes in Japan as well as the home they had made in America. For Nisei, it was an imagined and idealized cultural home in Japan as well as their American homes, which often had gardens in a Japanese style. For Kibei it was homes in both places.”⁵⁴⁰ Gardens at Manzanar, then allowed Japanese and Japanese Americans of varying generations to create a new third home, not in Japan nor in free America, but behind barbed wire. Although Issei (first generation) and Nisei (second generation) participated in garden construction, Issei men were responsible for the majority of ornamental gardens development. This was in part due to their specific immigration

⁵³⁸ Helphand, *Defiant Gardens* 190-191

⁵³⁹ Ibid. 189

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid. 191

history, which had fostered occupational and personal garden construction skill, but also came as a result from the undermining of their social status within camp.⁵⁴¹ Stripped of their traditional role as patriarch and financial supporter within the family unit and denied the space to hold political positions by the WRA in camp, Issei men found themselves with “little authority, responsibility or opportunity to improve their futures or those of their families.”⁵⁴² The sight of the barren, vast Owens Valley landscape that surrounded the camp for miles, the place where “the sage grew and tumbleweeds rolled” could not simply just be left alone.⁵⁴³ Gardening provided Issei men one opportunity to assert control over their lives, financially contribute to their families, benefit their communities and affirm their Japanese cultural traditions, while proactively managing stress imposed by their incarceration.⁵⁴⁴

Issei and Nisei women, however, were important in the construction of personal victory gardens and agricultural fields. Tamura explains, “For women and especially mothers, producing vegetables in victory gardens and fields allowed them to contribute to their family and community welfare while reaping the untold benefits of informal horticultural therapy.”⁵⁴⁵ Those who had extensive experience on farms and constructing gardens—both occupationally and within the home—worked with relatively inexperienced prisoners to recreate the inhospitable environment described as “scorching, manmade hells” in the heart of the Owens Valley desert to their new lives in Manzanar Concentration Camp.⁵⁴⁶ In reality, these gardens plots were collective efforts of women, men, and children, both Issei and Nisei generations.⁵⁴⁷ Helphand

⁵⁴¹ Tamura, “Gardens Below the Watchtower” 9

⁵⁴² Ibid. 12

⁵⁴³ Helphand, *Defiant Gardens* 161

⁵⁴⁴ Tamura, “Gardens Below the Watchtower”, 12

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁶ Helphand, *Defiant Gardens* 162

⁵⁴⁷ Dusselier, Jane. “Gendering Resistance and Remaking Place: Art in Japanese American Concentration Camps.” *Peace & Change*, Volume 30, Issue 2 <<http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/cgi-bin/fulltext/118651013/PDFSTART>> p 183

explains, “Evacuees took the empty WRA framework and filled it to make it into their homes, the domestic environment where personal and family lives were enacted.”⁵⁴⁸

Plotting Defiance: Community, Competition, and Political Resistance in Mess Hall Gardens

The act of home making from behind barbed wire was not only an act of survival; it was also an act of resistance. Gardening soon spread from the ornamental gardens and victory garden plots directly neighboring the barracks to all four corners that fenced in Manzanar. Seeking control over the physical environment and their lives, prisoners began organizing their community, establishing a newspaper, church, hobby shows, dance and sports teams.⁵⁴⁹

Recreational activities and reconstructing the bleak, barren physical landscape were essential to maintain the emotional health of the community, but these steps were also acts of resistance.

Architectural historian Lynne Horiuchi explains that “The internees’ building programs created community planning and new built environments as a means of defiance, less direct than political organizing, yet significant in transforming the conditions of their internment. By appropriating governance and building processes from the United States government administration, the internees created their own ‘town’ with their own town architects.”⁵⁵⁰ The new town of Manzanar, while not an irrigation colony, flourished with gardens and ponds, marking the triumph of the Japanese and Japanese Americans despite enduring unconstitutional incarceration.

The War Relocation Authority consented to requests to develop public parks throughout Manzanar in addition to the Victory Garden Program “in order to provide residents some relief from the confines of the overcrowded blocks.”⁵⁵¹ Although each garden was unique, gardens

⁵⁴⁸ Helphand, Defiant Gardens 190

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid. 157

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid. 164

⁵⁵¹ NPS. Cultural Landscape Report, p 78

outside of the mess halls and camp hospital shared many common features. These gardens typically included a shaped pond as the central design feature and were surrounded by a rectangular perimeter of small stones to frame the watercourse. Ponds were decorated with small islands, bridges, waterfalls, cascades or fountains and were occasionally stocked with fish including *koi*.⁵⁵² It is estimated that seventeen or eighteen ponds were ultimately constructed during the three years Manzanar operated and many other gardens also incorporated water features such as wishing wells, cement wading pools and local streams in their design.⁵⁵³ These gardens gained a lot of attention from camp officials and the neighboring Owens Valley, and eventually sparked a competition within the camp newspaper. In the autumn of 1943, the *Manzanar Free Press* initiated a “Best Garden Contest,” which further instigated friendly competition between blocks to create more refined designs.⁵⁵⁴ By this point almost every block had developed its own garden, but the reader’s pool selected Block 22’s *Otaba no Ike* also known as Three Sack Pond for first place, followed by Block 34’s *San-shi En*.⁵⁵⁵

A. Three Sac Pond

Gardens outside of the mess halls were some of the most elaborate in Manzanar, but they did not necessarily start off that way.⁵⁵⁶ In July 1942, a few months after Manzanar had opened, Harry Ueno, who had worked as a mess hall cook in Block 22, decided to construct a pond at the entrance of the mess hall so “people can enjoy it while they are waiting for the mess hall bell to ring to line up.”⁵⁵⁷ “You know, Manzanar was at high altitude and a lot of wind from Mount Whitney would kick up dust and a lot of pebbles sometimes. People standing in line would be

⁵⁵² Helphand, *Defiant Gardens* 183

⁵⁵³ Ibid. 182

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁵ NPS. Cultural Landscape Report, p 135

⁵⁵⁶ Helphand, *Defiant Gardens* 181

⁵⁵⁷ Helphand, *Defiant Gardens*, 181

affected,” Ueno explained.⁵⁵⁸ He was soon able to enlist the help of many other prisoners including Akira and Kuichiro Nishi, brothers who owned a renowned San Fernando Valley nursery that specialized in roses. After seeing the dedication and excitement that arose from the unique opportunity to collectively better their community, Akira Nishi offered to draw up a plan for the garden that he felt would be appropriate to represent the condition of their forced relocation and also provide some relief from their condition.⁵⁵⁹ “Stylistically and materially, the garden was an innovative fusion of ancient Japan, the frontier west, pre-war Los Angeles, and the Manzanar environment.”⁵⁶⁰ Residents of Block 22 continued to join the effort, hauling two-ton boulders from across camp to provide a seated resting area beside the mess hall. The garden continued to grow and eventually measured over 25 by 110 feet, encircled by the small stone fence typical of communal hall gardens.⁵⁶¹ Indigenous trees and shrubs were spread out throughout the plot, providing new, shaded landscape. But the highlight of the garden was the large figure-eight pond that stretched along the mess hall. Bordered by large and small stones on most sides, the pond had a “wishing well” on one side to pump water into the basin and a cement pathway stretched across the narrower middle section. The wishing well, designed by Los Angeles landscape artist George S. Takemura, was reminiscent of the wells popular in the first Japanese-style gardens in North America during the nineteenth century.⁵⁶² Residents of Block 22 worked with Harry Ueno and the Nishi brothers to create an elaborate Japanese, American, and Japanese-American garden in the middle of the Owens Valley desert.

⁵⁵⁸ Ueno, Harry Y., Sue Kunitomi Embrey, Arthur A. Hansen, and Betty Kulberg Mitson. Manzanar Martyr: An Interview with Harry Y. Ueno. Fullerton, Calif: Oral History Program, California State University, 1986. 28

⁵⁵⁹ Helphand, Defiant Gardens 181

⁵⁶⁰ NPS. Cultural Landscape Report, 134

⁵⁶¹ Helphand, Defiant Gardens, 182

⁵⁶² NPS. Cultural Landscape Report, 134

Acquiring the necessary supplies to construct this magnificent garden, however, was its own feat—Nishi’s plan for the Block 22 garden required twenty-four bags of cement to line the bottom of the pond.⁵⁶³ Camp policy at the time, however, restricted cement distribution for landscaping to only three sacks per block per month since the critical building material was already in scarce supply due to war rations.⁵⁶⁴ This policy did not stop the residents of Block 22 from creating their garden. Ueno among others successfully forged official paperwork eight times to acquire the needed material in three sack increments. “He [Mr. Ned Campbell, Assistant Project Director] gave me a permit for three sacks, but we actually needed about twenty-three sacks. I gave the permit to one of the drivers and said, ‘Get the sacks of cement.’ They brought in three. Then with the same permit he went again and got three. He kept returning with the same permit, and we accomplished the pond. After that, everybody started building a pond!” Ueno exclaimed.⁵⁶⁵ This subversive act ultimately helped earn the garden its nickname, “Three Sack Pond.”⁵⁶⁶ Stories like this one, where prisoners used subversive techniques going against the federal government to regain control over their lives and shape the physical landscape, can be found throughout Manzanar. The construction of Three Sack Pond was by no means the only instance prisoners stole government supplies, especially cement which was used for ponds, watercourses, walkways, garden bridges, and other decorative garden elements, from the WRA in order to construct their landscape projects.⁵⁶⁷ One block manager’s annual report noted hundreds of sacks of cement missing that year.⁵⁶⁸

⁵⁶³ Helphand, *Defiant Gardens* 182

⁵⁶⁴ NPS. Cultural Landscape Report, 119

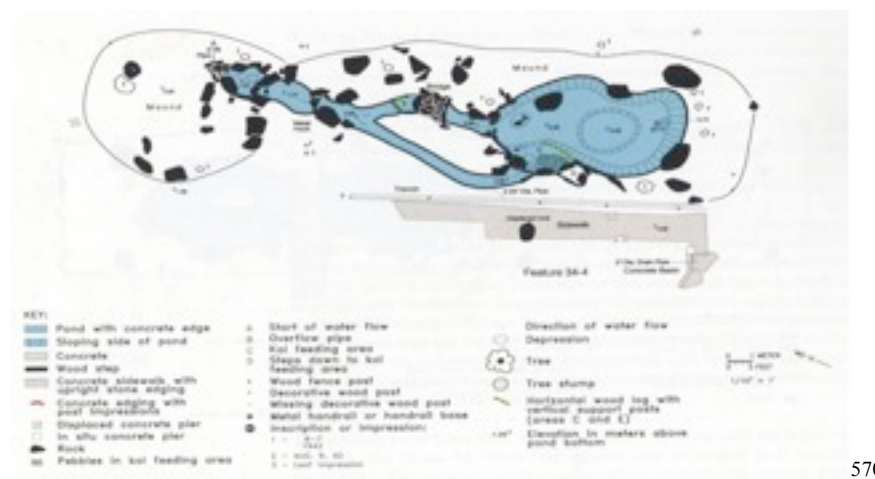
⁵⁶⁵ Ueno *Manzanar Martyr* 29

⁵⁶⁶ NPS. Cultural Landscape Report, 134

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid. 119

⁵⁶⁸ Helphand, *Defiant Gardens* 183

The other name for the Block 22 garden, “Otaba no Ike,” highlights another defining component—its cultural and healing significance. Otaba no Ike is derived from the name O to wa no Ike, the source of pure, sacred water that flows to the famed Kiyomizu Buddhist Temple in Kyoto, Japan.⁵⁶⁹ By honoring this garden with a name that recalls the sacred water, prisoners were expressing the deeper cultural and religious connotation that this garden held. Like the purifying water that flows to the Kiyomizi Temple, the water at Otaba no Ike had a healing quality and provided a peaceful sanctuary for those who had to wait in the blazing sun before mealtime.



The defiant nature of this garden must also not be overlooked, as often done by general surveys completed by the National Park Service. On December 6, 1942 a revolt broke out in Manzanar as hundreds of prisoners gathered to protest the arrest of Harry Ueno. Ueno is perhaps best known as the ‘Manzanar Martyr’ for his organizing efforts around the mess halls. After working in the Block 22 Mess Hall for several months he noticed that there began to be sugar shortages as those who ate at the mess hall began complaining. “In the beginning, they had enough sugar. Eight ounces of sugar was all right for everybody because there was sugar on the

⁵⁶⁹ NPS. Cultural Landscape Report, 134

⁵⁷⁰ NPS. Cultural Landscape Report 137

table. They used to lay it on the table so people could take as much as they wanted for their coffee. But soon sugar got shorter and shorter. In August and September it got worse,” Ueno explained.⁵⁷¹ Soon after hearing these complaints Ueno started his own investigation into the shortages and found that by September 30, 1942 approximately 20,000 pounds of sugar were missing. Allegations and rumors spread around the camp that WRA officials were selling the stolen sugar on the black market in addition to meat and other food supplies. The WRA denied these claims and shifted the blame onto soy sauce production (which Ueno contradicted only consumed 275 pounds of sugar total in its production processes).⁵⁷² However, in an article printed in the *Manzanar Free Press* on November 21, 1942, the administration admitted they were short 6,100 pounds of sugar. “Even if an ounce was taken out of the ration, that meant quite a shortage,” Ueno explained.⁵⁷³ Ueno and others formed the Mess Hall Workers’ Union to communally manage grievances, explaining, “We have to organize the mess halls. It’s the only way the grievances that we have to take the administration can be heard. We have to get together and organize. Individual complaints don’t mean anything to the administration.”⁵⁷⁴ Using the same methods and motives Ueno constructed the Block 22 garden and organized others to better improve their living situations and daily experiences.

Political unrest in and around the garden continued to escalate with the formation of the Mess Hall Workers’ Union. A few weeks after his investigation into the missing sugar and meat supplies, Harry Ueno was arrested. On the night of December 5, 1942, a man named Fred Tayama, the original leader of the Anti-Axis Committee and an outspoken critic of Ueno and his mess hall organization was beaten by a group of several masked prisoners. Ueno was

⁵⁷¹ Ueno, Manzanar Martyr 30

⁵⁷² Ibid 32

⁵⁷³ Ibid. 31

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid. 35

immediately charged, arrested, and jailed.⁵⁷⁵ A large gathering of prisoners who opposed the arrest of Ueno gathered at Otaba no Ike, the Block 22 garden, which also marked the entrance of the mess hall on the night of December 6, 1942. The group soon gathered outside of the barrack where Ueno was being held and demanded his release. Ueno recalled the scene:

They were yelling and shouting, and the wind was blowing about thirty-five miles an hour. You know how Manzanar is, when the wind is whipped up; it's dusty and pebbles fly. It was kind of a cold night. I think it was about a little after six that I noticed some of the MPs were shaking because so many people were out there—young fellows. Then the sergeant in charge went around and said 'Remember Pearl Harbor!' ...Then soon they [the military police] started putting on gas masks.⁵⁷⁶

The night ended with the firing of tear gas canisters and tommy guns; James Ito (17 years old) was pronounced dead immediately after a shot through his heart and abdomen at a distance of less than 25 feet. Jim Kanagawa (21 years old) would also die of complications several days later in the camp hospital. Ten other prisoners sustained bullet wounds through their backs. "All got the bullet in the back. Every one," Ueno somberly explained. Despite the demonstration, Ueno was later moved to jails in Bishop and Lone Pine before being transferred to Tule Lake Concentration Camp. The efforts of those who organized at the Block 22 Mess Hall Garden to fight for justice for their community is yet another example of resistance efforts within camp. Otaba no Ike was unique in its connection to events that would later be known as the Manzanar Revolt.⁵⁷⁷

B. 3 – 4 Garden

The garden to win second place in the *Manzanar Free Press*' best garden competition was constructed outside of Block 34 and accordingly named *San-Shi-En* or 3-4 Garden.

⁵⁷⁵ Christgau, John. "Reviewed work: Manzanar Martyr: An Interview with Harry Y. Ueno by Sue Kunitomi Embrey; Arthur A. Hansen; Betty Kulberg Mitson." *The Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 57, No. 4 (Nov., 1988), pp. 504-505 University of California Press <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3640404>>

⁵⁷⁶ Ueno, Manzanar Martyr 57

⁵⁷⁷ I choose to use the term "revolt" in this context as opposed to the more commonly phrased "Manzanar Riot" because of the social and political context that Art Hansen carefully explains in their text *The Manzanar Riot: An Ethnic Perspective*. FMI please also visit: <http://www.nps.gov/archive/manz/hrs/hrs11h.htm>

Exhibiting in several ways “the strictest translation of traditional Japanese garden design,” *San-Shi-En* perhaps best reflected the will to hold onto cultural identity and dignity by Japanese and Japanese Americans at Manzanar despite the shaming and Americanization efforts of the WRA.⁵⁷⁸ This garden was designed in the Momoyama hill and pond style, separating the garden into three levels: the highest point of the water source and bed of stones, an expansive watercourse, and a lower pool.⁵⁷⁹ Each of these subsequent layers, beyond providing an aesthetic beauty and variance in landscape that was much needed within the confines of Manzanar, also provided an opportunity to express cultural and religious traditions. The hill and rock arrangement that stood to the north of the pond, for example, was said to represent Mount Shumisen, the sacred mountain at the center of the universe where Buddha was enthroned. Within Manzanar, prisoners took it upon themselves to construct and redesign the landscape to best fit the needs of their communities. Surrounding this stone structure were rocks representing the sun, moon, and planets symbolically rotating around Mount Shumisen; this also was significant in that it marked the site where the watercourse began in *San-Shi-En*.⁵⁸⁰ The expression of Buddhist and Taoist principles could be unearthed not only at each of these layers, but also within them.

Having their origins in Taoist and Buddhist beliefs, *San-Shi-En* was constructed according to the traditional style “to evoke peace, prosperity, pleasantness, and long life” for those incarcerated at Manzanar.⁵⁸¹ Landscape architect Helphand explains that the rock arrangements at *San-Shi-En* symbolize the “immortal isles” that were believed to be the place

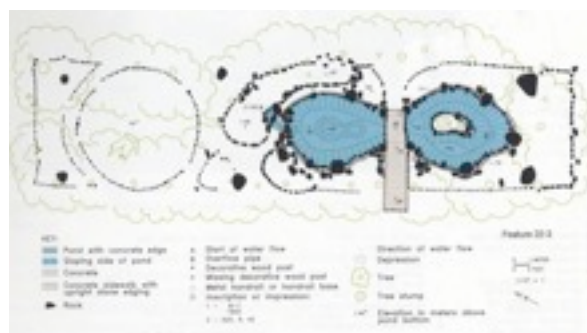
⁵⁷⁸ NPS. Cultural Landscape Report, p 136

⁵⁷⁹ Helphand *Defiant Gardens* 183

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁸¹ Ibid.

where people who had the secrets of everlasting youth dwelled.⁵⁸² According to the Taoist belief, these people, known as *hsien*, traveled throughout the immortal isles on the backs of beautiful cranes and eventually became fixed on the backs of tortoises, creating the symbolic *tsuru-kame* (crane and tortoise) rock arrangement.⁵⁸³ The crane island in *San-Shi-En* was a steep and jagged structure that consisted of three key garden design elements: horizontal (earth), diagonal (humans), and vertical (heaven).⁵⁸⁴ The tortoise stone, on the other hand, “offered symbolic protection from natural disasters and proper control of rivers,” key concerns for incarcerated peoples in an unfamiliar land. When combined the *tsuru-kame* rock structures represented “ageless vitality.”⁵⁸⁵ At *San-Shi-En*, these traditional arrangements arose from the large concrete lined pond, which was also constructed in the traditional Japanese gourd shape to outline the kanji character for mind.⁵⁸⁶ Japanese cultural and religious traditions, although their practice was in many ways discouraged within the confines of the barbed wire, were able to manifest in *San-Shi-En*. Prisoner Charles Kikuchi explained in a journal entry in June of 1942, “[the] whole thing looks like old Japan.”⁵⁸⁷ These manifestations, however, were highly influenced by the context of incarceration.



588

⁵⁸² Ibid.

⁵⁸³ NPS. Cultural Landscape Report, p 136

⁵⁸⁴ Helphand *Defiant Gardens* 184

⁵⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁶ NPS. Cultural Landscape Report, p 136

⁵⁸⁷ Helphand *Defiant Gardens* 159-160

⁵⁸⁸ NPS. Cultural Landscape Report 138

At Manzanar, another critical component in addition to the design of the gardens was the materials used to construct them. To ensure the consistency and connection between the garden and Manzanar, the issue of how to best incorporate the surrounding environment was carefully considered in the garden design. This concern aligned itself with the traditional Japanese garden design philosophy of *shakkei* or borrowed scenery. *San-Shi-En* was designed to also represent “a miniaturized landscape of the transition from mountains to stream, river valley, and finally plain,” taking advantage of the distant Sierra Nevada peaks to the west and tapering off to the seemingly endless acres of sagebrush to the east.⁵⁸⁹ Incorporating aspects of the Owens Valley desert environment did not stop there. “Manzanar was surrounded by natural materials that could be collected, brought to camp, and arranged into gardens,” and that is exactly what prisoners did.⁵⁹⁰ Rocks ranging from giant boulders to small stones smoothed by water were gathered and incorporated into essential elemental designs of mess hall gardens and other gardens throughout camp. Other materials including fallen tree branches and scrap lumber from camp construction and maintenance such as slats torn off vegetable crates were harder to come upon, but were also incorporated into both private and communal garden plots.⁵⁹¹ Although vegetation was often collected from a combination of indigenous species, the Manzanar nursery, the Sears Roebuck Catalog, and personal nurseries left behind in the San Fernando Valley and Los Angeles area, hardscape materials were primarily gathered from off the Owens Valley floor. “In all cases, the selection of materials and the mood of a garden were meant to harmonize with the social and physical setting,”⁵⁹² explains the National Park Service in their detailed publication *The Cultural Landscape Report*. “Mess hall gardens provided relief from one of the more monotonous aspects

⁵⁸⁹ Ibid. 184

⁵⁹⁰ NPS. Cultural Landscape Report, 119

⁵⁹¹ Ibid. 72

⁵⁹² Ibid. 117

of camp life and represented a unique adaptation of the Japanese style garden to the interment experience.”⁵⁹³



594

Another essential, but perhaps overlooked resource for garden construction was water. Although average precipitation in the Sierra Nevada Mountains was estimated at 30 inches annually, only 4 to 6 inches of precipitation ever made it to the Owens Valley floor.⁵⁹⁵ The area surrounding Manzanar Incarceration Camp was still well watered despite the low annual rainfall. Streams including Shepherd Creek to the north, George’s Creek to the south, and Bairs Creek, which ran through the southwest corner of the site, provided a much-needed resource to sustain the 10,000 residents of Manzanar.⁵⁹⁶ The Los Angeles aqueduct also ran less than a mile outside of the official camp boundary. Gardeners were initially informed that they would be provided all of the water resources they needed to supply their gardens, but it was not before long that the demand for water exceeded the capacities of the facilities. Occasional water shortages soon prompted WRA administrators to impose water restrictions on prisoners, especially limiting

⁵⁹³ Ibid. 131

⁵⁹⁴ NPS. Cultural Landscape Report 135

⁵⁹⁵ South Lahontan Hydrologic Region. “California’s Groundwater.” Owens Valley Groundwater Basin, Bulletin 118. February 27, 2004 <http://www.dpla2.water.ca.gov/publications/groundwater/bulletin118/basins/pdfs_desc/6-12.pdf>

⁵⁹⁶ NPS. Cultural Landscape Report, 96

water used in gardens.⁵⁹⁷ Some gardeners responded immediately by tapping into a forbidden resource—the fire hydrants.⁵⁹⁸ Despite stern reprimands from the fire department, the practice of using water from the local fire hydrants soon became common and provided an alternate source of water for irrigation and ponds throughout Manzanar.⁵⁹⁹ Although stealing water from the fire hydrant was by no means the most subversive act in camp, it was a clear declaration of the importance of (re)gaining control over one's life and landscape.

The many gardens constructed collectively by barrack blocks were diverse and not limited to Otaba no Ike and San Shi En. These gardens are strong markers and acts of defiance, wide spread phenomena constructed by an incarcerated population with limited supplies. Despite and in part because of their circumstances, Japanese and Japanese Americans manipulated the surrounding physical environment to benefit their community, all the while maintaining cultural dignity and pride in their craftsmanship. These gardens were eventually able to gain attention from individuals even outside of the camp and local Owens Valley residents began questioning the use of materials during wartime shortages. A protest formed of Owens Valley residents who were appalled at the use of WRA funding, materials and equipment to transport Joshua trees from Death Valley to the concentration camp, citing the “waste” of rubber and fuel.⁶⁰⁰ Although

⁵⁹⁷ Ibid. 44-45.

⁵⁹⁸ Ibid. 44-45

⁵⁹⁹ Ibid. 38

⁶⁰⁰ In an interview with Rick Potashin after describing various measures that were instated to allow prisoners outside the camp boundaries to collect resources for garden construction, he explained: “This just angered the local [Owens Valley] people to no end. They felt betrayed because when the government initially announced the news that this area would be the home to 10,000 Japanese Americans, they [the Department of Defense and War Relocation Authority] made assurances that they [people of Japanese ancestry] would be guarded under detention. And now you have them running all over the place... This triggered a huge local reaction that eventually caused the guard towers to be built... The locals petitioned the War Department and said they wanted an inquiry and wanted these people detained... As it happened on the west coast, at that time people [local Owens Valley residents] weren't really familiar with Japanese. There were a number of rumors that they had seen Japanese in Lone Piine, ‘oh yeah we saw them here over there.’ [But a security report investigation] found that these were all just fabricated.” These investigations and demands by local residents was responsible for the construction of the armed guard towers surrounding Manzanar.

Potashin, Richard. Personal Interview. June 27, 2008.

responses to these creations varied, the outrage expressed by some of those living outside of Manzanar exposes the threat and strength that these gardens posed. The construction of these defiant plots did not stop at simply the mess hall gardens, and continued to spread throughout the rest of camp; sprouting in front of the hospital and in larger spaces in the surrounding the barracks, gardens were essential components to the (re)envisioned camp design.

Cultivating Wellness: Health and Healing in Public Projects

In addition to a defiant expression, public gardens provided a healing and restorative benefit to those incarcerated at Manzanar. In the publicly shared spaces of the barbed wire enclosed area, including neighboring the hospital and vast open spaces designated to the outskirts of the square mile enclosure, some of the more experienced gardeners went to work to transform the physical landscape and bring peace to their fellow prisoners. Sometimes with the support of the WRA officials and sometimes met with resistance in the form of bureaucratic camp restrictions, gardeners were dedicated to constructing some of the most elaborate and beautiful gardens for the enjoyment of their entire community. These masterpieces stood in sharp contrast to the unadorned although commissioned designs that bordered the official WRA offices. “The gardens in the administration area were simple in character. ...This resulted in crisply defined landscape areas, consistent with the orderly character of the military camp design. The diversity of ornamental plant material that was evident in the homes and gardens of the prisoners does not appear to have been used in the administration area.”⁶⁰¹ The other major public projects were large-scale agricultural endeavors predominantly located on the north and south ends of camp. These public plots were able to restore the emotional health and physical health of those incarcerated at Manzanar and greatly impacted the experiences and daily lives of the prisoners.

⁶⁰¹ NPS. Cultural Landscape Report 158

A. Hospital Gardens

In the northwest corner of the camp, not too far from the cemetery tower, stood the 250 bed hospital complex. This building was not spared the harsh Owens Valley desert conditions and this often put an extra strain on patients as well as their families. To alleviate some of this burden landscape gardeners Nintaro “William” Ogami⁶⁰² and Bunyemon Wada designed and maintained an elaborate Japanese-styled garden to neighbor the hospital.⁶⁰³ Used by both the hospital staff and patients, the hospital garden was designed in a way to combine elements of the hill and pond gardens with traditional stroll and tea gardens.⁶⁰⁴ Incorporating winding paths and places to rest, Ogami and Wada carefully designed the hospital garden to choreograph prisoners’ movement through the space, drawing their attention to the natural beauty and “its sensory experience” in the slow, methodical progression. This garden design was unique in that it was formed by a combination of multiple smaller gardens within the larger area that were woven together by the winding pathways, reflecting the experiences of those who had been brought together at Manzanar.

Ogami’s son Arthur recalled the dedication of his father in creating the multifaceted hospital garden: “He would take his crew, and they would furnish trucks and tools, and they would drag them up to the foothills and the mountains. They would pick up rocks, shrubs, trees, whatever he needed to use in the landscaping.”⁶⁰⁵ [Explain power to move outside too] Vegetation and hardscape materials would be transported from around the surrounding areas of the Owens Valley to the now flourishing community that had developed at Manzanar. Eventually a variety of trees including locusts, birch, popular, pine, and pear trees were translated from

⁶⁰² Please note that different sources cite this gardener’s name differently. Helphand spells his first name Nitaro while archeologist Ronald Beckwith spells his name Nintaro <<http://www.discovernikkei.org/forum/es/node/2134>>

⁶⁰³ Helphand Defiant Gardens 184

⁶⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁵ Ibid.

around Manzanar to the hospital grounds. Encircled by small stones, the fruit trees were gathered from the remaining orchards that had been propagated decades earlier, highlighting the consideration dedicated to this particular garden.⁶⁰⁶ Garden beds blossomed around the building and grassy areas “to address grade changes and provide shade, visual interest, and beauty” with each of these smaller gardens connected by pathways and stepping-stones, ramps and stairs.⁶⁰⁷ The most prominent garden in the hospital, however, was the Japanese style pond garden.⁶⁰⁸ Stretching over 50 feet long, the water first pooled in a large concrete and rock basin before tumbling over three modest waterfalls along the winding channel and eventually settling into a twenty foot long basin approximately 5 feet lower than the small hill.⁶⁰⁹ On both sides of the water feature, a careful arrangement of stones of varying sizes marked its path and along the center of the water way, concrete stepping stones provided the opportunity for prisoners to gain a classic view up and down the stream. The hospital gardens at Manzanar served several key roles by providing both hospital staff and patients as well as the general population a small refuge and “a restful place to recuperate and relax” amidst the Owens Valley desert.⁶¹⁰ This garden was especially important healing tool for patients and provided a space to “imparted cultural familiarity and an expression of pride.”⁶¹¹ Maintaining the emotional health of patients was an essential element in addition to the care of their physical bodies.

⁶⁰⁶ NPS. Cultural Landscape Report, 129

⁶⁰⁷ Ibid. 128

⁶⁰⁸ Ibid. 129

⁶⁰⁹ Helphand Defiant Gardens 184

⁶¹⁰ NPS. Cultural Landscape Report, 128

⁶¹¹ Ibid. 129



612

B. Pleasure Park

Within the camp boundaries, several areas were transformed into parkland to provide a physical space of refuge from the harsh and monotonous desert conditions. These manifestations were almost magical places for those incarcerated at Manzanar because of their ability to dramatically change the appearance of the physical landscape, allowing prisoners to temporarily escape from the conditions under which they were forced to live. Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston remembered Pleasure Park in her text *A Farewell to Manzanar* as a place of solace within the barbed wire encampment. “You could face away from the barracks, look past a tiny rapids towards the darkening mountains, and for a while not be a prisoner at all. You could hang suspended in some odd, almost lovely land you could not escape from yet almost didn’t want to

⁶¹² Ibid. 121

leave.”⁶¹³ The ability to mentally escape the camp, even temporarily, was an invaluable gift to the prisoners, especially during days of celebration. Although the official order prohibited cameras at Manzanar, in actuality many unofficial photographs were taken. Not surprisingly, the large parks were favorite spots to celebrate special occasions. Anna Tamura notes that these parks provided “a scenic and photogenic place to mark the passage of major life events, such as birthdays, weddings, and farewells to soldiers. These scenic places allowed prisoners to celebrate these passages without fear of poisoning a lifetime of these memories with reminders of their imprisonment.”⁶¹⁴ The largest and perhaps most well documented of all of the green spaces on camp would come to be known as Pleasure or Merritt Park.

Construction on the area began in the fall of 1942 in the firebreak between Blocks 33 and 34, and is credited as one of the masterpieces designed by the Nishi brothers, Akira and Kuichiro.⁶¹⁵ Pleasure Park was designed as a traditional Japanese stroll garden, but was adapted to also incorporate essential elements of a Japanese pond and hill garden design. The first plantings were domestic rose buds that had been grafted to native rootstock and budded over 15,000 wild shoots, earning the park, then merely a showcase garden, the name Rose Park. As rose expert Kuichiro and his brother Akira’s garden design gained immense popularity, talks of expanding the garden ensued. Over the next few years, Tak Muto of the Community Activities became responsible for supervising construction of the park, which expanded to include features such as a large pond with island, bridges, waterfalls, several rock gardens, a Dutch oven, and a traditional Japanese teahouse, in addition to over 100 species of flowers and a wooded pine tree area.⁶¹⁶⁶¹⁷ The water features, similar to other camp gardens, were adorned with symbols of

⁶¹³ Ibid. 125

⁶¹⁴ Helphand Defiant Gardens 186

⁶¹⁵ NPS. Cultural Landscape Report, 78-79

⁶¹⁶ Helphand Defiant Gardens 186

Japanese garden traditions, mostly notably turtles. The water that fed into the central pond first flowed over a large turtle-shaped boulder that was placed at the top of the waterfall, causing it to split into two gentle waterfalls on either side of the turtle's head.⁶¹⁸ In the middle of the pond beneath the wooden bridge another large stone was placed to represent a swimming turtle.⁶¹⁹ These features and use of traditional Japanese religious symbols were important healing tools for both the gardeners and those who enjoyed Pleasure Park, promising protection from the natural environment as well as endurance, long life, and reflection.⁶²⁰



Perhaps two of the most notable features of the park were the large upright boulders at the southwestern and southeastern corners of the park.⁶²¹ Harvested from Yosemite, these boulders marked the entrances to the densely planted three-acre area and were each designed by Kuichiro Nishi, who included Japanese inscriptions on each boulder.⁶²² One of the memorial stones dedicated the park, “to the memory of fellow Japanese immigrants...[who although ushered to] this place with the breaking of friendly relations between two countries, have come

NPS. Cultural Landscape Report, p 78-79

⁶¹⁷ Burton, Jeffery F., Eleanor Roosevelt, and Irene J. Cohen. Confinement and Ethnicity: An Overview of World War II Japanese American Relocation Sites. The Scott and Laurie Oki series in Asian American studies. Seattle: University of Washington Press, September 2002.

<http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/anthropology74/ce8a.htm>

⁶¹⁸ NPS. Cultural Landscape Report 124-125

⁶¹⁹ Helphand Defiant Gardens 187

⁶²⁰ NPS. Cultural Landscape Report, 124-125

⁶²¹ Ibid. 79

⁶²² Helphand Defiant Gardens 186

to enjoy this quiet, peaceful place.”⁶²³ The Issei (first generation) had moved to the United States only to be forcibly relocated to a desolate desert environment where they would once again struggle to create livable conditions, although this time from behind barbed wire. The message of the inscription was rearticulated on the other memorial stone that also dedicated the park “for the enjoyment of the people and to the memory of the time of our residence here.”⁶²⁴ Pleasure Park was a garden explicitly made for the prisoners of Manzanar, but would be later renamed Merritt Park after the War Relocation Authority Project Director Ralph Merritt who supervised Manzanar from late 1942 until the camp was dismantled in 1946.⁶²⁵ The WRA had intermittently supported the development and expansion of Pleasure Park by hiring builders for between \$16 and \$19 a month for their work.⁶²⁶ Nonetheless the dedication to improving the living conditions for those at Manzanar was at the center of Pleasure Park. Henry Nishi explained that his father’s garden work “was just something he liked to do. Something he loved to do. Something for the betterment of the camp.”⁶²⁷



628

⁶²³ Ibid. 186-187

⁶²⁴ Unrau, Manzanar National Historic Site, California 8E.

⁶²⁵ Helphand, Defiant Gardens 186

NPS. Cultural Landscape Report, 78

⁶²⁶ Helphand Defiant Gardens 186

⁶²⁷ Ibid. 187

⁶²⁸ NPS. Cultural Landscape Report, 123

The therapeutic and healing quality of Pleasure Park benefited many of those whose had endured the emotional damage from forced relocation. “[T]hese people are living in the midst of a desert where they see nothing except tar paper covered barracks, sagebrush, and rocks. No flowers, no trees, no shrubs, no grass. The impact of the emotional disturbances as a result of the evacuation procedures, plus the dull dreary existence in a desert region surely must give these people a feeling of helplessness, hopelessness, and despair which we on the outside do not and will never fully understand,” explained Arthur Kleinkopf, the Superintendent of Education at Minidoka Relocation Center.⁶²⁹ Taking control over their physical living environment and reinventing green spaces at Manzanar including gardens and parks became importance places for emotional healing and morale boosting. Artist Kango Takamura while incarcerated at Manzanar initially appreciated the stunning beauty of the neighboring Sierra Nevada Mountains, but quickly grew weary of the harsh conditions, finding the heat, wind, and sun oppressive. She explained, “but one year after, it’s quite a change...a year after they built the camp and put water there, the green grows up. And mentally everyone is better. That’s one year after.”⁶³⁰ These gardens were not only able to “buffe[r] the psychological and physical trauma of the incarceration experience,” they transformed the incarcerated peoples’ experiences into collective struggles for liberation.⁶³¹ These plots of defiance necessarily were healing projects.

The other large parkland area that was constructed was neighboring the Children’s Village, the orphanage at Manzanar. F.M. Uyematsu, the owner of Star Nurseries in Montebello, California and Community Development Committee member in camp, generously donated the 1,000 Japanese cherry trees and wisteria vines to transform the neighboring land into Cherry Park. This project not only allowed Uyematsu to create a beautiful landscape for his fellow

⁶²⁹ Ibid 192

⁶³⁰ Ibid. 165

⁶³¹ Tamura “Gardens Below the Watchtowers” 2

community members and continue the work that he had done previous to incarceration, it also allowed him outside of the barbed wire. Issued an official military permit, Uyematsu traveled to Montebello in his own truck in order to get and transplant the trees.⁶³² Only occasionally were prisoners allowed to travel outside the camp to search for landscape materials that could be used in public and private gardens; it was a great privilege that both Uyematsu and Nishi were granted in order to construct the public parks.⁶³³ Eventually this area also developed into a popular place of solace for prisoners, providing as one prisoner explained, “a beauty spot of the center, and one of the most as a result to the desert-weary eye.”⁶³⁴ Within the context of healing from the traumatic and terrorizing experience of forced relocation and incarceration was the healing affect of asserting agency and control over their lives and physical surroundings.

C. Agricultural Projects

Another major endeavor that those incarcerated at Manzanar were dedicated to was farming. As was the case with previous agricultural endeavors in the Owens Valley, the location of the farm fields largely was determined by the location of surface water streams; at Manzanar, the southern fields were located between George’s Creek and Bairs Creek and the northern fields neighboring Shepherd Creek.⁶³⁵ The project was highly supported by the War Relocation Authority who assigned a white staff to supervise the overall agricultural program.⁶³⁶ It was the prisoners, however, many who had extensive background in agriculture, who were responsible for the entire process from cultivating to harvesting the crops. Construction for the “makeshift irrigation system” began on April 15, 1942 with a crew of approximately 40 prisoners clearing

⁶³² NPS. Cultural Landscape Report, 79

⁶³³ Ibid 119, 123

⁶³⁴ Ibid. 80

⁶³⁵ Ibid. 110

⁶³⁶ Ibid. 61

out the sagebrush and digging irrigation ditches mostly by hand.⁶³⁷ Prisoners developed ingenious techniques to maximize irrigation systems and agricultural production in the sandy and arid soil. Using whatever materials were available, predominantly cement and rocks, under the heat of the Owens Valley sun this team reconstructed irrigation ditches that were first built by the Paiute Peoples. Once the irrigation ditches had been dug and the soil had been tilled, even more prisoners were hired to cultivate and harvest the crops. Vegetables including potatoes, sugar beets, melons and carrots were soon planted and harvested in both the northern and southern fields. By September 1943, orders came from Washington, “urging all centers to enlarge their agricultural program to increase food production this year,” and further promoted the incorporation of crops that had been especially successful in the victory garden program into the large-scale agricultural farms.⁶³⁸ Farming practices were encouraged and supported by both the WRA and Washington because it made the incarceration camps self-sustaining and greatly reduced maintenance costs as a way of supporting the war effort. These endeavors were also extremely beneficial to the Japanese and Japanese Americans who by being allowed to assist in choosing which vegetable crops would be cultivated “as best suited evacuee mess hall tastes” regained some limited control over their lives.⁶³⁹ The combination of the victory garden program and agricultural farms also allowed those incarcerated at Manzanar to consume traditional Japanese food, providing invaluable health benefits, especially to the older Issei generation. Agricultural farms also provided a place of employment and opportunity to contribute productively to one’s community. By the summer of 1944, the program had expanded so that approximately 6,000 acres of land was being farmed on and cared for by 120 prisoners year

⁶³⁷ Ibid. 61-62

⁶³⁸ *Manzanar Free Press*. Manzanar at Work: Farming. September 10, 1943
<<http://www.nps.gov/archive/manz/mfp/mfp-v4-n1j.htm>>

⁶³⁹ NPS. Cultural Landscape Report, 61

round.⁶⁴⁰ Approximately 80% of vegetables consumed at Manzanar, which totaled approximately \$43,500 in worth annually, were produced in the fields.⁶⁴¹



⁶⁴⁰ Ibid. 62

Cooper, Michael L. *Remembering Manzanar: Life in a Japanese Relocation Camp*. New York: Clarion Books, 2002.

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⁶⁴¹ NPS. *Cultural Landscape Report*, 62

The productivity of the incarcerated population was a key factor in calming some of the neighboring Owens Valley population as well. Concerns by some Owens Valley residents over perceived misuse of War Department resources were relieved with the agricultural crop production from which they directly benefited. Although initial promises of forcing the Japanese and Japanese Americans to work to better the land were not fulfilled, many Lone Pine residents approved of the agricultural projects in camp. The September 10, 1943 edition of the *Manzanar Free Press* noted that the “finest vegetable products” from the previous season had been shown on display in the window of the Chalfant Press in Lone Pine.⁶⁴² These products were displayed to demonstrate that “Manzanar farmers can produce the best vegetables and fruits in the Owens Valley.”⁶⁴³ Widely supported by WRA officials, some of the local Owens Valley community, and prisoners themselves, the agricultural projects were popular projects at Manzanar.



Agricultural production was not limited to the two fields in camp; prisoners also worked at restoring the old orchards and raising livestock including pigs, cattle, chickens and ducks in order to supplement the lacking army diet and rations, in addition to cultivating other crops to

⁶⁴² *Manzanar Free Press*. Manzanar at Work: Farming. September 10, 1943
<<http://www.nps.gov/archive/manz/mfp/mfp-v4-n1j.htm>>

⁶⁴³ NPS. Cultural Landscape Report 64

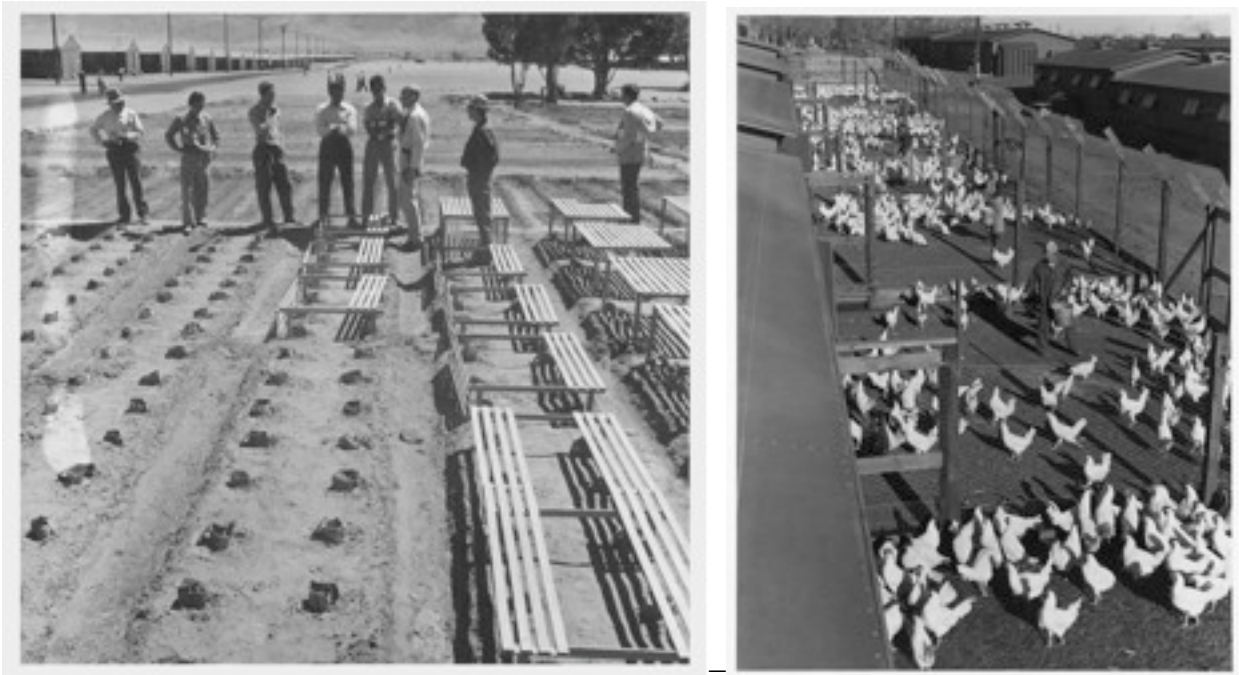
assist in the war effort. Although irrigation efforts by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LA DWP) had been terminated over 15 years prior to the construction of Manzanar, approximately 1,000 trees still stood in the desolate environment.⁶⁴⁴ By June of 1942, a 20-person team had been assembled and largely restored the Manzanar Irrigation Colony orchards and it was not before long that large crops of apples, pears, and other fruits were harvested.⁶⁴⁵ Other agricultural production, which was mainly directed at supporting the United States in the war effort, included cultivating inedible crops to produce alternative forms of chemicals and resources. A guayule plantation and laboratory were established at Manzanar to find the best species to extract a rubber substitute from the guayule plant. Chrysanthemums were also planted in order to produce an insecticide base that Japan had monopoly on.⁶⁴⁶ To view these projects as strictly patriotic endeavors, however, is insufficient for this historical context. Although WRA Project Director Roy Nash declared, “To beautify Manzanar is one campaign in which all can enlist with a will,”⁶⁴⁷ the determination to sustain gardening and agricultural projects by prisoners spurred from a variety of interests, ranging from those who wanted to support their families and fellow community within the confines of barbed wire, to those who used gardens as sites of resistance to the U.S. federal government, to those who were determined to prove their ‘American-ness’ and value to the general population. The campaign of beautification which many prisoners contributed to was much more than an aesthetic appeal or blind cooperation with the WRA.

⁶⁴⁴ Ibid. 149

⁶⁴⁵ Ibid. 65

⁶⁴⁶ Ibid. 69-70

⁶⁴⁷ Ibid. 72



D. Lawns

To manage the harsh environmental conditions that Japanese and Japanese-Americans incarcerated at Manzanar were forced to live under, wide scale lawn projects were also established. One prisoner expressed his first impression of Manzanar as noticing “the bareness of the land. I never saw anything like it. There wasn’t a there in sight, not even a blade of green grass. Coming from the northwest where there were a lot of green fields and forests, the sight staggered most of us. On top of that we had huge dust storms which made life miserable.”⁶⁴⁸ These dust storms raged strongest in late winter, spring, and fall and made living conditions at Manzanar consistently intolerable. Unsurprisingly, prisoners started immediately started implementing remedies to these conditions—green grass lawns. In the early June 1942, the first lawn at Manzanar was seeded in Block 6, between barracks 12 and 13. The residents of this area had come together to order approximately \$3.00 worth of grass seed by mail from the Sears &

⁶⁴⁸ Helphand Defiant Gardens 161

Roebuck catalog. This communal endeavor meant the residents collectively “pitched in: filling hollows, spading the earth, watering, bringing in topsoil—all by hand.”⁶⁴⁹ Projects like this one spread in popularity throughout camp so that by July of 1942, only a month after the first plot was seeded, over 100 lawns had been planted in the residential blocks.⁶⁵⁰ The War Relocation Authority was quick to pick up on the functional and aesthetic value of this project and announced in late June 1942 that 200 pounds of rye grass seed was available to each block. The WRA also provided rakes and shovels to anyone who would establish a barrack lawn; there was, however, only one lawn mover in the entire camp.⁶⁵¹



652

Role of the War Relocation Authority (WRA)

Although the gardens, agricultural plots, and green spaces provided prisoners “the greatest freedom to modify and personalize the landscape,” control over their actions was regulated by the requirement of official permission from the WRA prior to any modifications in

⁶⁴⁹ NPS. Cultural Landscape Report, p 45

⁶⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁵¹ Ibid. 44

⁶⁵² Albers, Clem. Manzanar, California. April 2, 1942. Volume 19 Section C WRA no B-11. <<http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/FindingAids/dynaweb/calher/jvac/figures/j8CB-11A.jpg>>

these communal spaces.⁶⁵³ Limitation on these projects were also imposed by restrictions in supplies such as cement, which was necessary to construct ponds, bridges, walkways, footpaths, and other structural elements. “While surplus government materials were available, internees were responsible for providing any new building materials not available from the administration,” explains the National Park Service in their extensive Cultural Landscape Report.⁶⁵⁴ Despite publicly proclaiming to support beautification and agricultural endeavors, the limitations to the administration’s support were clear from the beginning.⁶⁵⁵ It was only through creative arrangements that garden designers were able to acquire necessary material construct more elaborate and traditional Japanese garden features. Limitations on these gardens were imposed because of the threat that they posed the War Relocation Authority officials. These gardens stood as powerful and impressive statements; declarations of resistance and cultural pride were cultivated in between the blades of grass while healing elements flowed through the streams and under bridges.

Conclusion

Gardens provided the prisoners of Manzanar the physical and emotional space to regain some control over their lives and reassert their existence in a time and place where these simple declarations became life-threatening acts of defiance. Developed through a unique fusion of Japanese and American design to incorporate the physical landscape of the Owens Valley region and very nature of their incarceration, these diverse plots were able to support physical and emotional healing for a traumatized community. On psychological and material levels, gardeners were able to domesticate and environmentally alter the physical landscape to make living at Manzanar a more tolerable experience. Gardens provided opportunities to extend professional

⁶⁵³ Ibid. 116

⁶⁵⁴ Ibid. 78

⁶⁵⁵ Ibid. 71-72

experience to current occupations, which contributed to financial support for incarcerated families and became spaces of cultural and communal pride as well as sites to practice religious and cultural traditions. Helphand argues, “All of these gardens, grand and small, were acts of resistance, directed toward the maintenance of cultural integrity and self-respect. They were tangible symbols of hope that helped people survive their internment, fostered their mental and physical health, and were a demonstration of psychological and also political defiance.”⁶⁵⁶

Arthur Kleinkopf, the superintendent of education at Minidoka Concentration Camp, is quoted as referring to those incarcerated at WWII Japanese/American Concentration Camps as “colonists,” a population that moved West with the support of the federal government to occupy and exploit indigenous lands.⁶⁵⁷ Although this term is accurate in referring to the population that forcibly occupied the Owens Valley prior to the forced relocation of Japanese and Japanese Americans into the area, it does not adequately represent Manzanar in WWII. The experience of people of Japanese ancestry in the Owens Valley is more akin to the indigenous peoples who first lived on the land at Manzanar. Despite attempts to dominate Paiute Peoples, previously unimaginable coalitions were formed to try and maintain family structures, cultural pride and expression, and overall normalcy under the new conditions. Despite being incorporated into an exploitative economic system, the Paiute Peoples took great pride in their work, irrigating the land and harvesting crops. The water streaming off the Sierra Nevada Mountains and the characteristic of *gaman* tie both of these communities’ histories together, weaving resistance narratives into the very soil and water of the Owens Valley.

⁶⁵⁶ Helphand Defiant Gardens 189

⁶⁵⁷ Ibid. 165

III. Rods of Resistance: Barbed Hooks from Behind Barbed Wire

*Everybody who fishes
got a fishing story
and from his folding chair
if he's not too babysitting busy
his granddaughter
he will talk and take you there
when he first jumped out of the boat
flat smash onto early San Francisco
which got him nowhere
but a long walk to Japanesetown
or that Northwest lumbermill job
should I say slave job the way
he talks about it*

*miso and dumplings
on cold, fog-shouldered hills*

he laughs now of how hard
the work was/ how he left it so fast

*this leading to that &
when I caught up to him he was rapping
about striped bass fishing in the bay
for the Nisei Fishing Club derby
on Sunday, selling me a deep sea
rig in Wong's Bait Shop saying
"catcha lotsa bigga stripahs in Sacramento River—
this pole catcha bigga stripahs"
or was he cleaning his crab nets
his five gallon bucket 3/4 full of crabs*

fresh, red
clicking, breathing

then he would talk of the rainbow trout in Wyoming
oh yeah Wyoming
big beautiful ones he caught
not just anywhere easy to get to the river Wyoming
but a place that goes back and goes deep—
he will walk inside his garage
& show you his fishing hat with a button
pinned to the side painted:

GATE PASS
WAR RELOCATION AUTHORITY

*Heart Mountain Concentration Camp
where he caught his fish
he still wears it
but it is not easy to see
you have to talk to him
go up to him
in between cigar puffs
listen/ a story
will fill in the tracks
of where we have been*

Introduction

Fishing stories spread throughout the concentration camps as husbands, fathers, brothers, and sons would disappear “at night under the cloak of darkness and return before dawn” carrying with them the fruits of their labor.⁶⁵⁹ Several varieties of trout including the rare and esteemed Golden Trout served as essential supplements to the mass-produced army diet. But for those who risked their lives for these catches, the fish represented much more than a warm, familiar meal. For the fisherpeople of Manzanar and the other concentration camps, fishing was freedom. Continuing to engage in pre-World War II recreational activities was not a privilege afforded to those incarcerated by the War Relocation Authority, and in fact many forms of recreation associated with what was considered traditional Japanese culture was strictly prohibited. Prisoners took it upon themselves to recreate their lives from behind barbed wire and for a brave group of over 400 men and women this involved sneaking outside of camp to venture on fishing excursions. Many of these prisoners had learned the art of fishing as their main occupation in Japan and across the west coast, bringing their passion, skill, and supplies into the barbed wire encampments. They would carry their stories of fishing expeditions between late 1942 and 1945 for their lifetimes. As Doug Yamamoto points out: “he still wears it / but it is not easy to see.”⁶⁶⁰ Although it took several decades after the camps closed for those incarcerated to begin sharing their experiences, the stories of resistance, of fishing in the desert, must not be forgotten.

⁶⁵⁸ Yamamoto, Doug. “The Fisherman” *Ayumi: An Japanese American Anthology = Ayumi : Nikkei Beijin Bungei Shu*. Ed. Janice Mirikitani. San Francisco, California: The Japanese American Anthology Committee, 1980. 247

⁶⁵⁹ Shiozaki, Cory. “From Barbed Wire to Barbed Hooks.” *Sportsfishing Saturday*. Narr. Phil Friedman. KLAC-AM 570 in Los Angeles. March 14, 2009.

<<http://blog.manzanarcommittee.org/2009/03/21/manzanar-committee-member-cory-shiozaki-guests-on-radio-show/>>

⁶⁶⁰ Yamamoto. “The Fisherman”

Historical Context

Second only to the agricultural and gardening sector, many Japanese immigrants at the turn of the 20th century were employed in the fishing industry along the west coast of the United States. One of the main hubs for this industry was Terminal Island. Many people incarcerated at Manzanar came from this fishing community located 25 miles south of downtown Los Angeles in the San Pedro Bay. From the early 1900s, first generation Japanese (*Issei*) men began settling on the island and a burgeoning Japanese American community subsequently began to develop.⁶⁶¹ The fishing industry was the economic heart of the community, which was comprised almost entirely of people of Japanese ancestry accounting for 3,000 people on the southeast side of the island. Men worked primarily on fishing boats or operating businesses that supported the industry, while women worked in the canneries.⁶⁶² This population in addition to other Japanese American fishing communities in the Pacific Northwest provided critical advancements for the fishing industry. In 1910, for example, Japanese albacore fisherpeople off the coast in San Diego introduced live bait fishing by employing “blanket” nets.⁶⁶³ Due to the sheer success of this technique, it was quickly incorporated into regular fishing practices along the coast.⁶⁶⁴

The strength and skill of Japanese in the fishing industry proved to be difficult competition for other Americans, contributing to a sentiment of resentment specifically among white ethnic groups. Because of its “strategic location” and occupational composition, Issei living on Terminal Island were among the first people of Japanese ancestry targeted by the War

⁶⁶¹ Niiya, Brian. “Terminal Island.” Japanese American History: An A-to-Z Reference from 1868 to the Present. New York: Facts on File, 1993. 123

⁶⁶² Ibid.

⁶⁶³ Richardson, William C. “Fishermen of San Diego: The Italians.” *The Journal of San Diego History* Fall 1981, Volume 27, Number 4. San Diego Historical Society.
<<http://www.sandiegohistory.org/journal/81fall/fishermen.htm>>

⁶⁶⁴ Maxwell, William D. A History of the California Live-Bait Fishing Industry. Marine resources technical report, no. 27. Sacramento, California: State of California, Resources Agency, Dept. of Fish and Game, 1974.
<<http://ceres.ca.gov/calsip/catalog/BrowseRecord.epl?id=2913>>

Department at the break of World War II. On February 9, 1942, all Issei with commercial fishing licenses were arrested and incarcerated in temporary “assembly centers” and on February 26 the rest of the population still living on the island was given a notice to evacuate within 48 hours.⁶⁶⁵ Throughout this process Japanese owned boats and supplies were confiscated and stolen, often never to be seen again. The U.S. Navy claimed a significant number of the Japanese owned fishing vessels and adapted them for military purposes, but many of the structural changes rendered these ships unusable by Japanese fisherpeople after the war.⁶⁶⁶ These economic barriers were also met with legislative obstacles that prohibited “aliens ineligible for citizenship” from acquiring fishing licenses. This significantly hindered independent Issei fisherpeople from reestablishing themselves in the industry in the years immediately following the war.⁶⁶⁷

General Fishing at Manzanar

Many fisherpeople from these communities snuck in some of their gear and equipment into the concentration camps scattered along the west coast, uncertain of the type of environment they would live in for an indefinite period of time. Some prisoners had some previous knowledge of the Owens Valley and Eastern Sierra region and accordingly came to Manzanar prepared by bringing with them with fishing supplies including silkworm gut, split shots, and hooks. A few prisoners, including Mike Nishida and Jiro Matsuyama, had enough monetary resource to purchase extra fishing equipment from the Sears and Roebuck and the Montgomery Ward mail order catalogs.⁶⁶⁸ One of the most popular rods was steel telescoping rod, which extended into three lengths to just over 9 feet and was very flexible as it could be converted to either

⁶⁶⁵ Niiya “Terminal Island.”

⁶⁶⁶ Hasegawa, Susan. “Returning Home: The Post-World War II Resettlement of Japanese Americans to San Diego.” The Japanese American Historical Society of San Diego. January 9, 2009.
<<http://www.jahssd.org/?cmd=articles&id=susanarticle>>

⁶⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁸ Shiozaki, Cory. “From Barbed Wire to Barbed Hooks: Fishing Stories at Manzanar.” 2009.
<<http://www.fearnotrout.com/>>

conventional reel or fly reel by reversing the handle. This type of rod allowed fisherpeople in Manzanar the versatility they needed to hide their equipment and adjust to whatever environmental habitats they encountered.⁶⁶⁹ Most of the younger prisoners who started fishing in Manzanar were in their teens and generally had little money to spend on equipment so often started off with relatively simple gear. Fallen birch and willow tree branches were often transformed into poles with sewing thread and safety pins attached for lines and hooks. One young fisherman, Ken Sakuda, age 12, transformed his *shinai*—a split bamboo replacement for a Japanese sword that was use in *kendo*—to make a split bamboo fishing pole.⁶⁷⁰



Fishing gear from Manzanar anglers⁶⁷¹

Location

Although much of the Owens Valley was characterized by sagebrush scrub, several major streams flowed off the Sierra Nevada Mountains to the West of Manzanar and had sustained various populations in the region for centuries. In the late 19th century, with the colonization of the Owens Valley by ranching and farming communities, several trout species were introduced

⁶⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁷¹ Jiro Matsuyama equipment featured in the photograph above, included a complete outfit: 2 rods, a fly reel, a conventional reel, various bait containers, fish creels, leader wallet, hooks, sinkers, snake bite kit, folding drinking cup, gloves and sleeping bag not shown.

Ibid.

into the region. These fish populations boomed without much competition or predators and soon gained the region a recognizable title as a trout fishing haven, attracting tourists and anglers to the area even while the concentration camp was under operation.⁶⁷² There were three major creeks that were easily accessible to those incarcerated at Manzanar: Bairs, George, Shepherds Creek, with Symmes and Independence Creek to the north and Hogsback and Lone Pine Creek to the south also important fishing areas.⁶⁷³ Most of these streams ran directly east from the Sierra Nevada Range, eventually flowing into the Los Angeles Aqueduct on the opposite side of the 395 highway. The stories of the hundreds of prisoners, who escaped from the concentration camps, even for just a night, are heroic tales that demonstrate the drive for freedom. One fisherman explains: “It wasn’t a matter of escaping down there at Manzanar so much as it was a way of saying you’re not going to lock me up one way or another.”⁶⁷⁴ In accordance with an environmental justice framework, the challenges that these prisoners faced in their outings will be explained in their own stories and words. These vignettes provide invaluable insights into the lives of those who fished for freedom.



675

⁶⁷² Shiozaki, Cory. “From Barbed Wire to Barbed Hooks: Fishing Stories at Manzanar.” Film. <<http://www.facebook.com/video/video.php?v=43116241441>>

⁶⁷³ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁵ Ibid.

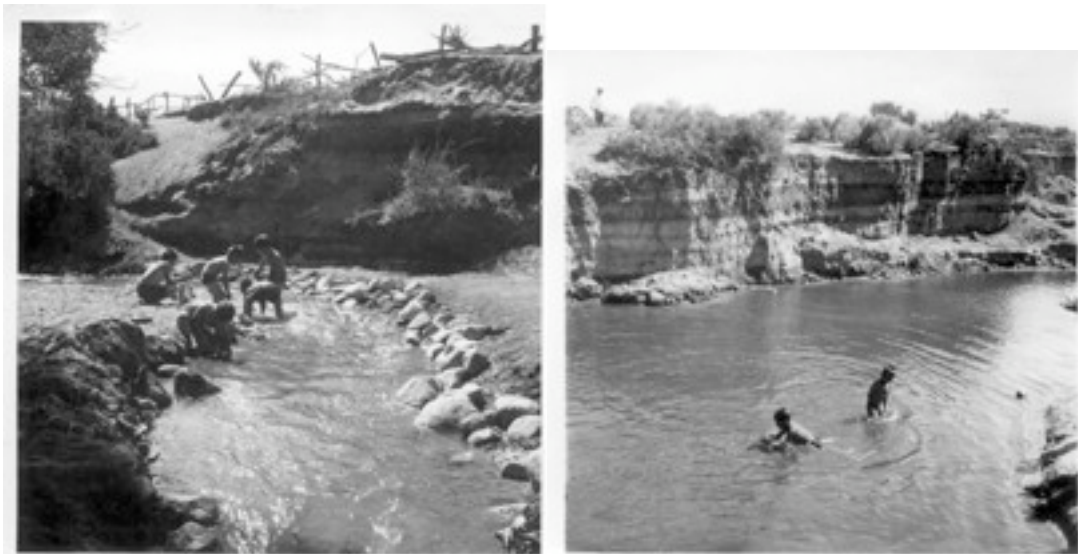


Jiro Matsuyama was a 21-year-old airplane mechanic living in Los Angeles when Executive Order 9066 was signed. Instead of waiting for the federal government to determine the date of his incarceration and the quality of the camp, Jiro volunteered with a group of other Japanese Americans to help construct Manzanar. Soon after arriving in the Owens Valley, his skill set as a mechanic earned him the job of supervising the water reservoir despite lacking the knowledge on how to run those facilities. Although he had never fished before, Jiro attributes spotting a trout in one of the streams that fed into the reservoir as the main reason he accepted the position. His position required constant access to the water supply and accompanying reservoir for supervision, providing him a 24-hour military clearance pass to leave the camp boundaries and a vehicle at his disposal. This afforded Jiro the opportunity to go fishing whenever he pleased. Once word got out about the trout stock in the streams surrounding camp, Jiro was bombarded by requests from other prisoners to sneak them out to go fishing. First denying any knowledge of trout fishing, he eventually became more comfortable sneaking out unauthorized prisoners. Some men were so desperate to go fishing that they offered Jiro bribes up to \$10, which was a considerable amount of money considering the highest salary in camp was \$19 per month. He never accepted money for transporting fisherpeople and explained that he had probably assisted dozens of prisoners during the three years he was at Manzanar. This position was by no means a safe one, however. Despite having the authorization to leave the camp, Jiro remembered being shot at by the armed guards twice while he was out checking the water sources.⁶⁷⁶

⁶⁷⁶ Shiozaki, Cory. "From Barbed Wire to Barbed Hooks: Fishing Stories at Manzanar." 2009. <<http://www.fearnotrout.com/>>

Bairs Creek

Bairs Creek was the only creek that ran within the barbed wire fence encampment and was therefore directly accessible to prisoners. Facing opposite of Block 6, the creek ran through the southwest corner directly below one of the 40-foot guard towers armed with machine guns and searchlights. Prisoners seeking relief from the Owens Valley desert sun developed a recreational area and picnic grounds on the banks where children often went swimming. What made this creek special, however, was not the water resources, but the deep gully that cut directly under the barbed wire fence post. Overgrown brush provided the perfect cover for fisherpeople to sneak out at night, directly under the armed guard tower. The creek was also characterized with low water levels so it was not a very popular place for fishing, though it was stocked with rainbow trout.⁶⁷⁷



678

Children playing in Bairs Creek, 1942

⁶⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁸ Ibid.



679

Overgrown gully at Bairs Creek

Archie Miyatake, the son of famous photographer Toyo Miyatake, was 17 years old when he was introduced to trout fishing at Manzanar. His friend and in-law Mike Nishida, who was an avid trout fisherman and was familiar with the region from before his forced relocation, helped Archie sneak out and fish on Bairs Creek. Avid fisherman and researcher Cory



Shiozaki explains: “They would sneak out at night; Mike spreading the second and third strands of barbed wire for Archie to squeeze through. Archie would then spread the wires for Mike.” The two men would follow Bairs Creek and end up near the foot of the Mt. Williamson, fishing down the stream back towards Manzanar until sunrise. Archie specifically remembered his first trip outside of the barbed wire fence. On that specific night he caught six trout, far fewer than Mike’s twenty, but these fish, which he had his mother prepare on a hotplate ordered from the Sears & Roebuck catalog, left him with smiles for days.⁶⁸⁰ Reflecting back on this time Archie explains: “It was worth the risk of getting caught to go fishing like that because, well just the fact that

⁶⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁰ Ibid.

you're breathing the air outside the camp. [The air somehow] smelled better. That feeling is hard to explain, it feels so free.'⁶⁸¹ Figuring out how to fish and get outside of the camp's boundaries was a liberating process for prisoners at Manzanar and was an act of defiance that qualitatively improved fisherpeople's and their families lives physically and emotionally. However, these excursions were not without their challenges and threats.

George Creek

Located directly south of Bairs Creek, George Creek marks the southern border of the camp and was the water mainly responsible for irrigating the southern agricultural fields. Water from this stream was diverted to irrigate the plots where prisoners grew fresh fruits and vegetables, but was also home to large populations of both rainbow and brown trout. Some of the physically most difficult, but emotionally most rewarding jobs at Manzanar were the agricultural laborers who had to clear the barren desert landscape in order to make space for the agricultural areas that would allow the camp to be self-sustainable within a year. Prisoners who occupied these positions were granted official approval to leave the barbed wire enclosed residential area of camp and venture out into the Owens Valley desert to discover whatever it was they could find. These workers in turn became some of the first fisherpeople in camp, as they found the irrigation ditches they had recently dug teeming with trout.⁶⁸² Some of these workers would slip away during the day and return with the farming crews at night so as not to be noticed by guards, while others went on their own and faced the challenge of sneaking out under the cover of darkness, allowing them the freedom to venture as far as they pleased. In parts, George Creek was an ideal fishing location for relatively inexperienced or ill-equipped fisherpeople because it

⁶⁸¹ Shiozaki, Cory. "From Barbed Wire to Barbed Hooks: Fishing Stories at Manzanar." Film. <<http://www.facebook.com/video/video.php?v=43116241441>>

⁶⁸² Shiozaki, Cory. "From Barbed Wire to Barbed Hooks: Fishing Stories at Manzanar." 2009. <<http://www.fearnotrout.com/>>.

narrowed greatly as it got closer to the Los Angeles aqueduct and its fish could be caught simply with a small line and bent wire for hooks or whittled willow branches for poles.⁶⁸³



684

Irrigation channel leading off of George Creek



Ray Chomori, a teenager while at Manzanar, often snuck out right under the noses of armed military guards at the southwest corner of the camp and would walk along Bairs Creek before finding his way to George Creek. A relatively experienced, although young fisherman, Ray had made his own pole out of a willow branch, adding the hooks and leader material that he brought with him to the Owens Valley. For bait he used worms that he dug up around the pear orchard.⁶⁸⁵ One especially memorable night, Ray recalls that while he and his friends had returned from a fishing trip and were sneaking back into camp, they kicked up a lot of dust, alarming the guard who thought it was smoke and called the fire department. Luckily the boys were able to

⁶⁸³ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁵ Ibid.

nonchalantly slip back into camp and pretend as if they were not aware of the situation.⁶⁸⁶ But not all fisherpeople's experiences with guards ended so pleasantly.

Prisoner Jack Kisamura of Los Angeles remembered one particularly unsettling night on his way back from Shepherd's Creek: "As I was crawling under the barbed wire fence, sudden I saw this burst of sand in front of me about 20 feet away. I just heard the pop of the sand. We assumed that the guard from the tower fired a shot into the dirt."⁶⁸⁷ On a different occasion, fisherman Mas Nakajyou was marched back to camp at bayonet point after he was caught fishing outside of the concentration camp boundaries.⁶⁸⁸ The threat of the strict military enforcement of the camp boundaries was not easily forgotten by the fishing population. Under the military order and regulations, guards were allowed to use whatever means they deemed appropriate to discipline and regulate the incarcerated population.⁶⁸⁹ This often meant dangerous, even life-threatening situations for those prisoners who chose to fish on the opposite side of the barbed wire.

Challenges also arose for the few women who embarked on fishing explorations outside of Manzanar. A largely male-dominated activity, women rarely had the opportunity to venture outside of the camp boundaries. Kayoko Wakita was an exception. A young teenager when she first arrived at Manzanar, Kayoko



had a difficult time adjusting to the harsh environment in the Owens Valley desert. However,

⁶⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁷ Shiozaki, Cory. "From Barbed Wire to Barbed Hooks: Fishing Stories at Manzanar." Film. <<http://www.facebook.com/video/video.php?v=43116241441>>

⁶⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁹ Shiozaki, Cory. "From Barbed Wire to Barbed Hooks: Fishing Stories at Manzanar." 2009. <<http://www.fearnotrout.com/>>.

Kayoko explained, that her parents were able to instill in her a mental attitude that assisted her in coping with the harsh living conditions. In addition to being a talented musician, her father Giichi worked as a night watchman on the reservoir crew, which allowed him access to a vehicle and the opportunity to explore the surrounding creeks and streams. On many occasions her father would take Kayoko along with him to go trout fishing, which she recalled as a “zen” experience. This meditative practice helped him cope of the troubles of his personal losses and displacement from society, she explained. On one of the last nights before Manzanar closed, Kayoko remembers that her father had wanted all the prisoners of their neighboring blocks to have the experience of tasting the fresh trout that he had grown so accustomed to eating at Manzanar. With some help from other fisherpeople, her father dammed one of the creeks and managed to capture enough trout to fill several 55 gallon barrels. The huge catch was then brought back to the mess hall and shared with all the neighbors.⁶⁹⁰ Kayoko maintains that her father’s perspective on fishing and spirituality were formative in helping her endure the great injustices at such a young age. She reflects: “I think it had a lot to do with the sadness of our situation. And at those moments you were totally free. You weren’t tied by anything. Your mind was completely pure. There was no anger. There was no negative or positive. You were totally pure. And I think [my father enjoyed] that because there was so much anguish elsewhere. When we become egoless, then you can fish and you can do anything you want and it will be fine.”⁶⁹¹

Shepherd Creek

Shepherd Creek was the primary water resource for Manzanar and was diverted into the reservoir on the north end of the camp boundary before continuing on to the Los Angeles Aqueduct. This creek was especially popular to fish because of its pure water source making it a

⁶⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁹¹ Shiozaki, Cory. “From Barbed Wire to Barbed Hooks: Fishing Stories at Manzanar.” Film. <<http://www.facebook.com/video/video.php?v=43116241441>>

perfect habitat for thousands of rainbow trout. Swarming through the feeder streams, rainbow trout continued to be stocked in the stream even during the years Manzanar was under operation. The Mount Whitney hatchery stocked thousands of trout throughout the surrounding creeks and in 1942, Fish and Games Planting Programs also planted a large batch of fish. The creek to the west of camp was characterized by relatively rough terrain, with sharply angled gullies gutting winding their way until the stream turned significantly deeper, wider and slower as it neared the Los Angeles aqueduct east of Manzanar. Eastern brook trout could also be found in the stream, hiding around the overgrown edges. Shepherd Creek also posed many challenges for fisherpeople, but promised great catches to those who came out successful.



692

Shepherd Creek west and east of Manzanar, respectively



Ken Miyamoto was only 21 years old when he left for Manzanar and immediately began working on a number of jobs once he entered camp. A farm laborer, mess hall cook, tractor mechanic, guayule (synthetic rubber) project coordinator, and even a member of the Manzanar civilian police department, Ken was very

⁶⁹² Ibid.

familiar with the campground and “had no problem sneaking out and because of his connections was never caught.”⁶⁹³ Before his forced relocation, Ken had heard the rumors of the world famous fishing area of the Eastern Sierra and accordingly bought leader material made out of silk worm gut, split shots and size 6 Eagle Claw hooks in preparation for fishing at Manzanar. He used whatever materials he could get his hands on while in camp for his equipment, upgrading to carved bamboo rakes for his fishing poles from the willow branches he had salvaged earlier. Ken explained that he “loved fishing so much that [he] went almost everyday, and if [he] didn't catch 30 trout a day, then it was a bad day.”⁶⁹⁴

On one fishing expedition, a group of men from the water crew decided to head out west and came upon an artist named Giichi Matsumura who asked to join them. An especially adventurous group, they started climbing up the mountain and Matsumura explained that he would stay behind and wait until they came back down with their catches. Once the group returned to the spot where they had left him, however, he was nowhere to be found. Assuming he had returned to Manzanar on his own, the group headed back under the shelter of night. Once back within the barbed wire residential region, they soon discovered that Matsumura had actually not returned back to camp and was reported MIA after several search party expeditions came back without sign of him. His remains would be found over two months later by Paul and Mary DeDecker from Independence who had been hiking high in the mountains. Apparently during the snowstorm, Matsumura got disoriented and went the wrong direction some 6 hours further into the snowline instead of towards the camp.⁶⁹⁵ Although tragedies like this one were rare, they expose the real dangers that fisherpeople faced on their expeditions outside of Manzanar.

⁶⁹³ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁴ Shiozaki, Cory. “From Barbed Wire to Barbed Hooks: Fishing Stories at Manzanar.” 2009.
<<http://www.fearnotrout.com/>>

⁶⁹⁵ Ibid.

As a young boy, only 12 years old when he first entered Manzanar, Fred Sakuda often heard wild stories from the older generation about sneaking out underneath the barbed wire fence to catch trout in the neighboring streams. Listening wide-eyed and with great excitement, Fred and his friends (Kiyomi



Mizutani and Tadami Ushijima, 12 and 14 years old, respectively) soon decided they would embark on their own adventures. Gathering the needed supplies of sewing thread, safety pins they bent to perfection, worms dug up from around the grounds, and a fallen, whittled willow branch for a pole, the group of young boys were able to follow the trail of the Issei through the overgrown Bairs Creek gully and catch their own trout. Fred recalls that he literally got hooked on these fishing adventures after catching his first brook trout.⁶⁹⁶ Provided him with some of the most memorable times in camp, he continued to work on improving his skill and equipment—carving a pole out of his kendo stick like Ken Sakuda and earning some money to order braided line, leader and hooks from the Sears and Roebuck catalog.

On one particularly memorable trip, Fred, Tadami, and another friend George Hikiji (age 10) snuck out to go fishing on Independence Creek. While waiting for their line to catch, they noticed another man fishing downstream, but unlike other fishermen they had come across in the past, this man was White. The stranger soon was walking upstream towards the area the three boys were fishing. Turning to Tadami in panic Fred asked, “What shall we do? Should we run or what?” To which Tadami replied, “No, just keep fishing.” So the three sat there in fear of being found out or much worse. As the man approached them he casually asked how the fishing was where they were, followed by the question: “What reservation are you from?” Apparently, the

⁶⁹⁶ Shiozaki, Cory. “From Barbed Wire to Barbed Hooks: Fishing Stories at Manzanar.” 2009.

man had mistaken the boys for Native Americans. The sun began to set so the three boys started to head back towards camp. The recent rain had caused the water level of the stream to rise and was almost at the boys' waists, so in order avoid getting his shoes wet George took them off and carried them high above his shoulders. While walking across the middle of the stream, George slipped on a rock and subsequently dropped both shoes, which quickly washed downstream in the rapid current. Fred and Tadami continued to offer him piggyback rides the rest of the way to camp, significantly slowing down their return. Once they slipped back inside the barbed wire fence, the three boys found a large commotion. This just so happened to be the same night that the water crew team had ventured up into the Sierras on their fishing expedition, only to return to find artist Giichi Matsumura had not made his way back to camp. George's father had been frantically searching the campgrounds for his son, worried he was. His father's panic only subsided after finding George who had finally returned to camp, shoe-less but safe.

The three boys continued on their adventures, following in the footsteps of the older generation and traveling farther than some dared to imagine. Towards the end of camp, in September 1945, Fred explained that security was much more relaxed and prisoners could leave without much problem. Although he and his friends had explored much of the area surrounding camp, fishing in Shepherd, George, Bairs, Symme, Independence, and Lone Pine Creeks, there was one fabled fishing ground they had not yet ventured to—the seven lakes on the opposite side of Mt. Williamson. They believed it was in these pools, high over 14,000 feet above sea level, that the famed golden trout lived. Gathering a team of fishermen, including older neighbors Seiichi Tori, Hebo Tori and Thomas Amano, Fred set out on one of his last expeditions. They followed Shepherd's Creek until it reached the foothill of Mt. Williamson and split in two directions. Not sure of which way to proceed, the group flipped a coin to decide which fork in

the stream they would follow. After a two-day hike up the mountain, they found themselves at a dead-end. As fate would have it, the group decided to return to camp, exhausted and disappointed by their journey, but vowing they would return in the future in search of the golden trout.⁶⁹⁷

Golden Beyond

The remote, fabled lakes on the far side of Mt. Williamson posed the biggest challenge to fisherpeople at Manzanar. Towering 14,389 feet above sea level, Mt. Williamson dominated the landscape to the west of Manzanar. In order to reach its basin, prisoners had to follow Shepherds Creek far into Shepherds Pass, some 12,018 feet high through rough, tree-less mountain terrain before crossing over to the other side. This path had first been trekked by the indigenous Paiute Peoples who lived in the valley centuries before Japanese/Americans had ever set their sights on the golden trout. Once they reached the Williamson Basin, prisoners would find seven high altitude lakes, two of which were teeming with trout. While this was a fantastic fishing ground, the trout that stocked these lakes were not golden, but pure Colorado cutthroat that had been transported to the region in 1931 by the Colorado Fish and Game Trade. The goldens lay still further yet, found far beyond the Williamson basin and the Mt. Williamson crest.



⁶⁹⁷ Ibid.

The only photo-documentation of fishing by prisoners at Manzanar was taken by the famous photographer and prisoner Toyo Miyatake with a camera he smuggled into camp. An experienced trout fisherman himself, Toyo luckily lived in the same block as Heihachi Ishikawa who had just returned to camp carrying fish Toyo had never seen before. Impressed by their beauty and rarity, Toyo took several photographs of Ishikawa in both black & white and in color.⁶⁹⁹ A legend in his own right within Manzanar, Heihachi was only known as “Ishikawa Fisherman” to most prisoners. He often left camp for weeks at a time carrying only scarce amount of rations in his small pack in search of the fabled golden trout. As it was impossible for him to carry enough provisions to sustain life, Heihachi survived off the land and water. He was 53 years old when he successfully returned to camp with the ultimate catch. Scholar Cory Shiozaki exclaims: “I could only envision this man fishing in solitude high in elevation over 12,000’ and being closer to the heavens than the rest of internees who were stuck within the confines of the barbed wire below. I can also imagine this man having to drop down below the snow line to timberline to cook his trout on an open fire enjoying his brief moments of freedom.”⁷⁰⁰ The Ishikawa Fisherman was a hero for many prisoners at Manzanar, conquering what appeared impossible in the face of incarceration.

⁶⁹⁸ Shiozaki, Cory. “From Barbed Wire to Barbed Hooks: Fishing Stories at Manzanar.” 2009.

⁶⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁰ Ibid.



“Ishikawa Fisherman”

Conclusion

Although very few fisherpeople were able to successfully complete the trek over Mt. Williamson to catch the golden trout, many prisoners at Manzanar found moments of freedom by fishing. Using whatever means and materials were available to them and ranging from young pre-teen boys to older, more experienced first generation fishermen, prisoners were resolved to find spaces outside the limitations of confinement. Not knowing when they would be officially liberated, freedom for fisherpeople at Manzanar lay at the end of their fishing poles.

⁷⁰¹ Toyo Miyatake. “Ishikawa Fisherman” Ibid.

IV. The Writings on the Wall: Inscriptions in the Reservoir

心よくやがて実土ざら	<i>Pleasantly all spikes</i>
刈り取らん	<i>we will soon reap.</i>
ほこらば ほこれ	<i>If you want to be proud, be proud for now.</i>
米のしゅひ	<i>Ugly Americans (Rice).</i>

Deeply embedded in a concrete support for a pipeline that ran across the South Fields irrigation system was the *tanka*, a four-line Japanese poem characterized by metaphors and personification. Hidden between the brushstrokes cemented into the infrastructure of the water distribution system were words that could not be freely uttered within the confines of Manzanar Concentration Camp. Instead they became secret exchanges between the few prisoners who were legally permitted to venture out beyond the barbed wire to monitor the camp's water supply. While in one interpretation this poem is a story of harvesting rice in the distant fields of Japan or central California, it also reveals the strong desire to defeat the United States. The kanji character for rice (米) is also used to signify the United States, and the last two characters of the poem, while difficult to read, translate to *shu-hi* or “ugly despicable people.”⁷⁰² This alternate interpretation was passed along by the Japanese work crews as they checked the pipelines and plumbing, a clear manifestation of political defiance in the face of silencing and censorship. The water-distribution systems that surrounded the residential area at Manzanar—predominantly located on an eight-acre plot located half a mile northwest of the central portion of camp and housed the 800,000 gallon concrete lined reservoir, settling basin, sand trap, chlorine house, and store house—provided those incarcerated at Manzanar with much more than the water necessary for their survival in the arid desert climate.⁷⁰³ It also became an important site for anti-U.S.

⁷⁰² Burton, Jeffery F. *Three Farewells to Manzanar: the archeology of Manzanar National Historic Site, California*. Tucson, Ariz: Western Archeological and Conservation Center, National Park Service, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1996. 664

⁷⁰³ *Ibid.* 339

organizing, a secret place for the expression of pro-Japanese political beliefs, and mostly importantly—a site of resistance.



The reservoir at Manzanar Concentration Camp was the most recent development in the long history of water distribution and irrigation techniques that dated as far back as human settlement in the Owens Valley. The accessibility and ease of establishing a water distribution system at Manzanar was a contributing factor in determining the site location for the concentration camp as it had guaranteed the success of agricultural communities for decades before World War II. The first reservoir followed the irrigation channels that had been originally been constructed by indigenous Paiute communities more than a century earlier. Hired and enslaved Paiute Peoples later reinforced these ditches for the Chaffey Irrigation Colony and the town of Manzanar at the turn of the 20th century. Run-off from the Sierra Nevada Range flowed into the neighboring Shepherd Creek, a mile and a half northwest of the center of camp. A small dam that had been established around 1910 diverted water into a drainage channel before pooling

⁷⁰⁴ Burton, Three Farewells to Manzanar

downstream in the unlined reservoir.⁷⁰⁵ This antique system relied mostly on natural drainage to direct the resource into pipes before serving the town of Manzanar up until the early 1920s.⁷⁰⁶



707

The War Relocation Authority (WRA) appropriated this distribution system, reformatting it to serve the needs of developing agricultural and domestic water use.⁷⁰⁸ The initial water supply for Manzanar Concentration Camp was provided “on a temporary basis by a water tank located west of Block 24,” which “emptied an average of 15 times every 24-hours.”⁷⁰⁹ The

⁷⁰⁵ Ibid. 384

⁷⁰⁶ Ibid. 340

⁷⁰⁷ Embrey, Monica. Photograph of old pipes. June 27, 2008

⁷⁰⁸ Potashin, Richard. Personal Interview. June 27, 2008.

⁷⁰⁹ Unrau, Harlan D. Manzanar National Historic Site, California: The Evacuation and Relocation of Persons of Japanese Ancestry During World War II: a Historical Study of the Manzanar War Relocation Center. Denver, CO:

inefficiency and expense of this system prompted the construction of a new, cement-lined reservoir to replace the unlined pit almost immediately after Manzanar had opened. On May 22, 1942, two Los Angeles contractors, Vinson and Pringle, began the design and construction of a 540,000 gallon capacity concrete dam and settling basin on Shepherd Creek about half a mile from the camp's northern boundary.⁷¹⁰ New pipelines were constructed to more efficiently transport the invaluable resource, but were not completed until July, which left many prisoners at Manzanar without a secure water supply. One prisoner explained: "As for showers, hot water was only available in Blocks 1 and 2, as the volunteer groups lived there. We lived in Block 4, so we could not bathe every day as it was pretty far to walk in those days."⁷¹¹ Designed with earthen embankments, reinforced with wire mesh, and lined with concrete, this new reservoir was constructed to serve the needs of over 10,000 people; however, soon after initial construction it was clear that its holding capacity was inadequate to meet camp needs. A team of Japanese and Japanese American prisoners who had limited construction experience was then hired in February 1943 to expand the water capacity, adding concrete and rock to build up the walls of the reservoir. Completed a little over a month later, the new water reservoir now held 800,000 gallons.⁷¹² Despite the increased capacity of the reservoir and the year-round flow of Shepherd Creek, the high demand for water in the desert climate for general domestic, agricultural, and recreational uses—on average, 1.5 million gallons of water a day—strained the system.⁷¹³

U.S. Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service, 1996. Retrieved: March 28, 2008.

<<http://www.nps.gov/archive/manz/hrs/hrst.htm>> 7

⁷¹⁰ NPS. Cultural Landscape Report, 37

⁷¹¹ Unrau, Manzanar National Historic Site, California 7D

⁷¹² NPS. Cultural Landscape Report 38

⁷¹³ Ibid.



714

Water was distributed from the reservoir to the residential and agricultural spaces in camp through a network of underground pipes and surface irrigation ditches, which also were reformatted versions of the older systems.⁷¹⁵ Some of the southern agricultural fields were watered by pipelines that derived from George and Bair's Creek and were supplemented with wells that were distributed around the outskirts of Manzanar.⁷¹⁶ Again for these projects teams of predominantly first generation male prisoners were assembled for construction as a way to keeping construction costs for Manzanar as low as possible."⁷¹⁷ Various crews of prisoners would continue to monitor the water supply for the entire duration Manzanar operated, with a group of four men rotating 24 hour long shifts to guard the precious water supply. An article in the *Manzanar Free Press* on September 10, 1943 explained: "Although water rights are controlled by the City of Los Angeles, Manzanar's water supply is supervised by Jiro Matsuyama. He sees that water is supplied and available at all times and properly chlorinated."⁷¹⁸ Although the reservoir crew positions did not pay a high wage—\$12 a month—they provided

⁷¹⁴ Embrey, Monica. Photograph of the Reservoir. June 27, 2008

Shiozaki, Cory. "From Barbed Wire to Barbed Hooks: Fishing Stories at Manzanar." 2009.

<<http://www.fearnotrout.com/>>

⁷¹⁵ Ibid. 110

⁷¹⁶ Potashin, Richard. Personal Interview. June 27, 2008.

⁷¹⁷ Unrau, Manzanar National Historic Site, California 7

⁷¹⁸ *Manzanar Free Press*. Manzanar at Work: Farming. September 10, 1943

<<http://www.nps.gov/archive/manz/mfp/mfp-v4-n1j.htm>>

prisoners the opportunity to officially leave the camp boundaries.⁷¹⁹ This occasionally provided problems for these workers who encountered harassment from armed guards, but generally functioned as a great privilege. In addition to figuring out how to manipulate the system so that they could officially gain access to land outside of camp, prisoners who worked on the initial construction of the reservoir and water distribution systems found ways to write themselves and their political views into history.

Excavations of the reservoir and other historic landmark sites by the National Park Service have unearthed inscriptions in the cement infrastructure that lay hidden under the flow of water for years. The content of the inscriptions varied from names and dates to political messages, written both in English and Japanese throughout the years that the system was under construction. Entirely denied access to photography or radio and with limited and censored opportunities to write for the *Free Press* newspapers within Manzanar, there were very few outlets for political expression for prisoners. But with the soft, fresh cement from the reservoir, some prisoners had finally found a place to voice their stories and experiences, underneath the ever-refilling water supply.

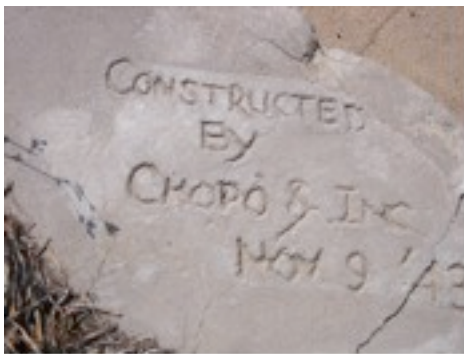
A large portion of the inscriptions written on the extended reservoir walls, irrigation channels and ditches, and chlorination tanks slabs demark the names and dates of those responsible for the infrastructure's construction. Notations such as "STONE WALL BY EMERGENCY CREW 2/25/43" were spelled out in small embedded pebbles on the cement, while family names and worker groups were spread along various work sites.⁷²⁰ These inscriptions were important declarations for these workers as they provided documentation of

⁷¹⁹ The highest paying occupation in camp was that of the doctors who earned only \$19 a month, which was pathetically low compared to the average month wage of the era (approximately \$150 in 1942).

Unrau, Manzanar National Historic Site, California 7D

⁷²⁰ Burton, Three Farewells to Manzanar 340

who worked on these projects on the physical infrastructure. In addition to providing the appropriate recognition, these signatures were a way for prisoners to express pride in their work. Pritchard argues: “that the urgency of needing to publicly write for commemoration has been around for as long as writing itself.” He continues to explain: “Graffiti dabbles on issues of human nature that force one to want to be remembered and not be forgotten through the passing of time.”⁷²¹ The undeniable desire to be remembered despite being forcibly removed from public spaces permeated throughout Manzanar. These workmen took the initiative into their own hands and set the record straight by writing it into stone. Their impressions including the following:



722

The other major body of inscriptions was those of explicit political declarations. Opposition to U.S. military and political actions, especially those directly relating to the Second World War, were used as one of the main justifications for incarceration—the so-called “military

⁷²¹ Ashley, Ian, Beynon, Daniel, et al. “Graffiti at UBC: A Sociological Analysis of Graffiti.” 2004-2005. 3
<http://www.sustain.ubc.ca/pdfs/seeds_05/winter/graffitti/A%20Sociological%20Analysis%20of%20Graffiti.pdf>
Pritchard, V. *English Medieval Graffiti*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008. 1

⁷²² Embrey, Monica. Photographs of signatures. June 27, 2008

necessity.” In actuality, the political beliefs of those living in Manzanar were very diverse and included individuals who were sympathetic with the Allied Powers and individuals who aligned themselves with the Axis Powers. Defining one’s allegiances for people of Japanese ancestry living in the United States was a complicated process as issues of citizenship, cultural and racial identity, generation, and perception of mistreatment by the U.S. government were key factors in addition to political alliances. Those individuals who did align themselves with Japan and the Axis Powers found very few spaces within Manzanar to express their political beliefs. One of the most notable was the extended cement wall of the reservoir. Along the area incorporated during the June 1943 expansion are several key declarations of anti-U.S. sentiment. Inscriptions reading 忠君愛国 which translate to “loyal to the emperor and love the county”; 打倒英米 — “defeat Great Britain and the U.S.A.”; 万々歳大日本帝国 — “Long Live the Great Japanese Empire”; and 満座那黒龍会本部—“Manzanar Black Dragon Group Headquarters” surrounded the upper border.⁷²³ It was only hidden away, literally underwater that these groups found the space to articulate their existence and beliefs.



724

⁷²³ Burton, Three Farewells to Manzanar 662-663

⁷²⁴ Embrey, Monica. Photographs of resistance June 27, 2008

This phenomenon reflects much of the literature's discussion on the political role of graffiti. Jeff Ferrell defines graffiti as a form of resistance towards "legal, political, and religious authority."⁷²⁵ The inscriptions in the reservoir may also be analyzed as such given the socio-political context of the era. Gonos, et al. expand on this definition by explaining that graffiti can be used as a means to communicate beliefs that are not necessarily acceptable to articulate in public, especially declarations that challenge the dominant political ideology of a community.⁷²⁶ Providing an anonymous voice to express unacceptable beliefs, these inscriptions were a powerful way for politically marginalized groups to overcome the censorship and silencing of Manzanar's regulations and document their existence. Gonos explains: "The presence of... graffiti signifies that their oppressors cannot fully censor their lives, their voices, and their history. The anonymousness of... graffiti may allow individuals to be heard without being seen; therefore, graffiti is a means for people to express beliefs that may or may not be acceptable in everyday social situations."⁷²⁷ Suffice it to say that the political expressions embedded in the cement wall were not acceptable views to hold for those incarcerated at Manzanar. These signs of resistance and defiance speak loud and clear, even from beneath hundreds of gallons of water.

These inscriptions in the water distribution system were in some way all political in nature. Defying the limitations imposed by the War Relocation Authority, graffiti provided the perfect medium for unpopular political expression. Some of these inscriptions also were declarations of hope and peace. On top of a ditch wall in the reservoir, surrounded by family names and dates, an inscription clearly states: "I LOVE MYSELF. Tommy Miyaoka."

⁷²⁵ Ferrell, Jeff. "Urban Graffiti: Crime, Control, and Resistance." *Youth & Society*. 27. 1 (1995): 73. 77

⁷²⁶ Ashley, Ian, Beynon, Daniel, et al. "Graffiti at UBC: A Sociological Analysis of Graffiti." 2004-2005. 22
http://www.sustain.ubc.ca/pdfs/seeds_05/winter/graffitti/A%20Sociological%20Analysis%20of%20Graffiti.pdf

⁷²⁷ Gonos, George, Virginia Mulkern, and Nicholas Poushinsky. 1976. "Anonymous Expression: A Structural View of Graffiti." *Journal of American Folklore* 89: 22.

Ashley, Ian, Beynon, Daniel, et al. "Graffiti at UBC: A Sociological Analysis of Graffiti." 2004-2005.
http://www.sustain.ubc.ca/pdfs/seeds_05/winter/graffitti/A%20Sociological%20Analysis%20of%20Graffiti.pdf

Declarations of self-love and community identity are equally as strong acts of resistance for those incarcerated at Manzanar, who had to constantly struggle to maintain their emotional health and sense of self-worth while unconstitutionally incarcerated. Neighboring the reservoir was also a large boulder which had been plastered with a thick layer of cement and inscribed with a single Japanese character: 平和 — Peace.⁷²⁸ This clear and strong affirmation stood as a marker of hope for all of those who had the opportunity to come across it and represented yet another act of defiance at Manzanar.



The cement inscriptions in the water distribution system at the outskirts of Manzanar Concentration Camp were important sites of resistance. Representing political perspectives as diverse as the incarcerated community, the writing on the wall—sometimes ominous, sometimes hopeful—was a space for freedom of expression otherwise unavailable at Manzanar. Prisoners who worked on constructing and maintaining the reservoir, the literal life-support of camp, documented their existence in stone so that they would not be washed away. By recognizing the diverse ways that people of Japanese ancestry living at Manzanar responded to their incarceration, agency and humanity is restored to the disenfranchised population.

⁷²⁸ Burton, *Three Farewells to Manzanar* 663

⁷²⁹ Embrey, Monica. Photograph of love. June 27, 2008
Burton, *Three Farewells to Manzanar*

V. Conclusion

*I swore
it would not devour me
I swore
it would not humble me
I swore
it would not break me.*

*And they commanded we dwell in the desert
Our children be spawn of barbed wire and barracks*

*We, closer to the earth,
squat, short thighed,
knowing the dust better.*

*And they would have us make the garden
Rake the grass to soothe their feet*

*We, akin to the jungle,
plotting with the snake,
tails shedding in civilized America.*

*And they would have us skin their fish
deft hands like blades/sliding back flesh/bloodless*

*We, who awake in the river
Ocean's child
Whale eater.*

...

*And yet we are not devoured,
And yet we are not humbled,
And yet we are not broken.*

Janice, Mirikitani, *We, The Dangerous*⁷³⁰

At Manzanar, water played a pivotal role in how incarcerated people of Japanese ancestry navigated their daily life and manifested acts of defiance. Through implementations of Japanese and Japanese American cultural traditions, prisoners were able to develop coping mechanisms to endure unbearable environmental and social conditions. By continuing to garden, fish, and write inside and out of the barbed wire encampment, a semblance of normalcy and routine was established. Skills that many Nikkei had developed occupationally as laborers in the agricultural

⁷³⁰ Mirikitani, Janice. "We, The Dangerous." *Ayumi: An Japanese American Anthology = Ayumi : Nikkei Beijin Bungei Shu*. San Francisco, California: The Japanese American Anthology Committee, 1980. 211

and fishing industries transformed into essential survival tactics inside the concentration camp. These actions, redefined within their specific historical context, were manifestations of plots of resistance and are often attributed as the reason that the community was able to survive incarceration not devoured, humbled or broken. Stealing water to plant gardens and grow crops that improved the community's physical and mental health was defiance. Risking one's life to catch a fish was a challenge. Carving one's stories and truths into the cement walls of the reservoir was opposition. These expressions of self and community identity, in a camp where one's own language was not permitted to be taught, were the essential articulations of acts of defiance.

Conclusion: Beyond A Place Like This

*Some people walked through
and out the back of my mind.*

*I'll bet you a home-made apple pie
you'll never get out of here in
a hundred years.*

That's impossible.

*Where in the world would you
get apples?*

*Okay then I'll bet you
a million dollars.*

What a pretty garden you made, Obasan.

No, this is not much.

*The one I had in Seattle had
many beautiful flowers.*

Too bad we are not in Seattle.

*Sore wa shikata ga ari masen ne?
That can't be helped can it?*

What's your name?

Bo ya

Whose boy are you?

Nobody's

*(Pinned on his back was a sign:
Please do not feed me.)*

Mitsuye Yamada, *Some People Walked Through*⁷³¹

The stories of people who lived in the Owens Valley, who watered its land and cultivated its crops—pine trees, apple trees, and *kabocha*⁷³² alike— must not slip out of our minds. Their stories, rarely told in conjunction with one another, teach some of the greatest lessons history has to offer but only if we take the time to learn them. The analysis of an environmental justice water history of this region challenges us to pull together the connections and overarching themes and recognize the similarities, while honoring the specificities and differences of each of these experiences. Telling the personal stories of challenge and resistance that manifested alongside

⁷³¹ Yamada, Mitsuye. "Some People Walked Through" Camp Notes and Other Poems. San Lorenzo, California: Shameless Hussy Press, 1976.

⁷³² *Kabocha* is a type of Japanese pumpkin

the oppressive forces of military and state domination provides the opportunity to align forcibly relocated, exploited and incarcerated people's struggles throughout time. Instead of watering-down or whitewashing these stories, the colorful histories and herstories once again emerge in full bloom.

The Nü'ma Peoples were the first humans to live in the Owens Valley.⁷³³ They were also the first to irrigate the land, to structure an agricultural system, and the first to endure forced relocation out of the valley and incarceration in it. This history set the foundation for patterns of forced relocation and incarceration; a combination of white supremacist and patriarchal ideals, new forms of capitalism and person/water/land resource exploitation dominated the valley for centuries. Acts of resistance from Nü'ma Peoples took on many forms: efforts to keep families healthy and communities intact, teaching and remembering the indigenous language despite efforts to wipe it out through master-worker naming practices, and the maintenance of cultural and religious traditions in the face of the imposition of a dominant, new culture. After years of massacre and armed resistance was defeated only by inhumane tactics of the 1863 'Scorched Earth' Campaign imposed by the U.S. military, Nü'ma Peoples surrendered. Watching their harvest and families go up in smoke and losing their land and water to colonizers who would dominate the valley predominantly due to assistance provided by federal land laws, the indigenous peoples of the Owens Valley resolutely resisted mass genocide. Since resistance via violence was no longer feasible, people worked within the wage-slave labor system so that they could stay on their sacred land. These communities ultimately were responsible for constructing the first infrastructure for the water-distribution system in the Owens Valley.

⁷³³ Dean, Sharon E. et al. Weaving a Legacy: Indian baskets & the people of Owens Valley, California. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press. 2004.

The struggle for empire continued the legacy of forced relocation and incarceration in the valley, as the battle between rival colonial empires of agriculture and distant urban cities advanced. Technological advancement named ‘progress’ and capitalist driven exploitation called ‘production’ and ‘growth’ were promoted over environmental sustainability and justice. Small communities of ranchers, farmers, and orchard growers and those who were bound by their slave-wage systems (including indigenous Paiute, Chinese, and Black populations) were devastated in this epic battle, which is infamously referred to as the Owens Valley Water Wars. The apple orchards that stretched for miles promising delicious fruit for as far as the eye could see soon withered away as the water flowed out of the valley. Although not the first nor last conflict over the invaluable resource in the region, this era was characterized by especially devious tactics—backhand deals, insider information trading, and collusion between federal, local governments and private enterprises. Resisters to these arrangements took on radical means to expose injustices, including bombing the physical infrastructure and organizing protests, but were strung along in the system until no longer valuable or profitable.⁷³⁴ Eventually the city of Los Angeles emerged victorious, at one point controlling 95% of the water rights in the region.

The next chapter in Owens Valley water history begins with the unconstitutional incarceration of 117,000 people of Japanese ancestry in the United States during World War II. My grandmother and her siblings were among the over 10,000 prisoners who lived for three years behind barbed wire and armed guard towers at Manzanar Concentration Camp and water was often at the center of their experiences. The abundance of the invaluable resource and guaranteed agricultural self-sustainability in addition to factors such as the relative distance to any vital military defense site, made this an ideal location for a concentration camp. Rumors

⁷³⁴ Recall that value is a term that refers to the degree of whiteness. For more information please refer to Appendix C.

about the Owens Valley desert circulated throughout the Japanese towns, detailing plans for a mass genocide of the Japanese and Japanese-American population by drowning or dehydration. Although it took many years before survivors of these great injustices would bring themselves to share their stories, the intricate ways that water flowed through their histories and herstories expose yet another example of the pattern tying together incarceration and water flow.

Water was especially important for the prisoners of Manzanar in implementing their acts of defiance. The streams that flowed off the Sierra Nevada Mountains directly to the west would nourish the incarcerated population in the harsh desert climate and sustain diverse gardens and agricultural projects. The creeks would be fished for brown, rainbow, and golden trout that also contributed to the prisoners' diet. Anti-U.S. military and pro-peace graffiti was carved into the cement walls of the reservoir, where the political messages would lay hidden from plain sight under thousands of gallons of water. Articulations of survival also often took the form of expressing cultural identity including the philosophies *Shikata ga nai* (it cannot be helped) and *Gaman* (endurance) to encourage the incarcerated community to focus on aspects of their life they could change. These plots of resistance helped the incarcerated population endure injustices from behind barbed wire.

My application of an environmental justice framework to analyze the water history of this region also incorporated poetry and visual imagery (usually in the form of photographs), as well as first-hand narrative accounts to enrich the historical accounts. These artistic expressions are predominantly representing the voices of those who spoke “from the margins to the margins”⁷³⁵ about their experiences with water and power in the heart of the Owens Valley desert, highlighting the diverse modes of resistance. Through incorporating these media, historically

⁷³⁵ The term “from the margins to the margins” was coined by Shakina Nayfack, conversation March 24, 2009.

marginalized and silenced communities speak for themselves by telling their histories/herstories with their own words and imagery.

Diverse academic discourses are brought into communication with one another in this text as yet another way to comprehensively address the environmental justice water history of the Owens Valley. All academic disciplines could incorporate components of an environmental justice framework into their curriculum, and arguably must. With the current environmental and economic crises the world is facing, the growing dialogue on sustainability and prosperity must also incorporate issues of justice with people at the forefront. The sustainable development triangle many environmental justice scholars have constructed calls for issues of equity, economy, and the environment (the three Es) or people, prosperity, and the planet (the three Ps) to be integrated in conversations on how to reorganize our world. This is a tool for those academic disciplines that do not traditionally engage one another to find meaningful ways to bridge the gaps between their fields. At Pomona College, utilizing this tool will provide students with a more comprehensive liberal arts education and will also train the future leaders of the world on how to address our pending crises. Ethnic Studies Departments including Asian American Studies, Black Studies, Chican@ Latin@ Studies, and Native American Studies should incorporate analyses of environmental resources and harm distribution and the construction of environmental discourses by People of Color into their curriculum to understand yet another way that power impacts these communities. Similarly, the Environmental Analysis Program must continue to integrate histories and experiences of People of Color in order to explore, explain, and explode interlocking systems of domination and make the discipline more accessible to marginalized communities. The historic divides between social justice and environmental causes is clearly replicated in both the academic and activist realms at the

Claremont Colleges and until these communities begin communicating and learning from one another, neither crises will be resolved. By looking to the past, we learn invaluable lessons for our future.⁷³⁶

This thesis is part of an attempt to bridge the gap between the disciplines of Environmental Analysis and Asian American Studies at Pomona College. By incorporating my family history and creative expression/visual imagery as fundamental knowledge in this project, I challenge the institution of academia to critically engage in what it produces and legitimates. By inextricably incorporating environmental water history with patterns of forced labor, relocation, and incarceration, I hope to encourage students and professors alike to question what history they are learning and who in the process is marginalized. Comprehensive and critical frameworks that adequately address the interconnecting components of the past, present, and future are needed across all disciplines. It is only with critical examinations of our institutional and systemic frameworks and cross-disciplinary integration that we will be able to begin adequately addressing the crises our world faces.

⁷³⁶ Activist Assata Shakur declaration about the need for individual and collective agency reads: “Either we're gonna tell our own history or our oppressors will make a history for us.” It is in this vein that I call for activist-scholars to follow the legacy of environmental justice advocates and demand the integration of environmental and social justice so that we may write our own history the way we want it to be told.

Afterword

After that first night on March 9th, 1942, my great-grandmother set off for the apple orchards on the outskirts of the Manzanar Concentration Camp. Every morning for two weeks after breakfast, she would hike halfway across the camp before coming across what remained from the Manzanar irrigation colony and Paiute water distribution system. It was here that she would find peace and solitude in the 10,000-person town confined to the one-square mile barbed wire enclosure; here that she would finally lay down her head and cry. Tears would not wash away the despair, embarrassment, and anger that built inside of her during her unconstitutional incarceration. But after making the journey for two weeks, she decided that crying under the apples trees “wasn’t productive and instead she looked around for things she could do in the camp,” my grandmother, Sue Kunitomi Embrey, remembered.⁷³⁷ Her resolution to create normalcy amidst the chaos, in part by gardening and recreating the surrounding natural landscape, further motivated Sue to improve her life. A conversation with her high school teacher proved to be the final motivating factor; “You can’t live in a place like this,” her teacher had exclaimed. But it was exactly a place like this—the Manzanar Concentration Camp sited deep in the Owens Valley desert—that she was condemned to live. These words greatly impacted Sue, helping to motivate her to work at the camp newspaper, ironically named the *Manzanar Free Press*, and eventually proved pivotal in her decision to find a way out of camp before the next Christmas.

Life outside of the barbed wire encampment was ridden with its own set of challenges. Discussions about the collective trauma in the years after 1945 were few and far between. An era

⁷³⁷ Embrey, Sue Kunitomi. Interview. University of California, Los Angeles, November, 2002. Interviewer: John Allen. Densho Digital Archive, Densho Visual History Collection; Densho ID: denshovh-esue-01. <http://archive.densho.org/Core/ArchiveItem.aspx?i=denshovh-esue-02-0011>

of silence proceeded as the remaining prisoners were sent out of camp with \$25 and a one-way train ticket. Responses to incarceration varied greatly including those who attempted to assimilate back into dominant American culture and those holding a *Shikata ga nai* and *Gaman* philosophy that promoted the continual moving on with life. Nonetheless, the desire to not stir up unpleasant memories and feeling of shame and guilt meant that the survivors of the camps rarely discussed the World War II Japanese American mass incarceration.⁷³⁸ “Your silence will not protect you,” warns poet Audre Lorde, and it did not protect people of Japanese ancestry in a post-WWII era United States. This collective silence was finally broken at first pilgrimage to Manzanar in 1969, led primarily by the Sansei (3rd generation) in an attempt to uncover some of their parent’s history.⁷³⁹ My grandmother was one of the few survivors of Manzanar to attend this pilgrimage, helping earn her the title—“an unquiet Nisei.”⁷⁴⁰ She would continue to dedicate her life to preserving the memory of the Manzanar by honoring those who had passed in the annual pilgrimage and demanding redress and justice from the federal government for the remaining survivors. For 36 years, Sue Kunitomi Embrey was one of the key figures responsible for organizing the annual Manzanar Pilgrimage, all the while encouraging people to speak out in the name of justice. But by 2005, she had become too ill to attend the 36th annual Pilgrimage, and asked her eldest son, Gary Embrey, to address the audience. To the intergenerational and multi-racial audience he exclaimed: “We have a special responsibility to teach American history not as

⁷³⁸ Yoo, David. “Captivating Memories: Museology, Concentration Camps, and Japanese American History.” *American Quarterly* 48.4 (1996) 680-699.

Sue explains: “How could we talk about it? Everybody was confused and bewildered. It took a long time to sort it out, to process it. And people are still doing that. It was a traumatic, traumatic experience.”

Bahr, Diana Meyers. Unquiet Nisei: An Oral History of the Life of Sue Kunitomi Embrey. New York: Palgrave, 2007, 85.

⁷³⁹ Ibid. 131.

⁷⁴⁰ Drinnon, Richard. Keeper of Concentration Camps: Dillon S. Myer and American Racism. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987, 307.

people might prefer it, but as it really was.”⁷⁴¹ The following year, my grandmother had not recovered from her illness and instead asked me to speak on her behalf. At the 37th annual Manzanar Pilgrimage held on April 19, 2006, a month before she would pass, I spoke about the legacy of my grandmother.

In the fighting spirit of my grandmother, I want to say we young people must learn from the commitment of our grandparents, learn from their perseverance, their strength, and their courage in this great injustice. We must learn not only to endure but also learn that through dedication and determination, injustice can be made right. Our grandmother never said *Shikata ga nai*, she says *Nidoto nai youni*, let it never happen again.

Now, as I stand before you once again, I ask that we continue in the struggle for justice and sustainability.

⁷⁴¹ Bahr Unquiet Nisei 255

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Appendix A: The Principles of Environmental Justice

The Principles of Environmental Justice

PREAMBLE

WE, THE PEOPLE OF COLOR, gathered together at this multinational People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, to begin to build a national and international movement of all peoples of color to fight the destruction and taking of our lands and communities, do hereby re-establish our spiritual interdependence to the sacredness of our Mother Earth; to respect and celebrate each of our cultures, languages and beliefs about the natural world and our roles in healing ourselves; to insure environmental justice; to promote economic alternatives which would contribute to the development of environmentally safe livelihoods; and, to secure our political, economic and cultural liberation that has been denied for over 500 years of colonization and oppression, resulting in the poisoning of our communities and land and the genocide of our peoples, do affirm and adopt these Principles of Environmental Justice:

- 1) **Environmental Justice** affirms the sacredness of Mother Earth, ecological unity and the interdependence of all species, and the right to be free from ecological destruction.
- 2) **Environmental Justice** demands that public policy be based on mutual respect and justice for all peoples, free from any form of discrimination or bias.
- 3) **Environmental Justice** mandates the right to ethical, balanced and responsible uses of land and renewable resources in the interest of a sustainable planet for humans and other living things.
- 4) **Environmental Justice** calls for universal protection from nuclear testing, extraction, production and disposal of toxic/hazardous wastes and poisons and nuclear testing that threaten the fundamental right to clean air, land, water, and food.
- 5) **Environmental Justice** affirms the fundamental right to political, economic, cultural and environmental self-determination of all peoples.
- 6) **Environmental Justice** demands the cessation of the production of all toxins, hazardous wastes, and radioactive materials, and that all past and current producers be held strictly accountable to the people for detoxification and the containment at the point of production.
- 7) **Environmental Justice** demands the right to participate as equal partners at every level of decision-making, including needs assessment, planning, implementation, enforcement and evaluation.
- 8) **Environmental Justice** affirms the right of all workers to a safe and healthy work environment without being forced to choose between an unsafe livelihood and unemployment. It also affirms the right of those who work at home to be free from environmental hazards.
- 9) **Environmental Justice** protects the right of victims of environmental injustice to receive full compensation and reparations for damages as well as quality health care.
- 10) **Environmental Justice** considers governmental acts of environmental injustice a violation of international law, the Universal Declaration On Human Rights, and the United Nations Convention on Genocide.

- 11) **Environmental Justice** must recognize a special legal and natural relationship of Native Peoples to the U.S. government through treaties, agreements, compacts, and covenants affirming sovereignty and self-determination.
- 12) **Environmental Justice** affirms the need for urban and rural ecological policies to clean up and rebuild our cities and rural areas in balance with nature, honoring the cultural integrity of all our communities, and provided fair access for all to the full range of resources.
- 13) **Environmental Justice** calls for the strict enforcement of principles of informed consent, and a halt to the testing of experimental reproductive and medical procedures and vaccinations on people of color.
- 14) **Environmental Justice** opposes the destructive operations of multi-national corporations.
- 15) **Environmental Justice** opposes military occupation, repression and exploitation of lands, peoples and cultures, and other life forms.
- 16) **Environmental Justice** calls for the education of present and future generations which emphasizes social and environmental issues, based on our experience and an appreciation of our diverse cultural perspectives.
- 17) **Environmental Justice** requires that we, as individuals, make personal and consumer choices to consume as little of Mother Earth's resources and to produce as little waste as possible; and make the conscious decision to challenge and reprioritize our lifestyles to insure the health of the natural world for present and future generations.⁷⁴²

⁷⁴² National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit. The Principles of Environmental Justice. Washington DC. October 27, 1991.

Appendix B: Outline of Issues from Principles of EJ

A. Ecological Principles

A. Gaia/ecological principles

- Reestablish spiritual interdependence to the sacredness of Mother Earth
- Affirm the sacredness of Mother Earth
- Affirm ecological unity and the interdependence of all species

B. Stewardship, land ethic

- Mandate ethical use of land and renewable resources
- Mandate balanced and responsible uses of land and renewable resources

C. Reducing consumption, personal responsibilities

- Personal commitment to make choices to consume as little of Mother Earth's resources as possible
- Personal commitment to produce as little waste as possible

D. Access to natural resources

- Provide fair access for all to the full range of resources

E. Environmental education

- Environmental education that emphasizes social issues for present and future generations
- Environmental education based on an appreciation of diverse cultural perspectives

B. Justice

A. Intergenerational equity

- Sustainable development for humans and other living things
- Reprioritize our lifestyles to ensure the health of the natural world for present and future generations

B. Intragenerational equity

- Recognize the need for urban ecological policies
- Clean up and rebuilt cities in balance with nature
- Recognize the need for rural ecological policies
- Clean up and rebuilt rural areas in balance with nature

C. Rights, freedom, and respect

- Right to be free from ecological destruction
- Fundamental right to clean air
- Fundamental right to clean land
- Fundamental right to clean water
- Fundamental right to clean food
- Right to a safe and healthy work environment
- Right to participate in all level of the policy-making process
- Public policy must be based on mutual respect for all people
- Public policy must be based on justice for all people—free from any form of discrimination and bias

D. Human rights, international law

- Governmental acts of environmental injustice constitute a violation of international law, the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, and the United Nations Convention on Genocide
 - E. Experimentation, human subjects
 - Strict enforcement of principles of informed consent
 - Halt the testing of experimental reproductive and medical procedures on people of color
3. Autonomy
- A. Treaties, sovereignty
 - Recognize the legal relationship between native people and the U.S. government through treaties, agreements, compacts, and covenants
 - B. Self-determination
 - Affirm the right to political, economic and cultural self-determination of all people
 - Recognize the right to environmental self-determination of all people
 - Affirm native people's sovereignty and self-determination
 - Self-healing
 - C. Cultural Relationships
 - Respect and celebrate each other's culture and languages
 - Honor the cultural integrity of all communities
 - Respect and celebrate each other's belief system about the natural world
4. Corporate Relations
- A. Liability, accountability
 - All past and current producers of toxins and of hazardous and radioactive materials be held strictly accountable and responsible for detoxification and containment at the point of production
 - B. Compensation
 - Victims of environmental injustice have the right to receive full compensation and reparations for damage
 - Victims of environmental injustice have the right to receive quality health care
 - C. Multinational corporations
 - Oppose the destructive operations of multinational corporations
 - D. Technological risks
 - Call for universal protection from nuclear testing
 - E. Environmental Hazards
 - Call for universal protection from the extraction, production, and disposal of toxic and hazardous waste
 - F. Source reduction
 - Cease the production of all toxins, hazardous waste, and radioactive materials
 - G. Occupational health and safety
 - Workers should not be forced to choose between unsafe livelihoods and unemployment
5. Policy, Politics, and Economic Processes
- A. Policy-making process

- Participate as equal partners at every level of decision making
 - B. Political and economic strategies
 - Promote economic alternatives that contribute to environmentally safe livelihoods
 - C. Militarization
 - Oppose military occupation and repression
 - Oppose military exploitation of land
 - Oppose military exploitation of people and their cultures and of other life forms
6. Social Movement
- A. Movement building
 - Build national/international movement
 - B. Activist strategies
 - Ensure environmental justice⁷⁴³

⁷⁴³ Taylor, Dorceta. "The Rise of the Environmental Justice Paradigm: Injustice Framing and the Social Construction of Environmental Discourses." American Behavioral Scientist Vol 43, No 4. January 2000. p 539-541

Appendix C: Theoretical Frameworks

Power and the Production of (Legitimate) Knowledge

Knowledge is often defined as the understanding of truths that are justified and believed. An important assumption correlated with this articulation of reality is that it is factual, meaning that that it is unbiased, neutral, and universal. Although philosophers and critical thinkers alike have debated for years what constitutes justified true beliefs, the response to this criticism has often turned to addressing the intention of the author(s) to discover the ‘true’ meaning behind a piece of work. It is thought that if the intention is revealed, the greater significance and meaning will also be uncovered. I find this approach to knowledge very limited in its scope in part because it conceals the role that interlocking systems of power play in constructing what is considered legitimate knowledge within mainstream society. The environmental justice framework that I employ uses a different understanding of knowledge, one that examines its construction and (re)production in the context of history and larger systems of power. Knowledge, instead of being a universal, impartial, and harmless articulation of truth, is understood as a socially constructed, political, and powerful component of culture.⁷⁴⁴

Conceptualizing knowledge within systems of power is part of the greater framework that also acknowledges the role of power in structuring our society. That is to say, everything meaningful functions within systems of power. This is especially pertinent to the production of legitimate knowledge within the institution of academia and the information industrial complex. What histories are discussed, who is writing them, how they are represented, what language is used to construct it—all factors within the academy and other institutions that contribute to the

⁷⁴⁴ In this context and throughout my paper unless otherwise noted, I use a definition of culture constructed by Cultural Theorist Stuart Hall who explains that culture is shared conceptual maps.

production of what its proponents consider legitimate knowledge. The answers to these questions expose the manifestation of interlocking systems of domination, especially when framed within its historical context. Knowledge is never meaningless, apolitical, or simply the telling of the ‘truth’ as much as mainstream disciplines claim that to be so.

Historical Construction of Race

Knowledge functions as a way to communicate meaning in society and provides explanations or more accurately, interpretations of the world around us. Systems of classification then become a principle way that order is structured and meaning is distributed within knowledge. Cultural theorist Stuart Hall explains: “The propensity to classify subgroups within humans...is a cultural impulse” and “an absolutely fundamental aspect of human culture” because it allows people to generate meaning. Although Hall theorizes that the capacity to classify is a basic genetic feature of humans, he explains that it is learned and taught to promote particular systems of classification, which become “the objects to the dispositions of power.” Culture itself functions as a system of power, with concepts and images developed as representations to allow people to think. This is then communicated with language, the externalization of meanings made about the world.⁷⁴⁵

Classification has historically been used as a system of power. This is possible because of its generative nature, meaning that once the order is established, “a whole range of other things fall into place because of it.”⁷⁴⁶ Hierarchies of race, gender, socio-economic class, sexuality, and a host of other socially and culturally defined concepts were historically developed within systems of classification and continue to be (re)produced today. The very character of hierarchies

⁷⁴⁵ Race, The Floating Signifier. Hall, Stuart. Jhally, Sut. Media Education Foundation. 1997.
<http://www.mediaed.org/assets/products/407/transcript_407.pdf>

⁷⁴⁶ Ibid.

calls for the need to maintain the order and enforce the hard and fixed boundaries of the structure. These systems of classification impact the production of knowledge and are especially relevant to discourses on the role of race in the colonization of Paiute Peoples, the struggles for agricultural empire and urban water imperialism, and the incarceration of people of Japanese descent during World War II. An analysis of the history of the construction of race is called for to better understand the significance of the role of race and power in these histories.

The history of construction of race can be directly tied to the beginning of European conquest and colonization. Questions regarding the nature and character of the indigenous peoples in the New World included “Were they truly human? Did they have souls? Were they rational beings?”⁷⁴⁷ It was religion that first produced answers to these questions about the hierarchy of people and attempted to categorize the world. One of the first and most clear manifestations of this was in the development of the Great Chain of Being.⁷⁴⁸ Created as a classical, Western medieval concept through which to organize the world, the Great Chain of Being produced a strict hierarchical system of the “natural order” of all things in the universe. This natural hierarchy organized all things with God in the highest position, followed by angels, people, animals, plants, and finally ended with minerals and earth. Visually this was often depicted as a scale of whiteness and blackness, with God top position associated with the purest white and dirt in the bottom position with the darkest black.⁷⁴⁹

⁷⁴⁷ Smedley, Audrey. *Race in North America: Origin and Evolution of a World View*. Westview Press, 2007. 161.

⁷⁴⁸ Jackson, Phyllis. *Whiteness: Race, Sex and Representation*. Lecture: Spring 2007.

⁷⁴⁹ Ibid.

Marks, Jonathan. “Great Chain of Being.” *Encyclopedia of Race And Racism* Ed 1. November 18, 2007.
< <http://personal.uncc.edu/jmarks/pubs/Enc%20race%20GCOB.pdf> >



Photo: Drawing of the Great Chain of Being from Didacus Valades, *Rhetorica Christiana*, 1579

It was not before long that a hierarchy of race was incorporated into this system, classifying and ranking people according to natural God defined classes. Eighteenth century scientist Carl von Linné argued in his text *The System of Nature* (1735) that there was “an underlying hierarchical order in nature...established by God, or providence itself, and it is the duty of humans to discover this order and to classify everything that exists – from human to fauna to flora – accordingly.” Linné’s theory continued to argue that there were four major categories or races of people and became the foundation for the Linnaean taxonomy, a classification system still employed today.⁷⁵⁰

The 15th and 16th century religious hierarchy of race continued to be constructed and defended in the 17th and 18th century under scientific ranking systems. Perhaps one of the most

⁷⁵⁰ Eze, Emmanuel. Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1997. 10

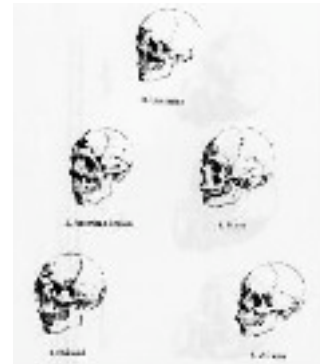
famous producers of racial hierarchies was physiologist and doctor Johann Friedrick Blumenback who developed at the end of the 18th century a racial classification system according to five categories: Caucasian, American, Mongolian, Malayan and Ethiopian. He proposed and advocated a “degeneration theory,” which claimed that the five races belonged to one species, where the Caucasian was the ideal “primeval” race from which the other four races “degenerated.”⁷⁵¹ This theory justified and reproduced theories including that of David Hume who claimed in 1748 that “all other species of men...to be naturally inferior to the whites.”⁷⁵²



Blumenback's five racial categories

Blumenback's racial geometry:

Caucasian	
American	Malay
Mongolian	Ethiopian

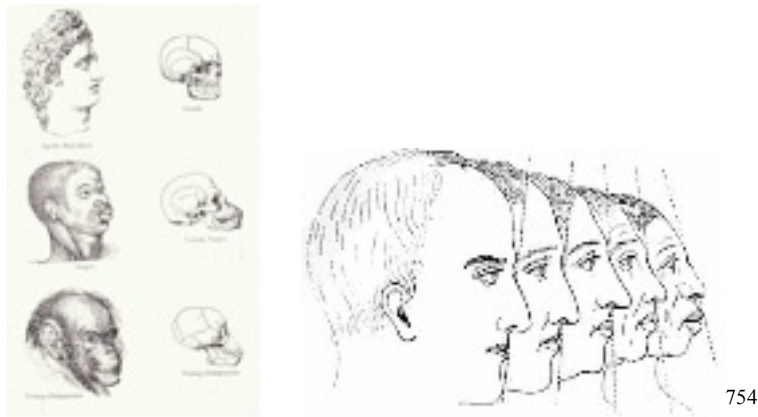


These categories were defined largely by physiognomy—a theory that originated in 4th and 5th century Greece that claimed one's character could be determined by one's physical characteristics including skin color, facial structure and angle, limb proportions, etc.⁷⁵³ Peoples' bodies were measured and dissected, categorized and hierarchized to construct a classification system similar to that of the Great Chain of Being with the lowest human race—Negroid constructed as the closest to apes and chimpanzees.

⁷⁵¹ Ibid, 80

⁷⁵² Ibid, 29

⁷⁵³ Some Enlightenment philosophers (George-Louis Leclerc and Comte de Buffon, among others) thought that skin color was climate related and not necessarily a biological factor that determined race.



There were five major principles which physiognomy claimed could be determined about a person by virtue of their physical appearance: intelligence, aesthetics, morality, sexuality and culture.⁷⁵⁵ The very question of whether someone was an intelligent, rational being or not was a critical question to these classifications, the same question first asked by the Western colonizers of the Americas.



Cartoon entitled 'Man is but a Worm' from British magazine Punch's Almanack for 1882 (December 6, 1881)

⁷⁵⁴ O'Malley, Michael. "Alien Menace." Center for History and New Media. George Mason University. August 2004.

<http://chnm.gmu.edu/exploring/19thcentury/alienmenace/pop_inhuman.html>

⁷⁵⁵ Jackson, Lecture.

Race has always been constructed as a ranking system. Within religious and scientific classification systems, the hierarchy of race elevates Whites to the highest position (thereby according to physiognomy, ascribing White(ness) as more intelligent, aesthetically beautiful, morally superior, sexually chaste and normative, and culturally celebrated than Black(ness)). These classifications systems are constructed as ‘natural’—either ordained by God or biologically determined systems that *reflect* the ‘true’ and ‘real’ hierarchies of the world. These hierarchies were not strictly limited to race either, continuously incorporating other social categories including gender, socio-economic class, and sexuality into the ranking systems. These classifications of people according to simultaneously occurring racialized, gendered, classed, and sexualized hierarchies strongly informed the culture—that is shared conceptual maps—of the academy. Both scientific and theological theories had developed as legitimate disciplines within the institution of academia and manifested themselves in the (re)production of interlocking systems of domination: including white supremacy, patriarchy, capitalism, heteronormativity, imperialism and colonization. Interlocking systems of domination, a term coined by scholar bell hooks, are historically constructed and institutionally reproduced systems that are used to maintain power structures. The institution of academia by no means is exempt from the influence of interlocking systems of domination of the production of legitimate knowledge.

Throughout the history of the Owens Valley, racial ranking systems and ideologies of white and male supremacy have dominated institutions and social relations between various communities. Much of the literature that has been produced discussing these histories ignores the role of these interlocking systems on the historical events of the era, thereby reproducing these systems in the very literature used to discuss them. It is important to address this directly in the

context of this thesis to prevent the unconscious replication of these power structures and to instead approach these histories from an environmental justice framework perspective.

A Look at Representation, Language, Culture and Code—Discursive and Semiotic Approaches

A constructionist approach to the concept of race, as opposed to one that enforces biological determinism deemed by either science or god, is an essential component in the development of an environmental justice framework because it helps expose how interlocking systems of domination have developed historically and how they are continually reproduced on institutional levels today. Another critical component of this environmental justice framework is the use of critical inquiries into the production of knowledge by analyzing representations and language used by various disciplines to discuss the history of the Owens Valley. Especially formative of the constructionist approach framework is cultural theorist Stuart Hall's analysis the two major models: the discursive model associated with French philosopher Michel Foucault and the semiotic approach associated with Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure. Within these frameworks, meaning, language, representation, and culture are considered to be as constitutive processes, not separate or independent of one another. Representation functions within the context of historical and present day manifestations of classification systems to produce meaning. This meaning is then articulated through language. Finally, culture is a set of practices that is primarily concerned with the production and exchange of meanings.

"Nothing meaningful exists outside of discourse." Cultural theorist Stuart Hall's words explain that the significance and meaning associated with all things is constructed and defined by the ways that things are discussed, analyzed, and valued.⁷⁵⁶ The discursive approach argues that the difference that exists in society is meaningful in regards to the systems of thought and

⁷⁵⁶ "There are plenty of things that exist in a non-discursive realm," however, Hall explains that "we as people have no access to them" because the way we engage with things is always within the discursive realm. Hall, Race Floating Signifier.

classifications developed to make sense of it—often conveyed in the form of representations.

Two classical approaches to representation—the reflective and intentionality positions—are theoretical frameworks that seek to answer the question of “how we can tell the ‘true’ meaning of a word or image.”⁷⁵⁷ The reflective framework claims that meaning functions as a reflection or imitation of ‘reality,’ while the intentional position, on the other hand, claims that meaning is constructed by the author(s) and is only significant in terms of understanding the author’s intention.⁷⁵⁸ Hall constructs a third approach to deconstruct representation—the constructionist approach, which “acknowledges that neither things in themselves nor individual users of language can fix meaning in language.”⁷⁵⁹ Representation functions within greater systems of power, hierarchical classification systems, and knowledge to construct meaning.⁷⁶⁰

The way that representation is articulated is through language. Ferdinand de Saussure argues that language is a complete system of signs, each of which have two corresponding components—the signifier and the signified. The signified is understood as the actual, ‘real’ object that exists in the non-discursive realm, while signifiers are the linguistic and visual tools that are used to convey the signified concept; together they form an inseparable “double entity.”⁷⁶¹ Although the relationship between the sign, concept and object (signifier) is arbitrary, the construction of language occurs within systems of power.⁷⁶² Saussure opposed the view of

⁷⁵⁷ Hall, Stuart. Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices. Culture, media, and identities. London: Sage in association with the Open University, 1997. 24

⁷⁵⁸ This approach claims that the concept of ‘reality’ is independent of the process of representation, with meaning an intrinsic component of reality. Meaning is therefore either an accurate representation or distortion of what actually exists. The intentional approach denies the existence of difference in reality (e.g. claiming racial differences do not exist). Representation then only speaks for its creator.

⁷⁵⁹ Hall, Representation, 25.

⁷⁶⁰ In other words, “Things don’t *mean*: we *construct* meaning.” An important component of this framework acknowledges that representation does not occur after an event, but rather is constitutive of it. It is this approach to representation and the production of knowledge that I will use throughout this thesis.

⁷⁶¹ Holdcroft, David. Saussure: Signs, System, and Arbitrariness. Modern European philosophy. Cambridge [England]: Cambridge University Press, 1991. 48

⁷⁶² Ibid. Pg 49

Hall, Representation, 21.

language as simply nomenclaturism, “a naming-process only – a list of words, each corresponding to the thing that it names,” explaining that it was too simple.⁷⁶³ Instead he advanced the semiotics approach to language that defines the act of using language as functioning within interlocking systems of power and having greater meaning beyond what is often simply ‘intended.’

For “effective exchanges of meanings” and the most basic forms of communication, people of the same culture—those who share the same cultural maps and who speak or write the same language—must also share the same ways of interpreting signs of language.⁷⁶⁴ This shared interpretation is how people know that the arbitrary combination of letters and sounds that make up a word stand for or represent the ‘real’ concept. The meaning is not in the object (person or thing) itself, nor is it in the actual word, hiding somewhere between the literal letters. Meaning is “*constructed by a system of representation*” and is fixed “so firmly, that after a while, it comes to seem natural and inevitable.”⁷⁶⁵ This shared understanding of the interpretation of signs is the code. Codes are responsible for letting people communicate by “fixing the relationship between concepts and signs.”⁷⁶⁶ The codes of language and culture function to allow people to be culturally competent subjects, (re)producing knowledge by expressing it through systems of

The letters that are chosen to spell out a word to convey a concept are not related to the object itself. Both Saussure and Hall use the example of the word for tree, explaining that it makes no difference to the object of the tree if the word used to describe it is spelled T-R-E-E or E-E-R-T. Therefore, the relationship between the two is arbitrary, but people within a shared culture cannot change this meaning because of the need to convey meanings. Meaning is therefore fixed, while also constantly shifting.

⁷⁶³ A nomenclaturism perspective ignores the significance and power of language and minimizes it to simply a neutral societal instrument. Hall theorizes that both visual images (iconic signs) and spoken or written words (indexical signs) are signs that carry meaning and therefore have to be interpreted.

⁷⁶⁴ Hall, Representation, 19

⁷⁶⁵ Ibid. 21

⁷⁶⁶ Ibid.

representation. To reiterate, representation, therefore, “is the production of meaning through language.”⁷⁶⁷

Both the discursive model and semiotic model are foundational components of the environmental justice framework applied in this thesis. The representation of Paiute Peoples, people of Japanese descent, Owens Valley residents, War Relocation Authority personnel, and the federal government, among other actors, influences the way that the history of Manzanar is constructed. Each theorist and discipline represents these stakeholders differently, creating meaning that defines their character and varying degrees of agency and voice. The language that is used to represent these actors often replicates the historically formed systems of power if it is not critically and consciously constructed. However, language can also be used as a tool to challenge the manifestation of interlocking systems of domination by critiquing the representations of people of color and whites. The interrogation of images that are naturalized and constructed as neutral in meaning is another component to creating just knowledge.

⁷⁶⁷ Ibid.

Appendix D: Words of Resistance

*The one in San Francisco who asked:
Why did the Japanese Americans let
the government put them in
those camps without protest?*

*Come the think of it I
should've run off to Canada
should've hijacked a plane to Algeria
should've pulled myself up from my
bra straps
and kicked 'm in the groin
should've bombed a bank
should've tried self-immolation
should've holed myself up in a
woodframe house
and let you watch me
burn up on the six o'clock news
should've run howling down the street
naked and assaulted you at breakfast
by AP wirephoto
should've screamed bloody murder
like Kitty Genovese*

*Then
YOU would've*

*come to my aid in shining armor
laid yourself across the railroad track
marched on Washington
tattooed a Star of David on your arm
written six million enraged
letters to Congress*

*But we didn't draw the line
anywhere
law and order Executive Order 9066
social order moral order internal order*

*You let'm
I let'm
All are punished*

Yamada, Mitsuye, *To The Lady*⁷⁶⁸

⁷⁶⁸ Yamada, Mitsuye. *To the Lady* <<http://able2know.org/topic/32181-1>>