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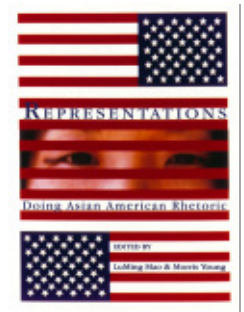
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RELOCATING AUTHORITY

Coauthor(iz)ing a Japanese American Ethos of Resistance under Mass Incarceration

Mira Chieko Shimabukuro

To say that the War department's announcement last week opening selective service to Japanese Americans brought instant joy to the hearts of all draft-age men would be misleading and inaccurate.

Many have waited hopefully for selective service to be opened. Others have hoped that it wouldn't; that it somehow would miss them and allow them to continue their pointless, purposeless lives behind the fences of relocation centers. . . .

Issues will provoke some to point out "why should their parents be confined behind barbed wire while the parents of other soldiers are free to go where and as they please. Why, since they may ultimately face the supreme sacrifice for this nation, their parents can't return to their former homes." The questions will be endless.

Endless questions against the inevitability of the draft are senseless. The draft is here and welcome.

—*Heart Mountain Sentinel*, 1942

January 1944—two years after Pearl Harbor and the subsequent reclassification of young American male citizens of Japanese ancestry as "aliens not acceptable to the armed forces, or any group of persons not acceptable" (Muller 2001, 41), the War Department made a startling announcement: these same men, most of whom were referred to as *Nisei* (second-generation Japanese Americans) in their own communities, were now reclassified back, "on the same basis as other citizens" (64), thus making them susceptible to the draft. However, during the official U.S. involvement in World War II, the majority of Japanese Americans were not living "on the same basis as other citizens," having been incarcerated en masse into War Relocation Authority (WRA) camps after being forcibly removed from

their homes along the West Coast during the spring of 1942. The news of the draft, throughout the incarcerated *Nikkei* (of Japanese ancestry) community, appeared to have been met at first with a kind of quiet resentment. But in some camps, like the one in Heart Mountain, Wyoming, the news would serve as the tipping point for an organized resistance to emerge, and with it, a resistant rhetoric that seemed to draw its authority from a multitude of both “friendly” and “hostile” sources. Amid these contending forces, several Japanese Americans stepped forward and claimed their rhetorical agency in the face of mass incarceration because they felt they had been authorized to do so.

The draft announcement was circulated to internees on January 22 via radio and camp newspapers, including the *Heart Mountain Sentinel*, which served a population of approximately ten thousand inmates. The *Sentinel's* contradictory claims, seen in the opening quotation, were made within a week of the announcement. However, it soon became clear that questions about the draft were not “senseless,” nor was the draft as “welcome” as the WRA-sponsored paper tried to proclaim. Less than three weeks after the War Department announced the draft, a committee of male, mostly Nisei, Heart Mountain residents, who would later describe themselves as a group “organized to inject justice in all the problems pertaining to our evacuation, concentration, detention and pauperization” (Fair Play Committee 1944), publicly emerged and began to speak out against the draft. These men called themselves the Heart Mountain Fair Play Committee (FPC) and went on to organize and articulate the only known collective Japanese American draft resistance during the World War II incarceration period.¹

Over the past seven years, the resistance by the FPC has begun to gather some recognition via PBS-supported documentaries by filmmakers Emiko Omori and Frank Abe, and via writers like Frank Chin, Lawson Inada, Mike Mackey, Arthur Hansen, and Eric Muller, but the history of Japanese American draft resistance during World War II remains a

1. While the FPC was the only group to explicitly refuse induction, collective responses that questioned the government's right to draft already-incarcerated citizens actually emerged in most of the camps. I have, as of this date, come across letters, resolutions, and petitions in various community archives that were written in at least five additional camps; however, more research is needed to study the extent and impact of these documents. In addition, individual acts of draft resistance (refusals of induction) took place at camps such as Tule Lake and Minidoka, but not in the same collectively organized manner as in Heart Mountain. See Hansen 2002 and Muller 2001.

controversial subject within the Nikkei community itself, in which there is disagreement regarding what is the best image to put forth in a country still struggling with its ongoing legacy of white supremacy. Decisions over what is and what is not the most correct response to the announcement of forced military service are never easy, but perhaps become even more difficult when one's entire community remains confined by barbed wire and guarded by armed soldiers. While I cannot begin to pass judgment on those who did decide to enlist under these historical conditions, I do want to consider how under these same conditions the members of the FPC might have come to claim their rhetorical agency, or their ability to act with words, and their resistant *ethos*, or the authority to explicitly resist oppression through writing. In using the often overused terms *resistant* and *resist*, I draw upon a discussion of Roger Gottlieb's work by camp studies scholar Arthur Hansen, who writes that to "qualify as authentic acts of resistance . . . [the] motivation must be to prevent, restrict, or terminate the oppressor's group exercise of power over the oppressed . . . [or to] 'lessen the total quality of oppression, not just shift it around.'" In addition, to resist, in Gottlieb's terms, means to "place oneself in jeopardy" at the hands of an oppressor (Gottlieb, quoted in Hansen 2002, 82). In this chapter, then, claiming a resistant ethos can be understood as claiming the authority to consciously "prevent, restrict, or terminate" an "exercise of power" over one's group, and to do so at some kind of material risk (for the FPC, further imprisonment), via an act of literacy in response to a specific moment in history.

To fully understand the nature of this resistant ethos and its material embodiment in the FPC writings, we should understand the ways in which the FPC's circulated bulletins were authorized, or sanctioned, not only by members themselves but by much of the camp community, and even the broader social conditions of the exact moment in history. This collective sanctioning, or coauthorization, was key to the FPC's emerging ethos, and developed out of several competing processes working to enable or suppress its draft resistance rhetoric. As Brandt and Clinton remind us, "literate practices can be shaped out of the struggle of competing interests and agents, . . . [and] multiple interests can be satisfied during a single performance of reading or writing. . . . 'Agency' does not have to be sacrificed through such an analysis, only recognized as multisourced" (2002, 350–351).

If we understand that rhetorical agency is multisourced, then we must understand the ways in which it contains multiple contradictions.

For any given rhetorical moment, we navigate between and across “concrete” and “abstract” processes that have bumped up against our lives, some of which, intentionally or unintentionally, encourage us to speak or write, to rhetorically act, and others which, intentionally or unintentionally, discourage us. Amid these competing tensions, we may or may not come to voice, or we may come to voice in some moments and not others. For the members of the FPC, the struggle between these contradictory processes seemed to provide the energy, and a kind of permission or authorization, that they needed to rhetorically act by using literacy to “go on the record” with their resistance.

The fact that the FPC did “go on the record” has allowed many of us Japanese Americans who identify with social justice activism to better understand not only our “intellectual heritage” (Royster 2000) but our political one as well. For many Japanese Americans, the “good war” of World War II continues to be one of the events pushing against our own sense of our authority to speak or write the realities of our lives, as the legacy of mass incarceration of almost an entire community continues to weigh heavily in any sense that we may have of ourselves. This is why it is all the more important to recover moments in Japanese American history when Nikkei claimed the rhetorical agency that they *did* have and articulated an explicitly resistant ethos in the face of oppression.

By exploring this history, I am following in the footsteps of several rhetoricians of color who mine the archives for examples of how people of color have performed “rhetorics of survivance” (Powell 2002), or have “construct[ed] a sense of an empowered self amid disempowering forces and use the energy generated by this process to act” (Royster 2000, 70), or have tried to find ways to “*create respect under conditions of little or no respect*” (Cintron 1997, x; emphasis in the original). These acts of “recovered legacies” (Lawrence and Cheung 2005) are critical to developing a fuller, and more accurate, understanding of rhetorical history. For Asian Americans specifically, these acts of recovery are important in that writing like that of the FPC helps document the ways in which people of Asian ancestry chose to “talk back” to both the symbolic and material incarnation of two racialized stereotypes that continue to frame Asian American experience in the United States—the “model minority” and the “perpetual foreigner.” In addition, understanding the ways in which social conditions called forth, “sponsored,” or coauthorized the struggle against racism can help us imagine how the social conditions of our own time might do the same, and thus enable us to continue the resistant

legacy of literacy that we have as racialized people living in a racist society. For those of us who have always hoped that our communities were not simply a group of “Quiet Americans” (Hosokawa 1969), complicit with each and every aspect of the incarceration period, recovering the written words of this resistant legacy can potentially help restore the psychic wholeness we need to engage in contemporary struggles of our own. In other words, archival recovery matters for *all* of us because we need to understand our human rhetorical heritage, but archival recovery matters for *some* of us in order to *recover* from both material and psychological damages. This is why through this research, even as many members of the FPC are still alive, I have come to claim them as *ancestors*, that is, as part of my rhetorical ancestry, *coauthor(iz)ers*, if you will, of what I am attempting to do here. It is in their name, then, that I write these words for you to recover.

THE EMERGENCE OF THE HEART MOUNTAIN FAIR PLAY COMMITTEE

The year before the draft was announced, Kiyoshi Okamoto, a fifty-four-year-old Nisei who had challenged many WRA policies since the beginning of the incarceration period, began giving talks on the Constitution to whoever would listen, calling himself the “Fair Play Committee of One.” One night, after an open debate with Nobu Kawai, one of the editors of the *Heart Mountain Sentinel*, on whether or not people should answer the infamous loyalty questionnaire with qualifications,² several younger Nisei, including Frank Emi, Paul Nakadate, and Isamu Horino, sought him out for weekly discussions. As historian Eric Muller wrote, these “younger men were drawn to Okamoto, seeing him as a visionary and a constitutional scholar, [even though] Okamoto had no legal training and developed his rather elaborate and some idiosyncratic

2. One of the more famous aspects of the incarceration period, the loyalty questionnaire was a form distributed to all inmates, purportedly designed to see if they were qualified to receive temporary clearances for leave from camp. Included on the form were the two most controversial questions, number 27, which asked if internees would be willing to serve in the U.S. armed services, and number 28, which asked if internees (many of whom were barred from U.S. citizenship) would forswear any allegiance to the Japanese emperor. Needless to say, these questions caused much distress in the community, dividing many family members and generations. People who answered no to both questions were removed from their respective camps and segregated as troublemakers in Tule Lake. Most FPC members had answered yes, but many had written in qualifications to their answers, saying they would fight only if their present circumstances were changed.

views on the Bill of Rights and the Constitution entirely from his own study" (2001, 77).

While the younger Nisei admired Okamoto for his righteous zeal in the face of oppression, the WRA and some *Sentinel* staff often portrayed him as "an 'intellectual hobo' and a 'latrine lawyer,' a man who was 'over-radical, unreasonable, irresponsible, and verbose'" (Muller 2001, 77). While much of this perception can be assumed to stem from the political anxiety that Okamoto must have instilled in WRA authorities, former FPC members also remember him as being in love with "salty expressions" (Emi 1998). Regardless, many of the draft-age Nisei in Heart Mountain were taken with his "great passion, creativity, and willingness to speak bluntly" (Muller 2001, 77). As former Heart Mountain resistor Mits Koshiyama put it, "I heard he had coarse language, but he was eloquent in preparing people to understand and study what the government was doing" (2001).

Some internment historians contend that this "preparation" would not have gone anywhere had a concrete issue not emerged while the FPC was holding its discussions (Nelson 1976, 119). But after the draft was announced, over the course of a week, the FPC transformed from a small study group to "a formal and militant resistance movement" authorized by a sizeable number of both Issei (first-generation, noncitizen) and Nisei (second-generation, citizen) internees. According to historian Douglas Nelson, "The change came on the evening of January 26, at a public meeting attended by almost 300 evacuees. The group voted to officially dedicate the Fair Play Committee to the clarification of 'certain issues raised by the decision to draft the Nisei'" (121).

Over the course of the next two months, the FPC not only responded to practically nightly invitations to give standing-room-only talks across camp (Emi 2002, 53), but also gave open public forums where the group's position was discussed and honed among audiences as large as four hundred Issei and Nisei, including a dues-paying membership that grew to 275 young men. For those who could not attend the meetings, or perhaps felt too nervous to do so, the FPC also issued a total of three mimeographed bulletins of its evolving position, posting them on the outside walls of barracks, latrines, and the mess hall. It is in the third and final bulletin, "one for all-all for one," that we can see the FPC's conscious resistance fully articulated.

Opening their one-page manifesto with two epigraphs from the Bill of Rights, the document moves on to declare that the Nisei have been

“complacent” and “too inarticulate” and that the time for “decisive action” is “NOW!” Following a sweeping detailed catalog of the ways the rights of Japanese Americans have been violated thus far, the FPC declares the draft to be the proverbial straw that broke the camel’s back. It is then that the FPC openly refuses to go to war while the Japanese American community is still incarcerated en masse:

[U]ntil we are restored all our rights, all discriminatory features of the Selective Service abolished, and measures are taken to remedy the past injustices thru Judicial pronouncement or Congressional act, we feel that the present program of drafting us from this concentration camp is unjust, unconstitutional, and against all principles of civilized usage. Therefore, WE MEMBERS OF THE FAIR PLAY COMMITTEE HEREBY REFUSE TO GO TO THE PHYSICAL EXAMINATION OR TO THE INDUCTION IF OR WHEN WE ARE CALLED IN ORDER TO CONTEST THE ISSUE (FPC 1944a, capital letters original³).

Even though the writers followed this paragraph by declaring that they were “all loyal Americans fighting for JUSTICE AND DEMOCRACY RIGHT HERE AT HOME” (FPC 1944a), it was this bulletin, and this exact wording, that eventually landed the seven-man steering committee of the FPC in prison. While sixty-three other FPC-member resisters were arrested for refusing induction, the FPC leadership was arrested, tried, and convicted for “conspiracy to counsel Heart Mountain’s draft-age Nisei to evade the draft” (Muller 2001, 114). In other words, it is because of this final bulletin, the focus of my study, that the FPC leaders were convicted for their rhetorical actions.

THE COAUTHORIZATION OF A RESISTANT ETHOS

Damage as an Authorizing Force

To understand the members of the Fair Play Committee’s emergence as rhetorical actors, and the simultaneous construction of their resistant ethos “amid disempowering forces,” I want to first consider the role that oppression, along with its local and distant agents, plays in both “authoring” and “authorizing” resistant rhetoric.

First and foremost, “minority discourse,” Abdul JanMohamed and David Lloyd assert, “is a product of damage.” This damage, they go on to explain, is “more or less systematically inflicted . . . by the dominant

3. All capital letters in excerpts from the FPC manifesto are retained as they were printed in the original.

culture. The destruction involved is manifold, bearing down on variant modes of social formation, dismantling previously functional economic systems, and deracinating whole populations at best or decimating them at worst" (1990, 4).

It is in *this* context that the discourse of "minorities" is formed and expressed, articulating the pain, anger, frustration, and/or rage that boil up in oneself or in a community facing that "damage."⁴ Both local and distant agents can perpetuate that damage and discourage us from claiming or locating any authority within ourselves over our actions, material and/or rhetorical. Locally, in Heart Mountain itself, the Fair Play Committee experienced one of those agents of "damage" to be the WRA-sponsored paper itself, the *Heart Mountain Sentinel*.

One week after the FPC issued its third and final bulletin, the *Sentinel* responded with a front-page editorial, "Our Cards on the Table," accusing the FPC of "deluding" Nisei youth by drawing them "unsuspecting into a tangle of intrigue" (1944). The following week FPC vice president, Paul Nakadate, accused the *Sentinel* of painting a distorted picture not only of the amount of support that the draft had throughout the camp, but also of the FPC's position itself. In doing so, Nakadate explicitly questioned the *Sentinel's* allegiances: "With the FPC in demand for nightly educational bookings at the request of the Block, the Sentinel could have very easily learned the true stand of the organization. . . . If the Sentinel is going to be the Sentinel of this camp I should like to have it come out clean and straight. Why cannot the outside public know of our genuine feeling instead of putting an artificial front in accordance with WRA policy" (1944).

The *Heart Mountain Sentinel* did seem to be serving as a medium through which a pro-WRA policy position could be fostered, though former editors have more recently denied this accusation (see Hosokawa 1998). Whether or not the WRA-sponsored *Sentinel* stayed consistent with WRA newspaper policy to "provide a medium through which WRA can direct public opinion within the evacuee group, and stimulate reactions and attitudes desirable for the maintenance of a high morale" (quoted in Mizuno 2001, 507) is less important for the purposes of this

4. "Minority discourse is in this respect a mode of ideology in the sense in which Marx in 'On the Jewish Question' describes religion—at once the sublimation and the expression of misery—but with the critical difference that in the case of minority forms even the sublimation of misery needs to be understood as primarily a strategy for survival, for the preservation in some form or other of cultural identity, and for political critique" (JanMohamed and Lloyd 1990, 5; emphasis in the original).

chapter than is the reality that the FPC *perceived* that the *Sentinel* was doing so. And given the tone and attitudes professed in earlier articles and editorials leading up to the FPC's public emergence of its resistant rhetoric, this perception is more than understandable.

The week after the draft was announced, and a month before the FPC issued its third bulletin, the *Sentinel* ran a front-page story profiling a young Nisei, a former "newshound for the Sentinel," who had volunteered for the military even amid his conflicted feelings about serving while his community lived behind barbed wire. Engaging a kind of proto-model minority rhetoric, the *Sentinel* began its tale of honor: "One of the most striking proofs that America has met with success in teaching its people loyalty to democratic traditions is found, we believe, in the Japanese American evacuees whose faith in American democracy remains solid and real despite the rankling injustice of evacuation" (Kitasako 1944, 1).

Continuing, the *Sentinel* moved back and forth between acknowledging the hardship and the confusion the Nisei faced as they navigated their decision:

The economic losses cut deep, but equally as painful was the severe beating his [the young Nisei who was the subject of the article] faith in American democracy suffered. To a youth who had been nourished on the tenets of democracy, evacuation was something which threw him way off. He found it hard to get his bearings. Things happened too fast, too crazily, too un-Americanly.

Where was the sanctity of United States citizenship, where was the justice of American democracy? Was it all talk after all?

It was disappointing, heartbreaking. America had rudely let him down.

But in the cool light of second thought, he realized the futility of protesting. He rationalized, and decided to fall in line with what the government wanted evacuees to believe: that evacuation was a military necessity.

"You can't buck the army. It's [*sic*] word is final. But I'll always feel that evacuation was not fair."

But the healing salve of time went to work on his wounds, and as the months went tumbling by, even amid the penal atmosphere of this camp, his battered faith was patched up almost as good as new. . . .

"It takes a maximum of faith to volunteer after you've been stuck into a camp like this, and in face of that sentiment," he said. "But if you want to be an American, you have to show it, and the best way to prove it is to offer your life for your country." (Kitasako 1944, 1, 5)

With this article, the *Sentinel* seems to address the “endless questions” it anticipates the Nisei having in its editorial of the week before. But the answer was simple: faith in American democracy is best shown by offering your life for your country. Certainly not by protesting what everyone, even the staff of the *Sentinel*, seemed to agree was an injustice. With this kind of tacit silencing of dissent, “if you want to be an American,” the *Sentinel* perpetuated the idea that Japanese Americans should just accept the realities of their oppressive situation.

It’s important to note, though, that the *Sentinel* was only a local incarnation of government policies put forth by the WRA and the Office of War Information policy (see Mizuno 2001). The true oppressive culprit here was not the *Sentinel* but the U.S. government, with its history and contemporary reality of institutionalized racism toward the Nikkei and other people racialized within the United States as “minorities.” After all, this entire situation took place during a time of war, when racialized animosity was heightened toward people of Japanese ancestry no matter what they professed the best response to be. Eleven months before the draft announcement, the head of the western Defense Command, General DeWitt, uttered his famous words before Congress: “A Jap’s a Jap. . . . There is no way to determine their loyalty. . . . It makes no difference whether he is an American citizen; theoretically he is still a Japanese and you can’t change him” (quoted in Niiya 2001, 66), and the year before that, right before the forced removal was announced, the *LA Times*, which served an area of California where Heart Mountain Nisei had grown up, had written a similar argument on its editorial page:

A viper is nonetheless a viper wherever the egg is hatched. . . . So, a Japanese American born of Japanese parents, nurtured upon Japanese traditions, living in a transplanted Japanese atmosphere and thoroughly inoculated with Japanese . . . ideals, notwithstanding his normal brand of accidental citizenship almost inevitably and with the rarest exceptions grows up to be Japanese, and not an American in his . . . ideas, and is . . . menacing . . . unless . . . hamstrung. Thus, while it might cause injustice to a few to treat them all as potential enemies . . . I cannot escape the conclusion . . . that such treatment . . . should be accorded to each and all of them while we are at war with their race. (59)

Publicly, Nikkei loyalty to the United States was continually questioned, regardless of the fact that a twenty-five-page government report

had been conducted a month before the attacks on Pearl Harbor and circulated among high officials of the State and War departments prior to the incarceration decision, concluding that “there was no Japanese problem” in regard to loyalty (see Weglyn 1976). While the Nikkei community was unaware of the report at the time, it was aware of the absurdity of the mass suspicion and the effects of the racist hysteria its members continued to face even inside the camps.

Given this historical context, some might find the “advice” of the *Sentinel* editors to be reasonable. All of these processes do seem to discourage Japanese Americans from acting in any explicit opposition, especially given the cultural norms of *shikataganai* (It can’t be helped) and *gaman* (Endure) which were so prevalent in the community at this time.⁵ But when a newspaper that is sponsored by one’s oppressors baits its readers’ allegiances (“if you want to be an American”), declares the “endless questions” of the draft as “senseless,” and portrays those that do question the draft as manipulative provocateurs, it does seem as if the editorial staff has become conscious or unconscious agents of the damage being inflicted. And despite all implicit and explicit warnings, the FPC was not going to remain “complacent” or “inarticulate” and instead would move to actively respond to these types of silencing processes designed to discourage it from engaging in a rhetoric of resistance via local and distant agents.

Well aware of the *Sentinel*’s position on the draft, the FPC knew that part of what was at stake in organizing an effective movement was its disagreements with the WRA-sponsored editorial staff as to the nature of *true* American behavior—that is, what being a “loyal” American entailed. Anticipating its detractors, the FPC explicitly addressed the issue in the second half of its manifesto:

We are not being disloyal. We are not evading the draft. We are all loyal Americans fighting for JUSTICE AND DEMOCRACY RIGHT HERE AT HOME. So, restore our rights as such, rectify the injustices of evacuation,

5. In his discussion of “cultures of resistance,” Takashi Fujitani cautions us to remember that all cultures are in a constant state of change, impacted by their specific historical circumstances. So while these cultural norms probably were in effect during the incarceration period, we should also understand them as kinds of “invented traditions” born from a century of competing nationalisms. We should also be aware, Fujitani argues, that the concept of *ganbaru* (to persevere in struggle), was another cultural “norm” with which some Nikkei identified, suggesting a more active engagement than is often associated, stereotypically, with Japanese Americans (2002, 24).

of the concentration, of the detention, and of the pauperization as such. In short, treat us in accordance with the principles of the Constitution.

If what we are voicing is wrong, if what we ask is disloyal, if what we think is unpatriotic, then Abraham Lincoln, one of our greatest American President [sic] was also guilty as such, for he said, "If by the mere force of numbers a majority should deprive a minority of any Constitutional right, it might in a moral point of view justify a revolution." (FPC 1944b)

Calling upon "the principles of the Constitution" and the denial of "[c]onstitutional right[s]," the FPC denied the disloyalty of which it knew it would be accused. In this way, the FPC's resistant rhetoric can be seen as authorized, or called forth, in part by the rhetorical processes of the *Sentinel*, which had encouraged Nisei to emerge from their "questioning" with a "maximum of faith" in American democracy and with the willingness to offer their lives for their country. This local position simply incensed most members of the FPC.

While it's important to avoid the oversimplification of characterizing the *Sentinel* staff as WRA "dupes," it is equally important to see how the positions set forth by the *Sentinel* were connected to distant and more "global" forces. To understand the ways in which large-scale oppression can work to coauthorize an oppressed group of people to claim rhetorical agency, we can read the FPC bulletin through JanMohamed and Lloyd's theory of "minority discourse":

Out of the damage inflicted on minority cultures, which, as Fanon so clearly recognized, prevents their "development" according to the western model of individual and racial identity, emerges the possibility of a collective subjectivity formed in practice rather than contemplation. . . .

[T]he collective nature of all minority discourse also derives from the fact that minority individuals are always treated and forced to experience themselves generically. Coerced into a negative, generic subject-position, the oppressed individual responds by transforming that position into a positive, collective one. (1990, 9–10)

This "transformation" can be seen in the first half of the bulletin. Here the FPC testifies to its given "negative, generic subject-position" of a collection of oppressed "one hundred and ten thousand innocent" individuals, who, as the FPC recounts, "were kicked out of their homes, literally uprooted from where they have lived for the greater part of their life, and herded like dangerous criminals into concentration camps with

barbed wire fences and military police guarding it,” and then the group transforms that position into a “positive, collective one” in the “practice” of its rhetorical act:

We, the Nisei have been complacent and too inarticulate to the unconstitutional acts that we were subjected to. If ever there was a time or cause for decisive action, IT IS NOW!

We, the members of the FPC are not afraid to go war—we are not afraid to risk our lives for our country. We would gladly sacrifice our lives to protect and uphold the principles and ideals of our country as set forth in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, for on its inviolability depends the freedom, liberty, justice, and protection of all people *including Japanese-Americans and all other minority groups* . . . unless such actions are opposed **NOW**, and steps taken to remedy such injustices and discriminations **IMMEDIATELY**, *the future of all minorities* and the future of this democratic nation is in danger. (1944; italics added)

As one part of a body of people “forced to experience themselves generically,” the FPC claims its coauthorized ethos on the grounds of that experience, employing repetition to build a sense of indignation as the particularities of both the authors’ and intended audience’s oppression are recounted: “Without any hearings, without due process of law as guaranteed by the Constitution and Bill of Rights, without any charges filed against us, without any evidence of wrongdoing on our part . . .”. This indignation then erupts into the use of all capital letters, rhetorically symbolizing the FPC’s collective rage, with which, hopefully, the audience now identifies:

AND THEN, WITHOUT RECTIFICATION OF THE INJUSTICES COMMITTED AGAINST US NOR WITHOUT RESTORATION OF OUR RIGHTS AS GUARANTEED BY THE CONSTITUTION, WE ARE ORDERED TO JOIN THE ARMY THRU **DISCRIMINATORY PROCEDURES** INTO A **SEGREGATED COMBAT UNIT!** (1944)

Thus, in this passage, the FPC is able to rhetorically claim its experiences with racialized oppression and “[o]ut of the damage inflicted,” authorize itself to claim its rhetorical agency to resist through the written word.

In order to more fully understand how the FPC did this, though, we must consider additional ways in which its rhetorical agency was “multisourced.” If some experiences worked to coauthorize the FPC’s resistant ethos by attempting to deny its members’ right to live as full

human beings, other experiences coauthorized their burgeoning ethos by doing the opposite—encouraging the Nisei to fully claim that right, and in doing so, encourage their resistant ethos. This “encouragement” can be better understood by considering some of the rhetorical choices in the final FPC bulletin.

Sponsorship as an Authorizing Force

Accumulated layers of sponsoring influences—in families, workplaces, schools, memory—carry forms of literacy that have been shaped out of ideological and economic struggles of the past. (Brandt 2001, 567)

Having grown up as the children of immigrants during the 1920s and '30s, the majority of the FPC leaders would have been immersed in the ideology of the Americanization movement in public schools. In California, where most of the members of the FPC were from, the movement provided educators with “a rhetorical framework for those who worked with immigrants. Some general characteristics of Americanization included staunch support for democracy, representative government, law and order, capitalism, general health . . . and command of the English language. Public schools were a key component of Americanization, the aim of which was to transform immigrants into patriotic, loyal and intelligent citizens of the Republic” (Yoo 2000, 22).

According to the *Los Angeles School Journal*, by 1925, most children of immigrants in California had already become to a “considerable extent Americanized,” having had “placed upon them the imprint of American citizenship” in their “desire to live as Americans” (Shafer 1925, 10). Whether this was true or not, we can certainly imagine that the discourse of American citizenship and civics education, including discussions of the U.S. Constitution, was prevalent in the public schools and thus readily available to Nisei children of the time, including future FPC leaders Paul Nakadate and Frank Emi, who played key roles in the writing of the bulletins.

Interestingly enough, in addition to their “Americanist” experiences in the public schools, the Nisei along the West Coast may have also gotten a heavy dose of Americanization through the Japanese-language schools, which were attended by almost every Nisei child during this time period. Frequently under attack by xenophobic organizations along the West Coast, the Japanese-language schools were designed by the Issei leaders as a way to teach Japanese to the second generation

and instill in them cultural values deemed necessary to strengthen and maintain ethnic ties. While leaders in the community differed as to how much the schools should teach values associated with the militarism of the then Japanese empire (Azuma 2005), they also found themselves confronted with two ongoing characteristics of the American empire: white supremacy and American chauvinism. By 1921, the state legislature of California had passed laws to govern these non-state-funded community institutions, including those that would “regulate the operation of schools, the certification of teachers, and the content of instructional materials. . . . To be certified to teach in a school, all teachers had to pass a state examination in English competency (reading, writing, and speaking) as well as in American history and institutions in English. All textbooks and curricula had to be approved by the Superintendent of Public Instruction” (Ichioka 1988, 207).

By the mid-1920s, in response to the growing institutionalization of anti-Japanese racism, the language schools had revised their stated goals, now saying that they were “[b]ased on the spirit of American public schools,” with their “purpose” being more to “supplement good civic education” (Ichioka 1988, 207). In other words, the atmosphere of Americanism and its discourse had been present on some level in both types of schooling available to the future FPC Nisei, both of which may have added another kind of authorization to resist the draft, both rhetorically and materially.

As “one layer” of what Brandt would call a “sponsoring influence,” this kind of “Americanist” discourse can be seen throughout the FPC bulletin. The first thing Heart Mountain residents would have read in the FPC’s third and final bulletin are two epigraphs from the Bill of Rights:

“No person shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law, nor private property be taken for public use without just compensation.” Article V Bill of Rights.

“Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.” Article XIII Bill of Rights.

Continuing through the one-page mimeographed manifesto, readers would have encountered at least seven different references to the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, “constitutionality,” or “unconstitutionality,” including explicit reference to the ways in which the current Japanese American circumstances violated the supposed highest law of the land:

Without any hearings, *without due process of law as guaranteed by the Constitution and Bill of Rights*, without any charges filed against us, without any evidence of wrongdoing on our part, one hundred and ten thousand innocent people were kicked out of their homes . . .

WITHOUT RESTORATION OF OUR RIGHTS AS *GUARANTEED BY THE CONSTITUTION*, WE ARE ORDERED TO JOIN THE ARMY . . .

we feel that the present program of drafting us from this concentration camp is unjust, *unconstitutional* . . . (*italics added*)

In addition to the constitutional references threaded throughout the bulletin, another aspect of Americanist discourse appears with the invocation of Abraham Lincoln in the fifth paragraph—one that I discussed earlier in relation to FPC’s rhetorical move to appeal to the principles of the Constitution: “If what we are voicing is wrong, if what we ask is disloyal, if what we think is unpatriotic, then Abraham Lincoln, one of our greatest American President [sic] was also guilty as such, for he said, ‘If by the mere force of numbers a majority should deprive a minority on any Constitutional right, it might in a moral point of view justify a revolution.’”

Clearly drawing upon Lincoln’s stature as an iconic emancipator of slaves, the FPC seems to invoke Lincoln’s name and words not as a kind of legal authorization, as the group does with references to the Constitution, but as a kind of moral authorization to resist when rights are clearly being denied. Whether or not Lincoln can truly be considered a “great” American president (and whether or not the FPC truly believed this to be so) matters less than the fact that the FPC knew that within the rhetorical framework of Americanization, he was *considered* a great American president, having read about him in textbooks used in either the U.S. public or Japanese-language schools.⁶ Because the FPC knew that Lincoln was held in such regard within Americanist mythology, additional authorization was provided to establish a resistant ethos in its manifesto.

In addition to the more “distant” authorizing process of Americanization, though, there were also more “local” agents taking part in the enabling processes involved in the FPC’s coauthorization. Nisei FPC members—275 in all—paid dues of \$2 apiece, which was

6. Compilers and translators of a textbook approved by the California State Superintendent in 1923 for the state’s Japanese-language schools prominently featured “[s]tories about George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Betsy Ross and other American figures” (Ichioka 1988).

used to buy ink and paper for the mimeographed bulletins (Emi 1998). Additional financial support and authorization came from residents who were not officially members of the committee, but who seemed to at least secretly believe in its cause. Guntaro Kubota, the lone Issei on the steering committee, was responsible for drumming up Issei support, providing translation at all meetings and for all bulletins. His wife later described how important Issei sponsorship was: “[T]hat’s the only way they can make the money, raise the money, ’cause the Isseis have the money, the Niseis, they’re young . . . they didn’t have any money.” And after listening to Kubota, many Issei did authorize the committee’s rhetorical and material actions. As Gloria Kubota explained, the FPC and her husband “got quite a few people, older ladies to follow him around and donate, and it was really cute how some of these old people . . . the ones that believed in him, they just followed him around . . . there were thirty blocks in our Heart Mountain, and it used to be cold but he’d go all over and they’d follow him around. Some people brought all the cash that they had and they’d give it to him” (1993).

But there was also the growing collective energy of the public meetings. By several accounts, there were approximately four hundred people present at the meeting where the decision to explicitly refuse to go was decided. While some say 99 percent voted for it, others say everyone did (Emi 1998; Nelson 1976, 122). Regardless, the FPC leaders afterward certainly would have felt authorized to incorporate explicitly resistant wording into “one for all-all for one,” and they certainly would have felt authorized to claim a collective ethos, their rhetorical authority to say, “*We, Nisei* . . .” and distribute their resistant rhetoric throughout Heart Mountain, the prison home in which they found themselves placed during World War II.

ETHOS AS HISTORICAL LOCATION

In some of her early work on the “politics of place,” Nedra Reynolds suggested the possibility of considering “ethos as location”: “Ethos in fact, occurs in the ‘between’ . . . as writers struggle to identify their own positions at the intersections of various communities and attempt to establish authority for themselves and their claims” (1993, 333). Following Reynolds, we can see how the FPC’s construction of a resistant ethos took place at the intersection not just of various communities, but of several processes discussed above. But in addition to these “discouraging” and “encouraging” authorizations, I’d like to extend Reynolds’s point

here and suggest that in considering the construction of ethos, location matters not just in terms of space, but also in terms of time—historical location matters.

In writing about Asian American literacy narratives, Morris Young describes the genre as an engagement in a metaphorical “rhetoric of citizenship” in response to the ongoing anti-Asian racism in the United States that constructs anyone of Asian ancestry as being a “perpetual foreigner,” no matter how many generations his or her family has lived in the United States. For Japanese Americans during World War II, this “construction” was foregrounded in the racist rhetoric of military leaders and the mainstream press, and materialized in the mass incarceration of all West Coast Nikkei, citizen and noncitizen alike. As a group, people of Japanese ancestry were continually questioned as to whether they could be truly American (read: *human*) with “faces of the enemy” (Hayashi 1992). For some Japanese Americans, being a “loyal” American meant “cooperating” with the WRA and all government policies; for members of the FPC, being a “loyal” American meant calling upon the discourse of the American Constitution and of the Americanist ideologies in which most of them had been schooled, thus exposing the racist hypocrisy of Americanist discourse at the time.

In this age of anti-immigrant rhetoric and legislation, as in the one that brought us the mass incarceration of citizens and noncitizens alike, for many Asian Americans, a “rhetoric of citizenship” may simply symbolize the right to be treated as an equal human being. This was the rhetoric of the Americanist curriculum most Nisei had learned in school. And this was the “master’s house” that they knew, the one where they lived. And these were the tools, the “codes of power,” that they had.

But what remains true with the use of all codes of power remains true with the use of Americanist discourse—the relations of power tend to be reified and stay intact. When we lay claim to Americanist ideologies, all of us born with U.S. citizenship, despite any antiracist intentions we have, inherit the legacies (become the benefactors) of things done in our name, whether it has been recognized as our name or not. As Kandace Chuh asserts, “By claiming ownership of US national identity, Asian Americanists must also then claim responsibility for the cultural and material imperialism of this nation” (quoted in Fujikane 2005, 94).

Of course, this is not to argue that the FPC was wholeheartedly guilty of imperialist design via its reliance on constitutional discourse. On the contrary, there is no question in my mind that the FPC was asserting its

rhetorical agency to resist racist oppression, *especially given its exact historical location*. After all, the men put themselves at material and bodily risk, with every intention of thwarting the oppressions carried out by the War Relocation Authority and were subsequently tried and convicted for conspiracy in a time of war. They enacted their agency to resist via a rhetorical act. But I am also reminded of Perry Anderson, who noted that the term *agent* “possess[es] two opposite connotations. It signifies at once active initiator and passive instrument” (1980, 18). Or, as Brandt and Clinton so ominously assert, “When we use literacy, we also get used” (2002, 350). Of this duplicitous potential, whenever we make a claim on our rhetorical agency, even if it is, in that moment, designed to resist, we should always be aware. This is the complicated path we continue to walk, even today, as we find ourselves at the intersections of many processes working to enable and disable our sense of authority to speak and write.

However, for the FPC and the construction of its resistant ethos in a time of mass incarceration, we must understand that the most pressing contradiction was the absurdity, the *audacity*, of the U.S. government stripping a group of humans of the rights they had been taught all their lives were *inalienable*, force them into so-called relocation camps, surrounded by barbed wire and armed guards, and then tell them they would restore *one* of their rights—the “right to be shot at” (Weglyn 1976, 136). It is within this historical location, this location of *damage*, this intersection of a wild mix of various, and jostling, sponsorships, or literacy authorizations, that we must understand the construction of the Fair Play Committee’s resistant ethos.

So while forces like the narrow definitions of “loyalty” were being articulated through the War Relocation Authority–sponsored *Heart Mountain Sentinel*, and calls for *gaman* and *shikataganai* may have echoed from some Issei lips, and the racist rhetoric of politicians and military officials continued to circulate in the minds of many who were incarcerated supposedly for their own safety, these forces undoubtedly combined into a collective message of “Don’t speak, don’t write” anything that could make things worse. Things are bad enough as it is. All of the above, intentional or not, was serving to limit, serving to damage any rhetorical agency and authority that the Nisei might have claimed.

And yet, this same damage also called forth other forces, which pushed against those attempting to limit the authority that the Nisei could claim. Forces saying, *Speak, write—you must*. Issei donations, the

angst and determination of 275 young Nisei men, the “salty expressions” of a “latrine lawyer,” and all the aspects of Americanization itself—all of them saying, *Yes, you, Nisei, you*. You do not deserve what is happening to you. You do not deserve it, and you can change it. You must have your conscience and write it, too. You can gather up all the energy “generated by this process” to claim and name your ethos, incarcerated and incensed, because you have been *coauthorized* to do so.

CONCLUSION: RELOCATING AUTHORITY

The FPC’s relocation of authority, the naming and claiming of a resistant ethos in a time of war, serves as a key part of our legacy as Asian Americans. In our own time and place, the United States of the post-9/11 world, this legacy remains important to invoke, for we have seen a new round of racial profiling and the partial rounding up of another group of racialized peoples,⁷ not to mention the ongoing political justifications of what is now clearly an illegal war. In times like these, when civil rights erode, when race, gender, sexuality, and class-based inequalities deepen, when a vastly unpopular war expands, all forms of paralysis that any of us might feel are understandable. However, trite as the saying may be, wherever there is oppression, there is indeed resistance. In June 2006, another Asian American, Lt. Ehren Watada, became the first commissioned officer to refuse deployment to Iraq after he had set about to “learn all that he could about the war and what he and those he commanded would likely face” (“About” 2007). As an officer, Watada had his own form of “coauthorizations,” including sanctioned time to “read widely,” and he soon became convinced that the war in Iraq was illegal. And like the FPC, he decided to put himself at material and bodily risk as he publicly refused to be sent to war.⁸ While Watada is only one person, he is part of a growing antiwar movement among the people of the United States’ own military (Cooper 2007). Certainly information about this movement should be a larger part of mass public knowledge than it currently is; however, many of these accounts of opposition and

7. “In the two months following September 11, more than twelve hundred Muslim, Arab, and South Asian men were detained and held indefinitely” (Nguyen 2005, xvii).

8. While the parallels between the FPC and Watada are not exact, Watada himself sees the similarities: “[The resisters] said ‘we’re Japanese American’ and we are part of this country no matter what the president says. They faced ostracization and imprisonment, but it was shown many years later that they were correct. . . . What I’m doing is no different” (quoted in Hamamoto 2006).

resistance have been written about and made available via the Internet and various print sources. These encoded acts of resistance mean that stories like that of Watada's and the FPC's hold the potential to "travel, integrate and endure" (Brandt and Clinton 2002, 337) and join a written legacy of Asian American resistance. And as long as these written accounts are not destroyed or erased, the potential remains for them to be recovered for both material and psychological purposes.

So no matter what amount of "damage" we do in fact face, one potential source of our recovery lies in our rhetorical history, our legacy of resistance encoded in our own community's "ways with words." Understanding this legacy of our written rhetoric helps us as Asian Americans, too long constructed as model minorities and/or perpetual foreigners, trace our own set of coauthorizations, our political and intellectual ancestries, which, in turn, helps make possible what we so sorely need in order to act, and write: the relocation of authority back into our bodies and ourselves.

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FAIR PLAY COMMITTEE
 "one for all—all for one"

"No person shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law, nor private property be taken for public use without just compensation." Article V Bill of Rights.

"Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction." Article XIII Bill of Rights.

We, the Nisei have been complacent and too inarticulate to the unconstitutional acts that we were subjected to. If ever there was a time or cause for decisive action, IT IS NOW!

We, the members of the FPC are not afraid to go to war—we are not afraid to risk our lives for our country. We would gladly sacrifice our lives to protect and uphold the principles and ideals of our country as set forth in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, for on its inviolability depends the freedom, liberty, justice, and protection of all people including Japanese-Americans and all other minority groups. But have we been given such freedom, such liberty, such justice, such protection? NO!! Without any hearings, without due process of law as guaranteed by the Constitution and Bill of Rights, without any charges filed against us, without any evidence of wrongdoing on our part, one hundred and ten thousand innocent people were kicked out of their homes, literally uprooted from where they have lived for the greater part of their life, and herded like dangerous criminals into concentration camps with barbed wire fences and military police guarding it, AND THEN, WITHOUT RECTIFICATION OF THE INJUSTICES COMMITTED AGAINST US NOR WITHOUT RESTORATION OF OUR RIGHTS AS GUARANTEED BY THE CONSTITUTION, WE ARE ORDERED TO JOIN THE ARMY THRU DISCRIMINATORY PROCEDURES INTO A SEGREGATED COMBAT UNIT! Is that the American way? NO! The FPC believes that unless such actions are opposed NOW, and steps taken to remedy such injustices and discriminations IMMEDIATELY, the future of all minorities and the future of this democratic nation is in danger.

Thus, the members of the FPC unanimously decided at their last open meeting that until we are restored all our rights, all discriminatory features of the Selective Service abolished, and measures are taken to remedy the past injustices thru Judicial pronouncement or Congressional act, we feel that the present program of drafting us from this concentration camp is unjust, unconstitutional, and against all principles of civilized usage. Therefore, WE MEMBERS OF THE FAIR PLAY COMMITTEE HEREBY REFUSE TO GO TO THE PHYSICAL EXAMINATION OR TO THE INDUCTION IF OR WHEN WE ARE CALLED IN ORDER TO CONTEST THE ISSUE.

We are not being disloyal. We are not evading the draft. We are all loyal Americans fighting for JUSTICE AND DEMOCRACY RIGHT HERE AT HOME. So, restore our rights as such, rectify the injustices of evacuation, of the concentration, of the detention, and of the pauperization as such. In short, treat us in accordance with the principles of the Constitution.

If what we are voicing is wrong, if what we ask is disloyal, if what we think is unpatriotic, then Abraham Lincoln, one of our greatest American President [sic] was also guilty as such, for he said, "If by the mere force of numbers a majority should deprive a minority on any Constitutional right, it might in a moral point of view justify a revolution."

Among the one thousand odd members of the Fair Play Committee, there are Nisei men over the draft age and Nisei girls who are not directly affected by the present Selective Service program, but who believe in the ideals and principles of our country, therefore are helping the FPC in our fight against injustice and discriminations.

We hope that all persons whose ideals and interests are with us will do all they can to help us. We may have to engage in court actions but as such actions require large sums of money, we do need financial support and when the time comes we hope that you will back us up to the limit.

ATTENTION MEMBERS! FAIR PLAY COMMITTEE MEETING SUNDAY, MARCH 5, 2:00 P.M. BLOCK 6-30 MESS. PARENTS, BROTHERS, SISTERS, AND FRIENDS INVITED