JAPANESE INCARCERATION AND THE "WAKASA INCIDENT":

TRAUMATIC MEMORY IN LITERATURE AND THE ARCHIVE

by

Jessica Thelen

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English

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by

Jessica Thelen

Approved: ____

John Ernest, Ph.D.
Department Chair
Chair of the Department of English

Approved: ____

Debra Hess Norris
Interim Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences

Approved: ____

Louis F. Rossi, Ph.D.
Vice Provost for Graduate and Professional Education and
Dean of the Graduate College

Signed: ____

Peter X Feng, Ph.D.
Professor in charge of dissertation

I certify that I have read this dissertation and that in my opinion it meets the academic and professional standard required by the University as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Signed: ____

Emily Davis, Ph.D.
Member of dissertation committee

I certify that I have read this dissertation and that in my opinion it meets the academic and professional standard required by the University as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Signed: ____

David Kim, Ph.D.
Member of dissertation committee

I certify that I have read this dissertation and that in my opinion it meets the academic and professional standard required by the University as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Signed: ____

Julie McGee, Ph.D.
Member of dissertation committee

I certify that I have read this dissertation and that in my opinion it meets the academic and professional standard required by the University as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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ABSTRACT

“Japanese Incarceration and the ‘Wakasa Incident’: Traumatic Memory in Literature and the Archive” explores representations of the traumatic memory and silences surrounding Japanese Incarceration in the United States during World War II, specifically in Miné Okubo’s graphic memoir *Citizen 13660* (1946), Julie Otsuka’s novel *When The Emperor was Divine* (2002), and Kiku Hughes’s graphic novel *Displacement* (2020). I use the “Wakasa Incident”—when 63-year-old Issei (first generation) James Wakasa was shot to death by a military police sentry on April 11, 1943, 7:30 PM, at the Topaz “Relocation Center” (incarceration camp) in Utah. Each of my primary texts covers the “Wakasa Incident” and the psychological trauma it caused Topazans and their descendants from different perspectives: from those who were there and those experiencing generational trauma years later. In these texts, Wakasa’s death haunts the memories of Topazans and their descendants, as well as the historical memory of Japanese Incarceration as a whole. This haunting is evidenced by how Wakasa’s death keeps resurfacing years later. I explore the details of the “Wakasa Incident”—who was involved, how it was represented in newspaper coverage and archival documents, and its legacy—in the digital component of this project: *James Wakasa, History, and Memory*. This is a digital exhibit that features a timeline of the events that took place in the wake of Wakasa’s death, interactive visualizations on

who was involved in the “Wakasa Incident,” an interactive map of newspaper coverage, information from declassified government archival documents, and analyses why Wakasa continues to be remembered.

Chapter 1

MEMORY, TRAUMA, AND JAPANESE INCARCERATION: A THEORETICAL APPROACH

Introduction

The representations of traumatic memory and silence in Julie Otsuka's novel *When The Emperor was Divine* (2002) and Kiku Hughes's graphic novel *Displacement* (2020) help us to understand the generational trauma the loss of Wakasa—through an incredibly violent death—has instigated in survivors of Japanese Incarceration and their descendants. The unnamed family in Otsuka's novel, particularly the father, represent the interrelatedness of silence and traumatic memory: how these silences can then persist and not only impact oneself, but one's family. This is also portrayed in Hughes's graphic novel through the fictionalized versions of Kiku herself and her mother: how these silences can create rifts in familial relationships, and that it takes honest communication about generational trauma to begin to repair these rifts.[1] This trauma, which takes the form of silence in Otsuka's and Hughes's texts, however, does not need to be verbally articulated to be communicated or understood. This goes against predominant theories of psychoanalysis and current therapeutic practices which assert that to communicate one's trauma, one needs to

[1] Although Kiku and her mother did not live through Japanese Incarceration themselves, Kiku's maternal grandmother Ernestina and great-grandparents did, and stories about Wakasa's death were thus passed down through the family.

speak it aloud to someone who can listen and help process it, like a family member or mental health professional. The family in Otsuka's novel can make sense of the father's trauma even though he never speaks of what happened to him while incarcerated separately from his family; they observe and interact with him, and readily see how his personality and behavior has changed since being incarcerated—he does not need to speak his trauma aloud, to verbalize it, for his family to know that he is in psychological pain. The trauma of Japanese Incarceration is made sense of in Hughes's graphic novel through "displacements," which, although Kiku and her mom discuss them at the end of the text, need to be experienced to be understood.

Otsuka and Hughes take different approaches to the exploration of familial and generational trauma in their texts. Otsuka focuses on a fictional, nameless family who is first incarcerated at the Tanforan racetrack in San Bruno, California and then at the Topaz camp in Delta, Utah. The trauma of incarceration is mainly brought to the forefront by the father, who is taken during the "round up" (the period post-Pearl Harbor in which FBI agents arrested Japanese and Japanese American men, namely community leaders and businessmen, taking them from their homes, often in the middle of the night). At the end of the novel, the father is finally released after four years of being incarcerated separately from his family. He has physically and emotionally transformed, becoming a shadow of the man his wife and children once knew. Whereas Otsuka takes a more individualistic approach, Hughes explores the trauma of Japanese Incarceration through the theory of generational trauma: that memories of a particular trauma experienced by members of a family can be passed down, physically and emotionally impacting successive generations. Part of the trauma these individuals and families experience in these texts is the murder of James

Wakasa. Rather than focus on Wakasa's death and how that impacts each family, here I explore various types of traumatic silences and how they are represented in Otsuka and Hughes's texts, and what these traumatic silences, and the ways in which they are intimately intertwined with memory and forgetting, can tell us about the experience of Japanese Incarceration.

One of the types of forgetting that Paul Connerton articulates in "Seven types of forgetting" is "humiliated silence."[2] In Otsuka's novel, the father's refusal to discuss what he endured is one such example of "humiliated silence," as "such silencings, while they are a type of repression, can at the same time be a form of survival, and the desire to forget may be an essential ingredient in that process of survival."[3] Although the father never directly verbalizes his trauma, his difficulties sleeping, his nightmares, his withdrawal from family and community life, and his angry outbursts reveal just how traumatized he is from years spent behind barbed wire. Some of the other silences in Otsuka's novel, however, can be differently understood and categorized as "traumatized silences."[4] As Connerton describes in *The Spirit of Mourning: History, Memory, and the Body* (2011), these are neither forced upon or consciously chosen by the survivors of a trauma. "Traumatized silences" occur internally within the survivor: these silences "are a crucial feature of traumatic experience" and are part of the "element of delay."[5] This "element of delay" refers to the fact that trauma takes time to digest—to be fully taken into the body and mind.

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[2] Connerton, Paul. "Seven types of forgetting," *Memory Studies*, SAGE Publications, 2008, 59-71; 67.
[3] Connerton 68.
[4] Connerton, Paul. *The Spirit of Mourning: History, Memory, and the Body* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 72-73.
[5] Ibid.

The "element of delay" can persist over the span of generations: "Parents transmitted to their children only the wound, but refused them the memory."[6] In this way, children "grew up in the ambience of the unspeakable."[7] This is the case for Kiku and her relationship with her mother in *Displacement.*

Part of generational trauma is the telling, or, more frequently, the keeping silent about a particular traumatic event or series of events and how they have impacted family members. In *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (1992), psychoanalysts Shoshanna Felman and Dori Laub, M.D., assert that "the historic trauma of the Second World War" is "a trauma we consider as the watershed of our times…as a history which is essentially *not over*, a history whose repercussions are not simply omnipresent (whether consciously or not) in all our cultural activities, but whose traumatic consequences are still *evolving*…in today's political, historical, cultural, and artistic scene."[8] This seems to be the case with the continuous publication of texts focused on traumatic events that occurred during WWII, such as the Holocaust and Japanese Incarceration, including the recent publications of: *But I Live: Three Stories of Child Survivors of the Holocaust* (2022), edited by Charlotte Schallie; *We Hereby Refuse: Japanese American Resistance to Wartime Incarceration* (2021) by Frank Abe and Tamiko Nimura; and *Those Who Helped Us: Assisting Japanese Americans During World War II* (2022) by Ken Mochizuki and Kiku Hughes, just to name a few.[9] As my close

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[6] Connerton 2011, 73.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Felman, Shoshana and Laub, Dori MD. *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing In Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992), xiv.

[9] It is interesting to note that these texts are either graphic memoirs (*But I Live*) or graphic novels (the remaining texts mentioned). For more on historical trauma and the graphic format, see my next chapter.

readings of traumatic memory and silences in *When The Emperor was Divine* and *Displacement* show, Japanese Incarceration continues to impact second, third, and fourth generation Japanese Americans in terms of interactions between family members and one's relationship with American history as a whole.

When The Emperor was Divine

When The Emperor was Divine focuses on individual trauma, communal trauma, and familial trauma.[10] In this novel, the familial trauma only becomes more prevalent during what Tetsuden Kashima terms the "crisis of readjustment," which is the period from 1945-1955 when incarcerees were trying to rebuild their lives post-camp: finding new homes, new jobs, and navigating their new positionalities in their communities.[11] Japanese Incarceration was, indeed, a communal trauma that greatly impacted individual families, some more than others, as experienced by the family in *Emperor*.[12] The mental anguish of incarceration, violent anti-Japanese racism, and difficulties with finding housing post-Incarceration led to a "crisis of readjustment" to "everyday life."[13] As Kashima states, when incarcerees began to resettle in their West

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[10] I define individual trauma as trauma that is experienced by the individual themselves, communal trauma as trauma experienced by a community or group, and familial trauma as trauma experienced by one's family.

[11] Kashima, Tetsuden. "Japanese American Internees Return, 1945 to 1955: Readjustment and Social Amnesia," *Phylon*, vol. 41, no. 2, 2nd Qtr., 1980, 107-115.

[12] From this point forward, *When The Emperor was Divine* will be referred to as *Emperor*.

[13] Kashima 108-110.

Coast communities, "their initial reception, in many cases, was not warm."[14] Kashima finds that "from January through June, 1945…31 major terrorist attacks upon California relocatees" were reported.[15] Such "terrorist attacks" were also reported in the *Topaz Times*, so those still incarcerated up until Topaz's closure on October 31, 1945 were aware of the violent acts of anti-Japanese racism they could experience upon their return to the West Coast.[16]

One such article, "Four Men Arrested For Attack On Nisei Farmer In Auburn," was published on page 3 of the February 10, 1945 issue of the *Topaz Tim*es.[17] The article states that "four men have been charged with felony counts of arson and attempted dynamiting in the Doi case…" and that "…Doi and his family have had nightly protection since Jan. 18 from the state highway patrol and a special deputy sheriff…there have been no further incidents."[18] Not only were there incidents of arson and "attempted dynamiting," there were also shootings, as a March 10, 1945 article in the *Topaz Times*, "Shooting Threats On Evacuees In Visalia, Lancaster Reported," shows.[19] This article made the front page of the *Topaz Times* and details "the shooting incidents involving evacuees who returned to their former farms in

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[14] Kashima 109.

[15] Kashima 109, quoting Fisher, op. cit., p. 193.

[16] Topaz, *Densho*, Densho.org, Accessed 21 August 2023, https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Topaz/.

[17] "Four Men Arrested For Attack On Nisei Men In Auburn," *Topaz Times*, February 10 1945, Newspapers.com.

[18] Ibid.

[19] "Shooting Threats On Evacuees In Visalia, Lancaster Reported," *Topaz Times*, March 3, 1945, Newspapers.com.

Visalia and Lancaster, California." In Visalia, "three shots from a high-powered rifle were fired into the house occupied by [names illegible]…and 10 other Japanese."[20] Upon investigating the shooting, "the sheriff discovered a small unoccupied building near[by] had been burned by trespassers later the following night."[21] It is stated that no one was injured in the shooting, and that the owner of the farm had been incarcerated at the Poston camp in Arizona prior to his return to California.[22] Such shootings occurred in California throughout 1945. On the third page of the May 1, 1945 issue of the *Topaz Times*, an article, titled "Officers Investigate Attack On Evacuee Home," covers a shooting in Merced, California where four bullets were fired into a "Japanese American's home."[23] This was a drive-by shooting where no one was injured.[24] This article also covers a different shooting that occurred a week before in Livingston where two shots were fired into the ranch home of a returnee family.[25] On May 25, the *Topaz Times* published "Another Shooting Reported In Fresno," which made the front page.[26] The article reads: "Deputy sheriffs are seeking persons who fired four rifle bullets into the wall of a bedroom occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Masaru

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[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.
[23] "Officers Investigate Attack On Evacuee Home," *Topaz Times*, May 1, 1945, Newspapers.com.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.
[26] "Another Shooting In Fresno," *Topaz Times*, May 25, 1945, Newspapers.com.

Miyamoto, recently returned Japanese evacuees and their two children."[27] Upon investigation, Deputy Sheriff Hubert Nevins "said two of the bullets narrowly missed Mrs. Miyamoto…he said they fired from a passing automobile."[28] The Miyamoto family was incarcerated at the Gila River camp in Arizona prior to their return to the Fresno area.[29] Such reports of violence against returnees underscore how "feelings of insecurity and apprehension were manifest; mental suffering was felt by many as they faced the return to their preevacuation homes hearing tales of physical violence and damage to property."[30] However, as Kashima states, "the Pacific Coast was the only home they knew; and in spite of all their fears, return to it they did."[31]

Otsuka represents instances of violence against returnees in *Emperor* when the mother, daughter, and son return to their home in San Francisco. In this chapter, titled "In A Stranger's Backyard," the children (the daughter is a now a teenager and the son is now a preteen) and their mother return home to find that their house has been squatted in and left in horrible condition: "The house did not smell good…the paint was peeling away from the walls and the window frames were black with rot."[32] Despite this, the family insists that they do not care, since, unlike other returnees, they were lucky: they still had a home to return to and did not have to sleep in a hostel,

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[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Kashima 110.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Otsuka 108.

church or the YMCA.[33] The house was also robbed of much of the furniture and belongings they had stored for safe keeping in a locked room. In one of the rooms there were "words scrawled in red ink that made us turn away. 'We will paint them over,' said our mother, and several months later, when we had money to buy paint, we did, but for years we could not get those words out of our heads."[34] It is obvious to the reader that this is more than likely racist graffiti left behind for the family to find if or when they returned. The mother reassures her children that they will paint over the words, which serves as a metaphor for moving on from their trauma and continuing to live their lives.

Connerton theorizes that there is a type of forgetting "that is constitutive in the formation of a new identity."[35] In this case, "forgetting becomes part of the process by which newly shared memories are constructed because a new set of memories are frequently accompanied by a set of tacitly shared silences."[36] This type of forgetting is a type of "prescriptive forgetting" which involves more gain than loss.[37] Connerton writes: "The emphasis here is not so much on the loss entailed in being unable to retain certain memories that serve no practicable purpose in the management of one's current identity…"[38] In other words, forgetting "that is constitutive in the formation of

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[33] Otsuka 109.
[34] Otsuka 111.
[35] Connerton, Paul. "Seven types of forgetting," *Memory Studies*, SAGE Publications, 2008, 62.
[36] Connerton 62.
[37] Connerton 62-63.
[38] Connerton 63.

a new identity" involves purposefully setting aside memories that no longer serve a purpose in the process of forging a new identity for one's self unrelated to the trauma one has experienced.[39] The silences that accompany this purposeful setting aside of memories that no longer serve to contribute to the formation of a new identity are "tacitly shared" and are invoked in order to create "a new set of memories" in the process of creating a new identity.[40] The family in Otsuka's novel has not yet reached this point, since, even though the family, when they first return home, does not talk about their time in camp, their habits of living in camp are ingrained—they still have their "camp" identities and have not begun the process of creating new memories to forge "non-camp" identities. Their habits of living in camp are so ingrained that, even when they have the chance to sleep in their own rooms, they all sleep together on the floor: "Without thinking, we had sought out the room whose dimensions—long and narrow, with two windows on one end and a door at the other—most closely resemble those of the room in the barracks in the desert where we had lived during the war."[41] That night, they are tormented by the memories of stories of racist violence that other returnees had experienced:

> As we tried to fall asleep in that white stucco house, we could not help thinking of the stories we had heard about the people who had come back before us. One man's house had been doused with gasoline and

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[39] Connerton 62-63.
[40] Connerton 63.
[41] Otsuka 112.

> set on fire while his family lay sleeping inside. Another man's shed had been dynamited. There had been shootings in the valley, and gravestone defacings, and unannounced visitors knocking on doors in the middle of the night.[42]

They heard these stories prior to their return, and it is likely that they read about some of them in the *Topaz Times*; indeed, many of the stories that the mother and her children heard are like those focused on here. However, when nothing happens during their first night back home, they slowly try to return to their previous lives: "Nothing's changed, we said to ourselves. The war had been an interruption, nothing more. We would pick up our lives where we had left off and move on."[43] This is not easy, since their neighbors and friends ignore them when they see them on the street—they do not talk to them or wave to them, and the mother tells her children: "*They're afraid…Keep on walking. Hold your head up. Whatever you do, don't look back.*"[44] This admonishment to keep on walking and to not look back can also be read metaphorically: keep moving forward, focus on the present, do not look back into the traumatic past. This can also be read literally, in a sense of "holding your head up high," staying strong in the face of adversity.

Indeed, Kashima states that instead of focusing on the recent trauma of incarceration, "the Issei and Nisei energies were focused on rebuilding their lives and communities…life became a bit more settled and the appearance of normalcy set

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[42] Ibid.
[43] Otsuka 114.
[44] Otsuka 115, her emphasis.

in."[45] This "appearance of normalcy" was based on a bedrock of "forgetting" the experience of evacuation.[46] Although, these attempts to move forward are thwarted when the family's house is once again targeted, this time while they are at home. This attack then shapes their behavior in response to the continued trauma of incarceration: "After the night the whiskey bottle shattered the window, we dragged the mattresses upstairs and slept in the room that faced the back of the house—the room with the words on the walls. Over the words our mother taped pictures…and across the windows she hung some…rice-sack curtains so no one could see inside."[47] At night, the mother would also go through the house and turn off all the lights so it would appear that no one was home out of fear of another attack.[48] Despite this recent attack on their home, the family once again tries to move forward with their lives. On this point, Kashima asserts: "The Japanese Americans tried to forget the past and attempted to work, raise families, and attain some modicum of personal security that had been lost during the previous years. It was not easy."[49] One of the issues that plagued returnees post-Incarceration was employment. This includes unemployment, a lack of gainful employment opportunities, as well as racist hiring practices. As the family's money begins to run out, the mother searches for jobs in the Help Wanted ads, but each time she is either told that "the position's just been filled" or "we wouldn't want to upset other employees."[50] After quitting or failing to keep various

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[45] Kashima 113.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Otsuka 118.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Kashima 114.
[50] Otsuka 128.

jobs, the mother finally finds stable work cleaning houses for wealthy families that live in a different neighborhood.[51] But the family's tentative attempts at normalcy—the mother working and her children attending school—are upset by the father's return.

When the father returns, his family does not recognize him, since the man that steps off the train is "a small stooped man carrying an old cardboard suitcase" and "his face was lined with wrinkles. His suit was faded and worn. His head was bare. He moved slowly, carefully, with the aid of a cane, a cane we had never seen before."[52] The rest of the family has been eagerly waiting to be reunited, but the reality is much bleaker than anything they had imagined: "Although we had been waiting for this moment, the moment of our father's return, for more than four years now, when we finally saw him standing there before us on the platform we did not know what to think, what to do."[53] They do not recognize him due to the physical transformation that has taken place while he has been separated from his family and incarcerated in various Army and Department of Justice (DOJ) camps: "…The man who stood there was not our father. He was somebody else, a stranger who had been sent in our father's place."[54] The man who returns to them looks much older than his 56 years of age, wears dentures, is bald, and is so thin they can feel his ribs through his shirt.[55] His personality is also completely different; he no longer sings to his children or tells them

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[51] Otsuka 129.
[52] Otsuka 131.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Otsuka 131.
[55] Ibid.

stories or jokes.[56] Instead, he remains silent about his experiences.[57] As the other members of the family note, "He never said a word to us about the years he'd been away. Not one word. He never talked about politics, or his arrest, or how he had lost all his teeth. He never mentioned his loyalty hearing before the Alien Enemy Control Unit. He never told us what it was, exactly, he'd been accused of."[58]

These loyalty hearings were incredibly traumatic for those who experienced them, so it is not at all surprising the father does not speak about what he went through. In *An Internment Odyssey (Haisho Tenten)*, Hawai'i Issei Suikei Furuya, who was incarcerated at several Army and DOJ-run camps throughout the continental U.S., including the Santa Fe Internment Camp in New Mexico (which is one of the camps where the father in Otsuka's novel was incarcerated), recounts his loyalty hearing at the Sand Island Internment Camp on Honolulu.[59] Furuya's loyalty hearing took place in two sessions over the course of a single day.[60] The first part of Furuya's hearing took place in the morning, in which incarcerees were asked questions such as "'Who do you wish to win the war?,' 'What do you think of Japan having attacked Pearl Harbor without a declaration of war?,' [and] 'What would you do if Japanese military forces were to land in Hawaii?'"[61] Furuya writes that "the hearing committee had come up with very embarrassing questions," since, as Japanese citizens with American-born children, "favor one and you betray the other."[62] Furuya did his best to

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[56] Otsuka 132-133.
[57] Otsuka 133.
[58] Otsuka 133.
[59] Furuya 34.
[60] Furuya 34-35.
[61] Furuya 34.
[62] Ibid. As Japanese nationals, Issei were barred from obtaining American citizenship, and thus only had Japanese citizenship. Their American-born children, on the other hand, had American citizenship.

answer the questions, and one answer causes the committee to become suspicious.[63] The committee asks Furuya if he had anything else to say, and he replies: "We [Hawai'i Issei] have educated our children in such a way that they can be proud of themselves as Americans. Now they have grown up and have become loyal U.S. citizens. However, when the war broke out, the government detained the parents of these loyal and good citizens. I fear that such actions will cause them to reconsider their loyalty to this country."[64] This statement intrigued the committee members and Furuya was called back in for more questioning later that afternoon. When he is called in, the Army captain, who was acting as prosecutor at the hearing, asked Furuya if he was saying "that the children of detained Japanese have waivered in their loyalty toward our country because their parents were detained?"[65] Furuya is shocked by this question and replies: "No, I didn't say that. I just wondered if their absolute loyalty might be diminished because of what's happened."[66] The captain then brings Furuya's son into the conversation and asks how his son feels regarding the issue of loyalty to the United States; Furuya writes that "I was shocked that he had turned his focus on me. I thought it best to not give him the wrong impression, and, wanting to protect my son and my other children, as well, I was confused about how to answer."[67] Furuya knows that anything he says in this hearing can not only be used against himself, but

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Turning against one would mean turning your back on the other, and vice versa, so Issei like Furuya were caught in a bind, unsure of how to answer these incredibly loaded questions and accusations at their loyalty hearings.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Furuya 35.

[65] Ibid.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Ibid.

his family, so he has to carefully think about what he says and replies that he has not spoken to or corresponded with his family since he has been incarcerated, and that "Hanzo, my eldest son, volunteered for the Hawai'i Territorial Guard and is now in service. I may have been overly anxious on the loyalty issue."[68] He waits for the committee's response and writes that "the questions had hit a sensitive area and I had become uncomfortable. Fortunately, the captain seemed satisfied."[69] It is only after the captain offers him a cigarette that Furuya relaxes.[70] It can be assumed that the father in Otsuka's novel was likely asked the same or similar probing and threatening questions at his own loyalty hearing.

Once the father settles in at home, he never speaks of his trauma—never gives direct voice to it—and the family never asks him to articulate it, since not only are they trying to cope with their own trauma, they are also trying to rebuild their lives: "We didn't want to know. We never asked. All we wanted to do, now that we were back in the world, was forget."[71] As Connerton states, "Some acts of silence may be an attempt to bury things beyond expression and the reach of memory," and this form of repression, as he goes on to assert, can be an act of survival—of surviving the trauma one has lived through and now must live with the memory of.[72] The father sequesters himself in the house, particularly in his own room: "Now whenever we passed by his door we saw him sitting on the edge of his bed with his hands in his lap, staring out through the window as though he were waiting for something to happen."[73]

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[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Furuya 36.
[71] Otsuka 133.
[72] Connerton 68.
[73] Otsuka 137.

In fact, the father slowly becomes agoraphobic and never leaves the house.[74] He has completely interiorized his trauma to the point that it shapes every aspect of his daily life. Sigmund Freud was the first psychoanalyst to discuss the interiorization of trauma.[75] In *Trauma: A Genealogy* (2000), Ruth Leys discusses how, in this early period of psychoanalysis, trauma studies focused on the psychological damage caused by WWI, as "psychoanalysis seemed to be the only theoretical-therapeutic approach capable of interpreting and treating the functional disorders associated with the massive traumas of modern warfare."[76] Freud asserted that these war neuroses were not caused by external factors, but rather interior battles between different facets of one's ego.[77] With the publication of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), Freud "posited the existence of a protective shield…designed to defend…against the upsurge of large quantities of stimuli from the external world that threatened to destroy [one's] psychic organization."[78] It is in this way that "trauma was thus defined in quasi-military terms as a widespread rupture or breach in the ego's protective shield, one that set in motion every possible attempt at defense…"[79] With this understanding of trauma, Freud and his devotees argued that trauma is an unbinding of that which has previously been bound.[80] This underscores the immense amount of damage trauma causes to and within one's psyche, which is clearly exhibited by the father in *Emperor*.

The trauma of incarceration has led the father to exist in a liminal space where

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[74] Ibid.
[75] Leys, Ruth. *Trauma: A Genealogy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 21.
[76] Leys 22.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Leys 23.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Leys 33.

he cannot quite believe he is no longer in camp but at home with his family—that he is not dreaming.[81] In a daze, the father "wandered slowly from one room to the next, picking up objects and looking at them in bewilderment and then putting them back down again. 'I don't recognize a thing,' we heard him whisper."[82] Contributing to his mental anguish is his inability to get decent sleep; one day he wakes up from a nap shouting his children's names: "He sat up and shouted our names and we came running…. He needed to see us, he said. He needed to see our faces. Otherwise, he would never know if he was really awake."[83] The trauma of incarceration, particularly the trauma of being "rounded up" in the middle of the night by the FBI while wearing his pajamas, is made evident by the father's paranoia; he believes that the phone is bugged, that someone is watching the house, that anyone in the neighborhood could be an informer.[84] He tells his children: "*They just don't like us. That's just the way it is. Never tell them more than you have to. And don't think for a minute, that they're your friend.*"[85] American psychoanalysts Abram Kardiner and Sandor Ferenczi, devotees of Freud, asserted that "trauma produced an unconscious imitation of the traumatic scene or person…at the cost of the ego's cognitive integrity or control."[86] In other words, "reliving" a traumatic experience was something that occurred automatically, as a response to a perceived danger—a response that wrested control away from the person who had experienced the trauma, and instead put them in the position of attempting to psychologically re-bind that which has been unbound by the traumatic experience.

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[81] Otsuka 133.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Otsuka 133-134.
[85] Otsuka 134, her emphasis.
[86] Leys 147. Kardiner and Ferenczi both published in the 1930s, Leys 143.

Although the father is not having what one would classically think of as "flashbacks"—which, as defined by Leys, "take the form of recurrent, intrusive images or sensations associated with the traumatic event, or of a sudden feeling that the traumatic event is literally happening all over again"—there are objects or people that trigger him to become paranoid, as his warnings to his children demonstrate, or angry.[87] Otsuka writes: "Little things—the barking of a neighbor's dog, a misplaced pen, an unanticipated delay of any sort—could send him into a rage."[88] These situations possibly remind the father of his time in camp, and thus trigger a trauma response, one of which is anger, another of which is his inability to focus on and engage with the present. Whenever his children try to engage him in conversation by telling him about their days, "always, it seemed, he had something else on his mind."[89] In this way, the father is embroiled in what Resmaa Menakem terms "dirty pain."[90] Menakem defines "dirty pain" as the "pain of avoidance, blame, and denial."[91] Menakem continues: "When people respond from their most wounded parts, become cruel or violent, or physically or emotionally run away, they experience dirty pain…they also create more of it for themselves and others."[92] In his "dirty pain," the father sinks further into himself and spends less time with his family, suffering from intrusive thoughts and nightmares. As the months wear on, the children state that "our father began spending more and more time alone in his room. He stopped reading the

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[87] Otsuka 134; Leys 241.
[88] Otsuka 134.
[89] Otsuka 135.
[90] Menakem, Resmaa. *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies* (Central Recovery Press, 2017), 20.
[91] Menakem 20.
[92] Ibid.

newspaper. He no longer listened to *Dr. I.Q.* with us on the radio. ‘There’s already enough noise in my head,’ he explained.”[93] He not only ceases to spend time with his family, doing activities that they enjoyed together, but sits in his room in silence, isolating himself both physically and emotionally: “…staring out through the window as though he were waiting for something to happen. Sometimes he’d get dressed and put on his coat but he could not make himself walk out the front door.”[94] He cannot bear to leave the house because the last time he did was when he was forcibly taken from it during “the roundup.” Outside his house lay his traumatic experiences in the camps, so the father is stuck in a state of limbo: never fully present and always on guard, waiting to experience another traumatic event. This paranoia leads him to believe that the FBI could come for him again, and he wants to be prepared in case that happens.

The father’s physical and psychological symptoms are the direct result of almost four years spent behind barbed wire, as well as the related traumas of being “rounded up” and subjected to one, or possibly multiple, loyalty hearings. The father is just one example of how the trauma of Japanese Incarceration continued to manifest after one was released from camp. The next text I will be discussing, *Displacement* by Kiku Hughes, examines how the trauma of Japanese Incarceration continues to impact a family generations later.

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[93] Otsuka 136-137.
[94] Otsuka 137.

Displacement

As I explain above, one of the major factors in the persistence of generational trauma is the silence surrounding a particular event or series of events. This silence is then taught to and internalized by each successive generation, facilitating the perpetuation of the physical and psychological impacts of said trauma on individual members of the family. Felman and Laub focus on those who listen to the stories of said survivors, to their testimonies. In the second chapter of *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, titled "Bearing Witness or the Vicissitudes of Listening," Laub (the sole author of the chapter) distinguishes between the outer evidences of trauma, such as historical records, and the inner evidences of trauma—the survivor's own account of it—which, he argues, does not yet exist in that it has not yet been heard by a listener: "The emergence of the narrative which is being listened to—and heard—is, therefore, the process and the place wherein the cognizance, the 'knowing' of the event, is given birth to."[95] He continues: "The testimony to the trauma thus includes its hearer, who is, so to speak, the blank screen on which the event comes to be inscribed for the first time."[96] I disagree with Laub, since trauma does not need to be heard in order to be inscribed. As seen with the historical survivors of Japanese Incarceration, as well as the family, particularly the father, in *Emperor*, the internalization of trauma often manifests in symptoms such as:

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[95] Felman and Laub 57.
[96] Ibid.

nightmares, angry outbursts, as well as physical and emotional isolation from one's family and community. The trauma is not always and does not need to be spoken aloud, and, if it is spoken aloud, does not need to heard by someone else to be validated as such. Laub complicates his argument when he asserts that the listener needs to not only listen to what is being said, but what is not being said—the silence: "the speakers about trauma on some level prefer silence to protect themselves from the fear of being listened to—and of listening to themselves. [Silence in this way can thus serve] both as sanctuary and as a place of bondage."[97] Silence as both sanctuary and bondage is evidenced by the fictionalized version of Kiku and her mother's fraught relationship in *Displacement*.[98] It is only in the third and final part of the graphic novel that Kiku confides in her mother that she has been "back in time."[99] Kiku's mother reassures her that she is not crazy, and that the same thing happened to her when she was just a little older than Kiku herself.[100] Her displacements began "in the '70s [when] there was talk of reopening the camps for political dissidents, communists, Black Panthers. My mom was concerned. It was one of the few times she talked about what life was like at Topaz. I was pulled back in time to camp three times."[101] However, unlike Kiku, she does not confide in her own mother because "it didn't

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97 Felman and Laub 58.
98 Kiku refers to the character in *Displacement*, while Hughes refers to the author.
99 Hughes 231.
100 Hughes 232.
101 Hughes 232-233.

seem appropriate. And after the third time, it stopped. So I just tried to forget about it."[102] While confessing this, she looks down at the floor, unable to meet Kiku's shocked and saddened expression, guilty and ashamed that she never had such a conversation with her own mother.[103] She is glad that Kiku has told her about her own experiences, and brushes away Kiku's apology when Kiku worries that she reminded her of own "displacements."[104]

This is when Kiku and her mother begin to discuss what they think the "displacements"—these moments of traveling back in time to the camps—really are. Her mother states:

> I think we're traveling through memory. I think sometimes a community's experience is so traumatic, it stays rooted in us even generations later. And the later generations continue to rediscover that experience, since it's still shaping us in ways we might not realize. Like losing the ability to speak Japanese, losing connection to Japanese culture. They're all lasting impacts of the camps that travel down the generations.[105]

Kiku responds: "That's why we were always taken to where your mother was, we were travelling through her memories?," and her mother replies, "That's a theory,

[102] Huges 233.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Ibid.
[105] Hughes 234-235.

anyway."[106] Indeed, as evidenced by Kiku's conversation with her mother, the "displacements" enable Kiku to better "become aware of the legacy of the camps" and how "the consequences of this traumatic experience are passed on to different generations, affecting their relationships."[107] Although Kiku travels back in time to when her maternal grandmother (Ernestina) and her great grandparents were incarcerated in Tanforan and then Topaz, she "never has the occasion to speak to her late relative. This narrative choice signals a void that symbolizes the readers' and Kiku's inability to fully recover the experience."[108] Even if Kiku was able to speak to and spend time with her grandmother during these "displacements," this void would still be present since Kiku is traveling through memories and not having the lived experience of someone from that time period (she has the hindsight of someone from the twenty-first century). There is still that gap between survivor and listener; no matter how much time Kiku spends in the past, the fact remains that she has an escape—she will always be sent back to the present; she will not have to endure years behind barbed wire. In other words, no matter how much time Kiku spends in the "past," she will never fully or truly know what it was like to live as her grandmother did, even if she has some of those same experiences herself while incarcerated at Tanforan and Topaz during her "displacements."

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[106] Hughes 235.

[107] Arioli, Mattia. "Promises of Democratic Consent and Practices of Citizenship: Reenacting Japanese Internment Camps Memories in Comics Form," *Jam It! Journal of American Studies in Italy*, no. 6, The Fractured States of America, May 2022, 230-255, 241.

[108] Arioli 242.

The closest Kiku gets to contact with her grandmother, whose trauma related to Japanese Incarceration has been passed down to her mother and then to her, is seeing her from a distance. During Kiku's second "displacement," she is once again transported to San Francisco in 1942. She is waiting with other soon-to-be incarcerees, identification number attached to her jacket, holding her bag of items while she waits for her number to be called.[109] While worrying about what is going to happen to her, she hears her grandmother's name, Ernestina, being called, likely by one of her parents (Kiku's great grandparents); she then sees her great grandfather, great grandmother, and grandmother talking together while their group number is called.[110] Kiku does not see her grandmother again until she arrives at Tanforan: her grandmother and her great grandparent's stall is right next to her own.[111] They have just arrived and still have their identification numbers pinned to their jackets.[112] Kiku eagerly listens in on her family members: "I listened to her speaking to her parents…in Japanese as they moved into the stall next to mine. I could hear them through the thin walls. I couldn't understand them but I could tell by their tone they were stressed."[113] Although Kiku lives next to her grandmother both in Tanforan and Topaz, she never speaks to her or engages with her in any way (which makes sense

[109] Hughes 50-51.
[110] Ibid.
[111] Since Tanforan was a horse racetrack, horse stalls were repurposed to serve as "rooms" for those incarcerated there.
[112] Hughes 72-73.
[113] Hughes 73.

since, as Kiku and her mother theorize, Kiku is possibly traveling through her grandmother's memories). Kiku then reflects: "I knew no Japanese, and neither did my mom. But Ernestina spoke it fluently. I wondered for the first time why she never passed it on to her children."[114] This is then explained at the end of the graphic novel when Kiku and her mom talk about the "displacements" they have both experienced: that the generational trauma of Japanese Incarceration has impacted later generations—Sansei (third generation, Kiku's mother) and Yonsei (fourth generation, Kiku)—of Japanese Americans, due to a variety of factors related to the "crisis of readjustment" that took place during the post-Incarceration period.[115]

One such aspect of the "crisis of readjustment" is what Kashima terms "social amnesia." The "appearance of normalcy" that survivors of Japanese Incarceration exhibited while "[focusing on] rebuilding their lives and communities….was achieved by 'forgetting' the evacuation experience."[116] This "forgetting" led to a state of "social amnesia."[117] "Social amnesia," Kashima argues, "is not a psychological pathology; it is a group phenomenon in which attempts are made to suppress feelings and memories of particular moments or extended time periods."[118] Unlike repressed memories, which are forgotten through no purposeful action on the part of the

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114 Ibid. This specific example is focused on later in this chapter.
115 Kashima 113.
116 Ibid.
117 Ibid.
118 Ibid.

survivor, "social amnesia" is "a conscious effort, an attempt to cover up less than pleasant memories."[119] These memories are "suppressed and are difficult to bring up to the surface consciousness."[120] The trauma of surviving Japanese Incarceration, possibly and likely compounded by Kashima's theory of "social amnesia," arguably led Kiku's grandmother to forgo passing the Japanese language or Japanese cultural customs down to her own children.[121] Menakem argues in favor of the theory of "generational trauma," which he describes as the belief that traumatic experiences can be passed down through the generations to those who have not directly experienced them: "our very bodies house the unhealed dissonance and trauma of our ancestors."[122] Here, Menakem not only asserts that "generational trauma" is a psychological phenomenon, but a physical, embodied experience as well. This is another explanation for the "displacements" that Kiku and her mother experience: that the trauma of Japanese Incarceration has not only been passed down through memories, but through their very genetics—that their bodies house the trauma that Ernestina experiences as a teenager incarcerated at Tanforan and Topaz. The silence surrounding this trauma leads to the continued internalization of it, which then leads to these "displacements" in future generations. This silence, and the fear of not only what

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[119] Ibid.

[120] Ibid.

[121] In fact, this decision could have stemmed from the actions of Japanese Americans after "the roundup," in which many wives and mothers who were left to deal with the trauma of their husbands being taken in the night, destroyed and/or hid objects and family heirlooms connected to Japan for fear of repercussions if they were later found with them.

[122] Menakem 11.

this silence masks, but of the silence itself and what it represents—the "unspeakable"—serves to compound generational trauma. Connerton asserts that since we are so trained to fear silence, we tend to dismiss it as a failing or as a neurosis that needs to be cleansed or healed via verbal speech.[123] However, he argues that "silence is not a unitary phenomenon: there are, rather, a plurality of silences."[124] There are different types of silences, such as intentional silences—like Kashima's theory of "social amnesia"—or silences that can be imposed by others, such as specific individuals or governmental and state apparatuses.[125]

In order to further explore the meanings and causes of these "displacements," Kiku and her mother decide to "trigger" a "displacement" on purpose; Kiku's mother begins telling her about Ernestina's life post-camp and this serves to once again transport them back in time.[126] They are whisked away to one of Ernestina's violin recitals, and after the recital ends they follow her down the streets of San Francisco.[127] As they continue to experience the "displacement," Kiku asks her mother to continue to tell her about Ernestina's life.[128] It is here that Kiku's mother reveals that, while Ernestina raised her family in New Jersey after her second marriage, she "was

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[123] Connerton 2011, 51-52. Felman and Laub focus on the healing power of verbal speech throughout *Testimony: Crises Of Witnessing In Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992).
[124] Connerton 2011, 53.
[125] Connerton 2011, 56.
[126] Hughes 235-238.
[127] Hughes 240-241.
[128] Hughes 252.

diagnosed with leukemia…as I was finishing high school. She died my freshman year of college. She was forty-eight years old."[129] Kiku never knew that her grandmother was so young when she passed, and her mother confides in her that "I always kind of suspected that her time in camp made her sick."[130] She then elaborates: "Topaz was in the Southwest, where they were doing nuclear bomb tests, too, or, I don't know, maybe it was just the stress of it all."[131] Either way, whether it was due to the nuclear bomb testing in the desert, something environmental at Topaz itself, or that Ernestina's body was more susceptible to severe illness due to the trauma of living in the camps, the fact remains that Japanese Incarceration greatly affected the bodies and minds of those who experienced it. This mental anguish led some incarceration survivors to take their own lives. In the May 18, 1945 issue of the *Topaz Times*, it is reported that "Keison Tim Nagai, 22-year-old Issei who was formerly of National, Washington, and later evacuated to the Tule Lake and Minidoka centers, was found dead…on May 11 in the furnished apartment he shared with two nisei [sic] since coming to New York from Chicago this year."[132] The article continues: "The death was certified as suicide by the police and verified as such by the local WRA official."[133] Even though her family is unsure about the exact cause of Ernestina's

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[129] Hughes 253.

[130] Hughes 253.

[131] Hughes 253.

[132] "Issei Takes Own Life In New York," *Topaz Times*, May 18, 1945, Newspapers.com.

[133] Ibid. Suicide is also a prevalent theme in John Okada's novel *No-No Boy* (1957), which focuses on a "no-no boy" who reunites with his family on the West Coast and attempts to adjust to life after refusing to serve the U.S. military while his parents were incarcerated. The main character's mother

cancer, or why so many Nisei survivors of the camps have died from cancer, such rumors were, and are, powerful.[134] While talking to her mother about the prevalence of cancer among incarceration survivors, Kiku states: "even if it is just a rumor, the fact that it became a rumor is pretty telling. Rumors start when there's fear and a lack of information. And they stick around and influence our memories forever. They don't have to be true to represent a truth about the world they came from."[135]

This is a powerful statement that can be directly tied to the rumors surrounding Wakasa's death: although these rumors might not be based in fact, there is a truth to them in that they "represent a truth about the world they came from."[136] In other words, it does not matter, in a larger sense, what Wakasa was doing when he was killed, but it does matter that Wakasa was killed for doing something that was perceived negatively, criminally—Wakasa was too close to the fence and "could have been escaping," so it does not matter if he was walking his dog or picking flowers or looking for arrowheads.[137] It is because there are no clear explanations for Wakasa's death—the mystery of what he was doing near the fence—and the "truth" that Wakasa's death reveals—that anyone near the fence could be perceived of wrongdoing and therefore shot to death—that the ghost of Wakasa, the memory of

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commits suicide towards the end of the novel, leaving both himself and his father further traumatized by the impacts of Japanese Incarceration.

[134] Hughes 254.

[135] Hughes 254-255.

[136] Hughes 255.

[137] Hughes 192.

him, haunts Otsuka's and Hughes's texts, even if they only focus on Wakasa for a small portion of their works.[138]

One of the reasons why such traumatic, ghostly memories haunt these narratives are the silences surrounding them. Connerton describes a type of silence that specifically relates to traumatic events or experiences: "traumatic silence."[139] This type of silence "originate[s] from deeply shocking and painful experiences."[140] "Traumatic silences," Connerton states, "signify the refusal or inability to tell certain narratives," which "consigns certain narratives to the realm of the supposedly unspeakable."[141] Connerton asserts that "history is drenched in such narrative silences."[142] Wakasa's murder was indeed a shocking, traumatic, and painful experience, particularly for those incarcerated at Topaz when it occurred. As shown in *Displacement*, the trauma of Wakasa's death was passed on through the generations of Kiku's family, from her maternal grandmother, to her mother, and then down to her. To be sure, there are other traumatic events that occurred during the period of Japanese Incarceration, including murders of other incarcerees. Why is Wakasa's murder the one that continues to be revisited?[143] In *Silencing The Past: Power And*

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[138] My next chapter provides close readings of these instances in these texts, as well as in Miné Okubo's graphic memoir *Citizen 13660* (1946).
[139] Connerton 2011, 73.
[140] Ibid.
[141] Ibid.
[142] Connerton 2011, 76.
[143] These other murders are focused on in the Murders of Incarcerees tab in *James Wakasa, History, and Memory*.

The Production Of History (1995), Michel-Rolph Trouillot defines history as "both 'what happened' and 'that which is said to have happened.'"[144] However, history, namely historical memory, is much more complex than we tend to or prefer to think. Even when the objective facts of history "are unquestionable, in no way can we assume a simple correlation between the magnitude of events as they happened and their relevance for the generations that inherit them through history."[145] Wakasa's death was indeed an important event both for those who survived Topaz and for subsequent generations, but it does well to note that although Wakasa's murder could be relegated to a name on a list of other incarcerees who were shot to death by sentries, it is not. For authors such as Otsuka and Hughes, it is instead situated as an important event in the lives of Topazans, and although Otsuka and Hughes's narratives are fictional, the importance that Wakasa's death is given is not. As is made clear from the historical record, Wakasa's death stirred up the camp and was perhaps the most important event that occurred at Topaz.[146] The "Wakasa Incident" and the questions it continues to spark aid us in understanding "why not all silences are equal and why they cannot be addressed—or redressed—in the same manner."[147] Trouillot continues: "To put it differently, any historical narrative is a particular bundle of silences, the

[144] Trouillot 2.
[145] Trouillot 16.
[146] For more on this, see *James Wakasa, History, and Memory*.
[147] Trouillot 27. Contemporary discussions of the "Wakasa Incident" are further complicated by the uncovering and treatment of the Wakasa memorial stone. For more on this, see the Wakasa Memorial Committee: www.wakasamemorial.org and "The Legacy of the 'Wakasa Incident'" subtab in *James Wakasa, History, and Memory*.

result of a unique process, and the operations required to deconstruct those silences will vary accordingly."[148] One method through which the silences surrounding Wakasa's death have been and continue to be "deconstructed"—in Trouillot's use of the term—is through the creation of fictional narratives about Topaz, such as *Emperor* and *Displacement*.[149] Although Wakasa's death takes up less than two full pages of Otsuka's novel, the trauma of it still haunts the narrative, emphasizing just how dangerous it was to be incarcerated and how one could be killed for conceivably any reason.

Wakasa's death continues to haunt the historical imagination— there are silences in the Wakasa narrative surrounding his death, as well as a relative lack of information about his life in the U.S. prior to incarceration. It is not only these silences that haunt, but the very fact of Wakasa's death itself that haunts: that a man was murdered while incarcerated because he was Japanese and considered an 'enemy' that was trying to 'escape.' In literary and cultural studies, haunting is typically used to refer to silences surrounding traumatic events. In *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (1997), Avery F. Gordon defines haunting as: "singular yet repetitive instances when home becomes unfamiliar…" and that the ghosts or specters of such hauntings give rise to underscore that "the trouble they represent and symptomize is no longer being contained or repressed or blocked from view."[150] In

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[148] Trouillot 27.
[149] When he uses the term "deconstructed," I take Trouillot to mean analyzed, made sense of.
[150] Gordon xvi.

this way, "the ghost [notifies us] that what's been concealed is very much alive and present, interfering precisely with those always incomplete forms of containment and repression ceaselessly directed towards us."[151] Indeed, Gordon's conceptions of haunting and ghosts can aid us in how we "conceptualize trauma."[152] Gordon states that "the ghost or the apparition is one form by which something lost, or barely visible or seemingly not there to our supposedly well-trained eyes, makes itself known or apparent to us, in its own way….The way of the ghost is haunting, and haunting is a very particular way of knowing what has happened or is happening."[153] Although Wakasa never appears as a ghost or specter in either Otsuka or Hughes's texts, the trauma of his death "haunts" those who survived Topaz and their descendants. As Kiku reflects while attending Wakasa's funeral: "their experiences, their traumas, still shaped me in ways I was only just beginning to understand. The murder of James Wakasa had such an impact on my grandmother that two generations later, it was still *haunting* our family. Our whole Nikkei community. *We were still mourning him.*"[154] Even though Wakasa was killed in 1943, and the current events of *Displacement* take place in the early Trump Era, he is still remembered and mourned. Instead of using the presence of an "actual" ghost to make her points about the generational trauma caused by Japanese Incarceration and Wakasa's death, Hughes uses the trope of time travel to

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151 Ibid.
152 Leys 227.
153 Gordon 8.
154 Hughes 201, my emphasis.

do so.

Hughes is not the first writer of color to explore such themes through the science fiction trope of time travel. With the publication of her novel *Kindred* in 1979, African American writer Octavia Butler uses time travel to explore the themes of historical memory, archival silences, and generational trauma as they relate to the legacy of the enslavement of Africans and African Americans in the United States. In her "Acknowledgments" section of *Displacement*, Hughes thanks Butler, "whose work inspired this book and who will always be a hero."[155] Like Butler with *Kindred*, Hughes's "recourse to time travel is [so] successful in its representation of what might emerge out of the gap between…pure memory and…the social and historical demands of narrative."[156] This is evidenced by Kiku's second "displacement," which transports her to San Francisco once again and places her in line with other Japanese and Japanese Americans, where an armed soldier stands guard near one of the infamous "Exclusion Order" signs.[157] Kiku is so shocked by the sight of an armed soldier standing guard over them that she trips and falls, and cuts her knee in the process. A young man her age, also in line, approaches her and asks if she is okay, and questions if she "is supposed to be here?," to which Kiku replies, "I don't know…"[158] Although

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[155] Hughes 281.

[156] Parham, Marisa. "Saying 'Yes': Textual Traumas in Octavia Butler's 'Kindred,'" *Callaloo*, vol. 32, no. 4, Middle Eastern & North African Writers, Winter, 2009, 1325.

[157] Hughes 32-33. A photograph of one of these signs is included in the Language Used tab of *James Wakasa, History, and Memory*.

[158] Hughes 35.

this “displacement” is short compared to many of the other “displacements” Kiku experiences throughout Hughes’s graphic novel, placing Kiku in line, waiting to see where she and the others she is gathered with are going to be taken, shows both the factual or “pure” aspects of memory—that these events did indeed take place and were well documented by famous photographers such as Dorothea Lange—while simultaneously complicating this factual narrative by placing a witness from the present (Kiku) in the same situation as one experienced by those in the past. As Marisa Parham argues in “Saying ‘Yes’: Textual Traumas in Octavia Butler’s ‘Kindred,’” “the social demands of narrative want a witness (or someone to speak out about a traumatic experience or experiences)—to personalize the factual, to bring the narrative to life.”[159] The physical injury—the cut on her knee—that Kiku sustained in the “displacement” stays with her in the present, underscoring the tenuous line between the past and the present that Hughes delineates throughout her text.[160] Kiku states: “I knew that I hadn’t been dreaming. The cut from my fall was real. The displacements were real. And they could happen again—they could happen anytime.”[161] The only warning Kiku is given that she is about to be “displaced’ is when she becomes

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[159] Parham, Marisa, “Saying ‘Yes’: Textual Traumas in Octavia Butler’s ‘Kindred,’” Callaloo, vol. 32, no. 4, Middle Eastern & North African Writers, Winter, 2009, 1315-1331, 1325.

[160] Hughes 36-37. The physical injuries that Dana experiences while enslaved in *Kindred* stay with her as she travels back to the present. For more on this, see Roberta Culbertson’s “Embodied Memory, Transcendence, and Telling: Recounting Trauma, Re-Establishing the Self,” *New Literary History*, vol. 26, no. 1, *Narratives of Literature, the Arts, and Memory*, Winter, 1995, 169-195.

[161] Hughes 37-38.

surrounded by a dense fog. At first, she explains it away, since "it's always foggy in San Francisco."[162] Since she and her mother are just visiting San Francisco, Kiku believes she will be safe at home in Seattle, Washington, but this is not the case. Even after she arrives home, Kiku continues to experience the "displacements;" while lying in the grass in her backyard, Kiku experiences her third "displacement."[163] The "displacements" that take place throughout the rest of the narrative are much longer than the two she experiences in San Francisco. Indeed, much of the action of the graphic novel takes place during these "displacements." Kiku lives more in the past than she does in the present, whereas, in *Kindred*, Dana's time is split more evenly between the two. Parham writes:

> …by writing the tale as her protagonist's experience of living as much in the past as in the present, Butler incarnates the historical—trumps the temporal—and thus evolves what could have been a very straightforward text about traumatic repetition into a book about haunting, into a text that stakes claim in the notion that one might be required to experience a past that is not proper to one's self, but that

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162 Hughes 38. This fog signals to both Kiku and the reader that she is about to experience a "displacement." Interestingly, the arrival of a dark fog signals the incoming of dark shadow people called "Taken" in Remedy Entertainment's video game *Alan Wake* (*Remastered*) (2021). This dark fog signals to the player that they are about to be ambushed by "Taken." The game's primary themes are memory and trauma, truth and fiction, and the distinction (or lack thereof) between dreams, nightmares, and the waking world. This leads the player to question what is real and what is a product of Alan's memories, of his trauma, of his own imagination, or a combination of the three. Since you play as Alan, the information you receive is filtered through his motivations and beliefs, leading you further into his traumatic memories and tormented psyche.

163 Hughes 45-48.

> nonetheless resonates with something in the self, a transmutation of history into an *experience* of reading, into a memory over which one can now claim ownership, rememory.[164]

Indeed, Hughes's graphic novel is also about haunting, especially how particular historical events, such as Wakasa's murder, even though they took place in the seemingly distant past, continue to shape the present. This is the case because these traumatic narratives continue to be passed down through the survivors of Japanese Incarceration and their families, hence why, even though Kiku never hears about the shooting from her grandmother, she learns about it through her mother—in this way, Kiku is the fourth generation in her family to have knowledge of Wakasa's death.[165] By experiencing the aftermath—the impacts—of Wakasa's death on the Topaz community herself through these "displacements," Kiku comes to better understand the nuances of the "Wakasa Incident" and how Topazans responded to it: she never knew about the work stoppages or controversies about where to hold Wakasa's funeral until she traveled back in time to experience it herself.[166] Instead of only hearing this story through her mother, Kiku now has information that she can then take back into the present and use to further educate her own family.[167]

Similarly, in *Kindred*, Dana seeks to use the knowledge she gains from the past

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[164] Parham 1325-1326, her emphasis.
[165] Hughes 191, 198.
[166] Hughes 198.
[167] Hughes 267-275.

to educate herself and her white husband.[168] As Sheryl Vint states: “[Dana’s] time travel is not used to change the past (and thereby the future) but to change our understanding of it, which changes the present and opens up fresh possible outcomes for our future.”[169] This is precisely what occurs in *Displacement*. After Kiku and her mother experience their joint “displacement,” they “started doing [their] own research on the camps. We went to libraries, genealogy sites, newspaper archives. We found my Grandma’s yearbook from Topaz High School. We found government records of when she and her parents entered and left camp.”[170] Kiku’s “displacements” and what she has learned through experiencing them increase her interest in her own family’s traumatic history of Japanese Incarceration, which leads her and her mother to do more in-depth genealogical research to learn more about what happened to Ernestina while in the camps.[171]

Learning more about her grandmother and great-grandparent’s experiences provides Kiku with a greater understanding of and appreciation for the decisions that members of her family made post-Incarceration. While looking over family letters written in Japanese, Kiku, her sister, and her mother lament that they would need to get a translator, since “nobody in the family speaks it.”[172] When Kiku’s sister asks

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168 Rehak, Hannah. “Butler’s Kindred: Non-linear Genealogies and the Transformative Possibility of Breaking Genre Conventions,” *Tapestries: Interwoven voices and global identities*, vol. 4, issue 1, *Threats to the American Dream*, Article 23, 2015, 2.
169 Ibid.
170 Hughes 267.
171 Ibid.
172 Hughes 269.

their mother if Ernestina spoke Japanese around the house while she was growing up, their mother replies: "Only to my grandparents, since they weren't comfortable with English. She didn't really want us to speak it."[173] Kiku, now much more knowledgeable about Japanese Incarceration due to her "displacements," replies, "It was dangerous to speak it in the camps; it makes sense she'd worry."[174] Her sister replies in understanding: "She was trying to protect her kids."[175] Kiku's knowledge of the dangers of speaking and teaching Japanese to one's children is directly based off of one particular experience she has while in camp. While at Topaz, Kiku and her friend and barrack-mate Aiko overhear Kiku's great grandparents arguing next door.[176] Kiku asks Aiko if she can teach her Japanese, and Aiko looks down at the ground: "You don't need to know it." Kiku replies: "I know it's not allowed, but we could do it after the evening roll call."[177] Aiko looks at Kiku sternly and replies, "Kiku, we're Americans. I know Japanese only because I grew up with Issei parents; otherwise it is useless to me. There's no reason for you to learn it."[178] Once Kiku realizes how adamant Aiko is regarding this, she apologizes.[179] Kiku then reflects that she was surprised Aiko was "so opposed to all things Japanese. Because she was so

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[173] Ibid.
[174] Ibid.
[175] Ibid.
[176] Hughes 92-95.
[177] Hughes 95.
[178] Ibid.
[179] Hughes 96.

outspoken against the prejudices we were facing for our heritage, I expected her to be more passionate about that heritage."[180] Kiku has now slowly begun to understand how "[Aiko] and other Nisei shied away from the Issei's outdated traditions" and "just why there was almost no connection to Japan left by the time I was born."[181] While they are looking through family archival materials, such as letters and photographs, Kiku's mother admits that not only would learning Japanese have been difficult, that she and her siblings "weren't that interested in learning."[182] Not only were there generational struggles between the Issei and the Nisei, but the rules in the camps, as well as the anti-Japanese racism prior to, during, and post-Japanese Incarceration led to future generations becoming more distant and separated from their Japanese heritage, such as learning and speaking the Japanese language. In both *Displacement* and *Kindred*, given the historical traumas that each text focuses on, Japanese Incarceration and slavery respectively, the reader is "[required] to acknowledge that…given the [historical] trauma…, the past and the present are inextricably linked."[183] This is clearly evidenced in *Displacement* with the discussions of the issues surrounding knowing Japanese.

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180 Ibid.
181 Ibid.
182 Hughes 270.
183 Rehak 7.

Conclusion

In her novel, Otsuka explores how the "crisis of readjustment" was experienced by a nameless family—how members of the family responded to violence against returnees, the difficulties in finding stable and gainful employment, and how the trauma of incarceration can impact some family members more severely than others. In her graphic novel, Hughes explores generational trauma: how members of a particular family have been impacted by the trauma of Japanese Incarceration generations later and how the memories of Japanese Incarceration, including the memory of James Wakasa, still live on in the Nikkei community. Although Wakasa never appears as a physical ghost in these texts, his death casts a shadow over each of these narratives, signifying one of the dangers of incarceration: that one could be killed for conceivably any reason. In my next chapter, "Representations of the "Wakasa Incident" in *Citizen 13660*, *When The Emperor was Divine*, and *Displacement*," I draw on how Wakasa's death haunts the historical memory of Japanese Incarceration while doing close readings of how Wakasa's death is depicted in these texts. Particularly, Hughes uses the theory of generational trauma to encourage readers to understand how an event experienced by one's ancestors can impact one's family in the present, leading to silences that are highlighted when the traumatic event experienced by one's ancestors is brough back to surface consciousness. Since *Citizen 13660* and *When The Emperor was Divine* take place during the period of Japanese Incarceration, they do not focus on the memory of

Wakasa's death like a section of *Displacement* does, but instead focus on how those who experienced the direct aftermath of his death reacted to it.

Chapter 2

THE “WAKASA INCIDENT” IN *CITIZEN 13660*, *WHEN THE EMPEROR WAS DIVINE*, AND *DISPLACEMENT*

Introduction

Through close readings of my primary texts—*Citizen 13660* by Miné Okubo, *When The Emperor was Divine* by Julie Otsuka, and *Displacement* by Kiku Hughes—I explore the representations of the “Wakasa Incident” in these nonfictional and fictional creative works. Particularly, I analyze how Wakasa’s funeral is depicted, incarcerees’ reactions to his death, the Topaz Administration’s reactions to the incarcerees’ reactions, and how the historical trauma of Japanese Incarceration in the form of Wakasa’s death has been passed down through multiple generations. Using digitized archival documents such as issues of the *Topaz Times* published in the wake of Wakasa’s death, a collection of Daily Logs compiled by the Topaz Administration, and the official report on the “Wakasa Incident” compiled by Russell A. Bankson, Reports Officer for Topaz, I provide a historical context that will foster a deeper

understanding of just how the "Wakasa Incident," "one of [Topaz's] major crises," has become a lasting memory for survivors and their descendants.[184]

Citizen 13660

In Miné Okubo's graphic memoir[185] *Citizen 13660*, only a small portion of the text (two pages) is devoted to James Wakasa, despite the second half of the narrative taking place at Topaz. Okubo's version of the "Wakasa Incident" is brief and largely focuses on the incarcerees' responses to the shooting. Okubo does not illustrate Wakasa or his death; she only depicts the aftermath of the shooting: [186]

> An elderly resident was shot and killed within the center area inside the fence, by a guard in one of the watchtowers. Particulars and facts of the matter were never satisfactorily disclosed to the residents. The anti-administration leaders again started to howl and the rest of the residents shouted for protection against soldiers with guns. As a result, the

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[184] The Wakasa Incident, 10 May 1943, H47, BANC MSS 67/14 c, folder H2.02:5, Japanese American Evacuation and Resettlement Records, The Bancroft Library, University of California Berkeley, 1. http://www.oac.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/k61n873j/?brand=oac4.

[185] A graphic memoir is a graphic novel that is "autobiographically motivated." Hescher, Achim. *Reading Graphic Novels: Genre and Narration* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 2. Graphic memoir is a subgenre of graphic narrative. Other examples of graphic memoirs include *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic* (2006) by Allison Bechdel, *Maus I* and *Maus II* (1986, 1991) by Art Spiegelman and *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood* (2000) by Marjane Satrapi, Hescher 51.

[186] Wakasa was previously incarcerated at Tanforan, just as Okubo was. Okubo states that it is just a few weeks after the loyalty questionnaire is dispersed that Wakasa is killed. Okubo, Miné. *Citizen 13660* (Seattle: University of Washington, 1983), 175-179.

> guards were later removed to the rim of the outer project area and firearms were banned.[187]

Here, Okubo does not name Wakasa, and focuses on how the 'full story' was not provided to incarcerees and how this led to unrest within camp. Although Okubo does not provide any details about the *Topaz Times*' coverage of Wakasa's death, it is important to read Okubo's account of how Topazans reacted to Okubo's death alongside this coverage to get a fuller picture of how the Topaz Administration attempted to sugarcoat the shooting. The Topaz Administration used euphemistic language and broad statements in an attempt to express sympathy for Wakasa and other Topazans affected by his death. Topazans did not buy it and demanded direct action from the Administration to ensure that such an incident was not repeated. In the April 12, 1943 Extra Edition of the *Topaz Times*, the front page is dedicated to the "Wakasa Incident." Published the day after Wakasa was killed, the front page includes two articles: "Administration Statement…" and "Resident Killed."[188] The Topaz Administration is quick to put their take on Wakasa's death front and center; this statement was issued by Lorne W. Bell, Chief Community Services Director. Here, Bell states: "The War Relocation Authority feels its responsibility to see that there is a careful investigation of this incident" and that "The Administration joins with the

[187] Okubo 180.

[188] These articles were also translated into Japanese at the bottom of the front page of this issue of the *Topaz Times*.

community in the feeling of genuine sadness as the result of this tragic incident. It is our sincere hope that events such as this will not occur again here at Topaz. To this end we encourage every resident to familiarize himself with the rules and regulations."[189] It is important to note that the "Administration Statement…" is the first article on the front page, whereas the actual report of what happened, "Resident Killed," is the second article. Before even reading the news coverage of what happened to Wakasa, incarcerees are fed the Topaz Administration's propaganda—that there will be a "careful investigation" and that the Administration too feels "genuine sadness" in the wake of this "tragic incident."[190] "Resident Killed" devotes only two brief paragraphs to the shooting itself:

> While attempting to crawl through the west fence between sentry posts Nos. 8 and 9 at 7:30 PM Sunday, James Hatsuaki Wakasa, aged 63, residing at 36-7-D, was warned back four times by sentries on duty. When he failed to heed the warnings, one of the sentries fired and Wakasa was instantly killed.[191]

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[189] "Administration Statement…," *Topaz Times*, April 12, 1943, Newspapers.com
[190] Ibid.
[191] "Resident Killed," *Topaz Times*, April 12, 1943, Newspapers.com. This is an almost verbatim retelling of the account of Wakasa's death that is included in the official report (The Wakasa Incident): "The information supplied to the Administration by the Military Police was limited to a statement by Lt. Miller that the sentry had reported to him that the victim had been observed approaching the west fence, and that the sentry in post No. 8 at the southwest corner of the center and the sentry in post No. 9 to the north, had called four warnings before the sentry in the guard tower at post No. 8 fired the single shot which killed Mr. Wakasa," The Wakasa Incident, 10 May 1943, H47, BANC MSS 67/14 c, folder H2.02:5, Japanese American Evacuation and Resettlement Records, The Bancroft Library, University of California Berkeley, 2. http://www.oac.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/k61n873j/?brand=oac4.

As Okubo states, there was unrest within Topaz once news of Wakasa's death spread. Indeed, there is so much unrest that an "Editor's Note" is published in the next day's edition (April 13) of the *Topaz Times*.[192] This "Editor's Note" asserts that the report on Wakasa's death, "Resident Killed," was "prepared by the Project administration at a hearing attended by the appointed WRA staff and representatives of the Community Council and other resident groups" and that "all information contained in the report was based on official preliminary information from the Military Police."[193] The "Editor's Note" ends with the reassurance that "the report submitted by the administration was printed verbatim in the special edition of the *Times*."[194] With this "Editor's Note," it is confirmed that "Resident Killed," like "Administration Statement…," was prepared and authored by the Topaz Administration. This is meant to reassure Topazans, but it did not, as on April 16, according to one of the camp's Daily Logs, "acting Project Director Hughes [Charles F. Ernest, Project Director, was still in Salt Lake City at this time] gave assurances to the effect that future shooting by sentries on guard will not occur."[195] Once again, these reassurances did not placate the incarcerees. The unrest caused by Wakasa's violent death led those already critical of the Topaz Administration to become even more so and for Topazans to become more

[192] "Editor's Note," *Topaz Times*, April 13, 1943, Newspapers.com.
[193] Ibid. It is important to note that the sentry who killed Wakasa was a member of the Military Police.
[194] Ibid.
[195] Daily Log (3 of 4), BANC MSS 67/14 c, folder H1.99:3, Japanese American Evacuation and Resettlement Records, The Bancroft Library, University of California Berkeley, https://oac.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/k6xw4rr7/?brand=oac4.

fearful of and demand protection from the sentries stationed along Topaz's borders. Okubo states that these demands were eventually heeded: that guards were moved further from the center of camp, and that firearms were banned.[196]

However, according to the Daily Logs kept by the Topaz Administration, this did not occur until after Wakasa's funeral, which took place on April 19. In the Daily Log for April 20, it is reported that "day guards [will be] abolished effective April 21."[197] This is then confirmed in the Daily Log for April 21: "Washington orders withdrawal of sentries during the day hours."[198] Although Okubo muddies the order of events, the fact remains that the Topaz Administration, in response to grassroots organizing (work stoppages in response to Wakasa's death, particularly in order to assert their right to have a funeral for Wakasa) and general unrest within the camp, changed how Topaz was run.[199] Despite the withdrawal of "sentries during the day hours," another shooting occurred on May 20, a little over a month after Wakasa was killed. According to the corresponding Daily Log, "a warning shot was fired to keep residents from strolling too near the wire fences."[200] This is covered in more detail in the May 22 issue of the *Topaz Times* in "Another Shooting Stirs Topaz; No One

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196 Okubo 180.

197 Daily Log (3 of 4), BANC MSS 67/14 c, folder H1.99:3, Japanese American Evacuation and Resettlement Records, The Bancroft Library, University of California Berkeley, https://oac.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/k6xw4rr7/?brand=oac4.

198 Ibid.

199 It is important to note that Wakasa was killed in the evening, 7:30 PM, and not during the day.

200 Daily Log (3 of 4), BANC MSS 67/14 c, folder H1.99:3, Japanese American Evacuation and Resettlement Records, The Bancroft Library, University of California Berkeley, https://oac.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/k6xw4rr7/?brand=oac4.

Injured": On Thursday evening, a warning shot was fired into the ground by a sentry "in the southeast watch tower to keep two residents from strolling too near the fence."[201] The article continues: "Immediately after the shot was fired the sentry reported to headquarters."[202] Although no one was injured, this incident rightfully shook Topazans, especially since it occurred not long after Wakasa was killed. The article ends much like "Administration Statement…" does, albeit more ominously: "It was recommended that residents should not invite danger by strolling near the fence after 7 PM and particularly after dark."[203] Okubo does not mention or reference this in her graphic memoir, but I argue that it is important to know that Topazans were still shot at by sentries after Wakasa's death, despite the Topaz Administration's reassurances that such an incident would never happen again.

Although Wakasa was an older bachelor, with no family in camp, his funeral was well-attended. On the same page that Okubo briefly details the events of how Wakasa came to be killed and the unrest felt by Topazans in the wake of Wakasa's death, she includes a drawing of Wakasa's funeral. This drawing features a raised platform near a series of barracks. Upon this raised platform are numerous floral arrangements and Wakasa's casket, adorned with flowers. Those who spoke at Wakasa's funeral are also on the platform. Thousands of incarcerees attended the funeral, and this is shown in Okubo's drawing, which features a large crowd

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201 "Another Shooting Stirs Topaz; No One Injured," *Topaz Times*, May 22, 1943, Newspapers.com.
202 Ibid.
203 Ibid.

surrounding the platform. The crowd of funeral attendees includes multiple generations, underscoring that it was a true community event. In Okubo's drawing, some of the men and women attending the funeral are crying—a woman and a man in the center of the image share a handkerchief to dry their tears.[204] A woman on the right buries her face in her hands while other Topazans look on with somber expressions. Okubo also includes a pictorial representation of herself; Miné stands directly in front of those sharing the handkerchief and is depicted in her trademark cross-patterned shirt she wears throughout *Citizen 13660*.[205]

However, unlike the rest of the Topazans attending the funeral, Miné is not looking at the platform, but faces backwards and looks to the left. She is not crying, and instead stares pensively into the distance.[206] Is this because she can no longer bear to look at the funeral? Or is she merely observing the rest of the crowd? Since Okubo writes in a journalistic, detached style, we can only speculate as to how Okubo the writer and Miné, the pictorial representation of Okubo, felt at Wakasa's funeral. Throughout *Citizen 13660*, generally, the text on the page corresponds to the image on that page. Although, sometimes, the image does not include everything or anything that is described in the text. For example, the page that includes the drawing of the funeral scene does not describe Wakasa's funeral. Instead, the next page, which features a drawing of women crafting paper flowers for the funeral, briefly describes

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[204] Okubo 180.
[205] Ibid. Miné refers to the drawn character, while Okubo refers to the author.
[206] Ibid.

the funeral itself.[207] Thus, the reader needs to pay careful attention to not only what the drawings depict, but what is not included—what they do not depict. Through close examination of Okubo's illustrations and text, it is clear to the reader that Wakasa's death not only angered Topazans, but greatly saddened them as well. Indeed, Wakasa's funeral is well-attended for an Issei bachelor who was not well known throughout camp. This underscores the inherently closeknit nature of incarceration camp life: that even if you did not know someone, you are still affected by their death, particularly when it is violent and unexpected.

Okubo then briefly describes the funeral scene depicted on the previous page: "An impressive memorial service was held for the unfortunate victim. The women of each block made enormous floral wreaths with paper flowers."[208] These paper flower wreaths were used to decorate the platform Wakasa's casket rested on, as is seen in Okubo's drawing and in archival photographs of the funeral.[209] In the drawing accompanying this text, women are seated on long benches, crafting paper flowers, while one woman takes the finished flowers and attaches them to a cross.[210] Okubo includes a pictorial representation of herself in this image (Miné); Miné does not appear to be helping create the flowers, rather, she seems to be examining one, holding it near her face. When depicted, Miné is more of an observer than an actor, which

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[207] Okubo 180-181.
[208] Okubo 181.
[209] Okubo 180.
[210] Creating paper flowers was a common crafting activity for women throughout the camps.

mirrors Okubo's writing style.[211] Not only is it important to look closely at Okubo's drawings to discover the deeper meanings of this text, it is also important to examine her word choice. Her decision to label Wakasa an "unfortunate victim" reveals Okubo's stance on whether the shooting was 'justified,' as is later decided at the Court Martial hearing when the sentry who shot and killed Wakasa, Gerald B. Philpott, is acquitted.[212] With the use of the phrase "unfortunate victim," Okubo takes a firm stance that Wakasa's death was not only unjustified, but likely the result of a crime (a murder). This phrase also implies that Wakasa was, in other words, at the wrong place at the wrong time: whoever was walking near the fence at 7:30 PM on April 11 would likely have been shot to death. Thus, despite Okubo's journalistic, seemingly-distant language, she does indeed reveal her emotions and perspectives if one closely examines her word choices and the images that accompany each block of text.

When The Emperor was Divine

In *When The Emperor was Divine*, Julie Otsuka devotes an even smaller portion of her text to Wakasa's death (one and a quarter pages). As with Okubo, Wakasa's name is not used. Instead, Wakasa is referred to as "a man," "the dead

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[211] This is much different than the pictorial representation of Hughes in *Displacement*, Kiku. Kiku is very active within the camp communities and takes part in camp activities and forms of protest.

[212] Okubo 181. Kashima, Tetsuden. *Judgment without Trial: Japanese American Imprisonment during World War II* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003), 192. For more on Gerald B. Philpott, see the Gerald B. Philpott subtab of The People Involved tab in *James Wakasa, History, and Memory*.

man," or "the man."[213] Unlike Okubo, Otsuka includes theories of 'why' Wakasa was killed—what he was possibly doing near the fence that led to him getting shot. It is speculated that: he was walking his dog, that he was hard of hearing, that he could not hear the sentry calling out to him because of the wind, or that he was trying to pick a "rare and unusual flower on the other side of the fence."[214] Otsuka even includes testimony from the sentry who shot Wakasa: "The guard who was on duty said the man had been trying to escape. He'd called out to him four times, the guard said, but the man had ignored him."[215] This mirrors what is stated in the official report on the "Wakasa Incident" (titled The Wakasa Incident) prepared by Russell A. Bankson, as well as in the Memorandum for General Bryan, written by John M. Hall, Captain and Assistant Executive, dated May 10, 1943. At the end of this memo, Hall states: "You will note that according to Lieutenant Miller, in command of the Escort Guard Company, Wakasa was challenged at a distance of some 240 yards, at which distance an oral challenge appeared to be barely perceptible."[216] Of course, incarcerees did not have access to this information, and even with this information, there are still questions as to whether Wakasa was able to hear Philpott calling out to him from such

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[213] Otsuka, Julie. *When The Emperor was Divine* (New York: Anchor Books, 2002), 101. This fits with the rest of Otsuka's novel, since other characters are not named, including the members of the family that are the novel's center of consciousness. This establishes the conceit that this (incarceration) happened to many West Coast Japanese American families post-Pearl Harbor and that this family is not unique in their experiences.

[214] Otsuka 101.

[215] Ibid.

[216] "Memorandum for General Bryan," May 10, 1943, https://evols.library.manoa.hawaii.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/e4ad26d7-81e9-4913-8872-4b6f4869b5fe/content.

a distance. So, even though Otsuka lists multiple scenarios to explain what Wakasa was doing when he was shot and killed, the question remains—for readers, the characters in the novel, and survivors of Japanese Incarceration and their families—why? The center of consciousness in this chapter, the son, who is about eight years old, fixates on a particular possible explanation for Wakasa's death: "Years later the boy would recall standing beside his mother at the service, wondering just what kind of flower the man had seen…And if he *had* plucked it. Then what?"[217]

What, indeed, would it mean if Wakasa had reached under the fence to pick a rare flower, or even a more common one, such as a "rose?...a tulip?...a daffodil?;"[218] it would not matter what he picked, if anything, since no matter what Wakasa did or was going to do that night, he was near the fence, and, because of this, he was shot and killed. Connected to the son's speculations about what type of flower it was are his visions of "exploding ships, clouds of black smoke, hundreds of B-29s falling down in flames from the sky. *One false move, pal, and you're dead*."[219] This last line underscores how it truly did not matter what Wakasa did or was going to do—there was the *perception* of wrongdoing or rule-breaking (possible escape)—and it was this perception that led to Wakasa's death. Interestingly, the last line of the Wakasa section of Otsuka's text—"*One false move, pal, and you're dead*"—echoes the warning given

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[217] Otsuka 101.
[218] Ibid.
[219] Otsuka 101-102, her emphasis. The imagery of planes dropping bombs from the sky evokes Hollywood war movies and newsreels of World War II. Movies were also screened in the incarceration camps.

by the MPs to the incarcerees who investigated the scene of Wakasa's murder the day after his death,[220] further lending credence to the fact that the MPs and sentries deployed at the incarceration camps would not, and did not, hesitate to shoot any incarceree who was believed to be or perceived as escaping or about to escape.[221]

This warning applies to life post-camp as well. When the mother, daughter, and son return to their home in Berkely, California, they choose to sleep in the same room their first night back; on this first night back home they "could not stop thinking of the stories we had heard about the people that had come back before us."[222] These stories center on those who had been the victims of anti-Japanese racism that takes the form of extreme violence: one man's "house had been doused with gasoline and set on fire while his family lay sleeping inside."[223] They had also heard about dynamitings and shootings, "gravestone defacings, and unannounced visitors knocking on doors in the middle of the night."[224] Even though the war is over and their family is home "safe," there is still the possibility of being attacked by those who still perceive them as Other, as the enemy.[225] In fact, one night the family is the victim of this particular brand of anti-Japanese racism, when a "whiskey bottle shattered the window" in the

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[220] Otsuka 102, her emphasis. This is detailed in The Key Players subtab of The People Involved In The "Wakasa Incident" tab in *James Wakasa, History, and Memory*.

[221] For more on murders of incarcerees, see the Murders of Incarcerees subtab of the Violence Against Incarcerees: Wakasa Was Not The Only One tab in *James Wakasa, History, and Memory*.

[222] Otsuka 112.

[223] Ibid.

[224] Ibid.

[225] Ibid. This is also discussed in the previous chapter.

front room where they had been sleeping.[226] After that, they "dragged the mattresses upstairs and slept in the room that faced the back of the house—the room with the words on the walls."[227] These "words on the walls" are never specified, but it is heavily implied earlier in this chapter that they are racist epithets aimed at the family for them to find when or if they returned. After the whiskey bottle is thrown through the window, the mother takes extra precautions in an attempt to keep herself and her family safe from any more attacks: "across the windows she hung some split rice-sack curtains so no one could see inside, and in the evening, when it began to grow dark, she wandered through the front rooms of the house turning off the lights one by one so no one would know we were home."[228] The family is not attacked again, but the possibility remains. The stories they heard of other returnees being attacked, their own experiences, and the memory of Wakasa's violent death, stick with them, once again underscoring the lesson: "*one false move, pal, and you're dead*."[229]

Otsuka, like Okubo, ends her section on Wakasa with a focus on his funeral.;[230] she too writes about the size of the funeral and the flowers used to decorate it: "At the funeral there were nearly two thousand people. The casket was strewn with hundreds of crepe-paper flowers. Hymns were sung. The body was

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[226] Otsuka 118.
[227] Ibid.
[228] Ibid.
[229] Otsuka 102, her emphasis.
[230] In "A Note On Sources" at the back of the novel, Otsuka lists *Citizen 13660* as one of the texts that helped her write *When The Emperor was Divine.*

blessed."[231] Historical records, such as articles in the *Topaz Times*, photographs, as well as Okubo's first-person account verify that Wakasa's funeral was well-attended by multiple generations. Indeed, the "Wakasa Incident" itself is a narrative—a historical trauma—that has been passed down through the generations: Issei, Nisei, Sansei, and Yonsei.[232]

Displacement

One of the more recently published texts that focuses on Topaz is *Displacement* by Kiku Hughes.[233] In *Reading Graphic Novels: Genre And Narration* (2016), Achim Hescher states that complexity is one of the key features of graphic novels, and a particular aspect of this complexity is "how [these] subplots and their narrating voices connect to each other textually and pictorially."[234] One example Hescher provides is Art Spiegelman's *Maus* (1986, 1991), which consists of "graphic matches and inserted captions with specific typefaces [and] framings."[235] However, there are distinctions within the graphic novel genre. There are text-oriented graphic

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[231] Otsuka 101.

[232] Okubo is Nisei, Otsuka is Sansei, and Hughes is Yonsei. For the definitions of these terms, see the Abbreviations and Terms Used Throughout The Exhibit subtab of the Language Used Throughout The Exhibit tab in *James Wakasa, History, and Memory*.

[233] As Achim Hescher states in *Reading Graphic Novels: Genre and Narration* (2016), a graphic novel is "a specific type of a book of comics that can be set apart from traditional comic books, quantitatively and qualitatively, according to a number of concrete parameters…which contribute to their complexity," 55. Hescher, Achim. *Reading Graphic Novels: Genre and Narration* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016).

[234] Hescher 56.

[235] Ibid.

novels, such as *Maus* and Allison Bechdel's *Fun Home* (2006), and image-oriented graphic novels, such as Chris Ware's *Building Stories* (2012).[236] I assert that *Displacement* is text-oriented, since, although it contains a number of large images, the written text used throughout does a lot of the heavy-lifting—for lack of a better term—in terms of how readers make meaning.[237] Hescher also asserts that graphic novels are "adult-oriented," but this is no longer necessarily the case, with the recent proliferation in the publication of graphic novels written and marketed for a young adult audience, including historical graphic novels, such as *Displacement*; George Takei, Justin Eisinger, Steven Scott, and Harmony Becker's *They Called Us Enemy* (2019); Frank Abe, Tamiko Nimura, Ross Ishikawa, and Matt Sasaki's *We Hereby Refuse: Japanese American Resistance to Wartime Incarceration* (2021); and Kiku Hughes and Ken Mochizuki's *Those Who Helped Us: Assisting Japanese Americans During the War* (2022). It is interesting to note that many contemporary graphic novels aimed at a young adult audience are also what Martha J. Cutter and Cathy J. Schlund-Vials, in *Redrawing The Historical Past: History, Memory, and Multiethnic Graphic Novels* (2018), define as "multiethnic graphic novels": "multiethnic graphic novels, more often than not, tactically rehearse[s], reimagine[s], and replay[s] 'dark moments' in history."[238] Multiethnic graphic novels often explore "the ways in which

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[236] Hescher 64.
[237] In *Redrawing the Historical Past: History, Memory, and Multiethnic Graphic Novels,* Martha J. Cutter and Cathy J. Schlund-Vials assert that "history itself is undeniably textualized and textual," 6.
[238] Cutter and Schlund-Vials 1-2.

the past is evocatively renarrated, provocatively reconfigured, and strategically remade…"[239] As such, "multiethnic graphical novels are uniquely focused on the gaps of traditional U.S. historical narrative and a reparation of these fissures through unique artistic endeavors that piece these fragmented histories back together."[240] As a multiethnic graphic novel, *Displacement* engages with a 'dark moment' in American history—Japanese Incarceration—and, more specifically, the "Wakasa Incident."

Displacement uses the science fiction trope of time travel to send Kiku back in time to Tanforan and Topaz, where her great-grandparents and maternal grandmother were incarcerated. Kiku calls these moments "displacements." The "displacements" that take place throughout the text serve as 'triggers' to unlock memories Kiku had either forgotten regarding her own family's experiences with incarceration or serve to teach her about aspects of incarceration she is learning about and being confronted with for the first time. At the beginning of the Wakasa section of *Displacement* (which, at fourteen pages long, is longest from the primary texts I examine), Kiku attends a camp dance with her love interest May. The joyful and peaceful night is interrupted by a gunshot—the last two panels on the bottom of the page depict a clear black sky, and then a rifle firing with a loud crack.[241] The next morning, Kiku wakes up to find her barrack-mates already awake and gathered around the table, discussing

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[239] Cutter and Schlund-Vials 2.

[240] Cutter and Schlund-Vials 5.

[241] Hughes, Kiku. *Displacement* (New York: First Second, 2020), 189. "It is the specificity of graphic narratives that the verbal and the pictorial track combine in the production of meaning making" (Hescher 110).

what happened the previous night: “A man was shot by the guards last night. James Wakasa. They say he was trying to escape.”[242] In a square panel of text—which are used throughout to show Kiku thinking about or reflecting on what she has learned while “displaced”—Kiku states: “I should have seen this coming. I knew a man had been shot from stories mom had told me.”[243] More panels of text follow as Kiku prepares to leave the barrack for the day: “Her Mom had said that the man had been deaf and was chasing his dog when he’d been shot.”[244] As in Otsuka’s novel, readers are once again presented with multiple possible narratives of Wakasa’s death—what he was doing near the fence when he was shot, and why he possibly did not hear the sentry calling out to him. Issues of memory are brought to the forefront when Kiku admonishes herself for not remembering that her family had discussed the “Wakasa Incident”: “I should have remembered, but it came as a shock. What else was I forgetting?”[245] Different, what I term “capsule narratives”—varying narratives or explanations for Wakasa’s death used to attempt to make sense of it—have been passed down in Kiku’s family, yet she did not remember them until she was re-presented with the shooting during a “displacement.” These “capsule narratives” are included in both *When The Emperor was Divine* and *Displacement*, since “no one [but

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[242] Hughes 190.
[243] Hughes 191. I use Kiku to refer to the pictorial character and Hughes to refer to the author.
[244] Ibid.
[245] Ibid.

the sentries on duty] actually saw the incident."[246] As such, even though these "capsule narratives" are not included in official documentation about the "Wakasa Incident," they are powerful, evocative and are ways in which those incarcerated at Topaz, and their descendants, attempt to make sense of a senseless death.

These "capsule narratives" can also be described as rumors, since Kiku states: "But I heard dozens of rumors about what had really happened. Nobody seemed to believe the *Times* [the *Topaz Times*] or the administration's version of events. I questioned my own family's version of events in light of all these conflicting stories."[247] The different "capsule narratives" of what Wakasa was doing near the fence continue to proliferate while Kiku is talking with the friends she has made in camp: "I heard he was just walking his dog when they shot him from behind," "I heard he doesn't even have a dog, though. He was Issei—maybe he couldn't understand the guards—."[248] May then interrupts: "So what if he didn't have a dog…maybe he was collecting arrowheads! He couldn't have been trying to escape. He knew as well as any of us that there's nowhere to go out there."[249] The fact that these narratives were included in Hughes's text, which was published in 2020, emphasizes that there is still no clear answer as to what Wakasa was doing near the fence. Kiku reflects: "We'd all

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[246] Taylor, Sandra C. *Jewel Of The Desert: Japanese American Internment at Topaz* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 137.
[247] Hughes 192.
[248] Ibid.
[249] Ibid.

known that the punishment for trying to escape could be death. But if Mr. Wakasa really hadn't been trying to escape at all, we could be killed for anything."[250] This echoes the line at the end of the Wakasa section in *When The Emperor was Divine*: "*One false move, pal, and you're dead*,"[251] as well as the threats made by the MPs to those investigating the scene of Wakasa's death.[252] "Exhibit 'E'" (prepared by Eiichi Sato) of The Wakasa Incident report documents the events of Monday morning, April 12, the day after Wakasa was killed. At around 10:00 AM, five men, two of whom were residents of Wakasa's block (Susumu Imai and Akima Sugawara), one of whom was the social worker for Wakasa's block (Eiichi Sato), and two "social workers on funerals" (Albert M. Yoshida and George S. Aso), set out to investigate the scene of Wakasa's death:[253]

> Together we approached the west-south fence…when an army "jeep" came speeding from the north on the road beyond the fence and, upon seeing us, came to an abrupt halt. The driver stood up from his seat, turned to his companion, and grabbed the submachine gun from the latter's hand. He jumped off the jeep and came dashing to the fence pointing his gun at us. 'Scatter or you'll get the same thing as the other

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[250] Hughes 193.
[251] Otsuka 102, her emphasis.
[252] Sato, Eiichi. "Exhibit 'E,'" The Wakasa Incident, 10 May 1943, H47, BANC MSS 67/14 c, folder H2.02:5, Japanese American Evacuation and Resettlement Records, The Bancroft Library, University of California Berkeley. http://www.oac.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/k61n873j/?brand=oac4 .
[253] Ibid.

> guy got.' We immediately obeyed his orders given at the point of his gun. His companion was heard to emit a loud laugh, one of derision.[254]

I do not know if Otsuka studied said documents, which have been declassified, digitized, and are available online, while writing *When The Emperor was Divine*. Although Hughes does not allude to the events of "Exhibit 'E,'" the "capsule narratives" (the rumors) surrounding Wakasa's death are part of the "…polyphonic, diverse, complicated narratives of history—versions of history that enable not only recitation of past trauma but also a reevaluation of what is at stake in the envisioning of history itself."[255] Indeed, the reiteration of "I could be killed for anything/I could be killed for making a mistake or what could be seen as wrongdoing/I will be killed if I also do what someone else was perceived to have been doing" is a call to the past that perhaps brings to mind the contemporary Black Lives Matter (BLM) and Stop Asian Hate Movements, underscoring just precisely what is at stake in "the envisioning of history itself"—the repeated acts of violence against those perceived as Other, acts of violence which can, and do, lead to death, to murder by racist citizens or by the police.

Contemporary Americans, like the Topazans who lived through the "Wakasa Incident," still try to make sense of this violence—to give a reason for it that can be believed—when the often-spectacular nature of the violence almost cannot be believed, yet is all too real. In *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, And Self-Making*

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[254] Ibid.
[255] Cutter and Schlund-Vials 16.

In Nineteenth-Century America (1997), Saidiya Hartman explores both what she describes as "terrible spectacles" of racist violence and the more every day instances of oppression and violence, "the terror of the mundane and quotidian," enacted against enslaved African Americans in the nineteenth century, as well as how these acts of violence are depicted.[256] One of the questions Hartman poses in her Introduction is "how does one give expression to these outrages without exacerbating the indifference to suffering that is the consequence of the benumbing spectacle…?"[257] This is readily seen in contemporary examples of the deaths of African American boys and men at the hands of police officers, as in the case of George Floyd, where the video footage of his death, his murder, was played continuously by media outlets and shared widely on social media platforms. In other words, Hartman questions how artists, authors, and reporters can represent or record such instances of spectacular violence enacted against those perceived as the Other without desensitizing viewers to the violence portrayed. Okubo and Hughes do not illustrate Wakasa's death, and Otsuka does not describe it—instead, these authors either depict or describe the aftermath of his death: the incarcerees' reactions to the shooting, the work-stoppages in response to it, and Wakasa's funeral. Through these choices, Okubo, Hughes, and Otsuka gesture to the spectacular nature of this violence without repeating it. For example, to emphasize the

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[256] Hartman, Saidiya. *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, And Self-Making In Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 4.
[257] Hartman 4.

increase in fear and the valid belief that one could be shot by one of the sentries or guards for conceivably any reason, page 193 of *Displacement* also features drawings of a guard tower and barbed wire, as well as a sentry with a rifle and their view from the guard tower.

Kiku states that tensions in camp were “heightened by the increase in military presence, and the fact that the military took Mr. Wakasa’s body before anyone else could see it.”[258] Although this statement makes good drama, it is not factually true, as there were key members of the incarcerated community at Topaz who viewed Wakasa’s body the night he was shot in order to identify him.[259] Indeed, given the camp administration’s attempts to restore Topaz to a sense of normalcy post-“Wakasa Incident,” it is unsurprising that rumors ran rampant, making it difficult to separate fact from fiction. Not only did the Topaz Administration attempt to restore Topaz to a sense of normalcy, they also “attempt[ed] to cover up the situation.”[260] In the next few panels, Kiku and her friends read the *Topaz Times*’ coverage of Wakasa’s death, and take issue with how the shooting is framed, with May exclaiming: “So it’s Wakasa’s fault that he got shot! What a bunch of crap.”[261] By presenting these varying narratives of how and why Wakasa was killed, as well as the Topaz Administration’s

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[258] Hughes 193. Hughes, like Okubo, does not illustrate Wakasa’s death.
[259] This is discussed in *James Wakasa, History, and Memory*, under the Key Players subtab.
[260] Hughes 194.
[261] Ibid. Coverage of Wakasa’s death in the *Topaz Times* and other newspapers is explored under the Map Of Newspaper Coverage subtab of the Newspaper Coverage of the “Wakasa Incident” tab in *James Wakasa, History, and Memory*.

attempts to erase the words "crime" and "murder" from the minds of incarcerees, Hughes "return[s] to the traumatic past and construct[s] a new reality that acknowledges the dehumanizing nature of much of what we consider history."[262] The dehumanizing effects of history are indeed felt and called out by May with her no-nonsense statement: "What a bunch of crap"—how it is completely ridiculous to suggest that Wakasa is to blame for his death.[263]

Kiku and May continue the conversation with their friends and turn to the related topic of Wakasa's funeral and the controversy surrounding it. Notably, although both Okubo and Otsuka include Wakasa's funeral in their respective texts, they do not include information on the controversies surrounding it and how these controversies were directly connected to the work stoppages that take place throughout Topaz in the wake of Wakasa's death. While Kiku and her friends are talking about how "they [the Topaz administration] think it'll [a funeral for Wakasa] rile us up, as if we weren't already upset," their older friend Emi enters and informs them that there is going to be a work stoppage "tomorrow and I—I'm going to participate."[264] May states that she and her friends won't attend classes in order to also participate in the

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[262] Cutter and Schlund-Vials 16.

[263] Hughes 194. This type of victim-blaming continues into the present in news coverage regarding victims of police violence, particularly when the victim is suspected of any wrong-doing, with the officers who harmed or killed that victim being described as "doing their duty" and protecting society from a "suspected" or "known criminal." This language is often employed more liberally when the victim of police violence is not white.

[264] Hughes 195-196. The work stoppages are covered in more detail in *James Wakasa, History, and Memory*.

work stoppage.[265] Emi then reveals that those participating in the work stoppage include "almost all the secretaries at my admin office…and Danny Takemura said none of the farm aids are going in to Delta. Not until they let us have the funeral."[266] In the First Annual Report (September 1942 through September 1943), Warren Watanabe and Russell A. Bankson include a detailed account of "The Wakasa Shooting."[267] Information on the work stoppages that occurred throughout Topaz that Hughes references are also included in the report. According to Watanabe and Bankson:

> Within the center protest against the shooting appeared in the form of spontaneous work stoppages. This was especially marked in the case of agricultural workers, who refused to leave the center to work on the farms in the project area….Work stoppages in various divisions continued throughout the week as the administration, councilmen, and committee members carried on discussions which…expanded to cover all aspects of the evacuation.[268]

These discussions focused on the topics of "the civil rights of evacuees, the policies of the War Department, the functions of the Military Police, and the responsibilities of

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[265] Hughes 196.
[266] Hughes 197.
[267] Watanabe, Warren, and Bankson, R.A. First Annual Report, September 1942 through September 1943, November 30, 1943, Historical Section, Project Reports Division, H424, BANC MSS 67/14 c, folder H2.02:04, Japanese American Evacuation and Resettlement Records, The Bancroft Library, University of California Berkeley. https://oac.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/k6kh0v8s/?brand=oac4, 51.
[268] Ibid.

the administration were threshed out, though few conclusions were reached."[269] Likely a result of these discussions, which were perhaps inspired by the work stoppages, as well as the camp-wide tension that directly resulted from Wakasa's murder, the *Topaz Times* published an article which outlined Topaz's plan to "prevent a recurrence of the incident."[270] Importantly, this article stated that "the Military Police 'alert' was lifted," that "no more soldiers who had seen service in the Pacific battlefronts were to be sent to Topaz and such soldiers already stationed at Topaz were to be withdrawn," and, perhaps most importantly:

> The Military Police were under orders not to molest or injure the residents or to exercise any unusual surveillance upon the evacuees. Moreover, they were not to enter the city area except on office business approved in advance by the commanding Military Police officer and the project administration.[271]

Although, as discussed earlier in this chapter, this did not prevent shootings from occurring. Even though no one was injured when the warning shots were fired post-"Wakasa Incident," despite the military and the Topaz Administration's new rules and reassurances, the threat of violence—the threat of death—was ever present.

While the work stoppages continue, the fictionalized representation of Kiku

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[269] Ibid 52.
[270] Ibid.
[271] Ibid.

looks on in awe: she never learned about this grassroots, incarceree-led response to Wakasa's death.[272] The next page depicts camp devoid of activity: no one is walking among the barracks, and the classrooms are empty. As her awed facial expression hinted on the previous page, Kiku admits: "I'd heard of the shooting, but I never knew there had been protests afterward. I was a part of a resistance that had never been taught to me."[273] Kiku then wonders if her grandmother Ernestina and her family participated in the work stoppages in any way, and if they did, why didn't they share that information with her mother: "Did they never tell my Mom this story? Did they think it was unimportant?"[274] Given Kiku's own positionality in the present—the Trump Era—resistance is significant to her, and learning about these work stoppages during one of her "displacements" teaches her that "almost every person at Topaz resisted their oppression in some way."[275]

Hughes then shifts her focus to Wakasa's funeral. The art accompanying the text is like the art Okubo uses to depict it: a raised platform featuring Wakasa's casket, floral wreaths, bouquets, and crosses; thousands of funeral attendees surround the casket. Hughes adds: "It [the funeral] was not permitted to be in the exact spot of his

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[272] Hughes 197.

[273] Hughes 198. This focus on resistance is made more prevalent at the end of the graphic novel, when Hughes directly connects events of the past—Japanese Incarceration—to events of the present—the incarceration of migrants at the U.S./Mexico border.

[274] Hughes 198.

[275] Ibid. For more on different types of resistance to Japanese Incarceration by the incarcerees themselves, see *We Hereby Refuse: Japanese American Resistance to Wartime Incarceration* (Seattle: Chin Music Press, 2021) by Frank Abe and Tamiko Nimura, with artwork by Ross Ishikawa and Matt Sasaki.

death, but it was nearby. We could see the barbed wire fence he was supposedly climbing under."[276] Okubo and Otsuka do not include this detail, and it is indeed a powerful one, since part of the reason the incarcerees participated in a work stoppage is not only because they wanted to have a funeral for Wakasa, but because, as Buddhist practice dictates, they wanted to have the funeral where he died: "The Buddhists are demanding the funeral happen at the place of death."[277] Similar to Otsuka, Hughes also writes that "…two thousand people came to mourn his death and remember his life."[278] Hughes then explicitly connects the trauma of Wakasa's death to the larger traumas of Japanese Incarceration Kiku's grandmother and her family experienced:

> I'm not sure why I cried, I didn't know him. But, I suppose, I never knew my grandmother, either. I never knew my great-grandparents, or any of the people from camp until the displacement. But their experiences, their traumas, still shaped me in ways I was only just beginning to understand. The murder of James Wakasa had such an

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[276] Hughes 199.
[277] Hughes 195. Archival documents that have since been declassified and digitized go into more depth about the desire to have Wakasa's funeral at the spot of his death and the Topaz Administration's resistance to this. A compromise is eventually reached and the funeral is held at a spot close to, but not on, the site of Wakasa's death. For more on this, see The Wakasa Incident, 10 May 1943, H47, BANC MSS 67/14 c, folder H2.02:5, Japanese American Evacuation and Resettlement Records, The Bancroft Library, University of California Berkeley. http://www.oac.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/k61n873j/?brand=oac4.
[278] Hughes 200.

> impact on my grandmother that two generations later, it was still haunting our family.[279]

With this explicit connection between the past and the present via generational trauma, Hughes explores the "interplay between history [and] memory [often explored in graphic novels]."[280] Cutter and Schlund-Vials argue that "integral to many multiethnic graphic novels is a re-seeing of history…"[281] Kiku's "displacements," which lead to her making specific connections between this historical trauma and her family's trauma, are a type of "re-seeing" of history that the graphic novel form enables Hughes to explore. Through these "displacements," Kiku comes to understand that Wakasa's death not only haunts her family, but "our whole Nikkei community" and confesses that "we are still mourning him."[282]

Hughes places the last block of text on the page, "we are still mourning him," in the center of a coffin surrounded by flowers. The memory of Wakasa, Hughes underscores, has never been laid to rest, and, like a ghost, haunts each successive generation, awakening sorrow in each.[283] Although the events themselves have passed—the direct aftermath of Wakasa's death and Japanese Incarceration as a whole—"the trauma lasted."[284] Kiku, however, takes solace in the opportunity to

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[279] Hughes 201.
[280] Cutter and Schlund-Vials 2.
[281] Cutter and Schlund-Vials 5.
[282] Hughes 201.
[283] Ibid.
[284] Hughes 202.

come together with the Topaz community that Wakasa's funeral provides, and echoes the "never again" and "always remember" rhetoric of the Holocaust and 9/11: "But when a community comes together to demand more, when we do not let the trauma stay obscured but bring it up to the surface and remember it together—we can make sure it is not repeated."[285] Throughout the last third of the graphic novel, Hughes especially "present[s] history as a site of struggle where new configurations of the past can be manipulated and alternate conceptualizations of the present and future histories might be envisioned."[286] The panels accompanying this text feature the crowd at Wakasa's funeral, with two sentries watching over the events (one of them armed with a rifle), Kiku, and other attendees of the funeral in shadow.[287] The trauma of Wakasa's death is part of all of them, and it is their duty, as a community, to remember the trauma and not bury it or ignore it—and, as part of remembering that trauma, informing others of past events to try to ensure such events are not repeated.

Conclusion

One way to remember such events is through the construction of memorials. Indeed, a group of Topazans does just that and constructs a memorial for Wakasa, but, according to Kiku, who is narrating over memories (perhaps her grandmother's) of Wakasa's funeral she experienced during a "displacement," it "was quickly removed

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[285] Ibid.
[286] Cutter and Schlund-Vials 2.
[287] Hughes 202.

by the camp director."[288] As Kiku states at the bottom of the page, the text placed next to two red flowers (flourishing despite the dry soil of Topaz), "A memory is too powerful a weapon."[289] As the persistence of the traumatic memory of Wakasa's death throughout various nonfictional and fictional texts such as *Citizen 13660*, *When The Emperor was Divine*, and *Displacement* indicates, memory is indeed powerful and persistent, and is frequently passed down through the generations, sometimes gathering strength as it does so, as is the case with the "Wakasa Incident." Surprisingly, the "Wakasa Incident" is mentioned in very few of the book reviews of these texts. Instead, reviewers focus on Okubo and Otsuka's writing styles, and Hughes's use of the science fiction trope of time travel. Although reviews of the works are largely favorable, there are critiques of Otsuka's novel, particularly the last chapter, that dismiss it as yet another rant against racism with no substance. What many of the reviewers of these texts agree on, however, is that Japanese Incarceration is a shameful part of the United States's past that needs to be continually taught about and discussed to make sure the event itself, and the trauma is has caused, are not forgotten.

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[288] Hughes 203. For more on the Wakasa memorial stone, see The Wakasa Memorial Committee: https://www.wakasamemorial.org/.
[289] Hughes 203.

Chapter 3

CRITICAL RECEPTIONS OF *CITIZEN 13660*, *WHEN THE EMPEROR WAS DIVINE*, AND *DISPLACEMENT*

Introduction

Reviews of my primary texts (*Citizen 13660*, *When The Emperor was Divine*, and *Displacement*) feature both praise and critiques. Those who reviewed *Citizen 13660*, both shortly after it was published and decades later, focus on Okubo's journalistic prose, her insights into the incarceration experience, and her use of humor. However, contemporary reviews feature more critique than those of the past. This complicates readings of a text that has been universally praised by both white and Japanese American readers alike, and was in fact lauded by those actively involved in Japanese Incarceration. This disrupts the readings of *Citizen 13660* that see it solely as a critique of Japanese Incarceration. Reviews of *When The Emperor was Divine* focus on Otsuka's tone, ability to shed light on a part of the U.S.'s shameful racial history, and the use of specific details, particularly about Topaz's natural surroundings, to bring the scenes to life. Although many critics praise the last chapter of the novel as a strong, poignant condemnation of U.S. policy when it comes to racialized Others, some see it as a tired, overblown diatribe against racism that adds nothing new to such conversations. However, the latter readings dismiss the righteous anger and lasting

trauma of Japanese Incarceration that the last chapter so poignantly highlights, as well as the fact that racism was one of the core reasons for Japanese Incarceration. The most recent text, *Displacement*, has not yet been given much academic attention, but has received praise in the popular press for Hughes's use of the science fiction trope of time travel to teach younger readers about a history they may not have learned about in school. Although *Displacement* is marketed to a young adult (YA) audience, the issues of generational trauma covered in the text can be appreciated and perhaps better understood by an older audience. The continued publication of nonfictional and fictional texts on Japanese Incarceration highlights the continued need for further attention to and education on this historical trauma and how it has impacted survivors and their families.

Citizen 13660

When it was published in 1946 by Columbia University Press, Miné Okubo's *Citizen 13660* received much praise from members of the public, as well as both orchestrators and critics of Japanese Incarceration. As Christine Hong asserts in her introduction to the 1983 edition of Okubo's graphic memoir, this praise from orchestrators complicates the typical reading of the text as a "subtle yet discerning exposé of racist unfreedom at the heart of American democracy."[290] However, the

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[290] Hong, Christine. "Introduction" (2014) in Okubo, Miné, *Citizen 13660* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1983), x.

book was also critiqued as "not wholly accurate"[291] and cautioned as needing careful readers by both Alice M. Togo and Setsuko Matsunaga Nishi in their respective reviews, both published in 1947. Regardless of how one reads Okubo's text, contemporaneous perceptions of her book need to be considered when asserting the importance of this work both when it was first published and in the present, particularly its influence on more recent texts of Japanese Incarceration, such as *When The Emperor was Divine* and *Displacement*. Complicating readings of *Citizen 13660* can then lead to perhaps more nuanced readings of *When The Emperor was Divine* and *Displacement*—how these works of historical fiction are contemporaneously read considering historical issues occurring at their time of publication: the post-9/11 era and the Trump Era, respectively.[292] I start by examining reviews of *Citizen 13660* that discuss Okubo's writing style and tone—how this has been both praised and critiqued—and then look at reviews that stress that Okubo's graphic memoir is more complex than it appears on the surface, requiring careful readers.

In their book review, published in *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* in January 1947, Constantine Panunzio begins by praising Okubo's text as "simple, eloquent, poignant…," that the narrative is "restrained, lightly humorous, and yet vivid."[293] Panunzio then provides specific examples from

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291 Panunzio, Constantine, "Citizen 13660 by Miné Okubo," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 249, Social Implications of Modern Science (January 1947): 209.

292 *When The Emperor was Divine* is sometimes referred to as *Emperor* throughout this chapter.

293 Panunzio, Constantine, "Citizen 13660 by Miné Okubo," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 249, Social Implications of Modern Science (January 1947): 209.

the text that illustrate these qualities, such as the account of Okubo's father being arrested by the FBI and incarcerated separately from the rest of her family, as well as the physical hardships of camp life, such as the wind and dust storms.[294] Panunzio then tempers their praise by stating that "the book is not wholly accurate, mainly its focus on the portrayal of Caucasians and MPs as solely hostile and negative."[295] Panunzio provides evidence to back these claims, stating that although Okubo refers to "friends" that came to visit her during "evacuation," that "Caucasians" "look on the evacuees with disdain (12)."[296] In a similar fashion, MPs are constantly depicted with guns at the ready and as "austere if not brutal."[297] Panunzio takes offence at these depictions of (white) Americans: "Americans who showed sympathy, who were moved to indignation, to tears, almost to revolt, far outnumbered those who gloated over the whole affair of evacuation. And in the camps were United States officials who were considerate, as well as those who were not. The book does not show this."[298] With their review, Panunzio both praises Okubo's book for being "direct and matter of fact," while deeming that it is not at the level of "great art" since "the total

[294] Ibid.
[295] Ibid.
[296] Ibid.
[297] Ibid.
[298] Ibid. In their book review, Panunzio does not provide any evidence to back up such claims of sympathy and indignation at the incarceration of Japanese immigrants and Japanese Americans. Ken Mochizuki and Kiku Hughes's 2022 graphic novel, *Those Who Helped Us: Assisting Japanese Americans During The War*, focuses on such figures, particularly those who directly helped those incarcerated.

sorrow of the ‘other half’ [white Americans]” is not depicted.[299] Another reviewer, Setsuko Matsunaga Nishi, would likely assert that, with this critique, Panunzio is missing the focus of the text: “the treatment of Japanese-Americans during the war,” not the feelings of white Americans who were either implicitly or explicitly complicit in the incarceration of Japanese immigrants and Japanese Americans.[300]

Nishi largely praises *Citizen 13660*. Like Panunzio, Nishi notes Okubo’s use of humor and the text’s objectivity.[301] It is important to note that Nishi predicts that Okubo’s text “will serve an important propaganda function to a public that perhaps would be more comfortable to forget the treatment of Japanese-Americans during the war.”[302] Indeed, in her statement before the Congressional Committee on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (CWRIC) in 1981, Okubo presents a copy of *Citizen 13660* “to the Commission for their record.”[303] Indeed, Okubo’s drawings, as Nishi states, “accurately describe the way people adjusted to the weather, flies, and mud; to the emotional jabs of suspicion, loneliness, and insecurity…and what they did to forget these discomforts and to build morale and self-respect.”[304] Even though Nishi does not provide direct examples of these, since it is a short book review, those

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[299] Ibid.

[300] Nishi, Setsuko Matsunaga, “*Citizen 13660*. By Miné Okubo,” *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 52, No. 5 (March 1947): 463-464, 464.

[301] Nishi 463.

[302] Nishi 464.

[303] Okubo, Miné, “Statement of Miné Okubo before the Congressional Committee on Wartime Relocation and Internment (1981), *Amerasia Journal*, 30:2: 15-18, 17.

[304] Nishi 464.

familiar with the text will readily find multiple examples throughout the work.

While discussing the experiences of incarcerees at both Tanforan and Topaz, Okubo frequently focuses on the weather. Okubo writes: "The weather in Tanforan was fair. It was sunny on most days but always windy and dusty. My stall faced north and sun never reached it. It was uncomfortable. I had a cold most of the time."[305] The drawing accompanying this block of text features a central group of five incarcerees, including the pictorial representation of Okubo (Miné) in a jacket with the collar raised, hunched over with a handkerchief covering her nose and mouth; she also holds her hair down so it does not get tangled by the wind.[306] To Miné's right is a man, also hunched over in a thick jacket with the collar raised, using both hands to hold down his hat, showing how windy it is at Tanforan.[307] In the background, a man in glasses and a black coat chases his hat which has been blown off of his head. The other members of the central group of five, two women and one child, also duck their heads against the wind. A woman with a spotted kerchief on her head holds her nose to block out dust particles.[308] There is no plant life depicted in the drawing, showing how harsh and unforgiving the landscape is.[309] Not allowing readers to forget that this is, above all, about the experiences of incarcerees, the barbed wire fence stands resolutely in the background, where another figure far off in the distance covers their nose and mouth

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[305] Okubo 56.
[306] Ibid.
[307] Ibid.
[308] Ibid.
[309] Ibid.

against the blowing dust.[310] Flies were also an issue in the camps, particularly in the old horse stalls that served as barracks at Tanforan, a horse racing track turned temporary incarceration camp in San Bruno, California[311]: "On warm days it was unbearable in the stalls and barracks. The stench of manure returned with the heat, and this in turn brought back the horseflies."[312] The drawing accompanying this text features two men slumped over in the heat, likely napping.[313] Flies swarm around them as they sit outside a barrack. Miné sits inside the barrack, sketching, a sheet or tarp the only barrier serving as a door and the only barrier between herself and the outside. This makeshift door does nothing to prevent the flies from coming in, and they buzz annoyingly around her as she tries to work.[314] These are just two examples of how Okubo depicts the environmental hardships of the camps through her drawings and written descriptions.

As Nishi notes in his book review, Okubo also took care to depict "the emotional jabs of suspicion, loneliness, and insecurity…" of camp life.[315] When describing the living conditions at Topaz, Okubo writes: "There was no privacy in our one-room home. People came and went…We were tired of the shiftless existence and

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[310] Ibid.
[311] "Tanforan (detention facility)," *Densho*, Densho Encyclopedia, https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Tanforan_(detention_facility)/.
[312] Okubo 106.
[313] Ibid.
[314] Ibid. Here, Miné is dressed in a pair of pants and her trademark cross-patterned shirt Okubo frequently draws her in throughout *Citizen 13660*.
[315] Nishi 464.

were restless. A feeling of insecurity hung over the camp; we were worried about the future."[316] The drawing linked to this text depicts a large room packed with men and women of various ages, talking, drinking, reading, and smoking. A pot of boiling water sits on a hot plate, and drawings adorn the walls. Miné is the only person in the drawing facing the reader, while the rest of the people in the room either look at those they are conversing with, at the book they are reading, or the drink they are pouring. Miné is once again dressed in her cross-patterned shirt; she looks at the reader, perhaps lost in thought, worrying about the future: wondering what is going to happen to her, the members of her family incarcerated with her, and the friends she has made in camp. As stated in the text accompanying this drawing, life in camp is tedious and without purpose, leading people to sit around talking "all day and far into the night."[317] The insecurity the incarcerees felt regarding their futures is explicitly stated here: what will happen to them when they leave camp? What plans should they make knowing that the future is so uncertain?[318] Perhaps the only sense of security is found with each other, hence crowding as many people as possible into single barrack rooms when meeting with friends and family.[319] Maybe Okubo's pictorial stand-in (Miné) is looking at the reader to show that she, unlike those crowded into the room with her, desires privacy, and, despite the loneliness this would cause, wants a moment to

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[316] Okubo 139.
[317] Ibid.
[318] Ibid.
[319] Ibid.

herself to think about her own future.[320]

Although one can readily find examples of the aforementioned physical and psychological hardships of incarceration throughout *Citizen 13660*, Nishi asserts: "What is *not evident* to most readers is the disillusioning torment that evacuation meant to them."[321] Here, Nishi underscores that if one is a "careful reader," Okubo's focus on the emotional pain and trauma caused by Japanese Incarceration will become evident.[322] When Miné and her fellow incarcerees arrive at Topaz, the camp is only partially finished: barracks are half-constructed, barracks have yet to be winterized, and incomplete sections of barbed wire fencing surround the camp.[323] During the winter, not only did incarcerees work to winterize their barracks, but also worked to build the camp's infrastructure: "Fence posts and watch towers were now constructed around the camp by the evacuees to fence themselves in."[324] This could be read just as a statement of fact: that one of the tasks incarcerees had to complete to finish the camp was to build the fencing and watch towers that would be used as part of the camp's infrastructure. However, this statement, and the actions themselves, are much more insidious: incarcerees, taken to Topaz against their will, due to government orders based on unfounded fears of another possible military attack on the United States from "fifth column" saboteurs within the United States itself, who are then imprisoned in

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320 Ibid.
321 Nishi 464, my emphasis.
322 Ibid.
323 Okubo 137, 141, 154-155.
324 Okubo 155.

U.S. Army and DOJ camps spread throughout the continental United States and located in desolate areas, are building the physical structures of their own confinement. The fence posts will be used in the construction of the barbed wire fence that surrounds the camp—fencing that is meant to keep those inside it imprisoned and obedient.[325] The watch towers will be used by the MPs and guards who serve as the camp's security; they stand in these panoptic watch towers and surveil the incarcerees to make sure no one tries to escape.

Okubo's matter-of-fact, journalistic prose belies the psychological trauma this caused incarcerees: those imprisoned were aware of what these fences and watch towers were meant to do given their previous imprisonment in the temporary "assembly centers," such as Tanforan, that were used to hold incarcerees while the ten "permanent" camps were being constructed. Miné is once again featured in the drawing accompanying this text, as she is in most of the drawings that make up *Citizen 13660*. She and another man, who is wearing glasses and a winter hat and coat, are observing men, clad in surplus G.I. clothes from WWI that were provided to incarcerees by the WRA, as well as winter gear incarcerees themselves ordered from the Sears, Roebuck catalogue.[326] These men, dressed in heavy coats, hats, and gloves, work diligently digging holes in the frozen ground, carrying fence posts, and planting them in ground.[327] Most of the men's faces are either obscured by their hats or are not

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[325] Ibid.
[326] Okubo 152-153.
[327] Okubo 155.

detailed enough to make out their facial expressions, so readers cannot readily discern what emotions these men are experiencing while working on constructing the camp's fencing.[328] However, given the fact that these men have already been previously incarcerated for months at facilities such as Tanforan, the apparatuses used to imprison them are more than familiar.[329] The discerning reader can thus imagine that these men might have experienced anger, resentment, sadness, frustration, and/or resignation when constructing these apparatuses of their own confinement.

Alice M. Togo, like Nishi, asserts that Okubo's text, although it appears straightforward due to its journalistic style, needs thoughtful readers.[330] In the first paragraph of her review, Togo contextualizes how Okubo came to create *Citizen 13660*: "…she resolved to keep a record of camp life in a series of sketches, which, together with a short text, are the substance of *Citizen 13660*."[331] Togo, like Panunzio and Nishi, remarks on how Okubo employs both humor and tragedy, and that both are "admirably [depicted] in her drawings."[332] Even though Okubo, in the written text that accompanies each drawing, "does not attempt to argue the ethics of the forced evacuation and confinement of American citizens," the drawings reveal that the book

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[328] Ibid.

[329] Barbed wire fencing at Tanforan is clearly depicted on pages 79 and 81 of Okubo's text. For more on the barbed wire fencing used at the camps, see The Physical Geography of Topaz tab in *James Wakasa, History, and Memory*.

[330] Togo, Alice M., "Citizen 13660. by Miné Okubo," *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (March 1947): 122.

[331] Ibid.

[332] Ibid.

is “more than an impersonal chronicle of events.”[333] The drawings, as Nishi states, “suggest that Miss Okubo was not unaware of the social processes operating in the camps and of the effects on individuals.”[334] One example of this is Okubo’s focus on the Loyalty Questionnaire, particularly questions 27 and 28. Okubo writes: “To determine their loyalty, Question 28 was used. It brought about a dilemma. Aliens (Issei) would be in a difficult position if they renounced Japanese citizenship and thereby made themselves stateless persons.”[335] The drawing that accompanies the written text about the Loyalty Questionnaire depicts a man standing onstage, addressing a large audience of men and women of various ages. The man is wiping a tear from his face with a handkerchief while orating emphatically. The men in the front row, who are standing against the stage, have mixed expressions of what appear to be relief and sadness. These men have tears streaming down their faces and are of varying ages. Here, Okubo depicts both Issei and Nisei and their varying reactions. The oldest man in the group, standing near the front of the stage, frowns and sheds a single tear, whereas the man next to him, likely a Nisei, appears to be smiling and sheds two tears.[336] This drawing and the text that accompanies it show Okubo’s awareness of not only pertinent issues in camp, but how different generations responded to them. Okubo depicts herself in the lower right-hand corner of the image;

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[333] Ibid.
[334] Nishi 464.
[335] Okubo 175.
[336] Ibid.

Miné is wearing a plain long-sleeved shirt and holding her nose while looking to the right, perhaps at someone next to her who is also in the front row. Miné holding her nose indicates that she is clearly opposed to or disgusted by whatever the man on stage is saying: Okubo does not provide details of this in her text—the reader must infer how Miné and the others are feeling from their body language and facial expressions.

Okubo's awareness of the intricacies of camp politics and the harsh realities of camp life is underscored by Togo's earlier statement that prior accounts of Japanese Incarceration have been written by those who did not directly experience it, whereas Okubo did.[337] So, although Panunzio and Nishi offer praise for Okubo's "matter of factness" and "objectivity," respectively, Togo reminds readers that even though she "draws no conclusions for her reader," the reader will readily draw their own conclusions from Okubo's text about "the social processes operating in the camps and their effects on individuals" by "examining her drawings."[338] In their June 1947 review of *Citizen 13660* in *Social Service Review*, E.A. goes in depth about Okubo's life prior to incarceration and the process of Japanese Incarceration from "evacuation" to incarceration.[339] Much of their review is spent tracing Okubo's life prior to and during incarceration, and leaves little room for an evaluation of *Citizen 13660*. E.A. establishes Okubo as an artist worthy of recognition, perhaps to lend their short but

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337 Togo 122.

338 Ibid.

339 E.A., "*Citizen 13660* by Miné Okubo," *Social Service Review*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (June 1947): 278-279.

effusive review of *Citizen 13660* some credence. E.A. briefly describes Okubo's role as one of the art teachers at Tanforan and how she served as an art editor for Topaz's literary and arts magazine, *Trek*.[340] It is her work for *Trek* that brings Okubo to the attention of the art editors of *Fortune* magazine: "They were so impressed by her work that they wanted her to illustrate a special issue on Japan."[341] Not only did Okubo work for *Fortune*, but it was this work that helped establish Okubo as a 'loyal US citizen.' It was only when she is "cleared by government authorities" that Okubo is able to leave Topaz in 1944 and settle in New York.[342] After providing this context, E.A. ends their review with a statement similar to the one that Nishi makes in his review about the importance of *Citizen 13660* as historical evidence of America's unjust treatment of Japanese Americans: "The drawings in this volume and the accompanying brief text make *Citizen 13660* a remarkable document…which will serve as a valuable permanent record of what we did to the American citizens whom we placed behind the iron curtains in our own country."[343] This perspective is reaffirmed upon the publication of the 1983 edition of the text (published by the University of Washington), both by reviewers and Okubo herself.

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[340] E.A. 278.

[341] E.A. 278-279. It is Okubo's work for *Fortune* magazine that Christine Hong cites as helping to situate Okubo as just one of many Nisei artists whose work was used to "[imagine] a postwar peace contingent on US victory yet inclusive of a democratically rehabilitated Japan" (111) in her article "Illustrating the Postwar Peace: Miné Okubo, the 'Citizen-Subject' of Japan, and *Fortune* Magazine," *American Quarterly*, Vol. 67, No. 1 (March 2015): 105-140.

[342] E.A. 279; Okubo, Miné, "Preface to the 1983 Edition," in Okubo, Miné, *Citizen 13660* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1983), xxvi.

[343] E.A. 279.

In her "Preface to the 1983 Edition," Okubo briefly recounts her 1981 testimony in New York City before the CWRIC in order to emphasize the importance of *Citizen 13660* in continuing to spread knowledge and foster conversations about Japanese Incarceration: "As *Citizen 13660* had been widely reviewed and was considered an important reference book on the Japanese American evacuation and internment, I presented the commission with a copy of the book in addition to my oral testimony."[344] Here, Okubo continues to briefly summarize the key points of her testimony, and how, with the presentation of a copy of *Citizen 13660*, she "stressed the need for young people from grade school through college to be educated about the evacuation."[345] In his 1984 review of the 1983 edition, published in *Pacific Affairs*, K. Victor Ujimoto echoes E.A. and Okubo's assessments of how *Citizen 13660* serves as an important pedagogical tool: "It will be a very important supplement to existing Asian American and Asian Canadian history and sociology texts."[346] Indeed, *Citizen 13660* is still celebrated in the present, with the Japanese American National Museum (JANM) running an exhibit titled "Miné Okubo's Masterpiece: The Art of *Citizen 13660*" (August 28, 2021 – March 27, 2022) to mark the 75th anniversary of its publication. The exhibit included "myriad sketches that she completed while she was incarcerated at [the] Tanforan and Topaz detention centers, the original drawings that

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[344] Okubo, Miné, "Preface to the 1983 Edition," in Okubo, Miné, *Citizen 13660* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1983), xxxviii.

[345] Ibid.

[346] Ujimoto, K. Victor, "Citizen 13660. By Miné Okubo," *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 57, No. 3 (Autumn 1984): 540-541, 541.

she created for the graphic memoir, as well as a draft of the final manuscript."[347] However, it is this largely laudatory view of *Citizen 13660* that Christine Hong critiques in her 2014 "Introduction" to the 1983 edition and in her 2015 article "Illustrating the Postwar Peace: Miné Okubo, the 'Citizen-Subject' of Japan, and 'Fortune' Magazine." Hong states that although "*Citizen 13660* is today typically read as a subtle yet discerning exposé of racist unfreedom at the heart of American democracy," the way Okubo's text was received prior to and after its publication by those directly involved in Japanese Incarceration needs to be taken into account.[348] By reading Okubo's graphic memoir as completely "against…state objectives," one "neglects the political value of her memoir at its earliest circulation."[349] Hong continues: Okubo's "intention 'to write a book [based] on her experiences here' was favorably acknowledged by the WRA officials who cleared her for resettlement, eastward, in New York."[350] As Hong asserts in her "Introduction," given the WRA's approval of Okubo's plans to write such a book, as well as the WRA's description of Okubo as being "'endowed with special abilities and talents,'" it is not surprising that those who worked for the WRA—those who played a direct role in the incarceration of Japanese Americans—"were among the early enthusiastic chorus of reviewers who

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347 "About this Exhibition," JANM. https://www.janm.org/exhibits/mine-okubo-materpiece.
348 Hong, Chrstine, "Introduction," Okubo, Miné, *Citizen 13660* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014), x.
349 Hong, Christine, "Illustrating the Postwar Peace: Miné Okubo, the 'Citizen-Subject' of Japan, and 'Fortune' Magazine," *American Quarterly*, Vol. 67, No. 1 (March 2015), 105-140; 106.
350 Hong 2014, xi.

claimed *Citizen 13660*'s democratic value."[351] Hong takes her argument further in her 2015 article, asserting that Okubo "cooperated with the WRA agenda [both] in '…her choice of illustrations for the book…and in their brief texts she wrote to accompany them.'"[352]

Okubo not only did this in *Citizen 13660*, but in her own sketches and text in "An Evacuee's Hopes and Memories," an article published in the *San Francisco Chronicle* on August 29, 1943. This example shows that even prior to the publication of her graphic novel, Okubo's artwork and words appeared in publications endorsed by the head of the WRA, Dillon Myer.[353] Okubo's drawings and text are accompanied by the words of none other than Myer, taken from a speech he made at the San Francisco Commonwealth Club.[354] The article provides background on the early stages of Japanese Incarceration—which was euphemistically termed "evacuation."[355] Alongside sketches of incarcerees arriving at camp and participating in daily life (eating in the mess halls, doing laundry, and walking on the roads near the barracks), Okubo writes: "One hundred and ten thousand people were evacuated. Twelve

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[351] Ibid.

[352] Hong 2015, 107, quoting Greg Robinson as quoted by Takashi Fujitani.

[353] Myer served in this role from 1942-1946 (Hong 2014, xi).

[354] "An Evacuee's Hopes and Memories," 29 August 1943, MS-840_0334, CSU Japanese American Digitization Project, California State University Archives. https://cdm16855.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16855coll4/id/52729.

[355] The article distinguishes Okubo's words from Myer's by including quotation marks around and using italics for excerpts from Myer's speech.

assembly centers and ten relocation centers were established."[356] Although Okubo states that she is only focusing on Tanforan and Topaz in her remarks, she writes that "in all of them the situation has been more or less the same, so…I am expressing the whole."[357] Directly below this, Myer is quoted: "Relocation centers were never intended as concentration camps or prisons. They were established primarily as expedient…"[358] Okubo using the language of the WRA to describe the camps ("evacuated," "assembly centers," "relocation centers") seems to lend credence to Myer's statements that the centers are not concentration camps or prisons—that they were created quickly and out of necessity. Throughout the article, Okubo's drawings and text serve to lend credibility to Myer's statements: not only is Okubo someone who is incarcerated—someone with an inside perspective—she is credible; she is a third generation Japanese American (Sansei), is college-educated and possesses charming characteristics.[359] At the beginning of the article, Okubo is described as "an art graduate of the University of California and a young woman with a healthy sense of humor."[360] She is educated, and is a well-known and established artist in the San Francisco Bay Area.[361] Thus, from the start, Okubo is established as credible—as

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356 "An Evacuee's Hopes and Memories," 29 August 1943, MS-840_0334, CSU Japanese American Digitization Project, California State University Archives. https://cdm16855.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16855coll4/id/52729.
357 Ibid.
358 Ibid.
359 Ibid.
360 Ibid.
361 Ibid.

reliable—as someone who can readily provide context and support for Myer's statements.

Then, Okubo describes how Tanforan was run, focusing on the mess hall: "The lower section of the grandstand served as the mess hall…There were often four or five lines, each about a block long, and they had begun forming two hours before mealtime. It was a blessing when the 17 mess halls opened."[362] Myer provides more context regarding feeding incarcerees, assuring those who attended his speech, and now those reading this newspaper article, that "all rationing restrictions applicable to the civilian population are strictly followed."[363] In other words, incarcerees weren't better off than home front citizens, and were also subject to rationing. Since Okubo does not denigrate the way the food is served or the quality of it, and since feeding incarcerees follows the same restrictions as those that civilians are subject to, Myer is once again intimating that incarceration is not horrific—that it is, in fact, more than tolerable, as if to say, 'if you don't believe me, take the word of someone who lives it.' However, it is important to note that when Okubo does critique, albeit briefly, the conditions surrounding incarceration, Myer pays them no heed. In the next section of the newspaper article, "-And Memories," Okubo matter-of-factly describes the train ride from Tanforan to Topaz as "a nightmare."[364] Although Okubo continues her critique, she softens it: "It was the first train trip for most of us and we were excited,

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[362] Ibid.
[363] Ibid.
[364] Ibid.

but many were sad to leave California and the Bay Region. To most people, to this day, the world is only as large as from San Francisco to Tanforan to Topaz."[365] This portion of the newspaper article is accompanied by Okubo's sketches of a classroom, the inside of a barrack, a depiction of the train ride, and a guard tower overlooking barbed wire fences and numerous barracks. Okubo does not seem to include herself in any of these drawings (based on the depictions that are spread throughout *Citizen 13660*). Although Okubo softens her critique of the train ride from Tanforan to Topaz from "a nightmare" to a sorrowful journey, if one looks closely at the sketch of the train ride, you can see someone crying, a single teardrop trickling down their cheek.[366] The other train passengers are depicted as sad, tired, and, perhaps, resigned.[367] The sketch underscores Okubo's description of the train ride as "a nightmare" and how many were sad to leave the only homes they had ever known. Myer's speech is once again excerpted and included beneath Okubo's words, continuing to emphasize the temporary nature of the camps—that incarcerees will later return to the homes they have made here in the United States: "We have assumed that the great majority of the people of Japanese ancestry now in the country will remain here after the war and continue to be good citizens or law-abiding aliens."[368] "Good citizens," as is implied at the beginning of the article, like Okubo, so it is no wonder that the WRA approved

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[365] Ibid.
[366] Ibid.
[367] Ibid.
[368] Ibid.

of Okubo's plans to write a book based on her experiences at Tanforan and Topaz given her previous work on the subject.[369]

This approval extended to reviews of *Citizen 13660* upon its publication in 1946. Myer praised Okubo's graphic memoir: "'This book is a reproof to those who would malign any racial minority, and should help to forestall any future mass movements of the type [Okubo] portrays.'"[370] This statement serves to undercut the U.S. government's statements that Japanese Incarceration was a military necessity in order to ensure the safety of the United States post-Pearl Harbor.[371] *Citizen 13660* was also endorsed by others actively involved in Japanese Incarceration, such as "WRA public relations head M.M. Tozier": "Miné Okubo has succeeded in giving the reader a strong sense of participation in the evacuation and relocation center experience…After reading [*Citizen 13660*], I felt that I knew for the first time what camp life looked like, smelled like, and felt like to the evacuated people."[372] As Hong states in her 2015 article, this is quite an astonishing statement for someone actively involved in Japanese Incarceration to make. The "realism" that Okubo is praised for was also lauded by critics of Japanese Incarceration such as writer, editor, and lawyer Carey McWilliams; he "remarked on Okubo's 'vivid talent' for capturing the 'truth' of

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[369] Ibid; Hong 2014, xi.
[370] Hong 2014, xi.
[371] Executive Order 9066, February 19, 1942; General Records of the United States Government; Record Group 11; National Archives. https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/executive-order-9066.
[372] Hong 2015, 116-117.

the camp experience and conveying it to a readership who, by dint of distance, time, and race, had no occasion to experience the camps directly."[373] Hong aptly states that it is this "common praise of *Citizen 13660* that "made postwar bedfellows of liberal administrator and liberal critic of the camps."[374] It is this historical context that must be taken into account when examining the continued praise and influence of Okubo's graphic memoir on more contemporary representations of Japanese Incarceration, such as Julie Otsuka's *When The Emperor was Divine* and Kiku Hughes's *Displacement*.

When The Emperor was Divine

Julie Otsuka's first novel, *When The Emperor was Divine*, was published in 2002, only one year after 9/11.[375] It is therefore unsurprising that contemporary book reviews would connect America's past to its present—the racial discrimination against Japanese Americans couched in the euphemistic language of "military necessity" with the racial discrimination faced by Middle Eastern immigrants and Americans—both instances where, because someone looked like the 'enemy,' they became so. Even though only four of the ten book reviews I examine directly draw parallels between the U.S. post-Pearl Harbor, and during Japanese Incarceration, to the period following

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[373] Hong 2015, 116.
[374] Ibid.
[375] *When The Emperor was Divine* will be referred to as *Emperor* from this point forward except when quoting from reviews.

9/11 (the "War On Terror"), it is important to discuss the contemporary historical context of Otsuka's novel as this shaped the way critics responded to it. However, it is also important to examine the numerous book reviews that do not take the post-9/11 context into account as well, since these reviews tend to focus more on Otsuka's tone and writing style versus the novel's content and themes. I assert that one needs to take Otsuka's writing style, particularly the shift it takes in the last chapter, and the novel's themes, and read them together to not miss her critiques of Japanese Incarceration and her exploration of how the trauma of incarceration impacted survivors.

In her review of *Emperor*, Sylvia Santiago praises, but mostly critiques it, focusing on Otsuka's approach to the novel's content. Santiago hones in on Otsuka's character development, or, rather, what she sees as a lack thereof. Otsuka's "scrupulously unsentimental" approach to writing about Japanese Incarceration, according to Santiago, "prevents the characters from being fully realized."[376] She admits that this approach "works well when imparting historical details and describing circumstances," but not while describing how such events impacted the novel's characters.[377] Santiago continues: "It is difficult to empathize with characters who never completely come to life, which is probably why the family's plight left me strangely unmoved by the novel's end."[378] The only exception, Santiago claims, is the

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[376] Santiago, Sylvia, "When the emperor was divine," *Herizons*, Winnipeg, Vol. 17, Issue 3 (Winter 2004) 37-38, 37.
[377] Ibid.
[378] Ibid.

chapter told from the son's perspective, which is "sincere" and "touching."[379] This chapter takes place at Topaz and focuses on how much the son misses the father (who has been incarcerated at a separate, DOJ-run camp), Topaz's natural surroundings, and how one is expected to act while incarcerated. Although Santiago has some praise for *Emperor*, she ends her review with a resounding critique: "*When The Emperor was Divine* is a novel that sheds light on a dark period in American history. Unfortunately, the illumination is so fleeting that it provides little more than a glimmer of the injustice done to Japanese-Americans."[380] Instead of praising this unsentimental tone, as many reviewers do with *Citizen 13660*, Santiago asserts that *Emperor* would have been stronger, and left a greater, more resounding impact on readers, if Otsuka had perhaps been more emotional in her tone, particularly in relation to the novel's characters.

Unlike Santiago, and similar to many reviewers of *Citizen 13660*, the review of *Emperor* in *Publishers Weekly* praises Otsuka's unsentimental approach to this period of American history.[381] Indeed, the reviewer uses that exact term in the first sentence of their piece: "This heartbreaking, bracingly unsentimental debut describes in poetic detail the travails of a Japanese American family living in an internment camp during

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379 Ibid.

380 Ibid.

381 *Publishers Weekly*, 26 August 2002, https://publishersweekly.com/978-0-375-41429-9. I argue that there are sentimental moments spread throughout the novel, particularly in the chapters told from the daughter's and the son's perspectives. By sentimental, I mean emotionally affecting and arresting.

World War II, raising the specter of wartime injustice in bone-chilling fashion."[382] It is interesting that the reviewer uses the term "specter," as historical trauma and generational trauma have been likened to hauntings.[383] Otsuka's novel does indeed feature a number of "bone-chilling" scenes of racial subjugation, as briefly described in this book review: the years the mother, daughter, and son spend in "filthy, cramped and impersonal lodgings," how they "return to a home that has been ravaged by vandals," and "the hostility they face" while trying to adjust to life post-camp.[384] This includes, but is not noted in this review, the murder of James Wakasa and his widely-attended funeral, which the family in Otsuka's novel also attends. These scenes are even more poignant if one knows the history of Japanese Incarceration, particularly the hardships faced by incarcerees upon release from camp. These hardships are brought to life with the character of the father, who returns at the end of *Emperor*. As the reviewer for *Publishers Weekly* describes: "When the children's father re-enters the book, he is more of a symbol than a character, reduced to a husk by interrogation and abuse."[385] This is underscored by the novel's last chapter, "Confession," a scathingly satirical take on the treatment of Japanese Americans post-Pearl Harbor, especially the Loyalty Hearings the men who were "rounded up" were subjected to. Unlike Santiago, this review praises Otsuka's use of "distinctive, lyrically simple

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[382] Ibid.

[383] See Kathleen Brogan's *Cultural Haunting: Ghosts and Ethnicity in Recent American Literature* (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1998) and the previous chapter for more on this.

[384] *Publishers Weekly*, 26 August 2002, https://publishersweekly.com/978-0-375-41429-9.

[385] Ibid.

observations" when describing the different points of view provided by the mother, the daughter, the son, and the father throughout the novel.[386] The reviewer continues to praise Otsuka, citing her "honesty" and "matter-of-fact tone."[387] This is similar to the praise of Okubo's sparse language in reviews of *Citizen 13660*.[388] Indeed, as this reviewer of *Emperor* states, it is this tone that is the "source of [the novel's] power."[389]

In his review of *Emperor*, Bill Robinson also notes the novel's undercurrent of sadness and Otsuka's use of sparse language to convey this.[390] Robinson writes: "The general tone of the body of the book is one of sad resignation…The story is told by showing, through straightforward description of inanimate objects, nature, and the weather."[391] One example of this is Otsuka's visceral description of the dust at Topaz: "Always, he would remember the dust. It was soft and white and chalky, like talcum powder. Only the alkaline made your skin burn. It made your nose bleed…It took your voice away. The dust got into your shoes. Your hair…Your mouth…Your dreams."[392] Here, Otsuka uses sparse language to describe the ever-present dust that seeps into the barracks, one's clothes, into one's body, and even into one's dreams. The allusions to

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[386] Ibid.
[387] Ibid.
[388] Nishi 463.
[389] *Publishers Weekly*, 26 August 2002, https://publishersweekly.com/978-0-375-41429-9.
[390] Robinson, Bill, "When the Emperor Was Divine," *MostlyFiction Book Reviews*, 31 October 2002, https://www.mostlyficiton.com/west/otsuka.htm.
[391] Ibid.
[392] Otsuka 64.

the loss of liberty and identity are also seen here through Otsuka's use of the phrases "it took your voice away" and "your dreams": incarceration is not only a physical, bodily state, but a psychological one, a state of mind—it directly impacts how one sees the world and oneself. This is highlighted by the boy's futile attempts to carve out an individual identity for himself while incarcerated: "One evening, before he went to bed, he wrote his name in the dust across the top of the table. All through the night, while he slept, more dust blew through the walls. By morning his name was gone."[393] Those who were incarcerated were stripped of their identities when they were assigned ID numbers while waiting for the busses that would take them to temporary incarceration camps ("assembly centers") such as Tanforan, and this, as is seen by the boy in *Emperor*, is facilitated and perpetuated by the monotonous, harsh surroundings of the camps. The harsh surroundings of the camps are accented by the small number of objects incarcerees could either bring to the camps or create once they arrived. The *Publishers Weekly* review of *Emperor* states that Otsuka describes the family's "…pitiful objects that define their world in camp with admirable restraint and modesty."[394] One of the few items the mother brings to camp from their previous life in Berkeley, California is "a picture postcard [of Jesus] someone had once sent to her from the Louvre. Jesus had bright blue eyes and a kind but mysterious smile. 'Just like the *Mona Lisa*'s,' said the girl."[395] Otsuka uses this postcard of Jesus to show the

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[393] Ibid.
[394] *Publishers Weekly*, 26 August 2002, https://publishersweekly.com/978-0-375-41429-9.
[395] Otsuka 82.

variety of religious and cultural practices within the camps: the mother prays to Jesus, while "coming from the other side of the wall, the sound of the man next door chanting…Salute to the Imperial Palace."[396] Otsuka deftly uses the postcard of Jesus to not only show the differences between those incarcerated, but to underscore that assimilating into white, Christian America will not protect you when you are marked as "the enemy."

One character that Otsuka uses to portray how being marked as "the enemy" differently impacts members of the same family is the father. Unlike the reviewer for *Publishers Weekly*, Robinson takes issue with Otsuka's depiction of the father, as well as Otsuka's change of tone and writing style, in the novel's last chapter, "Confession." Robinson states: "The final brief chapter…is out of character with the rest of the book. It comes across almost as a political diatribe…While his [the father's] hostile feelings are certainly justifiable, his words read as a stereotypical rant against racism. Their predictability lessens their power."[397] Whereas, the review for *Publishers Weekly* describes the father as "reduced to a husk by interrogation and abuse" and that, despite this, "the novel never strays into melodrama."[398] In "Confession," Otsuka creates a satirical portrayal of the Loyalty Hearings men like the father were subjected to post-Pearl Harbor when they were "rounded up" and separated from their families. Here,

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[396] Otsuka 83.
[397] Robinson, Bill, "When the Emperor Was Divine," *MostlyFiction Book Reviews*, 31 October 2002, https://www.mostlyficiton.com/west/otsuka.htm.
[398] *Publishers Weekly*, 26 August 2002, https://publishersweekly.com/978-0-375-41429-9.

Otsuka draws on the anti-Japanese racism prevalent throughout the United States, particularly the West Coast, prior to World War II, which only strengthened after Pearl Harbor. This chapter is the only one in the novel from the father's perspective and he calls out those—white Americans—who would treat Japanese and Japanese Americans as an undifferentiated mass that is out to do harm: "I'm the one you don't see at all—we all look alike. I'm the one you see everywhere—we're taking over the neighbor-hood. I'm your nightmare...I'm your worst fear…You can't get Pearl Harbor out of your mind."[399] The father continues to call upon these stereotypes to underscore how absurd they are: "I'm the saboteur in the shrubs. I'm the stranger at the gate. I'm the traitor in your own backyard."[400] This is a direct response to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066, which "authorized the removal and incarceration of 'any and all persons' from areas of the country deemed vulnerable or weak to sabotage."[401] In 1983, the CWRIC published its report, *Personal Justice Denied*, which stated that the processes of "evacuation" and "exclusion" were carried out by the United States against Japanese and Japanese Americans "despite the fact that not a single documented act of espionage, sabotage, or fifth column activity was committed by an American citizen of Japanese ancestry or a resident Japanese alien on

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399 Otsuka 143.
400 Otsuka 143.
401 National Museum of American History, Executive Order 9066, https://americanhistory.si.edu/righting-wrong-japanese-americans-and-world-war-ii/executive-order-9066.

the West Coast."[402] Otsuka calls upon these histories when presenting the father's use of these anti-Japanese stereotypes and fears, and underscores the injustice of incarceration by listing examples of some of the occupations some of those incarcerated had prior to being sent to the camps: "I'm your houseboy. I'm your cook. I'm your gardener."[403] Prior to being sent to the camps, Japanese and Japanese Americans suffered multiple civil rights abuses, and the father calls these out as well: "Freeze my assets. Seize my crops. Search my office. Ransack my house. Cancel my insurance. Auction off my business. Hand over my lease. Assign me a number. Inform me of my crime."[404] The crime, as Otsuka and multiple sources related to the Redress Movement stress, was being Japanese: "*Too short. Too dark, too ugly, too proud.*"[405] In their "Summary" in *Personal Justice Denied*, the CWRIC states this outright: "The anti-Japanese agitation [prior to Pearl Harbor] also fed on racial stereotypes and fears: the 'yellow peril' of an unknown Asian culture achieving substantial influence on the Pacific Coast or of a Japanese population alleged to be growing far faster than the white population."[406] It is not at all surprising that Otsuka would then include a satirical confession at the end of her novel to highlight the absurd nature of these

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402 The Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, "Summary," 3, *Personal Justice Denied*, 1983, National Archives, https://www.archives.gov/research/japanese-americans/justice-denied.
403 Otsuka 143.
404 Ibid.
405 Ibid, her emphasis.
406 The Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, "Summary," 4, *Personal Justice Denied*, 1983, National Archives, https://www.archives.gov/research/japanese-americans/justice-denied.

accusations of disloyalty, as well as the country's long history of anti-Japanese racism and legislation that gained strength, rather than began, post-Pearl Harbor. As such, Robinson misreads "Confession" as a melodramatic diatribe, stating that this chapter has no place in the novel. Rather, I assert that, rather than being melodramatic and unrealistic, the last chapter perfectly encapsulates the anger, despair, and frustrations, as well as the "reality of confinement" and helps the reader "better understand a very unfortunate period of American history."[407]

This is achieved, as Francine Prose, in her review of *Emperor* articulates, through Otsuka's use of sparse language, small yet evocative details and overall tone. Prose describes *Emperor* as "spare," "strong," and "an understated account…"[408] While recounting the increasingly devastating experiences of the family, "the novel's voice is hushed as a whisper" as the events are told through the different perspectives of the various members of the family.[409] Here, Prose briefly recounts the main events of the novel and saves her most effusive praise for the final chapter. As seen in previous reviews of *Emperor*, this chapter is divisive, either drawing praise or critique. In describing this final chapter, Prose writes: "His [the father's] outburst of righteous anger provides a simultaneously welcome and wrenching release after the restraint and

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[407] Robinson, Bill, "When the Emperor Was Divine," *MostlyFiction Book Reviews*, 31 October 2002, https://www.mostlyficiton.com/west/otsuka.htm.
[408] Prose, Francine, "Family interrupted: potent, spare, crystalline – Julie Otsuka's new novel, *When The Emperor Was Divine*, is an exquisite debut," *O, The Oprah Magazine*, Vol. 3, Issue 9 (Sept. 2002).
[409] Ibid.

tension that have built steadily through the novel."[410] This description of the father's speech echoes the praise in *Publishers Weekly*: "Anger only comes to the fore during the last segment, when the father is allowed to tell his story—but even here, Otsuka keeps rage neatly bound up, luminous beneath the dazzling surface of her novel."[411] This language is couched in satire and biting sarcasm; the father seems to hold up his hands in jest and say 'you got me': "All right, I said. I admit it. I lied. You were right. You were always right. It was me. I did it."[412] He then lists increasingly absurd acts of sabotage he, and those like him—Issei men in particular—were supposed to have committed or were supposedly planning to commit: "I planted sticks of dynamite alongside your railroads. I set your oil wells on fire. I scattered mines across the entrance to your harbors."[413] No acts of sabotage were ever found to have been committed by Japanese or Japanese Americans in the wake of Pearl Harbor, thus challenging and countering the U.S. government's claims that "evacuation" and incarceration were done only out of military necessity to keep the U.S., especially the areas designated as "military exclusion zones," safe from such acts of sabotage.[414] The father's anger is palpable as he continues to call out the absurdity of these racist, paranoid beliefs in a secret fifth column of spies and saboteurs living in the U.S.: "I

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[410] Ibid.
[411] *Publishers Weekly*, 26 August 2002, https://publishersweekly.com/978-0-375-41429-9.
[412] Otsuka 140.
[413] Ibid.
[414] National Museum of American History, Executive Order 9066, https://americanhistory.si.edu/righting-wrong-japanese-americans-and-world-war-ii/executive-order-9066.

spied on your airfields. I spied on your naval yards. I spied on your neighbors. I spied on you…"[415] Otsuka's repetition of the verb "spied" underscores the paranoia that many Americans fed into post-Pearl Harbor. Mass and popular media facilitated and perpetuated this paranoia through newspaper and radio reports, as well as political cartoons.[416] I also agree with Prose's assertion that it is with this powerful final chapter, as well as the "small, well-chosen details" spread throughout the text, that "Otsuka turns a brief novel about one of the most shameful episodes of something in our history into something even larger: a meditation on what it means to be loyal to one's country and one's self…"[417] This last statement echoes some of the language used in the reviews of *Emperor* that bring the historical context of the time of its publication—the post-9/11 era—into account when discussing the strengths and weaknesses of Otsuka's novel.

In her review of *Emperor*, Reba Leiding takes care to connect Otsuka's historical novel to the post-9/11 era. She begins her review by briefly summarizing

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[415] Otsuka 140.

[416] Dr. Seuss was one such artist who created political cartoons that perpetuated the belief that a secret fifth column of Japanese and Japanese Americans was actively plotting against the United States. The most infamous of Seuss's comics in this vein is titled "Waiting For The Signal From Home…," published February 13, 1942, and features an undifferentiated mass of Japanese men, drawn with all the trappings of racist caricature, travelling from Washington through Oregon to the coast of California, waiting in line for bricks of TNT, handed out by a man in a shed which boasts the sign "Honorable 5th Column." A man sits atop the shed, using a telescope to look across the ocean, waiting for "the signal" from Japan to launch another attack on the U.S. Minear, Richard and Deb, Sopan, "The Dr. Seuss Museum and His Wartime Cartoon about Japan and Japanese Americans," *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, Japan Focus, Vol. 15, Issue 16, No. 3, August 15, 2017. https://apjjf.org/2017/16/Minear.html.

[417] Prose, Francine, "Family interrupted: potent, spare, crystalline – Julie Otsuka's new novel, *When The Emperor Was Divine*, is an exquisite debut," *O, The Oprah Magazine*, Vol. 3, Issue 9 (Sept. 2002).

some of the key events of the novel, focusing on how "the dehumanizing trip to the camp, and the bleak internment in the alkaline Nevada desert as related by the young son and daughter, become mythic events."[418] Indeed, traumatizing historical events can take on mythic proportions when you are not the one who has experienced them. These "mythic events" are connected to the post-9/11 era when Leiding turns to the father in *Emperor*: "Their father, picked up for questioning immediately after Pearl Harbor and imprisoned throughout the war, returns a broken and bitter man."[419] It is how the family, especially the father, is treated by the U.S. government, that leads Leiding to remark: "The novel's themes of freedom and banishment are especially important as we see civil liberties threatened during the recent war on terrorism."[420] Although Leiding does not directly state that both Japanese Incarceration and the "War on Terror" were facilitated due to racist fears of the Other, as well as the belief in taking extreme action against the Other due to a perceived notion of 'military necessity,' it is heavily implied with the use of phrases such as "civil liberties" and "war on terrorism."

The question of "who is to blame" for attacks on the United States can lead to "a world suddenly foreign" in terms of how its citizens and immigrants are treated, as

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418 Leiding, Reba, "When The Emperor Was Divine," *Literary Journal*, Vol. 127, No. 14 (Sept. 1 2002): 215.

419 Ibid.

420 Ibid.

stated in a review of *Emperor* published in *The New Yorker*.[421] At the beginning of the review, the author briefly recounts the family's experiences leading up to and during Japanese Incarceration: the father "is arrested for treason," and then "the mother, daughter, and son are sent to an internment camp, where the girl whispers her brother bedtime stories about the desert beyond the barbed-wire fence…"[422] The unnamed family's world is made "suddenly foreign" "from the No Japs Allowed sign at the movie theater to the horse meat served at dinner in the camp."[423] In fact, the novel opens with the mother staring at an Evacuation Order notice posted near a post office in Berkeley, California, informing everyone of Japanese ancestry to prepare for what was euphemistically termed "evacuation:" "The print was small and dark. Some of it was tiny. She wrote down a few words on the back of a bank receipt, then turned around and went home and began to pack."[424] Although it is this theme of the familiar becoming unfamiliar, and "the implicit questions about culpability" that "resonate with particular power right now," the reviewer for *The New Yorker*, like many other reviewers of this novel, asserts that it is "Otsuka's incantatory, unsentimental prose" that "is the book's greatest strength."[425] Thus far the book reviews I have examined have noted the connections between the past and present, but it is the reviews by

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[421] "When The Emperor Was Divine," *The New Yorker*, 28 October 2002, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2022/10/28/when-the-emperor-was-divine.
[422] Ibid.
[423] Ibid.
[424] Otsuka 3.
[425] "When The Emperor Was Divine," *The New Yorker*, 28 October 2002, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2022/10/28/when-the-emperor-was-divine.

Sophie Taylor and Michael Upchurch that explicitly connect the treatment of Japanese and Japanese Americans post-Pearl Harbor to the treatment of Middle Eastern immigrants and Americans post-9/11.

In "Lost Liberties," Sophie Taylor takes an odd approach by denigrating other works of Asian American literature to praise Otsuka's novel as a departure from this so-called "norm": "Novels about the discrimination suffered by Asians in America tend to be melodramatic affairs calculated to get readers reaching for tissues rather than insights. Julie Otsuka's first novel, *When The Emperor was Divine*, is a crisp departure from the Asian-American sobfest."[426] Taylor does not name any novels to back up this claim, and instead turns her attention to how Otsuka's novel is pertinent to the post-9/11 era: "Otsuka's tale of a Japanese-American family during World War II offers a powerful indictment of government-sponsored paranoia that has implications for today's war on terror."[427] Taylor continues to praise what she perceives as Otsuka's lack of sentimentality throughout the novel; by avoiding the pitfalls of other Asian American novels and novelists, Otsuka has written a work that "manages to make universal the psychological torment of wartime prejudice."[428] Part of experiencing wartime prejudice, for the characters in *Emperor*, is "[losing] their identit[ies]" and suffering from internalized racism pre- and post-camp.[429] After they

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[426] Taylor, Sophie, "Lost Liberties," *Time Magazine*, 09 March 2003, https://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,430906,00.html.
[427] Ibid.
[428] Ibid.
[429] Ibid.

return to their home in Berkeley, the son and daughter, still trying to make sense of the trauma of incarceration, have internalized the belief that they are the enemy, that they must constantly apologize for everything, even for their very existence:

> If we did something wrong, we made sure to say excuse me (excuse me for looking at you, excuse me for sitting here, excuse me for coming back). If we did something terribly wrong, we immediately said we were sorry (I'm sorry I touched your arm, I didn't mean to, it was an accident…I was standing too close, I wasn't watching where I was going…I never wanted to touch you, I have always wanted to touch you, I will never touch you again, I promise, I swear…[430]

The son and daughter have internalized this belief that they are the Other, that they are 'the enemy' and are thus not wanted when they return to their community post-camp, so they remain silent about their experiences and make sure to be "always…polite" when interacting with other people, especially white Americans.[431] This internalized racism—this sense of inferiority—is strengthened by acts of racism that they experience: "Sometimes groups of boys would appear out of nowhere and circle us slowly on their bicycles without saying a word."[432] Not only are their internal monologues telling them to be extra careful so as not to be marked as 'enemies' once again, but their external circumstances are validating these monologues. It is this

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430 Otsuka 123.
431 Otsuka 122.
432 Otsuka 123.

struggle with identity that Otsuka's characters must traverse throughout the novel, particularly at the novel's end. As Taylor writes: "Otsuka describes the tightrope that the characters must tread between loyalty to their adopted country, loyalty to family and loyalty to race."[433] Taylor then asserts that this struggle is futile, since, no matter what, the members of the family at the center of Otsuka's novel "are doomed to demonization simply by being Japanese."[434] This demonization is similar to what was experienced by Midde Eastern immigrants and Americans in the post-9/11 era: "As the civil liberties of Middle Eastern immigrants in today's America are eroded by the war on terror, *When The Emperor was Divine* serves as a cautionary reminder of the damage governments inflict when they indiscriminately punish the innocent in the name of national security."[435] Taylor's review is the most searing indictment of the continued harm the United States government continues to inflict when it feels the safety of (white) Americans is being threatened.

In contrast to this indictment of racial discrimination couched in the language of national security, Michael Upchurch, in "The Last Roundup," contends that although it is tempting to make comparisons between then and now, the present is 'not quite as bad' as the period of Japanese Incarceration when comparing how Japanese

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433 Taylor, Sophie, "Lost Liberties," *Time Magazine*, 09 March 2003, https://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,430906,00.html. I take issue with Taylor's use of the phrase "adopted country," since the son and daughter are Nisei (Japanese Americans) and thus American citizens. Therefore, the United States is not their "adopted country."
434 Ibid.
435 Ibid.

and Japanese Americans were treated vs. how those of Middle Eastern descent are being treated: “Maybe it’s a sign of progress that, while numerous detentions and arrests inevitably followed the Sept. 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, no wholesale roundup of Arab-Americans was even contemplated.”[436] Upchurch highlights that this key difference between Japanese Incarceration and the post-9/11 era is one of the reasons why Japanese Incarceration is “a chapter of American history that still sits uneasily on the conscience of the nation.”[437] Throughout his review, Upchurch praises Otsuka, namely how the family’s experiences before, during, and after incarceration are explored in a “terse, but eloquent fashion,” especially her characterization of the mother.[438] He continues: “Otsuka’s portrait of the mother may be the book’s greatest triumph. Almost everything in it is below the surface.”[439] One example of this is how Otsuka describes how the mother is physically and emotionally withering away while incarcerated at Topaz. Otsuka writes that the mother no longer wanted to hear anything about the war, did not participate in camp activities, or find a job in camp.[440] In fact: “Most days, she did not leave the room at all. She sat by the stove for hours, not talking. In her lap lay a half-finished letter. An unopened book.”[441] With these brief yet poignant

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[436] Upchurch, Michael, “The Last Roundup,” *The New York Times*, 22 Sept. 2002, https://www.nytimes.com/2002/09/22/books/the-last-roundup.html.
[437] Ibid.
[438] Ibid.
[439] Ibid.
[440] Otsuka 93.
[441] Ibid.

descriptions of the mother's behavior, the reader can clearly understand how the mother has become depressed, listless, and unmotivated—living seems pointless while imprisoned behind barbed wire. These feelings are compounded by the mother's lasting trauma of the night her husband was "rounded up": "In her mind there were always men at the door. *We just need to ask your husband a few questions*. She would stare down at her hands in her lap… 'Sometimes I don't know if I'm awake or asleep.'"[442] This is just one example of what Upchurch describes as the mother's "wry defeatism" that serves to emphasize the psychological impacts of Japanese Incarceration.[443] The negative effects of Japanese Incarceration and how they affect future generations is explored throughout a more recent work on the subject, Kiku Hughes's *Displacement*.

Displacement

Kiku Hughes's first graphic novel, *Displacement*, was published in 2020, at the end of what is known as the "Trump Era." Despite Japanese Incarceration's implications for and connections to the present (migrants at the U.S./Mexico border being incarcerated in horrific conditions, with family members separated, rampant illness, and countless other civil and human rights abuses), reviewers of *Displacement*

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[442] Otsuka 93-94, her emphasis.
[443] Upchurch, Michael, "The Last Roundup," *The New York Times*, 22 Sept. 2002, https://www.nytimes.com/2002/09/22/books/the-last-roundup.html.

instead focus on Hughes's use of genre-blending as well as the themes of memory and trauma. This could be due to the recent resurgence in trauma studies, namely the intersections between traumatic memory and race. These topics continue to be explored in critical texts such as Resmaa Menakem's *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Meaning of Our Bodies and Hearts* (2017), Resmaa Menakem's *The Quaking of America: An Embodied Guide to Navigating Our Nation's Upheaval and Racial Reckoning* (2022), as well as graphic memoirs such as Molly Murakami's *Tide Goes Out* (2022), which focuses on Terminal Island and Japanese Incarceration. In *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Meaning of Our Bodies and Hearts* (2017), Resmaa Menakem argues that trauma is not only passed down through memories, but through one's genetics.[444] This theory is not mentioned in *Displacement* explicitly, but Hughes's focus on generational trauma strengthens the theory that historical trauma can indeed manifest as such.[445] Menakem states: "What we call out as individual personality flaws, dysfunctional family dynamics or twisted cultural norms are sometimes manifestations of historical trauma."[446] This is absolutely the case in *Displacement* as showcased in the strained relationship between the fictionalized versions of Kiku and her mother.

Generational trauma is focused on in both recent scholarship and in many of

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[444] Menakem, Resmaa, *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Meaning of Our Bodies and Hearts* (Central Recovery Press, 2017), 39-40.
[445] Menakem 2017, 39.
[446] Ibid.

the book reviews on *Displacement*. Tamiko Nimura, one of the co-authors of *We Hereby Refuse: Japanese American Resistance to Wartime Incarceration* (2021), focuses on Hughes's use of the conceit of time travel to explore the generational impacts of the historical trauma of Japanese Incarceration on this fictionalized version of her own family.[447] *Displacement* also explores other "current conversations in camp history," such as "the relevance of camp history for present-day history, tracing genealogy, [and] the tradition of resistance to incarceration."[448] Nimura chooses to focus her review on Hughes's use of time travel and how these experiences bring Kiku and her mother closer through learning more about their family history.[449] Nimura writes: "Some of the physical and psychological scars from camp have an impact on the main character, and it's not until she tells her mother about her travels that the reason for these temporal displacements becomes clear."[450] It is only through open communication that Kiku and her mother begin to process the trauma that Kiku's maternal great grandparents and grandmother experienced while incarcerated at Tanforan and Topaz. This communal approach to healing is vital to processing trauma caused by historical events, as Menakem asserts: "Sometimes trauma is a collective experience, in which case our approaches for mending it must be collective and

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[447] Nimura, Tamiko, "Kiku Hughes's graphic novel *Displacement* addresses the intergenerational trauma of Japanese incarceration through a story of time travel," *Discover Nikkei*, 18 January 2021, https://discovernikkei.org/en/journal/2021/1/18/8431.
[448] Ibid.
[449] Ibid.
[450] Ibid.

communal as well."[451] Kiku "experiences several such 'displacements' [instances of time travel] until she's trapped in the past for almost a year;" these 'displacements' permanently change Kiku and her relationship with her mother, as well as their relationship to their family's generational trauma.[452]

Nimura states that Hughes's use of time travel also serves to keep the story of Japanese Incarceration 'fresh' for readers already familiar with it: "Along with Kiku, readers might know what happens next for those in camp, but readers do not know what will happen to the main character, why she's time-traveling, and when she'll finally travel back to the present."[453] The use of time travel and its unpredictability—Kiku is transported back to the past during different moments and while in various locations—echoes the unpredictability of trauma and how one's physical body and psychological makeup respond to it. Menakem argues that "each individual body has its own unique trauma response…"[454] However, trauma responses can be remarkably similar between members of the same family: both Kiku and her mother experience 'displacements.' In Part III of *Displacement*, Kiku and her mother discuss these 'displacements;' Kiku's mother confides: "I was only a little older than you the first time it happened to me. In the '70s there was talk of reopening the camps for political

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451 Menakem 2017, 13.

452 Nimura, Tamiko, "Kiku Hughes's graphic novel *Displacement* addresses the intergenerational trauma of Japanese incarceration through a story of time travel," *Discover Nikkei*, 18 January 2021, https://discovernikkei.org/en/journal/2021/1/18/8431.

453 Ibid.

454 Menakem 14, 18.

dissidents, Communists, and Black Panthers. My Mom was concerned. It was one of the few times she talked about what life was like at Topaz."[455] The current events lead Ernestina to discuss her own experiences with being incarcerated at Topaz with her own daughter, and this leads Kiku's mother to become 'displaced' three separate times.[456] Kiku's mother confesses that, unlike Kiku, she never told her own mother about it because "it didn't seem appropriate" and that "I just tried to forget about it."[457] One explanation for Kiku's mother experiencing these 'displacements,' and now Kiku, is the physicality of trauma, as well as its genetic components; as Menakem argues: "Our very bodies house the unhealed dissonance and trauma of our ancestors."[458] Kiku's mother never talked to her own mother (Ernestina) about her experiences, because "it didn't seem appropriate," which could mean that she did not want to upset her mother further by asking for more specific details about what she experienced while incarcerated. Kiku apologizes to her own mother for bringing up the 'displacements,' but she reassures her that it is alright, and that "I wish I'd talked about them with my mom, too."[459] The trauma of Japanese Incarceration that Ernestina experienced has been passed down psychologically, and possibly genetically, which could further explain the 'displacements' and why they are so powerful, as well as why two generations have now experienced them: "Trauma can

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455 Hughes, Kiku, *Displacement* (New York: First Second, 2020), 232-233.
456 Hughes 233.
457 Ibid.
458 Menakem 2017, 10.
459 Hughes 233.

also be inherited genetically. Recent work in genetics has revealed that trauma can change the expression of DNA in our cells, and these changes can be passed from parent to child."[460] What complicates matters is that traumas, such as historical trauma and generational trauma, "often interact."[461] This is certainly the case with Kiku's family, as the historical trauma of Japanese Incarceration has become a generational trauma that she and her mother have both experienced via 'displacements.'

Reviewers other than Nimura also focus on generational trauma in Hughes's text. In her article "Sci-Fi Graphic Novel 'Displacement' Confronts the Trauma of Incarceration," Mia Nakaji Monnier dissects how generational trauma is explored in a myriad of nuanced ways throughout the work.[462] Monnier begins her review by stating that: "Generational trauma can shape our experience in ways both concrete—the loss of a mother tongue, the separation of a family—and more obscure. But even as trauma reaches into the present, the events that catalyzed it can be difficult to comprehend or even imagine."[463] This is made even more complicated due to the intersections between different types of trauma, as Menakem asserts.[464] Bringing family history into play increases the complexity, since, as Monnier rightly states, "family history, after all, is incomplete by nature: a mix of oral history, self-centered

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[460] Menakem 2017, 39-40.
[461] Menakem 2017, 45.
[462] Monnier, Mia Nakaji, "Sci-Fi Graphic Novel 'Displacement' Confronts the Trauma of Incarceration," *Los Angeles Review of Books*, October 9 2021, https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/sci-fi-graphic-novel-displacement-confronts-the-trauma-of-incarceration.
[463] Ibid.
[464] Menakem 2017, 45.

recollections, limited documentation, and silence."[465] Monnier asserts that Hughes's use of time travel to explore the complexities of family history seeks to make the past, both familial and historical, clearer; it makes "the camp experience more vivid and immediate."[466]

This is due not only to the use of the time travel trope, but the very format of the text itself: graphic novel. Monnier cites the important history of pictorial representations of camp and how they have served to 'give voice' to the silence surrounding Japanese Incarceration, a silence that has "stretched across the [Japanese American] community, caused by a combination of trauma and forced assimilation, and exacerbated by government censorship."[467] Due to the restrictions on camera ownership for those incarcerated in the camps, the visual arts and "artists' depictions became crucial records of life in camp, including Miné Okubo's 1946 graphic memoir *Citizen 13660*, which chronicles her time at Tanforan and Topaz, the same camps where Hughes's grandmother lived."[468] Here, Monnier highlights the importance of visual culture in the continued creation of works about the historical and generational traumas of Japanese Incarceration. As Menakem states: "Culture [is] how our bodies

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465 Monnier, Mia Nakaji, "Sci-Fi Graphic Novel 'Displacement' Confronts the Trauma of Incarceration," *Los Angeles Review of Books*, October 9 2021, https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/sci-fi-graphic-novel-displacement-confronts-the-trauma-of-incarceration.

466 Ibid.

467 Ibid.

468 Ibid. Indeed, *Citizen 13660*'s continued relevance to contemporary authors in their own depictions of Tanforan and Topaz is evidenced by Otsuka and Hughes both citing it in their sections on sources used, located in the back of each of their respective texts.

retain and reenact history," and, as such, "create[s] a sense of belonging, and belonging makes our bodies feel safe.'"[469] It is the loss of this sense of safety, both physically and emotionally, that leads to trauma responses.[470]

Kiku's trauma response—her response to her family's generational trauma—manifests in these instances of time travel, in which she travels not just through time, but space. Perhaps Kiku's physical body traveling through time and space is a metaphor for what Menakem, in *The Quaking of America: An Embodied Guide to Navigating Our Nation's Upheaval and Racial Reckoning* (2022), terms "stuckness": "The body 'develops' trauma and then holds it tightly inside its tissues. This is why trauma always involves a sense of stuckness. In order to heal from trauma, the body needs to metabolize that stuck, urgent energy."[471] Even though experiencing the physical and emotional symptoms of trauma is often overwhelming, it is also "an opportunity for healing."[472] However, what does healing from historical and generational trauma look like? For the fictionalized version of Kiku in *Displacement*, it is learning more about Japanese Incarceration through her 'displacements,' observing the collective and individual acts of resistance to said incarceration (and even participating in some herself), speaking with her mother about her own

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[469] Menakem 2017, 245, 251.
[470] Trauma is "always a protective response" and is "the body's response to an event" (Menakem 2022, 74).
[471] Menakem, Resmaa, *The Quaking of America: An Embodied Guide to Navigating Our Nation's Upheaval and Racial Reckoning* (Central Recovery Press, 2022), 75.
[472] Menakem 2022, 134.

‘displacements,’ and taking part in Trump Era protests regarding the incarceration of undocumented migrants at the U.S./Mexico border.[473] It is these connections between the past and the present that are made explicit throughout *Displacement*—the passage of Executive Order 9066 and Trump’s “Muslim Ban,” the incarceration of Japanese and Japanese Americans in camps throughout the southwestern U.S. and the incarceration of undocumented Mexican migrants at the U.S./Mexico border—that Kay Sohini marks as particularly significant in her review.[474] Sohini writes: “What makes *Displacement* particularly compelling and topical are the parallels Hughes draws between the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II and current anti-immigrant policies, the 2017 Muslim ban, and the atrocities at the Mexico-U.S. border.”[475] In fact, two of Kiku’s ‘displacements’ “are “proceeded and followed by two distinct scenes of Kiku’s mother watching the news leading up to the 2016 Presidential election.”[476] The *Publishers Weekly* review of *Displacement* also notes the timing of Kiku’s ‘displacements’: “…pulled from her Seattle home during the Trump Muslim ban, Kiku spends more than a year interned as a Japanese prisoner alongside her then-living maternal grandmother.”[477] Indeed, it is the juxtaposition that occurs within the text itself and that readers are encouraged to recognize that leads

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[473] Hughes 274-277.
[474] Sohini, Kay, “Genre-Bending and Resistance: Kay Sohini reviews DISPLACEMENT by Kiku Hughes,” *Solrad*, December 14 2020, https://solrad.co/genre-blending-and-resistance-kay-sohini-reviews-displacement-by-kiku-hughes.
[475] Ibid.
[476] Ibid.
[477] *Publishers Weekly*, “Displacement,” https://www.publishersweekly.com/978-1-2501-9353-7.

Displacement to "function[s] as a history lesson."[478] In her review, Sohini asserts that the text is not only a history lesson, but "a lesson in how history may repeat itself if we do not actively resist bigotry."[479] Learning about America's history of racism and discrimination can be one way to resist bigotry, as Michelle Lee claims in her *New York Times* article "Teach Your Kids To Resist Hatred Towards Asians."[480] Here, Lee lists books for children and teens that can help them learn about Asian American history and how to combat racism and discrimination in the present, particularly in the COVID era, which has seen a large increase in hate crimes against Asian immigrants and Asian Americans.[481]

The opportunity for younger readers to learn about the history of Japanese Incarceration is one of the reasons *Displacement* has garnered so much attention. The reviewer for *Publishers Weekly* states: "Through Kiku, readers learn key details about this moment in history, among them the murder of James Wakasa and the further relocation of people who voted, in a loyalty questionnaire, against serving in the U.S. military…"[482] Teen readers have also commented on how *Displacement* has helped

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[478] Sohini, Kay, "Genre-Bending and Resistance: Kay Sohini reviews DISPLACEMENT by Kiku Hughes," *Solrad*, December 14 2020, https://solrad.co/genre-blending-and-resistance-kay-sohini-reviews-displacement-by-kiku-hughes.

[479] Ibid.

[480] Lee, Michelle, "Teach Your Kids To Resist Hatred Towards Asians," *The New York Times*, April 24 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/24/at-home/anti-asian-hate-books.html.

[481] Ibid. The phrase "history lesson" is also used in Lee's brief blurb about *Displacement*: "In this science-fiction story inspired by her family, the teenage Kiku Hughes time-travels to the 1940s and finds herself trapped in the same World War II internment camp as her grandmother. There, Kiku gets a life-altering history lesson."

[482] *Publishers Weekly*, "Displacement," https://www.publishersweekly.com/978-1-2501-9353-7.

them learn more about this period of American history. In her review, Nikki, a 16-year-old from Rancho San Margarita, California, writes: "As a descendant of Japanese Americans who were forced into these internment camps, I had heard stories and seen pictures of what life was like there. However, I didn't fully grasp the extent of the prejudices and trials that were daily faced and relate very much to Kiku in that aspect of how little she really knew about the camps."[483] Not only did Nikki learn more about Japanese Incarceration, *Displacement* "inspired [her] to further explore [her own] family's history."[484] Her own family history is something that Kiku needed to further explore in order to continue to make sense of her 'displacements' and help herself, as well as her family as a whole, begin to heal from the historical, generational trauma of Japanese Incarceration.

Conclusion

Although these critics have some disagreements in terms of what the strengths and weaknesses are of the works they review, they all agree that, as David Blight states in his "Introduction" to *Passages To Freedom: The Underground Railroad In History And Memory* (2004), "the past should make us *feel* as well as *think* about its

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[483] Nikki, "Displacement," *Social Justice Books*, https://socialjusticebooks/org/displacement/.
[484] Hughes 267-270.

challenges."[485] In other words, history, particularly traumatic histories, should make us not only think about how those traumas came to be, but what emotions they stir in us. Indeed, *Citizen 13660*, *When The Emperor was Divine*, and *Displacement* all do so in their own ways, from the use of complex imagery and journalistic prose, to nuanced characterizations and detailed descriptions, to the use of genre conventions to get us to look differently at the past and its effects on the present. History does not only need to be studied, but interpreted [486], and examining these texts is one way of doing just that.

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[485] Blight, David, ed. *Passages To Freedom: The Underground Railroad In History And Memory* (New York: Smithsonian Books, 2004), 5, his emphasis.
[486] Blight 6.

Chapter 4

METHODOLOGY: *JAMES WAKASA, HISTORY, AND MEMORY*

Introduction

My digital exhibit, *James Wakasa, History, and Memory*, is an academic digital history project that takes the form of an exhibit, created to supplement the written chapters of my dissertation project: "Japanese Incarceration and the 'Wakasa Incident': Traumatic Memory in Literature and the Archive." It is with this supplement, in the form of a Scalar project, that I aim to reach a wider audience and showcase skills I have learned that are applicable to positions in the museum and archives fields. In her article "The Public Good of Digital (Academic) History," Rebeca Lenihan asserts that: "Creating a more accessible digital presence for our research alongside traditional scholarly publications…enables us to reach a wider audience, both directly…and indirectly."[487] Academic digital history projects are different from digital public history projects in "'the way in which they were designed, their intended audience, or the absence of the public as direct facilitators of the project themselves.'"[488] Nicole Basaraba and Thomas Cauvin further explicate this point: "Most public history and cultural heritage projects rely, by definition, on collaboration

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[487] Lenihan, Rebecca. "The Public Good of Digital (Academic) History," *Public History Review*, vol. 29, 2022, 185-194, 185-186.
[488] Lenihan 186, quoting Noiret.

among many different participants."[489] As my digital exhibit is a solo endeavor and was designed in order to supplement more traditionally conceived and written dissertation chapters, *James Wakasa, History, and Memory* serves both a "scholarly purpose [and allows my] research to reach a wider audience."[490] As this is an academic digital history project, my target audiences are those in the academy and in the archival and museum fields, such as graduate students, professors, archivists, and museum professionals who are familiar with Japanese Incarceration but not with the "Wakasa Incident." I also hope to reach a broader audience of those who may know about Japanese Incarceration in a general sense, but not any specific details.

Making this exhibit digital "enable[s] comparative study and can open new lines of inquiry" regarding the "Wakasa Incident."[491] My digital exhibit is the first of its kind to take a deep dive into the "Wakasa Incident:" it includes a timeline of events connected to the "Wakasa Incident," biographies of those involved, including the incarcerees who took it upon themselves to try to obtain justice for Wakasa, newspaper coverage of his death (both in national and incarceration camp newspapers), as well as analyses of the event in terms of its connections to trauma theory, memory studies, and literary studies. Using primarily open or 'for educational use' digitized archival materials, such as photographs, newspapers, and declassified government documents, largely provided by *Densho*, an organization that "[preserves] Japanese American stories of the past for the generations of tomorrow," Newspapers.com, and the National Archives and Records Administration, I seek to

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[489] Basaraba, Nicole and Cauvin, Thomas. "Public history and transmedia storytelling for conflicting narratives," *Rethinking History*, 27:2, 2023, 221-247, 238.
[490] Lenihan 192.
[491] Prescott, Cynthia Culver. "Going Digital to Enrich Research and Engage the Public," *California History*, vol. 97, no. 1, Spring 2020, 60-64, 64.

provide information about an important event in the history of Japanese Incarceration in a way that is more accessible than a traditional, physical museum exhibit.[492]

Exhibit Organization and Contents

James Wakasa, History, and Memory is organized by pages or tabs.[493] Each tab or page has its own title and focus—think of them as virtual exhibit cases with panel text. Many of the tabs also include subtabs: pages of related information. The exhibit begins with an "Introduction," which also encapsulates "Guiding Questions" and "Exhibit Contents and Navigation." I have envisioned this "Introduction" as a digital version of the wall text that greets you when you first enter a physical museum exhibit. In the "Introduction," I state that visitors will "Explore the interactions between memory and trauma, and how traumatic memories, both individual and communal, have impacted how Wakasa has been both forgotten and remembered." The "Introduction" provides a brief overview of Japanese Incarceration: what it was, what the ten 'permanent,' War Relocation Authority (WRA) camps were, and why this occurred. The exhibit, rather than focusing on Japanese Incarceration as a whole, centers on the "Wakasa Incident": who was involved, how Wakasa's death has been represented in historical documents, newspapers, and literary works, the intersections of memory and trauma, and the legacy of this event in the larger traumatic history of

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492 *Densho*, https://densho.org/.

493 Each page of the exhibit includes images, typically photographs from *Densho*, as their Digital Repository provides thousands of free use and open access images, as well as images that are available for educational use.

Japanese Incarceration in the United States, as well as how this connects to larger issues of Japanese Incarceration: "This exhibit explores the threat of violence and death that was applicable to anyone of Japanese descent who was incarcerated during this period." At the end of the "Introduction," I include links to the exhibit's highlights: "Timeline of Events," "The People Involved in the 'Wakasa Incident,'" "Newspaper Coverage of the 'Wakasa Incident,'" and "The 'Wakasa Incident,' Memory, and Trauma."

Visitors can then reach the next two pages that are part of the "Introduction"—"Exhibit Contents And Navigation" and "Guiding Questions"—by clicking the links at the bottom of the "Introduction" or through the Table of Contents. The "Guiding Questions" are modeled after similar questions I have encountered as both a museum visitor and wrote as a Graduate Assistant for the Delaware Historical Society. These questions are designed for the visitor to engage with the exhibit in a way that encourages critical thinking about its contents: "How is euphemistic language still used in the present to suppress the truth about human rights abuses?" and "What are some of the supposed 'justifications' for their actions made by the U.S. government and the perpetrators of violence against incarcerees?" Most of the other questions focus on the "Wakasa Incident" specifically, such as: "What were some of the responses to Wakasa's death by those incarcerated at Topaz?," "How did newspaper coverage shape the narrative of the 'Wakasa Incident?,'" and "How has the legacy of Wakasa's death continued into the present?" The "Exhibit Contents and Navigation" page provides an outline of what is included in the exhibit, as well as how visitors are

to “use the left-hand menu bar to navigate the exhibit.” A button on the bottom of this page brings visitors to the “Guiding Questions” page. This next page instructs visitors to refer to these questions as they explore the exhibit. These questions are meant to be considered as visitors navigate the exhibit in a linear fashion, starting with the “Introduction” and ending at “Resources: Learn More About Japanese Incarceration.”

The beginning of the exhibit features pages on “Language Used Throughout The Exhibit” and “Abbreviations and Terms Used Throughout The Exhibit.” It is important to define one’s terms, particularly when the terms being used are historical and were used euphemistically to suppress the truth. For example, instead of “internment camp,” scholars and historic sites tend to use “concentration camp” or “incarceration camp,” and, instead of “internee,” use “incarceree” to refer to those who were imprisoned during the period of Japanese Incarceration in the United States (1942-1946). On the “Language Used Throughout The Exhibit” page, I explain how it is important to no longer use the euphemistic terms the U.S. government employed and to use more forthright terms to underscore how traumatic Japanese Incarceration was, and continues to be, for survivors and their descendants. The “Abbreviations and Terms Used Throughout The Exhibit” page focuses more specifically on the abbreviations and terms I use throughout the exhibit and their definitions. I only employ the terms used by the U.S. Government, the WRA, and the Topaz Administration when directly quoting from or citing said sources. Otherwise, I use terms from the National Park Service (NPS), the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), and scholars in the field. Changes in terminology from euphemistic and

problematic language is currently a topic being addressed by those in Museum Studies, Archive Studies, Race Studies, and American Studies when it comes to, what are currently being described as, "difficult histories," such as enslavement. You will now often find museums updating the terminology they use throughout their exhibits; this is particularly the case with museums that focus on African American history and culture.[494] I also include definitions of terms that would only be familiar to those in the community and/or in the field of Japanese American Studies, such as those used to refer to different generations of Japanese Americans (Issei, Nisei, Kibei, Sansei, and Yonsei).

I then provide more context about violence against incarcerees to underscore that James Wakasa was not the only incarceree murdered by a sentry during this period. Although *James Wakasa, History, and Memory* is meant to be explored in a linear fashion, the exhibit is not locked into this format, meaning visitors can start to use or view the exhibit from any point. This is helpful for those who are more familiar with the general history of Japanese Incarceration and want to learn more about the specifics of the "Wakasa Incident." This section of the exhibit, which starts with "Violence Against Incarcerees: Wakasa Was Not The Only One," moves from more widespread instances of mistreatment within the camps (poor quality food, emotional

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[494] When I visited the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center in Cincinnati, Ohio in 2019, one of the exhibits that covered the early history of enslavement and abolition was going through this terminology change. The beginning of the exhibit included a placard asking visitors to excuse their appearance as they made these changes. Indeed, some of the panel and label text for exhibit cases and objects was missing due to this ongoing process.

abuse such as humiliation, not providing medical attention when needed, illness caused by poor nutrition and lack of sanitation), to more specific instances of violence on the "Murders of Incarcerees" page: the murders of Kanesaburo Oshima (Fort Sill, Oklahoma), Toshio Kobata and Hirota Isomura (Lordsburg, New Mexico), and Shoichi James Okamoto (Tule Lake, California) by military police who worked at the respective camps these men were incarcerated in.

The next page features a "Timeline of Events," the first large interactive piece of digital media in the exhibit. I used TimelineJS to create a timeline to teach visitors about the events that occurred after Wakasa was killed on April 11, 1943, at 7:30 PM. Using the arrows on either side of the timeline, visitors can scroll through to learn about newspaper coverage of Wakasa's death in the *Topaz Times* and how it was discussed and described in other historical documents. Each incarceration camp had its own newspaper with articles written by incarcerees, members of the newspaper staff, and the camp's administration. These newspaper articles covered how the Topaz Administration attempted to placate the incarcerees after news of Wakasa's death spread, the meetings between incarcerees and the Topaz Administration, and the grassroots responses to Wakasa's death (such as work stoppages).[495] Now that visitors have some historical context, I once again delve into more specifics on "The People

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[495] More information about camp newspapers in general, the *Topaz Times*, and newspaper coverage of Wakasa's death is featured later in the exhibit on the "Newspaper Coverage of the 'Wakasa Incident'" page and its related subtabs: "Information on Camp Newspapers," "Map of Newspaper Coverage," "Key Players in the *Topaz Times*," and "The Committee of 68 in the *Topaz Times*."

Involved in the ‘Wakasa Incident’” page and its related subtabs. “The People Involved in the ‘Wakasa Incident’” briefly describes what visitors can expect to learn about with the following subtabs: “The Key Players,” “The Committee of 68,” and “Gerald B. Philpott.” “The Key Players” includes members of the Topaz Administration, the incarcerees who examined the scene of Wakasa’s death (Masuji Fujii, Mike Maruyama, and George Shimamoto, among others) who were physically threatened for doing so, as well as members of the various committees formed to try to get justice for Wakasa, such as the Committee of 68 (a committee of incarcerees created to discuss Wakasa’s death and formulate a response/s). As shown through the Sutori charts (charts of information that include images such as photographs, WWII Draft Cards, maps, and written text), the incarcerees who investigated Wakasa’s death and took action to make sure such a tragedy did not happen again came from multiple generations (Issei and Nisei) and all walks of life, from farmers to business owners. These Sutori charts are the primary type of digital interactive I include in the exhibit. By clicking an embedded link, visitors will be taken to a new page outside of the exhibit to a digital chart. These charts feature images, such as photographs of the incarcerees or members of the Topaz Administration, locations related to the incarcerees, digitized archival documents such as WWII Draft Registration Cards, and newspaper clippings. Visitors can then scroll down and learn about specific people involved in the “Wakasa Incident,” such as their job in camp (if they were a member of the Topaz Administration, if they were involved in incarceree-run organizations or services), their lives pre-camp and post-camp if they were an incarceree, or Gerald B.

Philpott's life after he shot and killed Wakasa.

My exhibit includes a total of six Sutori charts that can be used to learn more about those involved in the "Wakasa Incident." This is important because, often, in photographs, for example, the incarcerees are not named, so information about them must be found using other archival sources, such as camp newspapers, Draft Cards, and digitized, declassified WRA documents. Information gleaned this way includes their occupations prior to incarceration, their age, whether they were married, what activities they participated in while incarcerated, and how and if they were involved in the "Wakasa Incident." Many of the incarcerees who investigated Wakasa's death were involved in camp life in some way, particularly incarceree-run camp governmental organizations or were employed in important jobs that made Topaz function, such as transportation services or the Co-Op. The middle section of the exhibit focuses on uncovering these histories before looking outward at "The Physical Geography of Topaz." Then, the end of the exhibit centers on the more theoretical portions of my written dissertation: memory and trauma, representations of the "Wakasa Incident" in literature, and the legacy of the "Wakasa Incident" and how it continues to impact the present; these pages are: "The 'Wakasa Incident,' Memory, and Trauma," "The 'Wakasa Incident' in Literature," and "The Legacy of the 'Wakasa Incident.'"

It is important for visitors to learn about the physical geography of Topaz to understand the physical and psychological effects of the landscape, both natural and manmade. This page includes a color-coded map of Topaz to show where some of the

members of the Committee of 68 were incarcerated and to perhaps indicate how some of those who were focused on the "Wakasa Incident" interacted. I add more contextual information to these images using one of Scalar's built-in tools called Annotation. With Annotation, any image can be labeled in such a way that boxes appear around what has been annotated, signaling to the user that the image can be interacted with. For example, I added Annotations to the color-coded map of Topaz to provide more information about which members of the Committee of 68 lived in which blocks and how else they were involved in the investigation into the "Wakasa Incident." For instance, clicking on the block (series of barracks) outlined in green informs visitors that this was Block 4, and that Albert M. Yoshida and Den Morozumi lived there: "Albert M. Yoshida was part of the group that investigated Wakasa's death on April 12, 1943. Den Morozumi was on the Committee of 10." "The Physical Geography of Topaz" also includes an embedded link to a page from the National Archives Catalog that features a map of Topaz that details the camp's "Land, Fencing, Irrigation, and Drainage." This map depicts how three different types of fencing were used throughout Topaz: square mesh fencing, chain link fencing reinforced with 3 strands of barbed wire, and 4-strand barbed wire fencing. The 4-strand barbed wire fencing was what was used for Topaz's perimeter, and was thus the type of fencing Wakasa was supposedly trying to crawl under in his 'attempt to escape.' Once visitors have learned about the physical geography of Topaz and the emotional toll it took on incarcerees, they learn about the psychological impacts of incarceration, particularly the trauma that lives on in the memories of survivors and has since been passed down

to their descendants through "generational trauma." "The 'Wakasa Incident,' Memory, and Trauma" focuses on generational trauma, silence, and Tetsuden Kashima's theory of "social amnesia." Here, I briefly discuss some of the theoretical work I do in one of my more traditional dissertation chapters in regards to how the trauma of Wakasa's death has continued to impact each subsequent generation of Japanese Americans whose relatives survived Topaz. Since silences in general are often a cornerstone of trauma, these silences are then taught to and internalized by each successive generation, which can facilitate the perpetuation of the physical and psychological impacts of said trauma on individual members of the family. Here, I also underscore how the memory of James Wakasa lives on in the Nikkei community ("Japanese emigrants and their descendants who have created communities throughout the world"[496]), and that his death casts a shadow over histories and memories of Topaz. I write: "It is not only these silences that haunt, but the very fact of Wakasa's death that haunts: that a man was murdered while incarcerated simply because he was Japanese and therefore classified as 'the enemy.' Thus, the trauma of Wakasa's death haunts those who survived Topaz and their descendants."

The next page of the exhibit, "The 'Wakasa Incident' in Literature," expands on the concepts explored on the previous page by focusing on examples and close readings of how the trauma of the "Wakasa Incident" has been portrayed in three

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[496] *Discover Nikkei*, "What Is Nikkei?," https://discovernikkei.org/en/about/what-is-nikkei.

different literary works: Miné Okubo's graphic memoir *Citizen 13660* (1946), Julie Otsuka's novel *When The Emperor was Divine* (2002), and Kiku Hughes's graphic novel *Displacement* (2020). I emphasize how the section of *Citizen 13660* that features the "Wakasa Incident" mainly focuses on the reactions of the incarcerees to Wakasa's death and coverage of his well-attended funeral. I include historical newspaper coverage of Wakasa's death (published in the *Topaz Times*) to provide more context as to what Okubo is describing when she states that his death led to unrest within camp. I have Annotated this image and instruct visitors to "hover over the article 'Funeral Held For The Late J. Wakasa' for more information." The article states that five Topazans "ceremoniously offered flowers to the deceased" and then lists their names. My Annotation highlights that Tatsumi Watanabe, one of those who offered flowers, was a close friend of Wakasa and, like Wakasa, resided in Block 36.

Otsuka's novel provides more of the incarcerees' perspectives than Okubo's text and includes speculations as to why Wakasa was near the fence—these speculations have continued into the present, and are included in Hughes's text as well. Otsuka, like Okubo, focuses on Wakasa's funeral and how those of all ages attended it. Hughes's text, unlike those of Okubo and Otsuka, takes place (partially) in the contemporary, and further highlights how Wakasa's death continues to haunt the Nikkei community. Although Kiku, the main character and narrator of *Displacement*, is Yonsei (fourth generation Japanese American), she is aware of Wakasa's death. She states: "I should have remembered [the stories about Wakasa], but it came as a shock.

What else was I forgetting?"[497] It is only through experiencing instances of time travel ("displacements") that Kiku is better able to recall and attempt to make sense of her own family's trauma. At the end of this exhibit page, I conclude: "As the persistence of the traumatic memory of Wakasa's death throughout various nonfictional and fictional texts…indicates, memory is indeed powerful and persistent, and is frequently passed down through the generations, as is the case with the 'Wakasa Incident.'" This serves as a transition to the next page of the exhibit, "The Legacy of the 'Wakasa Incident.'" On this page, I assert that one way to remember traumatic historical events such as this is to construct memorials. Historically, "a group of Topazans does just that and constructs a memorial for Wakasa…" However, the Topaz Administration ordered that the memorial was to be removed and destroyed, since, as Kiku wisely remarks, "A memory is too powerful a weapon."[498] It was believed that the monument had indeed been destroyed until archaeologists Jeff Burton and Mary Farrell discovered the top of it sticking out of the soil at Topaz in September 2020.[499] Thus, this page focuses on the recovery of the Wakasa memorial stone and the foundation of the Wakasa Memorial Committee in September 2021. This committee was formed to "ensure the highest professional standards are in place to preserve and interpret the monument."[500] The unearthing of the memorial stone, which was done in a

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[497] Hughes, Kiku. *Displacement* (New York: First Second, 2020), 191.
[498] Hughes 203.
[499] Ukai, Nancy. "The Demolished Monument," September 15, 2002, *50 Objects*, https://50objects.org/object/the-demolished-monument-2/.
[500] The Wakasa Memorial Committee, Timeline of Events, https://wakasamemorial.org/timeline.

disrespectful, damaging way, with no archaeologists, survivors, or members of the Nikkei community present, re-opened the wounds of Japanese Incarceration and Wakasa's murder. At the end of this page, I assert that "the formation and work of the Wakasa Memorial Committee…directly ensures that Wakasa is remembered, and that the memorial stone is preserved for generations to come." Although the "Wakasa Incident" might not be learned about in broader histories of Japanese Incarceration, this event deserves the specific care and attention that the Wakasa Memorial Committee provides.

Project Models

This project was largely modeled after Michael Dorney's Scalar site, "Incarcerated Quotidian: Everyday History in a Japanese American Incarceration Camp Community Newspaper." With his site, Dorney focuses on the history of the *Topaz Times*, particularly how the newspaper functioned within the camp (its role in spreading information from the Topaz Administration to the incarcerees), as well as how writers for the *Topaz Times* subtly critiqued camp life, such as through "diary entries," and through Bennie Nobori's "Jankee" comic strip.[501] Dorney asserts that we need to look at camp newspapers not just as instruments of the WRA, but ways for incarcerees to express their feelings about their lives in camp. Through his project,

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[501] Dorney, Michael. "Incarcerated Quotidian: Everyday History In A Japanese American Camp Community Newspaper," https://scalar.usc.edu/works/incarcerated-quotidian/index.

Dorney aims to "[add] more texture to our collective memory of this period, place, and people."[502] Similarly to Dorney, I use materials that focus on the experiences of the incarcerees, such as the *Topaz Times*, literary works by Japanese Americans who were incarcerated (Okubo), or whose family members were incarcerated (Otsuka, Hughes). Like Dorney, I begin with an "Introduction" that states the goals of my project, as well as what I hope visitors will take from it. Part of my "Introduction" reads as follows: "*James Wakasa, History, And Memory* underscores the multiple ways in which Wakasa's death has been represented and re-presented from 1943 to the present," whereas Dorney states: "…both historians and also the public at large can benefit from an extensive study of the newspaper [the *Topaz Times*] that kept the pulse of this carceral city."[503] However, as Dorney's project has less pages and subtabs than mine, Dorney then uses his "Introduction" to provide more information about the *Topaz Times* as well as what his scholarly intervention is with his Scalar project. Dorney also includes a thorough page on the "Editors/Staff/Contributors" to the *Topaz Times* and specifically names who the editors and other members of the staff were during different years of the newspaper's publication, as well as their various roles: art contributors, those in charge of religious publications, Japanese Language editors, among others.[504]

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502 Ibid.
503 Dorney, Michael. "Introduction," https://scalar.usc.edu/works/incarcerated-quotidian/introduction.
504 Dorney, Michael. "Editors/Staff/Contributors," https://scalar.usc.edu/works/incarcerated-quotidian/editors--staff.

Similarly, I focus on those involved in the "Wakasa Incident," from members of the Topaz Administration to the Topazans who sought justice for Wakasa in various ways, whether they were members of one of the different committees created to investigate his death, were members of the Community Council, or sought answers with their own investigations. The heart of Dorney's exhibit is his close analysis of Bennie Nobori's comic strip, "Jankee," which appeared in the *Topaz Times* until Nobori was transferred to the Heart Mountain camp in Wyoming. Jankee, the comic strip's main character, was an everyday Japanese American boy who navigated camp life, sometimes getting into trouble, sometimes engaging in humorous adventures, but always having something to say about life in Topaz. Dorney writes: "Though humorous and innocent on the surface, Nobori used the Jankee comic strips as cover for leveraging critiques against the Topaz administration and the incarceration program more generally."[505] For example, in one of the "Jankee" comic strips Dorney does a close reading of, Jankee arrives at camp, and once he sees how sparse his barrack is, takes some of the spare lumber that is property of the WRA to use as construction material. While running back to his barracks, lumber in tow, he falls in a ditch and bangs his knee. Dorney does a close reading of this comic strip to emphasize how Jankee's experiences mirror those of other incarcerees, including Miné Okubo.[506] After close analyses of examples of the "Jankee" comic strip, Dorney takes care to

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505 Dorney, Michael. "Bennie Nobori's 'Jankee,'" https://scalar.usc.edu/works/incarcerated-quotidian/jankee-by-bennie-nobori.
506 Ibid.

give attention to the sources he drew on while creating his project. I do this as well, but in the form of a more traditional "Works Cited" page, whereas Dorney has a page on "Sources and Research," where he links different resources that can be used if one wants to learn more about Japanese Incarceration, particularly Topaz. I do this as well, but on a separate "Resources: Learn More About Japanese Incarceration" page that is organized into categories: Web Resources, Podcasts, and Digital Exhibits. At the top of the page, I instruct visitors to "use these resources to learn more about Japanese Incarceration." Dorney has a page like this, titled "Recommended Reading," which solely features books on Japanese Incarceration.[507]

Although the organization of my exhibit owes much to Dorney's project, the idea itself and my desire to create a digital exhibit as part of my dissertation project stems from a graduate seminar that I took in 2019. In this course, we worked closely with the *Colored Conventions Project* (CCP) and created our own digital exhibits that will be included as part of the project.[508] The *Colored Conventions Project* "is an interdisciplinary research hub that uses digital tools to bring the buried history of nineteenth-century Black organizing to life….CCP uses innovative, inclusive partnerships to locate, transcribe, and archive the documentary record related to this nearly forgotten history and to curate engaging digital exhibits that highlight its

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[507] Dorney, Michael. "Recommended Reading, " https://scalar.usc.edu/works/incarcerated-quotidian/japanese-american-incarceration-bibliography.

[508] *Colored Conventions Project*, https://coloredconventions.org/. My exhibit, *Black Allies and John Brown*, is forthcoming.

significant events and themes."[509] The CCP exhibits that I referred to while creating *James Wakasa, History, and Memory* are "The Early Case For A National Black Press" (2016) by Ashley Durrance et. al. and "The Fight For Black Mobility: Traveling To Mid-Century Conventions" (2017) by Jessica Conrad and Samantha deVera. In "The Early Case For A National Black Press," Durrance et. al. explore the intersections of and the impact "Colored Conventions and the Black press had on one another."[510] There are three sections of this digital exhibit that influenced how I created and organized my own project: the "Education Report" page, the "Convention Report" page and one of its subtabs, "Smith's Land and Douglass' Paper," and the final page, "Credits." The "Education Report" page focuses on The Education Committee's report on the state of education in Black communities, as well as their future.[511] This page features excerpts from this report, which was printed in the January 21, 1848 issue of the *North Star*. These newspaper clippings, which are digitally available via Accessible Archives, can be enlarged so they can be read in full. The content of the clippings is also summarized by the exhibit's curators.[512] I organize "Key Players in the *Topaz Times*," a subtab of "Newspaper Coverage of the 'Wakasa

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[509] *Colored Conventions Project*, "About the Colored Conventions," https://coloredconventions.org/about-conventions/.

[510] Durrance, Ashley, Harkins, Hannah, Palombo, Nicholas, Rewis, Leslie, Berry, Melanie, Hutcheson, Christy, Jones, Eli, Shaffer, Morgan, and Fagan, Benjamin. "The Early Case For A National Black Press," *Colored Conventions Project*, 2016, https://coloredconventions.org/black-press/.

[511] Durrance et. al., "Education Report," https://coloredconventions.org/black-press/the-report-from-the-conventions-education-committee/.

[512] Ibid.

Incident,'" similarly. Using Sutori as a digital tool to present this information, I too include digitized newspaper clippings, provided by Newspapers.com, to inform visitors about how the Japanese and Japanese American "Key Players" in the "Wakasa Incident" spent their time while incarcerated. These clippings can also be enlarged so users can read them in full. Like the curators for "The Early Case For A National Black Press," I also summarize what is included in newspaper articles I feature in my exhibit. Including the full clippings allows those with a deeper interest in their contents to read them more closely, while the summaries enable those who want a brief overview of the information to engage with them in that way. "Convention Report" and its subtab "Smith's Land and Douglass' Paper" also influenced how I created my own exhibit. This subtab includes newspaper clippings that are both summarized and directly quoted from.[513] I use this method throughout my exbibit, particularly in the subtab "Information on Camp Newspapers." Here, I include articles from the *Topaz Times* and use Scalar's Annotation tool to provide context. The last, and one of the most important pages of any digital exhibit, is the "Credits" page. CCP includes the credits for their digital exhibits both on the exhibit's landing page and as its own page at the end of the exhibit.[514] This informs visitors about who contributed what to the digital exhibit they are viewing and is an especially important feature of digital exhibits, since most are collaborative in nature.

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[513] Durrance et. al., "Smith's Land and Douglass' Paper," https://coloredconventions.org/black-press/convention-report/smiths-land-and-douglasss-paper/.
[514] Durrance et. al., "Credits," https://coloredconventions.org/black-press/credits/.

"The Fight For Black Mobility: Traveling To Mid-Century Conventions" also greatly influenced *James Wakasa, History, and Memory*.[515] Conrad and deVera's project (also hosted by WordPress, as all CCP exhibits are), "investigates the ways men and women delegates and collaborating activists in their social networks claimed Philadelphia as a site for an inter-state and international movement furthering race uplift."[516] The page on "Delegates" inspired me to look deeper into the lives of those incarcerated at Topaz during the "Wakasa Incident:" their lives prior to incarceration, the groups, organizations, and activities they were involved in while incarcerated, and what role they played in the investigation into Wakasa's death.[517] Conrad and deVera mapped where the delegates came from before traveling to the convention, and provided detailed biographies of each of the delegates. As most of the incarcerees at Topaz came from the San Francisco Bay Area, I do not map where they lived prior to incarceration, but I provide biographical information about the Committee of 68 (a subtab of "The People Involved in the 'Wakasa Incident'"). I once again used Sutori to present this information, which I accessed via Ancestry.com. Here, I include digitized archival materials such as photographs of members of the Committee of 68, World War II Draft Registration Cards, and photographs of locations related to the members of the Committee of 68, such as the incarceration camps themselves. Here, I provide

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[515] Conrad, Jessica, and deVera, Samantha. "The Fight For Black Mobility: Traveling To Mid-Century Conventions," *Colored Conventions Project*, 2017, https://coloredconventions.org/black-mobility/.
[516] Ibid.
[517] Conrad and deVera, "Delegates," https://coloredconventions.org/black-mobility/delegates/.

what biographical information I could find on each member of said committee.[518] The "Post-Convention News Coverage" page of "The Fight For Black Mobility: Traveling To Mid-Century Conventions" exhibit piqued my interest in newspaper coverage of historical events. In my exhibit, I explore newspaper coverage of Wakasa's death throughout North America, and create a StoryMap to do so. Conrad and deVera do not map newspaper coverage of the 1855 National Convention, but they provide digitized newspaper clippings (that can be enlarged) as well as summaries of said clippings.[519] With my StoryMap, I trace where some of the national and camp newspapers that published coverage of Wakasa's death were located, and too provide clippings of articles and summaries of said clippings. "The Fight For Black Mobility…," published in 2017, and my exhibit, published in 2024, continue to underscore the importance of studying historical newspapers to explore how key events were reported on and perceived by those not directly involved in said events.

Themes: History, Memory, and Trauma

The last three pages of my exhibit focus on memory, trauma, and the legacy of Wakasa's death. However, albeit more subtly, these themes run throughout my exhibit

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[518] Some full names of members of the Committee of 68 were not provided, making it difficult for me to find information on them. Sometimes, even when a full name was provided, I was still unable to find information. However, I still include their names so as to maintain their inclusion in the historical record.

[519] Conrad and deVera, "Post-Convention News Coverage," https://coloredconventions.org/black-mobility/post-convention-news-coverage/.

due to the nature of its focus: the "Wakasa Incident." The murder of James Hatsuaki Wakasa, at the hands of MP sentry Gerald B. Philpott on April 11, 1943, at 7:30 PM, while it did not have any witnesses besides the perpetrator and fellow MPs, was an incredibly traumatic event that greatly impacted those incarcerated at Topaz and changed how Topaz was run. Digital exhibits such as *James Wakasa, History, and Memory* are one way in which to explore these themes while centering those who directly experienced the event. In "The role of born digital data in confronting a difficult and contested past through digital storytelling: the Waterford Memories Project," Jennifer O'Mahoney asserts that "Digital Humanities offers a way to address these fractured and incomplete narratives through digital humanities projects…"[520] With The Waterford Memories Project (WMP), the oral testimonies of those in Southeast Ireland "who had been affected by the Laundry system and whose voices were continually being marginalized by its official gatekeepers"[521] are not only featured but centered. Mahoney states that it is with the WMP that survivors of the Laundry System can tell their stories—narrate their traumas—and be listened to.[522] She writes: "The reality for Magdalene women was to keep secrets; secrets which are physically, emotionally, and cognitively arduous, and which arrest the process of

[520] O'Mahoney, Jennifer. "The role of born digital data in confronting a difficult and contested past through digital storytelling: the Waterford Memories Project," *AI & Society*, 37, 2022, 949-958, 950.
[521] O'Mahoney 951. The Laundry system was a "system of containment" for "poor and destitute women." These Laundries, particularly after 1922, used "silence, prayer, and physical labour (usually laundry work)…to gain psychological and physical control of the 'penitents'" (950).
[522] O'Mahoney 951.

meaning-making and interrogation of these experiences and memories."[523] With the WMP, trauma as described in narrative testimony can be processed and reflected on. The Laundry system, like Japanese Incarceration, not only affected survivors, but their descendants: "This shared sense of mourning a traumatic past must also recognize that these past harms can continue to manifest inter-generationally and in the present day lives of the survivors as well as the broader community."[524] Digital exhibits can ensure that the stories of survivors are heard through narrativizing historical events; even though "narrativized history is an imperfect representation of events…it is through these narratives that we can form meaning and understanding of what came before."[525] I believe that this is particularly the case when digital exhibits draw from multiple sources of information, both 'official' and 'unofficial.' Nicole Basaraba and Thomas Cauvin, in "Public history and transmedia storytelling for conflicting narratives," define 'official' sources of information as sources of "authority," such as "cultural heritage and memory institutions, scholars, historians, or journalists," while 'unofficial' sources of information "often take the form of fiction, documentary films, oral histories, performance, and community-based initiatives."[526]

In *James Wakasa, History, and Memory*, I use both 'official' sources of information, such as newspaper articles from the *Topaz Times*, declassified

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523 Ibid.

524 O'Mahoney 953, citing C. Wesley Esquimaux 2008.

525 Basaraba, Nicole and Cauvin, Thomas. "Public history and transmedia storytelling for conflicting narratives," *Rethinking History*, 27:2, 2023, 221-247, 224.

526 Basaraba and Cauvin 230, citing McRoberts 2016, 3.

government documents, and photographs taken by the WRA, as well as 'unofficial' sources of information, such as literary works like those by Okubo, Otsuka, and Hughes. Employing both types of sources of information can paint a more nuanced picture of traumatic historical events like the "Wakasa Incident." As O'Mahoney states: "Cultural stories can become fossilized and continue to perpetuate the silencing of survivors…"[527] This is particularly the case when "cultural stories" are only disseminated and retained by "cultural institutions" such as museums and archives.[528] This is largely due to the "top-down approach" which has "resulted in many museums and cultural institutions acting as producers of official historical narratives that silenced minority groups and communities."[529] Creating collaborative, public history projects is one way to combat this, but there are complications with creating and disseminating such projects.[530] My project is not, nor does it claim to be, a collaborative, public history project, but rather an academic digital history project that seeks to be collaborative in other ways—in terms of meaning-making. In other words, how will my digital exhibit's visitors respond to the "Guiding Questions?" How will they make sense of the pages on memory, trauma, literary texts, and the legacy of the "Wakasa Incident?" Such theoretical and exploratory content is typically not included

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[527] O'Mahoney 953.
[528] Basaraba and Cauvin 231.
[529] Ibid.
[530] Basaraba and Cauvin state: "When multiple narratives are co-produced by 'experts' and the different members of the public, in the case of shared authority, there needs to be a larger underlying theme, communication goal, or rationale for constructing the project so that one or more narratives is communicated" (234).

in more traditional, physical museum exhibits. However, it is important to note that "the relations between individual and collective narratives have also evolved according to broader definitions of history and memory."[531] Basaraba and Cauvin state that some historians believe that "public history offers opportunities to reconsider the relations between history and memory."[532] My exhibit, while, once again, not a form of public history, offers these opportunities as well, mainly with "The 'Wakasa Incident,' Memory, and Trauma" page. In the first paragraph, I assert that Wakasa's death is a generational trauma, and then define my use of the term. I then delve into memory and forgetting, and how silence is intertwined with these concepts, including how Freud's theories on the interiorization of trauma continue to influence how trauma is presently theorized, understood, and described.

Silence about one's trauma post-Japanese Incarceration was incredibly common, and Tetsuden Kashima posits the theory of "social amnesia" to help make sense of how widespread this silence was throughout the Nikkei community: "Kashima asserts that "social amnesia" is 'not a psychological pathology; it is a group phenomenon in which attempts are made to suppress feelings and memories of particular moments or extended time periods.'"[533] Here, I continue to summarize Kashima's main claims about "social amnesia": "Unlike repressed memories, which

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531 Basaraba and Cauvin 235.
532 Ibid.
533 Kashima, Tetsuden. "Japanese American Internees Return, 1945 to 1955: Readjustment and Social Amnesia, *Phylon*, vol. 41, no. 2, 2nd Qtr., 1980, 107-115, 113.

are memories that are forgotten without conscious effort on the part of the survivor, 'social amnesia' is 'a conscious effort, an attempt to cover up less than pleasant memories.' As such, these memories are 'suppressed and [are] difficult to bring up to [the] surface consciousness.'"[534] This silence becomes generational when it is passed on to one's children, who then pass it down to their children. It is not only the community that engages in silencing, but, as Paul Connerton writes in *The Spirit of Mourning: History, Memory, and the Body* (2011), "history is drenched in such narrative silences."[535] With projects such as the WMP, it is asserted that "technology should be used as a vehicle for valuing human dignity and challenging social exclusion."[536] This social exclusion can take the form of silencing on the part of cultural institutions, but digital culture can challenge this and combat these silences through participatory, community-based projects: "The emergence of the 'participatory web' [has given marginalized communities] the opportunity to reclaim their own historical and memorial narrative and so counter dominant stigmatized representations."[537] The Wakasa Memorial Committee does just this with their website.[538]

The Wakasa Memorial Committee's website features largely unmediated,

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534 Ibid.

535 Connerton, Paul. *The Spirit of Mourning: History, Memory, and the Body* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 73.

536 O'Mahoney, citing Cooley (2018), 955.

537 Geibel, Sophie. "Identities—a historical look at online memory and identity issues," *Handbook of Digital Public History*, ed. Serge Noiret, et. al. (Walter de Gruyter, 2022), 87-96, 89.

538 Wakasa Memorial Committee, https://wakasamemorial.org/.

digitized archival documents related to the “Wakasa Incident.”[539] This documentation comes from the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) and features letters between different members of the WRA, background information on Wakasa (such as where he lived prior to incarceration and where he was employed), and a list of Wakasa’s personal effects recovered after his death.[540] This page also includes a “Gallery of Propaganda and Historic Media” with the caveat that “most historic newspaper accounts from 1943 demonstrate the misinformation and deflection that followed the murder.”[541] Headlines featuring racist terms to refer to Wakasa are also presented unmediated, leaving it up to the viewer of the Wakasa Memorial Committee’s website to make sense of what misinformation about the “Wakasa Incident” is being presented and how it spread across the country. In this way, the Wakasa Memorial Committee’s website “is a place for…confrontation about how past events are interpreted…”[542] Although there are no sections through which to leave comments and have an online dialogue with other site visitors, the Wakasa Memorial Committee includes a “Contact Us” form where visitors are encouraged to “let us know your thoughts, join our committee or get in touch with the Wakasa Memorial Committee.”[543] In “Identities—a historical look at online memory and identity

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[539] By unmediated I mean that the documents are presented with no additional information such as annotations or summaries. It is up to the viewer to make sense of the documents as they are presented.
[540] Wakasa Memorial Committee, J.H. Wakasa, https://wakasamemorial.org/j-h-wakasa.
[541] Ibid. I include some of these same newspaper articles in my Map of Newspaper Coverage in *James Wakasa, History, and Memory*.
[542] Geibel 89.
[543] Wakasa Memorial Committee, Contact Us, https://wakasamemorial.org/contact-us.

issues," Sophie Geibel states that it is "through its participative dimension [that] the Web extends and broadens the range of spaces in which communities can discuss history and identity."[544] It is through the "Contact Us" form that viewers/users of the website can engage directly with members of the Wakasa Memorial Committee, which includes survivors, their descendants, museum members, and members of activist organizations. Public histories, as stated by Basaraba and Cauvin, "rely, by definition, on collaboration among many different participants."[545] Although public history projects rely on this collaboration as an integral part of their theory, practice, and final product, they "do not deny producers' authority and expertise, but places them in a broader process of production."[546] In other words, those that participate in public history projects contribute to their form and contents, but those who are formatting, editing, and leading the project have the final say in terms of how the project is formatted, finalized, and disseminated.

Conclusion

James Wakasa, History, and Memory underscores that "the memory of Wakasa haunts each successive generation" of Japanese Americans connected to Topaz, "awakening dormant sorrow." In *Displacement*, Kiku stresses that healing, while

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[544] Geibel 89-90.
[545] Basaraba and Cauvin 238.
[546] Ibid.

aspects of it can be and are often individual, flourishes when the community comes together. As Nancy Ukai, a descendant of Topazans and a historical researcher and writer, states: "Healing means learning the truth…"[547] However, when is healing complete, or is it ever complete, when it comes to historical trauma? I believe it is a continuous process that each generation impacted by said trauma takes up through various methods. Some of the methods employed by those impacted by Japanese Incarceration include pilgrimages to sites of incarceration, protesting current U.S. immigration policies and confinement procedures, doing genealogical research on one's family, creating works of art or literature that examine this trauma, and learning more about specific events that occurred, such as the "Wakasa Incident." Through *James Wakasa, History, and Memory*, visitors can not only learn about Wakasa and what happened to him, but how and why the "Wakasa Incident" continues to be brought to the surface consciousness via the publication of a variety of literary works.

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[547] Hutson, Sonja. "Long-lost monument brings up a painful legacy for Utah concentration camp descendants," December 9, 2021, Nichi Bei, News, https://www.nichibei.org/2021/12/long-lost-monument-brings-up-a-painful-legacy-for-utah-concentration-camp-descendants/.

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