

2024

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Recommended Citation

Meisenheimer, Catherine T. (2024) "With Liberty and Justice For All? The U.S. Internment of Japanese Peruvians During World War II," *Swarthmore Undergraduate History Journal*: 5 (1), 143-188. 10.24968/2693-244X.5.1.5 <https://works.swarthmore.edu/suhj/vol5/iss1/5>

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With Liberty and Justice For All? The U.S. Internment of Japanese Peruvians During World War II

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Abstract: After the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, the United States committed to a policy of interning more than 120,000 Japanese Americans. While Japanese American detention remains the most researched instance of wartime internment, the U.S. incarceration of Japanese Peruvians merits equal attention. The political forces behind Japanese Peruvian internment transcended the more common explanations that haunt so much of literature today. Racism and hysteria played their respective roles in this history of wartime internment, but as the war progressed, other reasons for Japanese internment emerged. On January 4, 1942, the Japanese began interning American civilians in the Philippines. Days later, the U.S. State Department decided to hold Japanese Peruvians hostage for the purpose of aiding American repatriation. America used hostage-taking as a political instrument of war, facilitating the return of more than 3,000 American citizens. Such retaliation, however, came at the human cost of interning more than 1,000 Japanese Peruvians without charge in places like Crystal City, Texas.

Introduction

“I had felt that America was an ideal country,” Seiichi Higashide—a shopkeeper and community leader of Ica, Peru—thought to himself as he and his family boarded a U.S. ship for an unnamed camp in Panama. So “[w]hy then,” Higashide wondered, “had that country moved to take such unacceptable measures?”¹ It was January 1944, and few Americans knew then (or even know now) that the wartime internment policies of the United States extended beyond its own borders. To ensure hemispheric security and facilitate Allied victory, U.S. officials spearheaded a program to remove so-called “enemy aliens” from Latin American countries and intern them in the United States. The majority of Latin Americans interned on U.S. soil consisted of ethnic Japanese, and among those internees, the Japanese Peruvians merit particular attention. Of the twelve Latin American countries that cooperated with the United States in turning over their citizens and residents of Japanese ancestry, Peru provided more than 1,700 of the 2,118 Japanese Latin Americans interned by the war’s end.²

So why exactly did the U.S. government feel compelled to deport and intern Japanese Peruvians during World War II? While racism and wartime hysteria played their respective roles in this history of internment, their continued emphasis has had the effect of eclipsing the other reasons that influenced decision makers in deporting and interning Japanese Peruvians: the need for hostages. On January 4, 1942, the Japanese began interning American civilians in the Philippines. Twenty days later, the U.S. State Department began holding Japanese Peruvians

¹ Seiichi Higashide, *Adios to Tears: The Memoirs of a Japanese-Peruvian Internee in U.S. Concentration Camps* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000), 143.

² C. Harvey Gardiner, *The Japanese and Peru: 1873-1973* (Albuquerque: New Mexico, 1975), 87-8. According to the United States Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, the 12 countries that contributed to the U.S. program of deportation and internment included Bolivia, Columbia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, and Peru. See, for further information on Latin American countries involved, United States Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, *Personal Justice Denied* (Seattle: The University of Washington Press, 1997), 307.

hostage for the purpose of prisoner exchanges. This research differs from the important scholarship already undertaken by historians in its focused analysis of the Philippines. The inner workings of Japanese internment in the Philippines played a role in the U.S. detention of Japanese Peruvians. Although America's usage of hostages facilitated the return of more than 3,000 American citizens (many of whom were interned by the Japanese in Manila), it did so at the human cost of detaining more than 1,000 Japanese Peruvians without charge in places like Crystal City, Texas.

On the shelves of internment literature, many books attributed the internment of Japanese Peruvians to long-standing racism, casting western governments as xenophobic and Asian immigrants as victims. While true to an extent, the motives behind internment varied. To gain votes and stifle civil unrest, Peruvian officials cooperated with American directives in deporting their Japanese. The State Department's Special Division hoped to ensure hemispheric security *vis-à-vis* the detention of Japanese Peruvians in the United States. And when military officials received concerning reports about Japan's treatment of American internees in the Philippines, the U.S. responded in part, interning Japanese Peruvians as hostages and exchanging them for imprisoned Americans. Although little is known about the individual experiences of Japanese Peruvians interned in the United States, the chronicled experiences of three men—Yoshitaro Amano, Seiichi Higashide, and Isamu “Art” Shibayama—shed light on this relatively obscure moment in history.

Between Two Worlds: The Japanese Experience in Peru, 1890-1940

Before elaborating on the story of internment, it may be helpful to explain how the Japanese came to Peru in the late 19th century. Recognizing the opportunity for economic and commercial cooperation with Japan, Peru established diplomatic relations with the emerging

Asian empire in August 1873. Considerable developments in Japanese immigration to Peru, however, did not occur until the late 1890s.³ Sparked by economic troubles in Japan and labor needs in Peru's rubber and sugar industries, the first Japanese came as contract laborers in 1899. Despite years of labor exploitation and exposure to disease, Japanese Peruvians eventually carved a foothold for themselves. While the number of Japanese living in Peru reached 5,158 in 1909, the population nearly tripled to 15,207 by 1927.⁴ Unlike their predecessors, migrants arriving during the late 1920s were craftsmen and artisans, frequently with ties to already successful Japanese Peruvians in the port cities of Callao and Lima.⁵

For many native Peruvians, Japanese industry threatened Peruvian opportunity. As Foreign Minister Alberto Ulloa Sotomayor explained in his book *Derecho Internacional Público*, "The increase of Japanese immigration and the activity developed by [said] immigrants have created social unrest...because their conditions and methods of working have produced *pernicious competition* for the Peruvian workers and businessmen."⁶ This sentiment not only spelled out the industrious working habits of Japanese immigrants. It also stamped average Peruvian laborers as second-class workers, providing fertile ground for resentment towards Japanese immigrants. To limit their economic productivity and break the so-called Japanese "monopoly" on retail, the Peruvian government in 1932 required every business to employ a non-Asian Peruvian workforce of at least 80 percent.⁷ With the annulment of the Japanese-Peruvian Commerce Treaty in 1934, the Peruvian government regulated all Japanese textile

³ Daniel M. Masterson and Sayaka Funada-Classen, *The Japanese in Latin America* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 20.

⁴ Gardiner, *The Japanese and Peru*, 29-37.

⁵ João Frederico Normano and Antonello Gerbi, *The Japanese in South America: An Introductory Survey With Special Reference to Peru* (New York: AMS Press, 1943), 76.

⁶ United States, House of Representatives, Committee on the Judiciary, 82 Cong., 2 sess., "Hearings before the President's Commission on Immigration and Naturalization" (Washington, 1952), 1926 (emphasis added).

⁷ Ayumi Takenaka, "The Japanese in Peru: History of Immigration, Settlement, and Racialization," *Latin American Perspectives* 31, no. 3 (2004): 87.

imports, and by 1936, it issued additional restrictions on Japanese businesses making it illegal for them to transfer ownership.⁸

The success of Japanese immigrants led to their racialization, which in turn accelerated discrimination. In addition to viewing the Japanese in Peru as pernicious competition, Peruvians perceived the Japanese community's insularity as proof of their continued loyalty to their native country. During their period of growth, Japanese immigrants established civic organizations and Japanese language schools, which provided spaces where they could preserve their language and culture. At the same time, a growing number of native Peruvians felt the social development of Japanese immigrants made them less likely to assimilate. They saw the Japanese community's tendency to keep to themselves—a tendency not altogether voluntary—as a dangerous separation from the rest of Peruvian society. In their survey of the Japanese in South America, João Frederico Normano and Antonello Gerbi suggested the typical Peruvian's opinion of the Japanese thus: While he may respect and even admire individual Japanese, “he regards with misgivings such a standoffish...people who do not speak Castilian, do not profess the Catholic faith, do not attempt to participate in the social and intellectual life of the country, and send their money away.”⁹ Again, the Japanese in Peru did not always self-segregate by choice. Language barriers and general anti-Asian prejudice worsened the already poor relationship between Japanese laborers and their Peruvian counterparts.

The Peruvian press also echoed misgivings about the Japanese community. Around 1937, a newspaper in Lima raised concerns about their dual loyalty, announcing how it was “the government of Japan that organize[d] Japanese activity in Peru.”¹⁰ This anxiety over Japan's

⁸ Takenaka, “The Japanese in Peru,” 87.

⁹ Normano and Gerbi, *The Japanese in South America*, 122.

¹⁰ Gardiner, *The Japanese and Peru*, 69.

increasing militarism set the tone for frequent suspicion and distrust. Indeed, a growing number of Peruvians concluded that if Japan's economic desires prompted the invasion of East Asia, the pattern would be repeated in Peru. To counter this "Japanese invasion," the Peruvian government established immigration quotas and suspended naturalization proceedings for Japanese Peruvians in the late 1930s. Moreover, in 1937, the government annulled all registrations of "alien" offspring born in Peru, and prohibited Japanese born in Peru from claiming birthright citizenship.¹¹ Whether unaware or undeterred by these difficult circumstances, Seiichi Higashide still found a way to join the flow of Japanese immigrants seeking better opportunity in Peru.

Born into poverty in Hokkaido, Higashide aspired to become a self-made man. Witnessing the cruel mistreatment of workers on an irrigation project in his village, Higashide concluded that more promising opportunities awaited him beyond the borders of northern Japan. At the age of twenty-one, Higashide immigrated to Peru because of the country's large Japanese community. However, in the small town of Ica, Higashide found himself in what he referred to as a "small, closed world of Japanese immigrants in South America...even more narrow than the society [he] had left!"¹² At the same time, Higashide suffered from racial hostility, recalling how "whenever one stepped out of the Japanese community, insulting epithets would be hurled at our faces [the Japanese]...even young children would casually shout at us '*chino macaco*' [Chinese slave]."¹³ While he recognized it as a crude term used in large part by uneducated Peruvians, Higashide also believed that it signified systemic acceptance of racism.

Despite said attitudes, it must be noted that racial intolerance was not one-sided.

Regarding marriage, Higashide observed that most first-generation immigrants harbored a strong

¹¹ Edward N. Barnhart, "Japanese Internees from Peru," *Pacific Historical Review* 31, no. 2 (1962): 169-70.

¹² Seiichi Higashide, *Adios to Tears: The Memoirs of a Japanese-Peruvian Internee in U.S. Concentration Camps* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000), 7.

¹³ Higashide, *Adios to Tears*, 111.

prejudice against Peruvians. According to him, many immigrants either considered themselves to be racially superior or feared that their children would have to cut themselves off from the Japanese community as a result of marrying an ethnic Peruvian.¹⁴ Whatever the reason, immigrants like Higashide gradually discarded their sojourner mentality and attempted to become assimilated émigré. Almost five years after arriving in Ica, Higashide married Angelica Yoshinaga, a second-generation Japanese Peruvian. Together, they raised five children. Despite their efforts to fully integrate, Higashide and his family still worried about xenophobic vigilantism.

On May 13, 1940, around ten Japanese Peruvians died in a violent riot near Lima and Callao after false reports circulated about arms being found in Japanese-owned haciendas. Enraged by rumors of the Japanese concealing deadly firearms, some elements of the Peruvian populace vandalized Japanese shops and bazaars. “Although the looting continued in broad daylight,” Higashide noted, “the police made no move to make arrests or even restrain the mob.”¹⁵ Some non-Asian Peruvians protected the Japanese and their businesses from destruction. Tomas Hayashi, a Japanese Peruvian and former internee, recounted how his father’s non-Asian Peruvian employees helped prevent the rioters from utterly destroying their family business.¹⁶ In the riot’s aftermath, claims for damages amounted to around two million soles (more than five hundred thousand dollars in 1940).¹⁷

In addition to xenophobic vigilantism, the Japanese in Peru faced frequent accusations of espionage and sabotage due to their perceived fanatical devotion to the Japanese Emperor.

¹⁴ Higashide, *Adios to Tears*, 76.

¹⁵ Higashide, *Adios to Tears*, 108.

¹⁶ Tomas Hayashi, interviewed by Casey Peek, *Hidden Internment: The Art Shibayama Story*, dir. Casey Peek, Progressive Films, 2003, YouTube, 00:07:35-00:08:05.

¹⁷ Normano and Gerbi, *The Japanese in South America*, 79-80.

Indeed, Higashide conceded, “[w]e had all been indoctrinated to absolute submission to the Chrysanthemum Insignia [the imperial seal of Japan].”¹⁸ But not all Japanese were ready to sacrifice themselves for their fatherland. In fact, military conscription—which powered much of Japan’s expanding military—prompted many Japanese to leave. Higashide himself admitted to concerns of serving in Japan’s aggressive military. No matter how eager most Japanese were to establish homes in South America, most Peruvians questioned the Japanese and their loyalty.

Narratives of Japanese spies and saboteurs flourished during the 1940s. Representative of the genre, true crime author Alan Hynd asserted in *Betrayal from the East: The Inside Story of Japanese Spies in America* that the presence of fishing boats crewed by “yellow Aryan friends” off the coast of South America confirmed Japan’s spy activity.¹⁹ Hynd’s book even included an account of Yoshitaro Amano, a Japanese entrepreneur who was captured in Panama and whose fishing boat was seized. Amano also figured prominently in Richard Rowan’s *Secret Agents Against America*.²⁰ Although Amano’s wealth and education made him a prime suspect of Japanese espionage, his ship attracted the most suspicion. Rowan speculated that Amano’s “tuna clipper” had the capacity to carry marine mines in its forward, and a torpedo tube in its aft.²¹ Joining Rowan in this trend of speculation, the U.S. government relied on information that either turned out to be inconsistent at best, or completely false at worst. Nevertheless, the U.S. government’s dependence on speculative reports contributed to the chargeless internment of Japanese Peruvians during World War II.

¹⁸ Higashide, *Adios to Tears*, 62.

¹⁹ Alan Hynd, *Betrayal from the East: The Inside Story of Japanese Spies in America* (New York: Robert M. McBride & Co., 1943), 139.

²⁰ Richard W. Rowan, *Secret Agents Against America* (New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1939), 230.

²¹ Rowan, “Sketch of the ‘Tuna Clipper’ *Amano Maru*,” in *Secret Agents Against America*, 231.

Before America's entry into World War II, Peru adopted national policies advocating for the "whitening" of society. The country's legal restrictions on immigration and citizenship exacerbated anti-Asian sentiment, firmly setting in place the prejudices that motivated Japanese Peruvian internment. Given that many Peruvians saw Japanese diligence and tenacity as dangerous, the Peruvian government decided to cooperate with the United States when the latter argued that imprisoning Japanese civilians would strengthen hemispheric security against Japanese military aggression.

In the Name of Hemispheric Security: The State Department's Special Division and Wartime Internment

Just as the Peruvian government paid attention to the growing number of Japanese in Peru, the U.S. government gradually took notice of Japanese communities in Latin America. To protect America's economic interests and improve its foreign relations with South America, President Franklin D. Roosevelt introduced the "Good Neighbor Policy." The diplomatic unity resulting from this policy positioned the United States as the leader in protecting the hemisphere's citizenry. Thus, when war broke out in September 1939, the United States concerned itself with the potential threat of Axis nationals in the Western Hemisphere. On September 23, 1939, foreign ministers from North and South America met in Panama to discuss the steps to be taken following the outbreak of war in Europe. They officially agreed to "suppress violations of neutrality and subversive activities by nationals of belligerent countries or others seeking to promote the interest of belligerent powers in the territory and jurisdiction of

any or all of the American Republics.”²² After this meeting, Roosevelt ordered J. Edgar Hoover’s Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to collect intelligence in the Western Hemisphere.²³

Originally, Roosevelt assigned FBI agents to investigate and foil Germany’s covert operations in Central and South America, until the large Japanese populations in Brazil and Peru attracted the attention of legal attachés. Although Hoover used operatives in the United States and abroad to gather intelligence on suspected Japanese espionage, not all officials agreed with his tactics. Edward Ennis, Director of the Alien Enemy Control Unit in the Department of Justice (DOJ), disputed the FBI’s authority to operate beyond American borders, and cautioned U.S. Attorney General Francis Biddle of this. As Ennis recalled, “often, there were arguments as to just where his [Hoover’s] authority ended and the authority of other officials in the Department of Justice began.”²⁴ Despite clashes between the DOJ and FBI on jurisdiction, the conflict did little to rein in Director Hoover and his agents. As a proponent of result over process, Hoover felt he did not have to justify any of his actions to the DOJ.²⁵ So, when the FBI began investigating Japanese communities in Latin America, the State Department’s Special Division became more fervid in enforcing a repatriation program.

By the fall of 1940, the State Department became more concerned with the growing diplomatic crisis between Japan and the United States. In October that year, the State Department received alarming reports from its representatives in Shanghai, Peking, and Japan that the

²² The Secretary of State (Cordell Hull) to Ambassador in Brazil (Jefferson Caffrey), September 4, 1939, *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1939, Vol. V*, 17.

²³ John K. Emmerson, *The Japanese Thread: A Life in the U.S. Foreign Service* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1978), 127.

²⁴ Edward J. Ennis, interviewed by Miriam Feingold, December 20, 1972, Earl Warren Oral History Project, University of California, Berkeley, (October 17, 2005), 6.

²⁵ Arnold Krammer, *Undue Process: The Untold Story of America’s German Alien Internees* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1997), 4.

situation in Asia “may explode at any instant.”²⁶ State Department officials saw Japan as ready to take advantage of the war in Europe, waiting to extend its control and proclaim a “new order” in greater East Asia.²⁷ Writing to Secretary Hull, U.S. Ambassador to Japan Joseph Grew cautioned that general war might erupt soon and advised the government to facilitate the repatriation of American civilians.²⁸ Officials were concerned by the possibility of Japan interning American civilians if war broke out between the U.S. and Japan. Thus began the Special Division’s efforts to coordinate an evacuation policy for Americans in the Far East.

On November 20, 1940, Consul General Frank Lockhart informed Secretary Hull of the Special Division’s success in soliciting shipping companies to evacuate American citizens in Asia. That same month, Lockhart reported that 1,151 Americans left Shanghai.²⁹ Despite this momentary victory, American diplomats found themselves divided between conflicting courses of action. When overseas officials notified the State Department that Thailand was on the verge of Japanese occupation in February 1941, Roosevelt’s administration agreed to dispatch a warning to American civilians in both China and Japan to return to the United States. In an effort to avoid sensational publicity, however, Secretary Hull instructed Ambassador Andrew Grew in Tokyo to “immediately and *quietly*” forward the government’s suggestion that Americans withdraw to the United States.³⁰ Communications between the American government and its nationals in Asia amounted to quiet advice, a policy with which the Special Division disagreed.

²⁶ Breckenridge Long, *The War Diary of Breckenridge Long: Selections from the Years 1939-1944*, ed. Fred L. Israel (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), 133.

²⁷ Scott D. Sagan, “The Origins of the Pacific War,” *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18, no. 4 (1988): 896.

²⁸ The Ambassador in Japan (Grew) to the Secretary of State (Hull), October 6, 1940, *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1940, Vol. IV, Far East*, 932.

²⁹ The Consul General at Shanghai (Lockhart) to the Secretary of State (Hull), November 20, 1940, *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1940, The Far East, Vol. IV*, 953.

³⁰ The Secretary of State (Hull) to the Ambassador in Japan (Grew), February 11, 1941, *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1941, The Far East, Vol. V*, 400 (emphasis added).

Frustrated by the reluctance of his colleagues in the Far East to issue *adamant* warnings, Chief of the Special Division Joseph Green pleaded with Secretary Hull: “Unless there are overwhelming political considerations of which SD [Special Division] is not aware,” Green explained, “[the] SD is of the opinion that an unequivocal warning should be issued to American citizens residing in the Far East.”³¹ In the end, the Special Division followed the department’s recommendation of subtly urging American civilians to return to the United States, so as not to tip off or provoke the Japanese government. Meanwhile, the Japanese in Latin America received no warning from their government that detention was imminent.

The American military expressed deep concern for the security of Panama and its crucial canal. The Panama Canal was central not just to the United States in defending its interests in the region. Belligerent nations across the Western Hemisphere relied on the Canal for their security, since it acted as the only secure maritime link between the Atlantic and Pacific. While American Lieutenant General John L. DeWitt, Commander of the Western Defense Command, stressed the presence of a Japanese threat and appealed to President Roosevelt to intern all Japanese and Axis nationals on the West Coast, opinions within the DOJ diverged from DeWitt’s assessment. As Ennis said, “[DeWitt] was honestly, though *mistakenly* as it turned out, concerned that the Japanese fleet...might break loose a task force and attack the Panama Canal or the West Coast of the United States.”³² Although the DOJ never found evidence of the Japanese contemplating an invasion of Panama, within days of the Pearl Harbor attack, the first detention of Japanese Latin Americans occurred in Panama. Five days after Pearl Harbor, Panamanian authorities rounded up all Japanese men, women, and children for internment, along with male German and Italian

³¹ Memorandum by the Chief of the Special Division (Green) to the Secretary of State (Hull), December 6, 1941, *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1941, The Far East, Vol. V*, 449.

³² Ennis, interviewed by Feingold, 7.

Panamanians.³³ Although Panamanian officials later abandoned the planned internment on Panamanian soil, instead turning their internees over to the United States, the imprisonment of Japanese Panamanians served as a model for the U.S. internment of all suspicious Latin Americans, including Japanese Peruvians.

Concerned about Axis influences in Latin America, the U.S. government encouraged other countries in the Western Hemisphere to consider interning or repatriating their enemy aliens. In January 1942, a month after the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor, foreign ministers from North and South America met for a third time in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, to form the Emergency Advisory Committee for Political Defense. Composed of seven representatives from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, the United States, Mexico, Uruguay, and Venezuela, the committee recommended the local detention of Axis nationals in each republic. Furthermore, if any republic lacked the resources to do so, the committee urged the transfer of Axis nationals to other American republics. But as historian P. Scott Corbett points out, “the most obvious ‘other’ republic was the United States.”³⁴

Believing that the majority of Latin American countries could not be trusted to monitor and detain “dangerous” Axis nationals, Undersecretary Welles prodded other State Department officials to act quickly. Assistant Secretary Breckenridge Long concurred in a memorandum to Attorney General Biddle, “[I]f these persons are not taken now, the South American governments may neither surrender nor detain them at all.”³⁵ Congruent with a national identity

³³ Letter from U.S. Ambassador to Panama (Wilson) to Undersecretary of State Benjamin Sumner Welles, December 12, 1941, in Lika C. Miyake, “Forsaken and Forgotten: The U.S. Internment of Japanese Peruvians During World War II,” *Asian Law Journal* 9 (2002): 168.

³⁴ C. Harvey Gardiner, *Pawns in a Triangle of Hate: The Peruvian Japanese and the United States* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981), 17-18; P. Scott Corbett, *Quiet Passages: The Exchange of Civilians Between the United States and Japan During the Second World War* (Kent: The Kent State University Press, 1987), 142.

³⁵ Memorandum from Chief of Alien Enemy Control Unit (Ennis) to the U.S. Attorney General (Biddle), March 15, 1942, in Miyake, “Forsaken and Forgotten,” 169.

swayed by ideas of exceptionalism, some policies, such as its exclusionary immigration acts, viewed the Japanese as racially inferior. In addition, however, Japanese Peruvian internees represented a commodity. An internal government memo stated that “*inherently harmless* Axis nationals may be used to the greatest possible extent. We could repatriate them, we could intern them, or we could hold them in escrow for *bargaining* purposes.”³⁶ Regardless of their suspected danger or citizenship, the United States considered Japanese Peruvians as potential hostages suitable to trade for American civilians detained in Axis controlled regions of Asia, including the Philippines.

Besides overt racism and paranoia, security concerns—justified or not—led to the wartime detention of Japanese immigrants without credible evidence or specific charges of fifth-column activities. Thousands of Japanese Peruvians swept up by the fervor of wartime internment faced various injustices, but the perceived importance of hostage-taking merits a closer look into the Japanese internment of American civilians in the Philippines. In its attempt to realize repatriation and secure fairer treatment of interned American citizens, the Special Division entangled itself in the deportation and internment of Japanese Latin Americans.

Most Benevolent Conquerors: Japanese Internment of American Civilians in the Philippines, 1942

Though motivated in part by racial prejudice and ideas of national security, the American government’s actions also occurred in response to similar internment programs by the Japanese. Days after General Douglas MacArthur abandoned Manila, American civilians and Filipino nationals stood together, gazes fixed northward as Japanese troops marched into the capitol on

³⁶ Memorandum, “Regarding the Activities of the United States Government in Removing from other American republics Dangerous Subversive Aliens,” November 3, 1942, RG 59, Subject Files, Box 180, Records of the Special War Problems Division, *National Archives*, in Esther Newman, “Sojourners, Spies and Citizens: The Interned Latin American Japanese Civilians during World War II,” PhD diss., (Youngstown State University, 2008), 51 (emphasis added).

January 2, 1942.³⁷ Two days later, the first American, British, and French civilian nationals were ordered to report to the University of Santo Tomás, which the Japanese had turned into an internment camp. In a matter of months, the camp held around 2,250 American civilians, the largest number of civilians imprisoned by the Japanese in World War II.³⁸ Japan's desire to spend as little as possible meant that the camp experience was characterized by filth, disease, malnutrition, and overcrowding. Upon receiving disturbing reports of American internees in the Philippines suffering cruel treatment by the Japanese, General MacArthur informed the War Department that the Japanese subjected American internees to "extremely harsh and rigid measures," marked by special humiliation designed "to discredit the white races."³⁹ Upon hearing this, as well as General MacArthur's recommendation that the American government act "immediately and aggressively" through proper diplomatic means, the U.S. State Department released the following statement on February 2, 1942:

"If assurances cannot be given by the Japanese government that these principles will be applied to the treatment of American nationals, not only on Japanese occupied territory in the Philippines but throughout Japan and Japanese occupied territories, it may be necessary for this government to reconsider its policy of according to Japanese nationals on its territory the most liberal treatment consistent with the national safety."⁴⁰

While the government went as far as interning its own citizens of Japanese ancestry (the Nisei), extraditing Japanese Americans was entirely out of the question.⁴¹ To find enough

³⁷ James Scott, *Rampage: MacArthur, Yamashita, and the Battle of Manila* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2018), 61.

³⁸ Rupert Wilkinson, *Surviving a Japanese Internment Camp: Life and Liberation at Santo Tomás, Manila, in World War II* (Jefferson: MacFarland & Company, 2014), 1-2.

³⁹ General Douglas MacArthur to Secretary of War Henry Stimson, February 5, 1942, Box 2495, RG 59, in Corbett, *Quiet Passages*, 48.

⁴⁰ U.S. Department of State to Japanese Government, Box 2495, RG 59, in Corbett, *Quiet Passages*, 49 (emphasis added).

⁴¹ According to the census of 1940, around 120,000 persons of Japanese ancestry resided within the territorial limits of the United States, and of these, some 80,000 were *Nisei* (American-born citizens of Japanese ancestry) and 40,000 were *Issei* (foreign-born Japanese, ineligible for naturalization). See, for further information on the population of the Japanese in America, Sydney D. Bailey, "The Problem of the Japanese Americans," *India Quarterly* 2, no. 4 (1946): 366.

Japanese to exchange for American civilian internees, the U.S. government began to intern Japanese Peruvians. The conditions suffered by American internees in the Philippines help explain some decisions made by American officials regarding Japanese Peruvians.

Located in a busy part of Manila, the sixty-acre camp had a few large buildings. To the right of the Main Building, adorned with saints on cornices, stood the three-story Education Building, which housed male internees and most of the Japanese garrison. Behind the Main Building was a “long one-story structure” called the Annex, which held mothers as well as young children. Still, most internees slept in the Main Building.⁴² In addition to gender-based segregation, the Japanese attempted to separate internees by nationality. But with thousands pouring in and accommodations in short supply, they soon abandoned the policy of gendered segregation.

Life at Santo Tomás was complex, with the internment experience defined by cooperation and resistance. Japanese commandants accepted a plan prepared by interned Americans to establish an interim government within the camp. Thirty-six-year-old American insurance executive Earl Carroll was ordered to take charge of said interim government.⁴³ Within a few weeks, Carroll built a provisional bureaucracy within the camp designed to serve a population of over 3,000 internees, 70 percent of whom were American nationals.⁴⁴ As such, Santo Tomás became “a miniature city,” administered by various representatives and agencies.⁴⁵ To foster community within the framework of regulation, the camp’s all-male administration created a host of leadership positions and organizations, from room monitors carrying out nightly

⁴² Wilkinson, *Surviving a Japanese Internment Camp*, 20.

⁴³ Wilkinson, *Surviving a Japanese Internment Camp*, 28.

⁴⁴ James Mace Ward, “Legitimate Collaboration: The Administration of Santo Tomás Internment Camp and Its Histories, 1942–2003,” *Pacific Historical Review* 77, no. 2 (2008): 162.

⁴⁵ Santo Tomás Internment Camp, *Internews*, January 24, 1942.

roll calls to disciplinary members acting as the camp's civilian police.⁴⁶ No matter how often they defended the internees' interests against Japanese restrictions, Carroll's nine-member Executive Committee inevitably made difficult decisions. Opposing some Japanese demands while acquiescing to others turned out to be the camp's version of "collaboration."

While a tale of fortitude and ingenuity, the story of American internment at Santo Tomás was also one of "legitimate collaboration," according to historian James Mace Ward. While collaboration comes across as a weighty charge, often synonymous with treason, Ward recasted collaboration as legitimate, hoping to capture the complex *quid pro quo* interactions between a suzerain power and the population it dominated. As much as collaboration blurred the lines between right and wrong, loyal and disloyal, American and un-American, internee leaders had little choice but to be middlemen. To increase their autonomy from Japanese interference, interned officials conceded to some Japanese demands in exchange for certain privileges. For example, when the Japanese threatened to revoke the internees' privilege of accepting outside food through the front gate, since they made Santo Tomás look more like a "picnic ground than a prison camp," the camp's central committee chose to tighten discipline preemptively.⁴⁷ Effective immediately, Carroll and his colleagues ordered the front gate to be covered with *sawali* (woven bamboo fiber) to block visual contact between the internees and outside world. Twice a day, visitors filed in front of the gate and placed their packages onto tables manned by Japanese inspectors checking for forbidden items, from liquor and flashlights to knitting instructions and radios.⁴⁸ The packages were then taken to the designated internee.⁴⁹ And in probable response to

⁴⁶ Ward, "Legitimate Collaboration," 162.

⁴⁷ Wilkinson, *Surviving a Japanese Internment Camp*, 92.

⁴⁸ Cates, *The Drainpipe Diary*, 302. Some women's knitting instructions, as Cates recalled, were confiscated by Japanese sentries since it looked like secret code to them.

⁴⁹ Wilkinson, *Surviving a Japanese Internment Camp*, 92.

the Japanese Army's reputation for rape, like that at Nanking, the committee forbade women from wearing shorts. To ensure compliance, the committee put in place a "morality patrol." In addition to regulating female attire, the morality patrol took the initiative to check incoming packages for contraband and outside information, which were sometimes smuggled in through bread loaves or pieces of beef. While the morality patrol tried to allay all Japanese fears of internee revolt and subversion, the camp's internees reportedly heaped "considerable abuse" onto the patrol. By mid-March 1942, the patrol's chief urged internees to appreciate their well-intentioned mission:

"[We] do not consider [ourselves] policemen or guards. We look upon ourselves as 'aides.' We...are the middlemen who forward [Japanese] regulations...and assist in their interpretation so that probable infractions will not result in greater restriction upon the camp as a whole."⁵⁰

Regardless of intent, Wilkinson asked himself an intriguing question: In order to live, "[w]ere we collaborating with the enemy?"⁵¹ Another survivor of the Santo Tomás Internment Camp, Irene Hecht, argued to the contrary.

Instead of "legitimate collaboration," a charge that still carries the implication of treason, Hecht suggested that internment went through four stages of development: denial, "lemonade from lemons" (making the best of a situation), making do, and struggling for survival.⁵² The first phase, denial, lasted from the beginning of American internment in the Philippines to the Bataan Death March in April 1942. As a keen nine-year-old during this period, Hecht observed two behaviors on the part of adults around her. Some Americans reacted in disbelief to internment. Public outrage, according to Hecht, could be summarized by the following diatribe: "How could

⁵⁰ Santo Tomás Internment Camp, *Internews*, March 14, 1942.

⁵¹ Wilkinson, *Surviving a Japanese Internment Camp*, 92.

⁵² Irene Hecht, "An Inmate's Response to James Mace Ward's 'Legitimate Collaboration,'" *Pacific Historical Review* 81, no. 4 (2012): 602.

we be ordered around by these ‘yellow monkeys.’ This defied both logic and etiquette!”⁵³ Complaints then concluded with assertions that General MacArthur would return in two weeks and put the Japanese in their place. The other reaction Hecht witnessed was a desperate attempt to return to “normality.” For example, one of Hecht’s female neighbors in the camp asserted normality in an elaborate night-time routine. “She applied various magical creams to her face,” Hecht recalled, “and wrapped her hair in an elaborate—frankly ugly—bandana to keep her permanent [wave] in order.”⁵⁴ Indeed, whenever Hecht’s neighbor set off with her three days’ supply of food and bedding, one of her necessities had been her make-up case.

Initially, living spaces in the classrooms-turned-dormitories averaged around 30 square feet per person, “a third more than a single bed.”⁵⁵ It did not matter that every cubic inch of space had been taken up—people continued to pour in. “All the women and children, ages ranging from eleven months to seventy-nine years, were tired and nervous,” Tressa R. Cates, an American nurse at the Sternberg General Army Hospital in Manila, explained, “and I, who had been a want-to-be-alone Garbo from the time I could toddle, was in the midst of all this confusion and noise!”⁵⁶ In addition to scarce living space and privacy, noises at night became incessant. Tired of waiting for liberation, three Australian internees tried to escape Santo Tomás on February 12, 1942. Two days later, however, they were recaptured and executed by the dreaded *Kempeitai* (Japanese secret police) at Manila’s North Cemetery.⁵⁷

Sometime after the fall of Bataan in April 1942, Japanese commandants assembled internees at Santo Tomás to view newsreels of the Death March. Hecht recounted how the photos

⁵³ Hecht, “An Inmate’s Response to James Mace Ward’s ‘Legitimate Collaboration,’” 605.

⁵⁴ Hecht, “An Inmate’s Response to James Mace Ward’s ‘Legitimate Collaboration,’” 605.

⁵⁵ Wilkinson, *Surviving a Japanese Internment Camp*, 27.

⁵⁶ Cates, *The Drainpipe Diary*, 17.

⁵⁷ Wilkinson, *Surviving a Japanese Internment Camp*, 133.

shown to them emphasized the miserable state of American prisoners: “Dehydrated, starved, staggering, they collapsed across the screen.”⁵⁸ Japanese sentries wanted internees to give up the idea of being rescued. From Hecht’s point-of-view, this was a turning point in the attitudes and behaviors of the internees. They understood that they needed to make the best of an unfortunate situation. When thirty-odd Army nurses from Bataan arrived at Santo Tomás, the camp soon established a regular hospital, but one lacking medicines and medical equipment. The camp also organized “abbreviated” schooling for children. Japanese commandants limited the subjects taught to English and mathematics, and despite such restricted schooling, internees tried to create a viable world for themselves.⁵⁹

The health of most internees remained stable throughout 1942. However, signs of malnutrition began to appear by June 1943. In accordance with Japanese orders, the internees largely fed and provided for themselves, from bed mattresses to medicines. Initially, Filipino merchants and families outside the camp supplied fruits and vegetables to the internees. But when the Japanese closed down the camp’s supply line to reduce smuggled notes and goods, starvation cases increased rapidly. As a nurse at the camp hospital, Cates saw the worst of malnutrition and disease. On June 8, 1943, Cates witnessed a number of children and adults experiencing impetigo and other skin diseases caused by nervousness, filth, and malnutrition.⁶⁰ She recalled how hospitals in the United States practiced strict isolation whenever a case of impetigo was discovered. Of course, such isolation at Santo Tomás was out of the question. With food scarce and supplementary sources cut off, internees had to make do with the worsening circumstances.

⁵⁸ Hecht, “An Inmate’s Response to James Mace Ward’s ‘Legitimate Collaboration,’” 607.

⁵⁹ Hecht, “An Inmate’s Response to James Mace Ward’s ‘Legitimate Collaboration,’” 608.

⁶⁰ Cates, *The Drainpipe Diary*, 278.

By September 1944, Hecht wrote about the camp's starvation diet: "[S]kipping a meal was not just an inconvenience, but a serious deprivation."⁶¹ At this time, the camp's stock of food had shrunk to a dozen stored eggs, six or eight ounces of salt pork, a few cans of meat, and a few pounds of rice—all of which had to support thousands of internees. Cates wrote about the types of so-called "scarecrows" in the camp. "Men and women who looked like skeletons," Cates noted, "walked around on pipe-stem legs...with folds of baggy skin that had lost all elasticity and life. Drawn faces with eyes fixed on the ground." The second type of "scarecrows" were usually over fifty, and according to Cates, "their faces were large and edematous,...their abdomens distended, and they hobbled around on grotesquely swollen legs. These people would soon be in their graves."⁶² While difficult to imagine, the Japanese treated Filipinos outside the camp much worse. Filipino refugees witnessed the Japanese committing orgies of abuse, mutilating young men, taking so-called "comfort women," and bayoneting newborn babies in front of their Filipino parents.⁶³ Even in Manila, Hecht noticed how coffins would be carted past the camp every morning: "There would be a rickety cart, with a shambling, bony horse and equally bony driver, head covered in a battered straw hat, his skinny legs sticking out from his short pants. On the cart was a box. I had no difficulty in concluding that the box was a coffin."⁶⁴ Seeing the image of death in its many forms helped Hecht realize the danger they were all in. From that day forward, she vowed to never take one step that was not necessary for survival. Rather than join her friends in jumping rope, hopscotch, or tree climbing, Hecht watched from afar. Yet shortly after, her friends also stopped playing games as their bodies became too weak to

⁶¹ Hecht, "An Inmate's Response to James Mace Ward's 'Legitimate Collaboration,'" 609.

⁶² Cates, *The Drainpipe Diary*, 389.

⁶³ Wilkinson, *Surviving a Japanese Internment Camp*, 167.

⁶⁴ Hecht, "An Inmate's Response to James Mace Ward's 'Legitimate Collaboration,'" 611.

engage in such boisterous activity.⁶⁵ By the war's end, 390 internees had died at Santo Tomás, a death rate of approximately ten percent.⁶⁶

Due to the negative meaning of collaboration, legitimate or otherwise, it would be more accurate to perceive the Santo Tomás experience as a study in survival. Internees' survival predicated on their ability to negotiate with the Japanese and solve day-to-day problems effectively. If Santo Tomás was the story of a human community held in place against its will, so too was the U.S. internment of Japanese Peruvians. Any similarities, however, were lost on some American officials. To ensure better treatment for American internees in the Philippines, General MacArthur informed the State Department that it could use Japanese nationals as a "lever under the threat of reciprocal retaliatory measures to force decent treatment for [American] interned men and women."⁶⁷ Again, deporting nonconsenting Japanese Americans was out of the question. Moreover, the United States had already agreed to intervene in the transfer and internment of Axis nationals from Latin America *vis-à-vis* the Emergency Advisory Committee. To rectify those two problems, Secretary Hull urged President Roosevelt in 1942 to "remove all the Japanese from these American Republic countries for internment in the United States."⁶⁸ Thus began the U.S. internment of Japanese Peruvians, a program designed to increase American bargaining power and intended to improve conditions for Allied citizenry interned by the Japanese.

⁶⁵ Hecht, "An Inmate's Response to James Mace Ward's 'Legitimate Collaboration,'" 611.

⁶⁶ James McCall, *Santo Tomás Internment Camp: STIC in Verse and Reverse, STIC-toons and STIC-tistics* (Lincoln: Woodruff Printing, 1945), 66, 146.

⁶⁷ General Douglas MacArthur to Secretary of War Henry Stimson, February 5, 1942, Box 2495, RG 59, in Corbett, *Quiet Passages*, 48.

⁶⁸ Corbett, *Quiet Passages*, 146. Corbett cites a letter from Secretary Hull to President Roosevelt (1942), pleading for more ships to be available to transport Japanese Peruvian deportees.

All's Fair in Love and War?: Inter-American Relations and the Wartime Program of Deportation

While Peru hoped to rid itself of an unwanted minority, the importation of Japanese internees provided the U.S. government with valuable bartering currency in civilian exchanges. When it became apparent that Japan held a larger than expected number of Americans and other Allied nationals in its prison camps, the U.S. government feared it would not have enough Japanese detainees to exchange for these American civilians. To rectify this issue, some U.S. officials called for the wholesale extradition of Japanese Peruvians. A May 1942 memorandum recommended as much, calling for Peru to deport all their persons of Japanese descent to the United States, *regardless* of their citizenship status.⁶⁹ However, when a lack of American ships, space, personnel, and resources prevented this kind of wholesale extradition, the legality of the program fell into question.

J. Daniel Hanley of the State Department's Foreign Activity Correlation section insisted in a memo that the department should decide "whether an effort should be made to influence Peru to *breach* international law."⁷⁰ Initially, Peru's deportation program targeted Japanese consular and diplomatic officials as well as leading businessmen. John K. Emmerson, the Third Secretary of the U.S. Embassy in Lima, established the following criteria for selecting deportees: Axis nationals in Peru had to occupy a position of leadership or exercise influence within the community.⁷¹ Emmerson attempted to single out Japanese leaders in the community to catch "potential subversives" in Peru.⁷² However, unable to find *any* credible evidence of subversion

⁶⁹ Memorandum from R. Henry Norweb to Director J. Edgar Hoover, F.B.I. (May 8, 1942), Japanese Activities Along the West Coast of South America, in Lika C. Miyake, "Forsaken and Forgotten: The U.S. Internment of Japanese Peruvians During World War II," *Asian Law Journal* 9 (2002): 171.

⁷⁰ Memorandum from J. Daniel Hanley of the Foreign Activity Correlation Section of the U.S. State Department, September 8, 1942, Box 2499, RG 59, in Corbett, *Quiet Passages*, 147-8 (emphasis added).

⁷¹ Emmerson, *The Japanese Thread*, 143.

⁷² Emmerson, *The Japanese Thread*, 139.

or espionage contemplated by Peruvian Japanese, U.S. and Peruvian officials deported the Japanese at random. With little to no protocol in place for selecting deportees, “the whim of enforcing officials played a major part in the designation of the [so-called] undesirables.”⁷³ This fickle arrangement concerned the State Department as they did not want the United States to become a dumping ground for unwanted Axis nationals. Director Ennis informed the Special Division that the State Department hoped to *only* intern “dangerous aliens of enemy nationality,” not harmless refugees. Although Ennis acknowledged that U.S. officials in Peru sometimes made errors and acted in haste when marking individuals for deportation, the selection process had to be diligent with getting rid of the “right” Japanese—those who presented a threat.⁷⁴ Even so, American officials were more concerned with taking preventative measures in Peru than with ensuring fair treatment of Japanese Peruvians, which explains why Attorney General Francis Biddle concluded that such random errors “did not warrant the restriction of internment.”⁷⁵

While U.S. leaders scrambled to validate Japanese internment, the Peruvian government hastened the expulsion process. Peruvian officials viewed the war as a serendipitous opportunity to rid Peru of its “undesirable” Japanese. Soon after Pearl Harbor, Peruvian President Manuel Prado concluded, “the deportation and internment in the United States of as many of the nation’s Japanese as possible was both politically popular and expedient.”⁷⁶ In addition to being a convenient means of expelling Peruvians’ economic competition, Prado’s government stood to profit from cooperation with the United States. As a 1942 American newsreel reported, “the U.S. lent Peru \$25 million and signed a reciprocal trade agreement. Peru [would] receive American

⁷³ C. Harvey Gardiner, *The Japanese and Peru: 1873-1973* (Albuquerque: New Mexico, 1975), 85.

⁷⁴ Memorandum from Chief Edward Ennis to Chairman Albert Clattenburg, September 21, 1942, Box 2516, RG 59, in Corbett, *Quiet Passages*, 149.

⁷⁵ Letter from U.S. Attorney General Francis Biddle to Secretary of State Cordell Hull, January 11, 1943, in Miyake, “Forsaken and Forgotten,” 174.

⁷⁶ Daniel M. Masterson and Sayaka Funada-Classen, *The Japanese in Latin America* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 159.

arms under a Lend Lease agreement.”⁷⁷ President Prado’s goal of securing political support and economic aid from the United States was far from surprising. Prado wanted to see “the substantial elimination of the Japanese colony in Peru,” Norweb wrote, which would grant individual Peruvians certain economic advantages.⁷⁸ To better guarantee their removal, however, President Prado indicated that Peru would not readmit interned Japanese Peruvians at any time. In contrast, Prado and other political officials took almost no action against the large German community in Peru. Similar to other American republics, including the United States, Peru boasted a bigger and better-established German population, with strong ties to the political elite. Along with political ties, a significant enough number of prominent Peruvians lived in Germany, which made Prado’s administration think twice about deporting German residents.⁷⁹

The Peruvian government pursued restrictive policies in accordance with the U.S. mission for hemispheric security. Peruvian authorities imposed travel restrictions on the Japanese and shut down their schools, newspapers, and civic organizations. At the suggestion of the U.S. government, Prado further ordered the confiscation of phones from their homes. The Peruvian government also canceled Japanese land leases and froze their assets.⁸⁰ Shortly after Pearl Harbor, Peruvian officials placed 566 Japanese and their businesses on the dreaded “blacklist,” which was used to round up and arrest “suspicious” Japanese, sometimes in nighttime raids without any real proof of subversive activity.⁸¹ Japanese teachers, organization leaders, clergymen, and other high-profile members of the community transformed into scapegoats, and the Peruvian government rendered them financially powerless.

⁷⁷ Newsreel clip, *Hidden Internment: The Art Shibayama Story*, dir. Casey Peek, Progressive Films, 2003, YouTube, 00:11:35-00:11:44.

⁷⁸ Letter from Ambassador of Peru (Norweb) to Undersecretary of State (Welles), July 20, 1942, in Miyake, “Forsaken and Forgotten,” 171.

⁷⁹ Gardiner, *Pawns in a Triangle of Hate*, 20.

⁸⁰ Emmerson, *The Japanese Thread*, 137.

⁸¹ Emmerson, *The Japanese Thread*, 138.

Racial strife in Peru, exacerbated by wartime restrictions, drove some Japanese Peruvians to offer themselves for deportations. The general prejudice and feared “blacklists” made it difficult for Japanese Peruvians to lead a normal life or earn a basic living. Towards the middle of the war, George H. Butler, First Secretary of the Embassy at Lima, reported to Secretary Hull about the turn of events: “At first the Japanese did not wish to leave Peru, but...now ‘all of them’ want to go to the United States,” even though that meant indefinite confinement in a camp.⁸² Art Shibayama, a native Peruvian, never perceived himself or his family as unwanted immigrants. He described his childhood in Lima as idyllic, spending summer vacations at his grandparents’ seaside home in Callao. Despite his family’s deep roots in Peru, nothing could save them from the country’s intent to deport and intern as many Japanese as possible. Shibayama remembered how the Japanese men in Peru tried to evade capture:

“Every time a U.S. transport came into the port of Callao, words got around and people, the head of families, went into hiding—my father included. When the [Peruvian] police came to our house several times looking for him...and not finding him, they took my mother and put her in jail. My sister was eleven at the time and went with her because she didn’t want her mother to go by herself. As soon as my father found out about it, he came out, he gave himself up.”⁸³

In the end, Peruvian officials sent Shibayama’s entire family to the United States for internment.

Some weeks after President Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066, resulting in the wartime internment of Japanese Americans, the United States turned to Japanese Peruvians to provide a steady pool of exchangeable prisoners. In late 1942, General George C. Marshall wired the Caribbean Defense Command: “The State Department wants immediate deportation from Peru of nine Japanese tailors recently okehed [sic] for deportation by the Peruvian government,”

⁸² Letter from First Secretary of the Lima Embassy (Butler) to Secretary of State (Hull), July 10, 1943, in Miyake, “Forsaken and Forgotten,” 176.

⁸³ Art Shibayama, *Hidden Internment: The Art Shibayama Story*, dir. Casey Peek, Progressive Films, 2003, YouTube, 00:11:50-00:12:31.

Marshall wrote. “These interned nationals [were] to be used in *exchange* for American civilian nationals now interned” by the Japanese.⁸⁴ Despite America’s limited number of ships and space for internees, partial deportation was still accomplished through cooperation between the American and Peruvian governments. On April 5, 1942, the *S.S. Etolin* left Callao for San Francisco with 141 Peruvian-Japanese males on board, the first group of internees.⁸⁵ Eight days later, the *S.S. Acadia* followed, and deportations of Japanese Peruvians continued throughout the war. Japanese passengers on board these ships reported being under strict guard in tight, unventilated quarters below deck.⁸⁶ Little did they know that some would be taken to a temporary detention camp in Panama before being sent to the United States.

Behind Barbed Wire: The Internment and Deportation of Japanese Peruvians

In January 1944, Seiichi Higashide’s success as a merchant and civic leader attracted the attention of Peruvian agents, who marked him for deportation to the United States. Like many of his countrymen, Higashide found himself in a vulnerable position. “Surrounded by American soldiers carrying rifles with fixed bayonets,” Higashide recalled, “we were lined up four abreast and marched over to the gangway...M.P.s [the military police] were on all sides of us and it was clear that elaborate precautions had been taken. It was then that I truly came to understand that I was a prisoner of war.”⁸⁷ While on board a U.S. freighter for Panama, Higashide came to know that the ship carried twenty-nine Japanese, five of whom were *naturalized* Peruvians, and two who were born in Peru.⁸⁸ Later that month, Higashide disembarked at an unnamed military installation in the Panama Canal, where he endured harsh conditions for nearly two months.

⁸⁴ General Marshall to the Caribbean Defense Command, December 11, 1942, National Archives, Records of World War II, Army file AG 014.311, in Barnhart, “Japanese Internees from Peru,” 171.

⁸⁵ Gardiner, *Pawns in a Triangle of Hate*, 25.

⁸⁶ Letter from Victor K. Tateishi, detainee of alien detention center, to the Ambassador of Spain, June 30, 1944, in Miyake, “Forsaken and Forgotten,” 172.

⁸⁷ Higashide, *Adios to Tears*, 142.

⁸⁸ Higashide, *Adios to Tears*, 144.

Since the camp in Panama fell under the American military's jurisdiction, "everything," according to Higashide, "was handled in a military manner."⁸⁹ Under pain of punishment, camp guards forced Japanese Peruvian inmates to salute the American flag and recite the Pledge of Allegiance before sending them off to perform hard labor in the canal. Labor ranged from transporting square timber and mixing gravel with cement to hacking away at underbrush and digging holes in the ground.⁹⁰ Captured two years earlier on charges of suspected espionage, Yoshitaro Amano described the perverse enjoyment that some American sentries took in issuing orders to internees. In his memoir, forty-three-year-old Amano detailed an incident in which he and nine other prisoners had to dig a hole measuring a certain number of feet. When informed that the measurements were off by two inches, the internees had to refill the hole, stamp down the dirt, and start again. These demanding conditions took their toll on the weakest detainees, and according to Amano, some M.P.s mistreated the internees for entertainment: "They just wanted to make us tired."⁹¹ Another Japanese Peruvian detained in the Canal Zone shared testimony reminiscent of Amano's experience in Balboa. One humid day in February 1942, American soldiers ordered the internees to dig a latrine. While shoveling dirt, the internee thought he was digging his own grave. When American guards instructed them to then fill the pit with buckets of human waste, the older internees became too tired: "They could not run fast enough to please the

⁸⁹ Higashide, *Adios to Tears*, 144.

⁹⁰ Higashide, *Adios to Tears*, 145. See, for more information on the hard labor that Japanese Peruvians had to perform, "Protest by Japanese Government against Cases of Ill-Treatment by the American Authorities of Japanese Held by the Authorities of the United States Government, 1944," in *Foreign Relations of the United States, Diplomatic Papers V* (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1965), 958.

⁹¹ Yoshitaro Amano, *Waga Toraware No Ki (The Journal of My Incarceration)* (Tokyo: Japan Publishing and Distribution Co. (Nippon Shuppan Haikyū Kabushiki Kaisha), 1943), 23, in Newman, "Sojourners, Spies and Citizens," 46.

guards, they were poked and shoved by guards with bayonets.”⁹² Under these harsh conditions, the internees learned to accept orders.

At first, exhausting physical labor and meager living conditions made up the life of internment in Balboa. The makeshift camp housed detainees in assembled tents, surrounded by barbed wire and patrolled by soldiers with machine guns.⁹³ Meals at the camp consisted of potatoes, beans, bread, and half a cup of cold coffee. Within days of arriving, Amano noticed the disparate treatment of Japanese internees and attributed this to the resentment of American draftees. This was heightened by the arrival of injured soldiers from Pearl Harbor to Gorgas Hospital in Panama City. “When [the] soldiers saw their own buddies wounded and in terrible shape,” Amano reasoned, “their morale or their desire to fight increased...[T]heir reaction was, ‘I hate the Japs,’ and that came down on our heads. We got punished for Pearl Harbor then and there.”⁹⁴ Hence, tensions escalated at the Balboa camp between American draftees and Japanese internees. As Amano put it, “They [the soldiers] stared at us [the Japanese] with hate in their eyes. All the bad jobs were assigned to us, much worse than those assigned to the Italian group. The Italians looked at us with pity because we had to work much harder.”⁹⁵ However, after months of labor and uncertainty, conditions at Balboa gradually improved.

With greater food rations and reduced physical demands, Japanese internees began to search for entertainment. As a self-proclaimed lecturer by disposition and vocation, Amano took on the responsibility of entertaining internees by reciting stories from *A Tale of Two Cities* and *The Man in the Iron Mask*. Over time, Amano realized that what Japanese internees really craved

⁹² Testimony of Grace Shimizu, in “Treatment of Latin Americans of Japanese Descent, European Americans, and Jewish Refugees During World War II,” Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Immigration, Citizenship, Refugees, Border Security, and International Law of the Committee on the Judiciary, House of Representatives, One Hundred Eleventh Congress, First Session, March 19, 2009.

⁹³ Amano, *Waga Toraware No Ki*, 22, in Newman, “Sojourners, Spies and Citizens,” 45.

⁹⁴ Amano, *Waga Toraware No Ki*, 23, in Newman, “Sojourners, Spies and Citizens,” 45.

⁹⁵ Amano, *Waga Toraware No Ki*, 23, in Newman, “Sojourners, Spies and Citizens,” 46.

was news about the war. While working as an interpreter at a nearby military hospital, Amano developed relationships with local Panamanian laborers. In a matter of weeks, Amano called in a favor from one of the local workers there, asking for issues of the *Estrella* and *Panama American*. The local worker obliged and smuggled the newspapers into the camp for Amano to read to the internees in Japanese.⁹⁶ The daily news roundup became a highly anticipated event among the internees, who began to bet on the distance of Japan's advancement. Using information gleaned from Western news sources, Amano gave embellished reports on the cunning superiority of the Japanese in Bataan and Corregidor. With regard to the Japanese sinking of the *Repulse* and *Prince of Wales*, two British battleships, Amano bragged about the Imperial Army's might: "[F]or Germany, it took two years to bomb England, but Japan accomplished this destruction in 80 minutes." Moreover, Amano looked down on America's failure to anticipate attacks from the Japanese military, who "came down from the jungles like a strong wind."⁹⁷ The camp guards could not understand Amano when he was giving his nightly reports, and if they demanded to know what he was saying, Amano replied that he was preaching the Holy Gospel. After picking out words like "Singapore" and "Manila," the soldiers became deeply suspicious of his zealous lectures. Privy to their suspicions, Amano wondered if someone could be killed over such a thing as reporting the news. Regardless, Amano continued his nightly reports. As he put it, "People wanted the news so badly. At the time, the decision was easy, but looking back, it was *foolhardy*."⁹⁸

Amano's suspect activities and defiant attitude made him a target for military questioning. When two guards called on and escorted him to a tent for questioning, Amano

⁹⁶ Amano, *Waga Toraware No Ki*, 38, in Newman, "Sojourners, Spies and Citizens," 61.

⁹⁷ Amano, *Waga Toraware No Ki*, 42, in Newman, "Sojourners, Spies and Citizens," 63.

⁹⁸ Amano, *Waga Toraware No Ki*, 38, in Newman, "Sojourners, Spies and Citizens," 62 (emphasis added).

expected the worst. “I thought of a spy movie, where the guy gets shot. I thought of that and shuddered,” Amano recalled later.⁹⁹ He described the head interrogator as an M.P. named “Sibbly,” a sergeant and nisei translator. In his memoir *Waga Toraware No Ki (The Journal of My Incarceration)*, Amano paraphrased Sibbly’s questions:

“You must have known when the war was going to start. What was your position in Japan?... We have evidence. Why did you go to the bank the day before [Pearl Harbor] to withdraw money?... Where was the money? How did you spend it? Why did you take it out?... We started searching your house. We couldn’t find anything suspicious.”¹⁰⁰

After Sibbly asked a number of questions, many of which Amano referred to as “stupid,” the guards escorted him back to his cot. According to Amano, Sibbly issued special orders thereafter for sentries to shoot Amano if he ever came within ten feet of the surrounding wire gate.¹⁰¹

Amano was able to evade said situation, however, since the military sent him to Fort Sill for indefinite internment.

In early May 1942, Amano and other Japanese internees passed through Texas by train and arrived at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. Upon their arrival, Amano described the camp facility as being composed of 192 tents and 13 barracks, “lined up like *Go* game pieces” on several acres of open land, surrounded by a ten-foot-high barbed wire fence.¹⁰² Conditions at Fort Sill fared better, in some ways, than at Balboa. Officers at Fort Sill supplied the internees with good food, served on clean porcelain dishes. They also did not force internees to perform hours of hard labor. Finally, Amano “felt proud to be promoted from animal to human.”¹⁰³ With time for leisurely pursuits, the internees entertained themselves in the form of talent shows, featuring traditional Japanese acts such as *shigin* (poetry) and *shakuhaji* (flute performances).

⁹⁹ Amano, *Waga Toraware No Ki*, 27, in Newman, “Sojourners, Spies and Citizens,” 47.

¹⁰⁰ Amano, *Waga Toraware No Ki*, 29, in Newman, “Sojourners, Spies and Citizens,” 48.

¹⁰¹ Amano, *Waga Toraware No Ki*, 32, in Newman, “Sojourners, Spies and Citizens,” 49.

¹⁰² Amano, *Waga Toraware No Ki*, 68, in Newman, “Sojourners, Spies and Citizens,” 65.

¹⁰³ Amano, *Waga Toraware No Ki*, 70, in Newman, “Sojourners, Spies and Citizens,” 65.

These standing-room-only shows provided internees with a brief respite from the fear and worry of indefinite incarceration, but reality soon kicked in with the deaths of three Japanese internees. On May 1, 1942, Ochi Yakuji was the first prisoner to die at Fort Sill due to untreatable tongue cancer. “[Everyone] knew tongue cancer killed him, but so did American indifference,” charged Amano.¹⁰⁴ As he recalled, the doctors only came to Ochi’s tent to determine if he was dead or alive; they did not treat him properly. The next casualty, Kanesaburo Oshima, died ten days later. One of seven internees killed by American M.P.s during the war, Oshima died trying to escape from the camp. According to the FBI, Oshima went to the camp perimeter and attempted to climb over the double-layered fence. A soldier spotted Oshima from a nearby watchtower, and drew out his pistol. When internees pleaded with the soldier to not shoot Oshima due to his mental instability, the guard lowered his gun. Another guard, however, used a machine gun and shot Oshima. The internee’s body then collapsed to the ground. Following an autopsy, medics concluded that one shot entered the base of his spine, and another penetrated the back of his head.¹⁰⁵ The third camp death of Shimoda Itsuji occurred shortly after. Although the cause of his death was ruled unknown, Amano believed that Itsuji died under suspicious circumstances, since military officers refused internees’ requests to visit the body. Instead, some camp administrators brought flowers and delivered condolences to the deceased, which Amano derided as too little, too late. “We needed kindness while we were alive. If they had showed any compassion first, there would be no need to bury bodies out here,” Amano opined.¹⁰⁶ In good faith, camp officials permitted the detainees to conduct funeral services for the deceased.

¹⁰⁴ Amano, *Waga Toraware No Ki*, 74, in Newman, “Sojourners, Spies and Citizens,” 67.

¹⁰⁵ Tetsuden Kashima, *Judgment Without Trial: Japanese American Imprisonment During World War II* (Washington: University of Washington Press, 2003), 191.

¹⁰⁶ Amano, *Waga Toraware No Ki*, 75-76, in Newman, “Sojourners, Spies and Citizens,” 68.

Unbeknownst to the American M.P.s, the funerals galvanized Japanese Peruvians to express their outrage and contempt. During a eulogy, Japanese internee “A” denounced the United States’ claim to moral superiority. According to Amano, “A” insisted that Japan did not kill civilians without a just motive, compared to American soldiers who casually gun down mentally ill internees. These eulogies, delivered in Japanese, provided internees with a platform to indirectly express their frustration and resentment. Few prisoners protested directly to the camp’s administration, but some were willing to speak up. As Amano recalled, the military court martialled the soldier accused of shooting Oshima. Ten Japanese internees were called as witnesses, one of whom, Shindo Tamezo, testified that the soldier disregarded requests to hold fire. When the accused denied hearing any such requests, Tamezo called him a liar, noting how the other sentry in the watchtower heard and heeded the request.¹⁰⁷ Even so, nothing the internees arguably did warranted a death sentence. According to the Geneva Convention of 1929, to which American and Japanese internees were subject to, an attempted escape only carried a penalty of confinement for up to thirty days.¹⁰⁸ Upon learning this, an officer yanked the defendant’s stripes from his military uniform. However, the court later acquitted the soldier of all counts.¹⁰⁹

On May 28, 1942, orders arrived to transfer the Japanese internees, including Amano, to Camp Livingston in Louisiana. Near the city of Alexandria, Camp Livingston differed from Fort Sill, especially in terms of living conditions. To the relief of Japanese internees, soldiers guarding the camp’s watchtowers were not armed with machine guns. The barracks also proved to be far more comfortable than the leaky tents at Fort Sill. As life became more pleasant, some

¹⁰⁷ Amano, *Waga Toraware No Ki*, 77, in Newman, “Sojourners, Spies and Citizens,” 69.

¹⁰⁸ Japan and the United States agreed to apply the 1929 Geneva Convention to their respective internees. Kashima, *Judgment Without Trial*, 191.

¹⁰⁹ Amano, *Waga Toraware No Ki*, 77, in Newman, “Sojourners, Spies and Citizens,” 69.

internees filled their days with *mahjong* and *Go*. Others indulged in their open access to daily newspapers, such as *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*. But this period of stability was short-lived for Amano. In June, Amano and four other Japanese were listed for diplomatic repatriation.

On June 18, 1942, Amano and other Japanese internees boarded the Swedish-American liner *Gripsholm*. According to Amano, the ship carried 1,065 civilians, including Japanese ambassadors Kichisaburo Nomura and Saburo Kurusu. On July 2, the ship stopped in Rio de Janeiro to pick up 383 Japanese nationals from Peru and Brazil.¹¹⁰ As the *Gripsholm* neared Lourenco Marques, Mozambique—site of the first civilian exchange with 2,500 Americans aboard the *Conte Verde* and *Asama Maru*—Amano's sense of nationalism replaced his taste for resistance. Amano described the scene as follows:

“On the morning of [July] 22nd, all of us anxiously awaited the arrival of our *Asama Maru* and *Conte Verde* and a chance to see them proudly sail into the bay. It was a magnificent sight. The Hinomaru [the Japanese national flag] and a white cross were painted on the sides of the ships. High on the masts fluttered the Hinomaru and the sight of it against the tropical blue sky nearly blinded me. We breathlessly watched in anticipation. When the two ships drew alongside the *Gripsholm*, there arose a loud ‘banzai!’ At that moment, the power of Imperial Japan seemed overwhelming.”¹¹¹

Filled with national pride, Amano boarded the *Conte Verde* for Singapore, which was then occupied by Japan. His arrival in Singapore signaled the end of his American internment, but Amano continued to write about the superiority of his homeland until the end of the war.¹¹²

The second and final exchange between Japan and the United States occurred in 1943.

¹¹⁰ Newman, “Sojourners, Spies and Citizens,” 75.

¹¹¹ Amano, *Waga Toraware No Ki*, 131, in Newman, “Sojourners, Spies and Citizens,” 76. For more information on the internees held and exchanged by the Japanese, see Greg Leck, *Captives of Empire: The Japanese Internment of Allied Civilians in China 1941-1945* (Philadelphia: Shandy Press, 2006).

¹¹² Amano, *Waga Toraware No Ki*, 132, in Newman, “Sojourners, Spies and Citizens,” 76.

With 737 Japanese Latin Americans aboard, mostly diplomats, businesspeople, and bankers, the *Gripsholm* sailed into the neutral port of Goa on the southwestern coast of India, on October 16, 1943.¹¹³ The Japanese *Teia Maru* waited with 1,516 passengers on board, mostly American and Canadian internees from the Philippines.¹¹⁴ Soon after this successful exchange, diplomatic negotiations between Japan and the United States broke down. Although the cause remains unknown, Corbett suggests that the Japanese placed greater importance on civilian exchanges with the British. By January 1944, Allied forces had captured some 331 Japanese pearl divers in the Pacific, who were interned by the Australian government. Following General MacArthur's advice, the Australian government consistently refused to repatriate the Japanese pearl divers, on the grounds that they possessed "vital military information" on the territorial waters of Australia.¹¹⁵ Surprisingly or not, MacArthur's views held significant sway over the Australian government. Even when the British government asked Australia for the pearl divers release and repatriation, the Australian government refused to do so unless MacArthur agreed.¹¹⁶ Regardless of the information the pearl divers might have had, the Japanese still expressed their preference for a civilian exchange with the British before a third exchange with the Americans. Ultimately, America's hesitancy to capitulate to Japan's demands contributed to the empire's growing unwillingness to negotiate with the U.S. Special Division.

Although civilian exchanges halted after that, the deportation of Japanese Peruvians continued, as in the case of Seiichi Higashide. Before transporting Higashide and his family to the United States, U.S. officials confiscated their passports and ordered consulates to not issue

¹¹³ Corbett, *Quiet Passages*, 93.

¹¹⁴ Tomi Kaizawa Knaefler, *Our House Divided: Seven Japanese American Families in World War II* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1995), 49.

¹¹⁵ Corbett, *Quiet Passages*, 100.

¹¹⁶ Corbett, *Quiet Passages*, 101.

them any visas or other paperwork. Upon their arrival, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) ruled their entry as illegal because they lacked proper paperwork.¹¹⁷ By a process of America's own making, Higashide and his family became "alien enemies." Most Japanese Peruvians were housed in three internment camps, all located in Texas: Kenedy, Seagoville, and Crystal City.¹¹⁸ Initially, Higashide was interned at the all-male camp in Kenedy, whereas his family ended up in the family internment camp at Crystal City. Higashide described the men at Camp Kenedy as primarily young native Peruvians. Single and high-spirited, these Japanese Peruvians hoped to return to Peru, not Japan. Their pattern of resistance, in contrast to the Japanese Latin Americans at Fort Sill, was more unconventional. "I do not know who conceived it," Higashide recalled, "but at one point, it became popular among a group of internees to break chinaware. Calling it a 'war of attrition,' they would deliberately drop dishes and cups on the floor to shatter them after meals."¹¹⁹ As absurd as it may sound, they reasoned that such actions would decrease the enemy's material resources, thereby affecting America's ability to continue the war. Growing irritated by their foolishness, Higashide warned them to stop. He tried to appeal to the internees' sense of obligation to behave in a more civilized manner as representatives of Japanese society. From that moment onward, the internees at Camp Kenedy deemed Higashide as pro-American. His unpopularity, however, did not last long, as the INS transferred him to Crystal City.

On July 2, 1943, Higashide reunited with his family at Crystal City, which offered its residents a reasonably normal life. While material conditions varied, the camp generally provided adequate provisions to survive, from the "cradle to [the] grave," as Higashide put it.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ Miyake, "Forsaken and Forgotten," 173.

¹¹⁸ Gardiner, *Pawns in a Triangle of Hate*, 59.

¹¹⁹ Higashide, *Adios to Tears*, 158.

¹²⁰ Higashide, *Adios to Tears*, 167.

Like Santo Tomás, the internees at Crystal City participated in a self-governing association, composed of an elected general director and administrative officers. Children attended one of three school systems—English, Japanese, or German—and interest groups were formed to promote Japanese activities, such as tea ceremonies, flower arranging, and judo.¹²¹ Higashide marveled at the camp's wealth and resources. The internees at Crystal City also had access to the news, and by 1945, Higashide believed that “anyone with clear eyes could see Japan's impending defeat.”¹²² Nonetheless, a faction at the camp persisted in doubting American victory. Confident in the invincibility of Japan's Imperial Army, this group denounced all news reports as propaganda.¹²³ Higashide and his family were still interned in Crystal City when they learned of Japan's final defeat.¹²⁴ Due to the national piety of the pro-Japanese faction, many of them gladly went back to Japan in November and December of 1945. As Higashide explained:

“They had received a thorough indoctrination in militaristic ideology in Japan and had been confined to a closed-off Japanese community in Peru...They rejected advice from parents and words of persuasion from their children and simply returned to Japan. There were a number of cases where parents and children were separated by differing beliefs. They, more than others, became true victims of the war.”¹²⁵

Like Higashide's family, Art Shibayama's family mostly managed to remain together through deportation.

Shibayama's grandfather, a naturalized Peruvian citizen, was one of the first Japanese to be interned by the U.S. and “repatriated” to Japan. Although the U.S. government used the word “repatriation” when sending Japanese Peruvians to Japan, the term did not fit the situation. For Japanese Peruvians who did not hold Japanese citizenship, “repatriation” should have referred to

¹²¹ Higashide, *Adios to Tears*, 170.

¹²² Higashide, *Adios to Tears*, 172.

¹²³ Higashide, *Adios to Tears*, 172.

¹²⁴ Higashide, *Adios to Tears*, 173.

¹²⁵ Higashide, *Adios to Tears*, 173.

their return to Peru. For Japanese Peruvians who had never been to Japan, the voyage was not at all a return, but rather a first-time visit. Unfortunately, Shibayama never saw his grandfather again. Shibayama's family spent nearly two years at Crystal City's internment camp. Shibayama, only thirteen-years-old then, recalled how his parents tried to keep their lives as normal as possible. They never talked about protest or resistance, and whenever they addressed the drudgery of camp life, they tended to say, "[T]here's nothing you can do about it...[I]t's just one of those things."¹²⁶ The Shibayamas remained in Crystal City until 1946, two years before the camp officially closed.

As the camps began to close, hundreds of internees—including the Higashides and Shibayamas—fought deportation with the help of Wayne Collins, a fiery civil rights attorney from Sacramento, California. Ultimately, Collins prevailed in federal court and secured an agreement with the DOJ, allowing Japanese Peruvians to remain in the country on the condition that they obtain employment. The Higashides and Shibayamas found work at a vegetable processing plant in Cumberland County, New Jersey. There, employees worked twelve-hour shifts for less than \$3.00 a day.¹²⁷ Higashide, a previously successful merchant, found it difficult to support his family of eight on the low wages he earned as an agricultural worker. He began to wonder, "[H]ow did the U.S. government intend to compensate us [the Japanese Peruvians] for our incalculable spiritual and material losses? How did it intend to make clear its responsibility for taking such unjust and unreasonable actions?"¹²⁸ With no formal documentation of their entry into the United States, the Higashides were essentially stateless. In 1952, Peru refused to readmit Japanese Peruvian deportees. That same year, American immigration laws denied them

¹²⁶ Art Shibayama, *Hidden Internment: The Art Shibayama Story*, dir. Casey Peek, Progressive Films, 2003, YouTube, 00:14:10-00:16:34.

¹²⁷ Newman, "Sojourners, Spies and Citizens," 82-83.

¹²⁸ Higashide, *Adios to Tears*, 179.

citizenship on the grounds of illegal entry. It took an act of Congress to recognize the legality of Japanese Peruvians' entry into the United States. In 1954, "illegal entrants" from Central and South America were officially given entry visas.¹²⁹ This freed Higashide and his family from the lingering fear of deportation. After more than ten years of detention and hardship, the Higashides became American citizens on August 25, 1958. While reciting the oaths of allegiance at the Immigration and Naturalization Office in Chicago, Higashide became emotional. He recalled, "The citizenship test had been only a minor obstacle, but as I looked back at the long and difficult road we had traveled to be able to take that test, I was struck with deep emotions, and I could not prevent tears from misting my eyes."¹³⁰ Although not absolute justice, the ability to gain American citizenship ended the Higashides' period of indefinite uncertainty.

Whether under American or Japanese jurisdiction, internees struggled to live in confinement. In January 1942, the Japanese rounded up American civilians in the Philippines for internment. Twenty days later, the U.S. State Department agreed to take Japanese Peruvians hostage for the purpose of facilitating American repatriation. The U.S. internment of Japanese Peruvians aided the return of more than 3,000 American citizens—albeit, at the human cost of holding more than 1,000 Japanese Peruvians without charge. Blocked by Peru and disinclined to return to war-torn Japan, many Japanese Peruvians after the war were declared undocumented in the United States. However, inspired by those who came before them, Japanese Peruvians followed the time-honored American tradition of taking the U.S. government to court.

Conclusion

Former internees, including Higashide and Shibayama, expressed their profound disappointment with the United States—a self-described city upon a hill. More so than other

¹²⁹ Higashide, *Adios to Tears*, 223.

¹³⁰ Higashide, *Adios to Tears*, 224.

nations, Higashide expected the United States to consistently protect human rights. He felt betrayed, however, by the U.S. Constitution and its inability to prevent wartime internment. Likewise, Shibayama described his battle for justice as “a slap in the face.”¹³¹ The Civil Liberties Act of 1988 provided \$20,000 in redress to Japanese Americans interned during World War II. While a triumph for Japanese American internees, the act excluded Japanese Latin Americans. Only those who were U.S. citizens or permanent residents during the war were entitled to formal apologies and monetary compensation. In response, Shibayama joined other surviving Japanese Peruvians in a class action lawsuit against the U.S. government. Under the settlement reached in 1998, the court in *Mochizuki v. United States* (1998) ordered the DOJ to make reparations to the Japanese Peruvians by means of an apology and payment of \$5,000 each.¹³² But because the government’s offer fell short of granting Japanese Peruvians reparations equal to that awarded to Japanese Americans, Shibayama refused the offer and turned to international law to campaign for equitable redress.¹³³

The U.S. internment of Japanese Peruvians deserves particular attention. It shows that while anti-Asian sentiment contributed to both American and Peruvian actions, the most pressing motivation was to facilitate the exchange of hostages for the purpose of protecting American civilians—regardless of the cost to innocent outsiders. In contrast, the Peruvian government had their own reasons for cooperating with the U.S. government in its deportation program. By the time of World War II, Japanese industry presented an apparent threat to Peruvian opportunity. To maintain popularity and reduce civil unrest, Peru’s President Manuel Prado cooperated with American officials and expelled as many Japanese as possible, regardless of their actual

¹³¹ Newton, “Sojourners, Spies and Citizens,” 92.

¹³² *Mochizuki v. United States*, 41 Fed. CL. 54 (1998).

¹³³ IACHR, Report No. 26/20, Case 12.545, Merits (PUBLICATION), Isamu “Art” Carlos Shibayama et al. v. United States, April 22, 2019.

citizenship. The motivations behind internment, however, differed from person to person, entity to entity. Before America entered the war, the Special Division sought to increase hemispheric security by means of Japanese Peruvian internment. As the war went on, other reasons emerged in support for their internment. After he received reports about the disturbing treatment of American internees at the hands of Japanese in the Philippines, General MacArthur expressed his grievances to the U.S. War Department. From there, the United States responded in part to the actions taken by the Japanese, interning and exchanging Japanese Peruvians for interned American civilians. Despite the breadth of literature on American internment in the Philippines, not much is known about the individual experiences of interned Japanese Peruvians in the United States. However, the eyewitness accounts of Yoshitaro Amano, Seiichi Higashide, and Art Shibayama offer valuable insight into the differing conditions of camp life. Yet, even in the best of conditions, it stands to reason that cooperating countries deprived Japanese Peruvians of their rights.

Rather than assess each person's guilt on a case-by-case basis, captors of Japanese Latin Americans viewed the internees as commodities suitable for human trade. Interned Japanese Peruvians were denied due process and equal protection as a consequence of total war. In that time of conflict, the government's primary function was to maintain order first and the law second. James Rowe, Assistant to Attorney General Biddle, admitted as much: "[T]he first requirement of the government was order. Law comes *after* order."¹³⁴ The internment of Japanese Peruvians should not be divorced from the rest of U.S. history. Like Allied victory, the United States paid a shocking price for the freedom of their interned citizens in the Far East.¹³⁵

¹³⁴ James Rowe, interviewed by Miriam Feingold, December 20, 1972, Earl Warren Oral History Project, University of California, Berkeley, (October 17, 2005), 38.

¹³⁵ William Hitchcock, *The Bitter Road to Freedom: A New History of the Liberation of Europe* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2008), 3.

To facilitate the return of more than 3,000 American civilians, the U.S. government turned the Japanese Peruvians into innocent casualties of war—a course at odds with a nation premised on liberty and justice for all.

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