

AU/ACSC/CROWLEY/AY10

AIR COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE
AIR UNIVERSITY

Harmony

by

Suanne M. Crowley, Major, USAF

A Research Report Submitted to the Faculty

In Partial Fulfillment of the Graduation Requirements

Advisors: Dr. Kimberly Hudson and Dr. Rebecca Oxford

Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama

March 2010

Disclaimer

The views expressed in this academic research paper are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the US government or the Department of Defense. In accordance with Air Force Instruction 51-303, it is not copyrighted, but is the property of the United States government.

Abstract

In 1942 United States citizens and United States residents of Japanese descent were evacuated from Seattle and interned along with over 100,000 other individuals of Japanese descent living on the west coast during World War II. Many of the evacuees presented stoic and accepting countenances during their ordeal. This research paper looks at the question of how, when faced with such prejudice and unjust imprisonment, many Japanese-Americans and other individuals of Japanese descent evacuated from Seattle in 1942 were able to face evacuation and relocation in the spirit of harmony.

“The physical hardships we could endure, but for me the most devastating experience was the unjust stigmatization by American society, the bitter reminder that racism had won again over the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, the perception that the American people had thrown us into concentration camps simply because of our blood. It was galling, infuriating, and frustrating. Scapegoats we were, and imprisoned scapegoats to boot.”¹ These words were written by Minoru Masuda, a United States citizen of Japanese descent, who was evacuated from Seattle and interned along with over 100,000 other individuals of Japanese descent during World War II. The raw emotion expressed above was not typical of internees, in fact, many of them presented stoic and accepting countenances during their ordeal. When confronted with unjust imprisonment, many Japanese-Americans and other individuals of Japanese descent evacuated from Seattle in 1942 faced evacuation and internment with a spirit of harmony.

Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Executive Order 9066 militarized the western regions of Washington, Oregon, and California, as well as the southern third of Arizona, and authorized the removal of any individual of Japanese ancestry from the militarized regions.² In 1942 there were three primary categories of individuals of Japanese ancestry living in the militarized zone of the western United States: immigrant Japanese born in Japan currently living in the United States (Issei), individuals of Japanese descent born in the United States and holding United States citizenship (Nisei), and Nisei who had traveled to Japan to receive their education and then returned to the United States (Kibei).³ At first, many in the Japanese community believed only the Issei would be removed from the militarized zones. One evacuee recalled: “I remember telling my father that since he was not a citizen ... he might be taken away as the others, but for him not to worry about the family and the business because we – his sons – would keep the family and the business together. I said that we were American citizens, that we

couldn't be touched, despite all the furor, because we were protected by the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.”⁴ History shows that this was not the case as all those of Japanese descent, American citizens included, were evacuated from Seattle and other cities in the militarized zone in 1942.

The evacuees were sent to temporary assembly centers established at fairgrounds, horse racing tracks, migrant worker camps, an abandoned Civilian Conservation Corps camp, a livestock exposition hall, and a mill site.⁵ In all there were seventeen assembly centers, each named after their physical location including the Portland Assembly Center, the Fresno Assembly Center, The Marysville Assembly Center, etc. Only the Puyallup Assembly Center, located just south of Seattle, Washington, was known by an alternate name: Camp Harmony.⁶

Between April and September 1942, over seven thousand Seattle-area individuals of Japanese descent began their internment at Camp Harmony.⁷ It is likely the camp was nicknamed “harmony” because of the importance of harmony or “wa” in Japanese culture in an attempt to influence internee behavior from the moment they arrived at the facility. It is unmistakable that the culture at Camp Harmony reflected how Japanese in America, even those who had never been to Japan and had limited or no ties with Japan, assimilated this practice into their own culture.

Harmony, or “wa,” is a central concept in Japanese culture. The face one shows in public is not necessarily a reflection of that individual's or that culture's actual beliefs. In Japanese society, individuals are expected to “rise above his or her own selfish feelings and, for the welfare of the majority, put on a good face” in order to “preserve the harmony of the group.”⁸ Just as harmony is an important element in Japanese society, it plays an important role in the

culture of Japanese Americans, including the Issei and Nisei, and was reflected in how they publicly dealt with the evacuation.

As they departed Seattle in April 1942 the evacuees were reported to be “their cheerful selves,” stoic under the circumstances.⁹ The local paper reported the evacuees to be in high spirits, “laughing and shouting and cheerful farewells” as if on their way to a picnic or party.¹⁰ Considering the fact that the evacuees had been forced to sell or abandon their homes, businesses, belongings, friends, schools, and any other ties they had in the Seattle area it is difficult to believe that, even if outwardly expressed at the time of departure, there was anything close to a festive air associated with the evacuation. Were the evacuees demonstrating “wa” or were these simply prejudiced reports from a community eager to see the Japanese descendants departing Seattle? Even if the reports were accurate what faced the evacuees on their arrival at Camp Harmony should have eliminated any positivity among the evacuees.

Camp Harmony was built on the dirt parking lots, grandstands, and livestock areas of the Puyallup fairgrounds. The living facilities consisted of hastily constructed tarpaper roofed shacks designed to house six families per unit. Each family was assigned to one 20 square foot room, built directly on the dirt with one small window, a partial partition between each family, and no plumbing.¹¹ When it rained, a frequent occurrence in springtime western Washington, water leaked through numerous cracks in the buildings and turned the dirt floors and walkways into mud, exacerbating an already miserable situation.¹² There was no privacy and little if any creature comforts. The only offense these people had committed was that they looked like the enemy. A majority of the internees were American citizens; many had been business owners, students, and professionals prior to the evacuation. The response to these living conditions should have been outrage. Yet, most remained “intensely loyal to the United States”¹³ Excerpts

from a letter written by an internee demonstrated how “wa” helped the writer put a public face on the situation: “The barracks ... were not what I expected them to be, but they are comfortable enough. The walls between the rooms don't quite reach the ceiling and if one talks loudly he can be heard at the other end of the barrack. Although the living quarters are close, one can live comfortably.” The writer goes on to state: “Everything is a little crude but it's all right for a little crudeness fits into the picture. Everyone seems to be contented and have adopted themselves to the change even though many things are lacking.”¹⁴

Harmony or “wa” is an essential element of Japanese culture and it is what enabled evacuees from Seattle to tolerate their untenable internment. At the beginning of this paper the words of Minoru Masuda illustrated how deeply he was by the injustices inflicted upon him and his family. Mr. Masuda voiced how “galling, infuriating, and frustrating” it was to be subjected to evacuation simply because of his physical appearance, however, “wa” created a dichotomy between his thoughts and actions as he went on to state: “the stigmatization of being branded disloyal and imprisoned evoked a sense of shame, as if the wrongful branding and the unjust act were somehow valid because of its sanction by American society...Added to the self-imposed cloak of shame was the altogether human defense of submerging anger and bitterness: allowing it to surface and bubble would bring forth pain too strong to bear and detract from the goal of survival and achievement in the postwar years.”¹⁵ The injustice of the evacuation evoked strong reactions among all internees but how those feelings were expressed was deeply affected by cultural beliefs. The actions displayed by those who lived at Camp Harmony along with the sentiments expressed by Mr. Masuda reflect an inner strength and an amazing ability of the evacuees to face the ultimate injustice with harmony.

¹ Minoru Masuda, *Letters from the 442nd*, p. 7

² Truman Library, 1942

³ Ibid.

⁴ Minoru Masuda, *Letters from the 442nd*, p. 4

⁵ National Park Service

⁶ J. Burton, *Confinement and Ethnicity: An Overview of World War II Japanese American Relocation Sites*.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ S. Bezruchka, "wa" or harmony in Japan

⁹ Joseph Conard, "Japanese Evacuation Report #11" Seattle Office of the American Friends Service Committee.

¹⁰ Seattle Times, "City's Jap Evacuees Start 'Housekeeping' in Puyallup." April 28, 1942, pg. 5.

¹¹ Joseph Conard, "Japanese Evacuation Report #11" Seattle Office of the American Friends Service Committee.

¹² *Camp Harmony (Puyallup Assembly Center)*, 1942.

¹³ Minidoka Internment NM, Expanded website <http://www.nps.gov/archive/miin/home.htm>. A vast majority of the Camp Harmony internees were relocated to Camp Minidoka, Idaho and many demonstrated their loyalty to the United States by volunteering for military service. "Of the ten relocation centers, Minidoka had the highest number of volunteers, about 1,000 internees – nearly ten percent of the camp's total population during its peak."

¹⁴ Letter dated May 14, 1942. Elizabeth Bayley Willis Papers. Acc. No. 2583-6, Box 1. UW Libraries Special Collections.

¹⁵ Minoru Masuda, *Letters from the 442nd*, p. 7

Bibliography

- Bezruchka, S. “*wa*” or harmony in Japan. <http://mailman2.u.washington.edu/pipermail/pophealth/2005-February/001048.html> (accessed 12 March 2010).
- Burton, J., M. Farrell, F. Lord, R. Lord. *Confinement and Ethnicity: An Overview of World War II Japanese American Relocation Sites*. National Park Service, www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/anthropology74/ce16.htm (accessed 12 March 2010).
- Conard, Joseph. Japanese Evacuation Report #11. Seattle Office of the American Friends Service Committee, Collector, Box 4, Hoover Institution Archives, dated Mary 11, 1942, <http://www.lib.washington.edu/exhibits/harmony/exhibit/transport/html> (accessed 12 March 2010).
- Harry S. Truman Library & Museum: *The War Relocation Authority & the incarceration of Japanese-Americans during WWII. 1942 Chronology*. http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/japanese_internment/1942.htm (accessed 28 February 2010).
- HistoryLink Essay: *Camp Harmony (Puyallup Assembly Center), 1942*. http://www.historylink.org/index.cfm?DisplayPage=pf_output.cfm&file_id=8748 (accessed 12 March 2010).
- Letter dated May 14, 1942. Elizabeth Bayley Willis Papers. Acc. No. 2583-6, Box 1. UW Libraries Special Collections, <http://www.lib.washington.edu/exhibits/harmony/Exhibit/willis.html> (accessed 10 March 2010).
- Masuda, Minoru. *Letters from the 442nd: The World War II Correspondence of a Japanese American Medic*. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2008.
- Seattle Times. *City’s Jap Evacuees Start ‘Housekeeping’ in Puyallup*, April 28, 1942, p. 5, <http://www.lib.washington.edu/exhibits/harmony/exhibit/transport.html> (accessed 12 March 2010).
- United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *Minidoka Internment, National Monument*, <http://www.nps.gov/archive/miin/home.htm> (accessed 10 March 2010).