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# Race, Gender, and Citizenship: The Removal of Japanese and Japanese Mexicans from the United States/Mexico Borderlands

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RACE, GENDER, AND CITIZENSHIP:  
THE REMOVAL OF JAPANESE AND JAPANESE MEXICANS  
FROM THE UNITED STATES/MEXICO BORDERLANDS DURING WORLD WAR II

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THE REMOVAL OF JAPANESE AND JAPANESE MEXICANS  
FROM THE UNITED STATES/MEXICO BORDERLANDS DURING WORLD WAR II

By

SELFA ALEJANDRA CHEW-SMITHART, M.A., M.F.A.

DISSERTATION

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the uprooting of the Japanese Mexican community from the United States/Mexico borderlands region during World War II. I argue that the development of international relations and the global organization of the economy directly informed the management of Japanese immigrants and their descendants in the United States borderlands region. In compliance with the United States' request to control Japanese Mexicans, President Manuel Ávila Camacho ordered the dislocation of the entire Japanese Mexican community and approved the creation of concentration camps and zones of confinement. Under this order, a new pro-American nationalism developed, which scripted Japanese Mexicans as an internal racial enemy during World War II.

In spite of the broad resistance presented by the communities of which they were valued members, Japanese Mexicans lost their freedom, property, and lives. The number of affected persons during the Second Great War extended beyond the number of first generation Japanese immigrants "handled" by the Mexican government during this period. The entire multiethnic social fabric of the borderlands was reconfigured in the absence of Japanese Mexicans during the war.

This research endeavor raises several questions relative to race, gender, and citizenship status in the United States/Mexico borderlands. This dissertation makes an important contribution to the historiography of the United States-Mexico Borderlands, Mexican history, American history, the history of World War II, and Asian American History.

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## INTRODUCTION

This dissertation began as research into “absences” in historical memory. My initial intention was to write a paper on the Chinese Community and the absence of Chinese women in some towns of the borderlands during the last decade of the twentieth century. While reading El Paso’s newspapers in search of images or texts discussing the presence of Chinese men and women, I stumbled upon an article describing a military search of several homes in Cd. Juárez on March 15, 1942. I was stunned to learn that, against the principles of sovereignty I learned during my elementary school years, a group of United States soldiers had entered Mexican territory to arrest persons of Japanese descent, and that the American Consul had supervised the search.<sup>1</sup> My surprise grew when I did not recognize the Japanese surnames of the arrested persons listed in the article. My family’s home was in downtown Cd. Juárez near the addresses cited and also in proximity to the house my father had lived in when a child. Because we were close friends with our neighbors, whom we considered our extended family, a series of questions haunted me: Why did I not know any relatives of the men arrested in 1942? Why did I not attend school with their grandchildren? Why had my father not mentioned having Japanese friends during his childhood years in what was then a small city where practically everyone knew one another? I initiated my inquiry into the missing Japanese Mexicans families in Cd. Juárez. My research has directed me toward focusing on larger questions related to Japanese experiences along the Mexico/United States borderlands, as well as tracing the history of their displacement during World War II.

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<sup>1</sup> Sovereignty principles during my generation were related to self-determination and independence; or the right of the inhabitants of a country to decide how to rule their nation without the interference of other nations. Territoriality was, thus, very important, as the French and the United States armies had entered Mexico, showing their power against the desires of the Mexican government and population.

The uprooting of persons of Japanese descent during World War II occurred throughout the American continent with the direct intervention of the United States Department of State, the United States Army, and the Federal Bureau of Intelligence, all institutions employing their power beyond the borders of the United States. As historian P. Scott Corbett reported in his research on the exchange of civilians between the United States and Japan, approximately 2,188 persons of Japanese ancestry were deported from several Latin American countries to be interned in American concentration camps. According to Corbett, the United States Department of State “essentially offered South American countries the option of eliminating their Japanese minority by sending them to the United States.” The willingness of Latin American governments to subject their citizens and residents of Japanese descent to the control of the United States ensured a firm collaboration with the United States. It also allowed for the direct intervention of American police and military forces in the internal affairs of the Latin American Republics.<sup>2</sup>

Initially, the United States government ordered the eviction of only Latin American men from their countries of birth or residence, but in 1943 the United States Department of State implemented a “family reunification” program, transporting civilian relatives of concentration camps residents from Latin American countries to the United States.<sup>3</sup> Although the United States did not request from the Mexican government the internment of Japanese Mexicans in American

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<sup>2</sup> P. Scott Corbett, *Quiet Passages: The Exchange of Civilians between the United States and Japan During the Second World War* (Kent, Ohio, and London: The Kent State University Press, 1987), 142.

<sup>3</sup> After World War II, Latin American Japanese interned in United States concentration camps were excluded from a legal existence in the United States because of immigration laws of the period prohibited the entrance of persons of Asian origin, and because they had not been granted a visa when they were removed from their countries to be interned in concentration camps in the United States. Thus, according to the United States Department of State, Latin American Japanese abducted had committed a crime when they stepped into the United States forced by American government officials. *Ibid.*, 139-166.

concentration camps, the United States and Mexican governments decided to evacuate all Japanese Mexican communities from the United States/Mexico borderlands.<sup>4</sup>

The uprooting of Japanese Mexicans began in January 1942, disrupting the lives of the residents of the Mexican northern border region. Rodolfo Nakamura, a nine-year old child at the time, explained in an interview that he was traumatized by witnessing the mass eviction of Japanese from Palau, Coahuila. Nakamura remembered that “just a little after my mom died, they suddenly spread the news. One Friday they started saying that all Japanese were going to be picked up. (...) You could hear the painful weeping everywhere.” The Mexican government ordered Rodolfo Nakamura’s father to leave his town immediately, which orphaned the child. Nakamura remembered Palau’s train depot was crowded “since very early in the morning because there were too many (Japanese Mexicans) leaving,” but separation of families was only one of the damaging effects of the relocation program.<sup>5</sup> They also suffered the loss of property, employment, freedom, health, and life itself as a result of their eviction from the borderlands and coastal zones of Mexico.

The history of the uprooting of the Japanese Mexican community during World War II not only pertains to those persons who were the direct target of the relocation program. Japanese Mexicans were members of larger communities and were also parents, children, neighbors, partners, and friends of other Mexicans. Relatives and acquaintances of Japanese Mexicans often protested the relocation program and defended the constitutional rights of Japanese Mexicans and their children to remain in their communities. Thus, the history of the Japanese Mexicans during World War II is also the history of the communities who reacted to

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>5</sup> Notes taken during interview with Rodolfo Nakamura in Mexico City, July 25, 2006.

the relocation program as well as the history of the nation state uprooting a group placed in the margins of society.

Although the displacement of Japanese Mexicans and the suspension of their civil rights took effect in the name of national security, the relocation program was a racist project: it demanded the exclusive eviction of persons who were racially defined as Japanese, regardless of their nationality. In addition, the Mexican government evicted several German and Italian men from the borderlands, but on a personal basis, not as an ethnic or racialized group. The analysis of the relocation program thus brings to the forefront the mechanisms of power that operate against racialized groups in modern societies.

Philosopher Giorgio Agamben argues that suspension of human rights could not take place without a legal framework allowing for modern states to function dictatorially in times of political and economical crisis. Every mechanism to ensure the application of democratic principles, such as the separation of powers or habeas corpus, will fail when the head of the state holds absolute power over an entire population in a state of emergency. Such a process has become a pattern of modern “democratic” states to sustain themselves by disrupting or suspending their legal framework.<sup>6</sup>

Among examples of cancellations of civil rights and displacement in modern states are the internment of Native Americans in reservations, the internment of Jews and Gypsies in death camps, the internment of Japanese Americans in detention centers, the expulsion of persons of Mexican descent from the United States, and the detention of prisoners in Guantanamo. In each instance, nation states have targeted racialized groups and created a sudden, violent displacement

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<sup>6</sup> See Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1998); Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

of human beings from their original places of residence, justifying the loss of human rights for certain populations as responses to national emergencies.<sup>7</sup>

The intent of this dissertation is to recover the memory of the Japanese Mexican community from the perspective of the uprooted human beings whom the Mexican government forced to abandon their homes in 1942. This approach allows us a reinterpretation of the relocation program in which the relationship between racism and state power in “times of crisis” explains the vulnerable position of the Japanese Mexican community.

Because the Mexican government publicly explained the relocation program as an unbiased and benign form of control, and because the direct victims of the program have been silent, it is necessary to write the history of the relocation program from the perspective of the Japanese Mexicans who were uprooted during World War II. There is sufficient evidence in the files of the Ministry of the Interior to prove that the Mexican and the United States governments damaged Japanese Mexican individuals and families, undermining the basic tenets of democracy with the suspension of their civil rights. Moreover, Japanese Mexicans experienced the effects of the relocation program according to their gender and class.

The memories of Doctor Shoshin Murakami reflect what he perceived as a safe and free environment during World War II. In the webpage titled “Migraciones de Japoneses a México,” the Mexican Japanese Association (main cultural institution of the Japanese Mexican community) presents the following quote by Dr. Murakami:

[...] Our parents had the prettiest prison: the entire City of Mexico was their prison; they were free to walk, they could eat everything they wanted, what they could buy and the people of Mexico and the government of Mexico never hurt them.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> See Agamben, *Homo Sacer*; Agamben, *State of Exception*.

<sup>8</sup> My translation. Asociación México Japonesa A.C., "Las Migraciones De Japoneses a México" [http://www.kaikan.com.mx/kaikan/aportaciones\\_Migraciones.php?id=302](http://www.kaikan.com.mx/kaikan/aportaciones_Migraciones.php?id=302) (accessed March 20, 2010). The

Despite this memory of life in Mexico City, Dr. Murakami's narrative of the relocation program differs greatly from the personal stories of the men and women I interviewed in the course of my research. They reported their uprooting as a traumatic, disastrous event in their lives. Furthermore, most files in the Ministry of the Interior contain information on the restrictions and hardships experienced by Japanese Mexican individuals and families during World War II.<sup>9</sup> The results of this research do not refute, however, the validity of Dr. Murakami's memories or those of any other Japanese Mexican person shielded from the harshness of deracination during wartime. On the contrary, this dissertation acknowledges heterogeneity and interstices in the application of the displacement program. Because silenced pain and trauma have delayed the narration of the Japanese Mexican experience, this research attempts to unearth different voices of Japanese Mexicans who have not had a place in the official history. I hope this narrative helps heal the wounds of racism and other forms of oppression inflicted during World War II.

## **Theory and Methodology**

While one can find a plethora of significant books and essays on topics pertaining to the plight of people of Japanese descent in the Americas, there is scant research on the subject specifically exploring the question using borderlands history and its paradigms. This dissertation attempts to provide a cogent analysis of citizenship, race relations, culture, gender, and class related to the uprooting of Japanese Mexicans from the United States/Mexico borderlands.

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Asociación México Japonesa was formed in 1957; however, it is the successor of the Comité Japonés de Ayuda Mutua was created in 1942. This organization will be described in detail in Chapter 5.

<sup>9</sup> The Mexican government has kept this information in the archives of the department in charge of the control Japanese Mexicans, Dirección de Investigación Política y Social (DIPS) whose records are identified in this dissertation under the letters IPS.

In the study of interlocking relations of power, this dissertation borrows the definition of race proposed by Michael Omi and Howard Winant's *Racial Formations in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1980s*.<sup>10</sup> According to Omi and Winant, "the meaning of race is defined and contested throughout society, in both collective action and personal practice." Race is a socially defined and unstable definition which is constantly "formed, transformed, destroyed and re-formed."<sup>11</sup> The idea of a Japanese race in Mexico and in the United States was, thus, not a fixed list of physical and moral attributes, but a series of perceptions which changed in every community and period.

Ignoring race as a social organizing principle contributes to the false idea that assaults on the human rights of communities of color are locally contained and sporadic events of social injustice. Thus, this research examines the relocation program of 1942 as a racial project that was directed against residents on the national periphery, already subjected to continuous racial oppression.<sup>12</sup> Such marginalization is possible in self-declared democratic nations because they are imagined communities, argues social theorist Benedict Anderson. The definition of nations demands an agreement on what characteristics the members of those communities must have, on who belongs and who is excluded from the nation. Nations then set the borders which contain not only the territory in which the imagined community establishes itself, but also the social processes and privileges the nation claims for itself.<sup>13</sup>

Coexisting national systems of power in the United States/Mexico borderlands make necessary the inclusion of categories of analysis on which my theoretical frame and focus are

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<sup>10</sup> See Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1980s* (New York: Routledge, 1986).

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 61-62.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>13</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1993).

based. This theoretical frame/focus is informed by several critical thinkers and major borderland historians who explore issues of race, gender, and class.<sup>14</sup> Without the incorporation of a borderlands perspective, it is difficult to address properly the many contradictions posed by the internment program and the “democratic principles” on which the intervention of the United States in other nations’ affairs during World War II was predicated, especially in the Americas.

The mere inclusion of international processes and events, notwithstanding military agreements and hemispheric conventions, will not suffice to unravel the issues related to the origins and effects of the incarceration of thousands of ethnic Japanese in the United States and Mexico and their forced migration from Latin America to the United States during World War II. The “Borderlands as Metaphor” concept, identified by historian Ramón Gutiérrez and exemplified in the work of theorist Gloria E. Anzaldúa, is an exploration of borderlands hybrid, heterogeneous experiences and provides elements to evaluate the importance of the Japanese Mexican community in borderlands social formations before and during World War II.<sup>15</sup>

The existence of multicultural, multiracial, and non-heterosexual persons in the borderland regions challenges the possibility of enforcing permanent racial, sexual, and cultural boundaries. Anzaldúa brings a feminist, queer perspective to the study of the borderlands which reflects upon the constant disjunctives that a mestiza confronts and resolves on a daily basis. Despite the degree of agency that ethnic Mexican women have in the creation of their images and their sexual and cultural practices, those dichotomies imposed over the bodies of mestizas in

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<sup>14</sup> The very first dissertation in the Department of History completed by Dr. Julia Schiavone Camacho is an excellent study that lays a theoretical framework for border studies and Chinese I feel it is not necessary to repeat; however, it is important that I extract from it the theories governing and illuminating the subject matter on which I have embarked. I am identifying the major theorists for my purposes.

<sup>15</sup> Ramón A. Gutiérrez, "Borderlands," in *Encyclopedia of American Cultural and Intellectual History* ed. Mary Kupiec Cayton (New York: 2001).

terms of gender, race and sexuality are painful and costly. The border, concludes Anzaldúa, is a scar that mestizas heal through their creation and renovation of a multicultural world.<sup>16</sup>

The notion of mestizaje, particularly from Anzaldúa's perspective and seen both as a racial and cultural merging, merits a deep examination in view of the presence of Asian immigrants in Mexico. While post-revolutionary rhetoric in Mexico claimed racial mixture as a positive aspect of the Mexican population, underlying the concept of "raza cósmica," as introduced by philosopher José Vasconcelos, is the idea that European elements are vital to the development of an improved race.<sup>17</sup> Since Mexicans did not find this homogenizing model in the Asian Mexican community, Japanese Mexicans, as other persons of Asian descent, have been subjected to the generalized idea that they are permanently alien to the Mexican culture and "race" and not Mexican mestizos.

During the period preceding World War II, children of Asian immigrants in Mexico, particularly those whose mothers were Mexican, represented another kind of mestizaje. This hybridism demanded the reorganization of the "us" and "them" and introduced new social tensions and possibilities in the dynamics of racial relations in the borderlands. Thus, Japanese Mexicans in this area created hybrid forms of cultural identification that challenged hegemonic ideas of nationality, citizenship, and mestizaje. Moreover, the social fabric borderlanders of Japanese descent wove across borders further helped them to soften the social and political limits dividing racialized communities in the United States/Mexico borderlands region.

Although the United States national boundaries were daily and harsh reminders of the limits to their freedom of mobility, Japanese Mexicans in the borderlands had established themselves as denizens on the Mexican side of the border under a less restrictive racial system,

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<sup>16</sup> Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera* (San Francisco: spinsters/aunt lute, 1987).

<sup>17</sup> José Vasconcelos and Didier Tisdell Jaén, *La Raza Cósmica* (The Johns Hopkins University Press: 1997).

before World War II. Their uprooting interrupted the creation of cultural and social spaces in which Japanese Mexicans were negotiating their inclusion in metaphoric but also real borderlands.

According to historian Yolanda Chávez Leyva, racial hierarchies and social exclusions have created historical trauma among ethnic Mexicans and Native Americans. Since silence prolongs the pain of members of marginalized communities, I intend with this manuscript to generate long overdue conversations on the effects of displacement on individuals of Japanese descent in the borderlands. It is necessary to promote the healing of victims of racism through the analysis of historic events separating families and generations in the borderlands. Because historians have the potential to reestablish a sense of continuity that validates and strengthens marginalized communities through the construction of their memories, it is the aim of this dissertation to reassert the importance of Japanese Mexicans in the formation of culturally rich borderland communities. Ultimately, this dissertation is a recognition of their resilience and their ability to survive uprooting and oppression.<sup>18</sup>

The research of historian Erika Lee has been instrumental in my evaluation of the relocation program as pivotal in the process of militarizing the borderlands. Lee recently argued that the exclusion of Chinese transformed the United States into a gatekeeping nation. The undesirability of racially defined immigrants evolved into the criminalization of Chinese immigration and the subsequent status of undocumented immigrants as “illegal aliens.” If the prohibition of Chinese immigration in 1882 justified the patrolling of the borderlands in search of undocumented Chinese from 1904, as Lee argues, the use of the army in the control of Japanese immigrants and their descendants contributed to the acceptance of military power over

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<sup>18</sup> Yolanda Chávez Leyva, "There Is Great Good in Returning: A Testimonio from the Borderlands," *Frontiers - A Journal of Women's Studies* 24, no. 2/3 (2003).

certain groups of civilians.<sup>19</sup> This is one effect of the relocation program during World War II largely overlooked in the examination of the internment of ethnic Japanese and one that will emerge in the course of the present narrative.<sup>20</sup>

The review of documents related to the relocation program in Mexico has been a possibility for several decades; I have reviewed more than 1,700 files in the Departamento de Investigación Política y Social (DIPS) archives containing information on Japanese Mexican individuals relocated during World War II. Yet, the potential to revise official accounts has not been fully realized. Although a member of the Asian Mexican community, I acknowledge my own subjectivity in order to ponder the effects of the relocation program in borderlands, national, and world history. I have been able to establish communication with Japanese Mexican victims of the relocation program because my own history as a person of Chinese descent is intertwined with forms of oppression similarly affecting Japanese Mexicans of all genders and generations. Nevertheless, the limits to my knowledge of the Japanese Mexican community include my unfamiliarity with the Japanese language and limited knowledge of Japanese culture. Like all historical accounts, mine is a partial narrative that demands further studies from other perspectives and subjectivities. And in spite of these limits, through acceptance of the subjectivity that is implicit in the writing of history, I have looked through “another ‘I/eye’, the ‘I’ which was often denied in the writing of history; where subjectivity was once unacceptable, yet inevitable,” following the steps of historian Emma Pérez and other scholars of color.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> The United States government created the Border Patrol in 1915 to arrest undocumented Chinese immigrants.

<sup>20</sup> Erika Lee, *At America's Gates. Chinese Immigration During the Exclusion Era, 1882-1943* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

<sup>21</sup> Emma Pérez, *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999).

## Sources

This dissertation rests largely on archival documentation. In order to cover the gap left by previous historic narratives of the relocation program, I conducted my research mainly in Mexico City at the Archivo General de la Nación. This dissertation relies mainly on documents filed in the Dirección General de Investigación Política y Social Archives, and the records pertaining to this department are listed as IPS, following the nomenclature used in the same Archivo General de la Nación.

President Ávila Camacho created the Departamento de Investigación Política y Social (IPS) in 1942 to operate under the supervision of the Ministry of the Interior. This new department was responsible for the control of Japanese populations residing in Mexico during WWII. The IPS archives contain correspondence with the President of Mexico, the Ministry of the Interior, and members of the political secret police units which formed part of the Ministry of the Interior. It also contains letters signed by military officers, governors, and United States diplomats. These archives are a source of personal narratives from many sites of the relocation program: ministers, congressmen, policemen and women, Japanese Mexican men and women, and other voices that emerged to provide a complex view of the Japanese Mexican community during the first forty years of the twentieth century and, more specifically, the critical period between 1942-1945. Documentation in the same file, however, is fragmented and it requires a great effort to reconstruct the lives of the victims of the relocation program. Some Japanese immigrants did not know how to speak or write Spanish. Their voices, therefore, are not recorded in the IPS files. Yet, we can still find direct testimonies from Japanese Mexican men and women who wrote letters, appeals, or other documents during the relocation program.

I also conducted research at the National Archives and Records Administration repositories in Washington, D. C. I searched for documents related to the internment of Latin

American residents of Japanese origin in relocation camps while under the custody of the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service. Records of their arrival to the United States, entrance permits, and related court hearings were helpful in understanding the process of their uprooting. Their arrival on American soil, their subsequent interment in concentration camps, and their deportation to Japan followed protocols that contradict democratic principles, but were still “legal.”

Newspaper publications in the United States and Mexico were an excellent source of information and the editorials provided a window into both local and national social aspects of the program. Some of these newspapers are *El Paso Times*, the *El Paso Herald Times*, the *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, the *Diario de los Debates de la Cámara de Diputados del Congreso de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos*, and the *American Time* magazine. These sources allowed me to identify popular notions that existed in Mexico and the United States with regards to the Japanese relocation program in Latin America.

Interviews with eleven members of the Japanese Mexican community who were affected by the relocation program were crucial in understanding the psychological and economic damages that the Mexican government inflicted upon all persons of Japanese descent, not officially acknowledged as of today. Fidelia Takaki de Noriega, Eva Watanabe Matsuo, Rodolfo Nakamura Ortiz, Minerva Yoshino Castro, Diamantina Nakamura Ortiz, Mahatma Tanahara Romero, Raúl Hiromoto Yoshino, Ángel Tanaka Gómez, Sidoni Otsuka de Tanaka, María Fujigaki Lechuga, gave me the opportunity to learn their personal stories and that of their families. In addition, I interviewed Hermilo Sánchez Cisneros and Alicia Bueno who had Japanese Mexican relatives and friends and also provided information on how the relocation program affected them or their relatives. I conducted these interviews between 2006 and 2010 in

Mexico City, Cd. Juárez, and Temixco. Most contacts were the result of the kind assistance I received from my extended family, Nakamura Villegas. Interviewees provided valuable insights into their personal stories and family histories. Because victims of the Japanese relocation program were sharing painful memories, I considered a recorder an intrusive and impersonal element that could limit information to be shared and I decided to take notes instead.

An especially insightful narrative was offered by the memories of Dr. Martín Otsuka, author of *Poems, Memories of My Home Town, and Chronicle of My Travels in Mexico*. Otsuka was arrested and incarcerated in the borderland state of Chihuahua in 1942. Published in 1987, this tome was written in Japanese for a Japanese audience once Dr. Otsuka returned to his birthplace. Dr. Otsuka translated some poems into the Spanish language, which gave me the opportunity to learn his views on the Mexican community and his account of his arrest, and incarceration during the relocation program.

Except where noted, I translated to English those interviews and documents produced originally in Spanish. When available, I mentioned the complete name of residents and citizens of Mexico once, and then I proceed to refer to them by their paternal last name. I replicated the ways in which newspapers named Mexican politicians. They avoided, for example, use of the second surname of presidents Lázaro Cárdenas and Porfirio Díaz; however, newspapers and official documents always included Manuel Ávila Camachos two surnames. The Ministry of the Interior records show different spelling of the surnames of Japanese Mexican men and women. When possible, I used that which Japanese Mexicans wrote in their official documents.

## Review of Literature

Social scientists and journalists in the United States have explored the relocation and internment of Japanese and Japanese Americans during World War II since the inception of the program. In this century, we find a sudden interest in the experiences of Issei and Nisei in concentration camps, resulting in many publications during the last two years alone which surpasses the number of texts dealing with this subject written in the past five decades.

Director of the War Relocation Authority Dillon Myer commissioned in 1942 twenty one anthropologists who travelled to the sites of confinement during World War II and used the internment camps as laboratories to study human behavior.<sup>22</sup> Among them was U.S. Navy Lieutenant Commander Alexander Leighton who published in 1945 *The Governing of Men*, a political science treatise based on his direct observations of the interactions of Japanese American internees.<sup>23</sup> In their reports, scientists in the camps discussed the psychological and sociological issues among the confined population in order to explain behaviors and assist the WRA administrators in their management and prevention of internee resistance against camp policies. Most researchers in this cohort portrayed the camps as generally harmonious social units, which invited ethnic Japanese to assimilate and become true Americans. In addition, photographers Ansel Adams and Dorothea Lange unwittingly supported with their images the

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<sup>22</sup> The War Relocation Authority was created in March, 1942 to administer ten concentration camps in the United States. It was responsible for more than one hundred million dollars in government property and confined 119,000 men, women, and children of which 64.9 were American born. In addition to WRA camps, the INS managed other type of facilities in which most internees were from outside of continental United States. Richard Drinnon, *Keeper of Concentration Camps: Dillon S. Myer and American Racism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 8-10.

<sup>23</sup> Robert Redfield, Edward Spicer, Weston LaBarre, Conrad Arensberg, Morris Opler, Marvin Opler, John Embree, Solon Kimball, and Alexander H. Leighton were some of the social scientists working within the camps. Peter T. Suzuki, "Anthropologists in the Wartime Camps for Japanese Americans. A Documentary Study," *Dialectic Anthropology* 6, no. 1 (1981). See also Orin Starn, "Engineering Internment: Anthropologists and the War Relocation Authority," *American Ethnologist* 13, no. 4 (1986).

WRA-hired scholars' view of the camp as the temporary residence of content Japanese Americans.<sup>24</sup>

Several researchers submitted their critical evaluations of the relocation program independently from the War Relocation Authority at the end of World War II. Most of them agreed that the detainment of Japanese Americans was inconsistent with a pattern of American democratic practices and principles. Their faith in the legal framework of the United States impeded many postwar historians from identifying the internment of Japanese Americans as another episode in the history of violence and economic exploitation against non-white populations. It would take several decades to approach the relocation program from the perspective of global capitalism and racial power to address the complicity of the legal state apparatus in the systematic exclusion and exploitation of people of color. In the meantime, the debate in the field of history centered on identifying the responsible parties for the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II.<sup>25</sup>

Political scientist Morton Grodzins concluded in *Americans Betrayed* (1949) that the confinement of Japanese Americans was the work of organized racist groups with economic interests in California, such as the Western Growers Protective Association, the Farm Bureau Federation, the American Legion, and the Native Sons of the Golden West. According to Grodzins, these groups had enough political leverage to pressure Western Defense Commander General John L. Dewitt to use his power to displace Japanese growers. Grodzins argued that the relocation program broke a tradition of democracy in the political system of the United States. Grodzins' interpretation of this period, however, fails to account for the effects of racism. From

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<sup>24</sup> Alexander H. Leighton, *The Governing of Men: General Principles and Recommendations Based on Experience at a Japanese Relocation Camp* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1945).

<sup>25</sup> Jacobus tenBroek, Edward N. Barnhart, and Floyd W. Matson, *Prejudice, War and the Constitution, Japanese American Evacuation and Resettlement*, vol. III (Berkeley: University of Los Angeles Press, 1954), 2.

the perspective of communities of color, the internment of ethnic Japanese fit into the systematic racial oppression that had been operating in the United States. Jim Crow still defined segregated life in the military, schools, places of employment and neighborhoods during World War II. Furthermore, throughout the subsequent decades, police brutality and lack of voting rights continued to support political disfranchisement of non-white minorities; Grodzins elected, nevertheless, to see the relocation program as an exception in a democratic social continuum.<sup>26</sup>

In the same vein, law scholars Jacobus tenBroek, Edward Barnhart, and Floyd Matson explained in 1954 that the relocation program was the result of the prejudice of high ranking officers of the United States Army and the Supreme Court's decision to sustain the legality of the internment of ethnic Japanese. These scholars argued that such ratification was against universal democratic principles and established a legal precedent that could apply to any citizen of the United States; thus, the relocation program was, in their view, an act against all-American liberties.<sup>27</sup>

In 1956, sociologists Leonard Broom and John I. Kitsuse advanced the conversation on the operation of concentration camps, addressing the psychological stress American Japanese families endured while interned. Broom and Kitsuse challenged previous narratives which described the internment camps as sites of Americanization of Japanese immigrants and their children. Broom and Kitsuse's study, *The Managed Casualty*, offers valuable information on the variances among and within families of Japanese origin. When the War Relocation Authority tested the loyalty of Japanese American internees, requiring answers to a series of questions

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<sup>26</sup> Morton Grodzins, *Americans Betrayed: Politics and the Japanese Evacuation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949); James H. Madison, *A Lynching in the Heartland: Race and Memory in America* (New York: Pallgrave MacMillan, 2003), 16, 135; Thomas J. Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2009), 30, 49, 65, 143, 177-180, 204.

<sup>27</sup> Jacobus tenBroek, Barnhart, and Matson, *Prejudice*.

supposed to establish their degree of American patriotism, 5,589 Japanese American internees lost their American citizenship by expressing their allegiance to Japan in their answers. The “loyalty” questionnaire determined their eligibility for relocation or deportation: when the internees proved their loyalty to the United States, they were eligible to remain in an internment camp administered by the War Relocation Authority. When Japanese Americans stated their allegiance to Japan, they remained under the control of the Immigration and Naturalization Service until their deportation. Broom and Kitsuse depicted internees as complex human beings who made difficult decisions which were not exactly related to their loyalty to the United States or Japan. These sociologists addressed peer pressure, confusion, instability, generational conflicts, and the desire to remain with their Japanese parents as factors shaping the behavior of internees at the detention centers.<sup>28</sup>

In 1969, journalists Audrie Girdner and Anne Loftis revived the view that the relocation program was an exceptional mistake born from prejudice and ignorance on the part of the United States’ populace.<sup>29</sup> Their work, *The Great Betrayal*, endorses the “model minority” myth which celebrates the achievements of Japanese Americans in spite of their oppression. Such perspective denies any profound impact suffered by Japanese Americans in the 1940s.<sup>30</sup>

Defending the internment of Japanese Americans, former Director of the War Relocation Authority Dillon Myer published *Uprooted Americans* in 1971. Myer claimed that the internment of Japanese Americans was in their best interest and a measure of protection against

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<sup>28</sup> Leonard Broom and John I. Kitsuse, *The Managed Casualty: The Japanese-American Family in World War II*, Publications on Culture and Society, vol. 6 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1956).

<sup>29</sup> Audrie Girdner and Anne Loftis, *The Great Betrayal: The Evacuation of the Japanese-Americans During World War II* (New York: McMillan, 1970).

<sup>30</sup> The Model Minority Myth affects all non-white communities as the achievements of few serve as a reference to judge the social status of the rest. In this model, most non-white persons are responsible for their own disfranchisement and they should follow the steps of successful Japanese Americans to improve their quality of life. The history of racial oppression is then erased.

extreme racist attacks. Japanese immigrants and their descendants were, in Myer's account, defenseless passive victims who had a positive experience at the WRA's camps. According to the WRA director, internees received the benefit of acculturation to the United States culture while interned so they could be better accepted in the United States at their exit from the camps.<sup>31</sup> In 1987, historian Richard Drinnon challenged Myer's claim in *Keeper of Concentration Camps: Dillon S. Myer and American Racism*. According to Drinnon, Myer was the product of his social training in American racism. Consequently, the WRA leader shared his ethnocentric views with most European Americans, but as a high ranking state official Myer had the power to inflict damage on two communities he saw in need of assimilation: Japanese internees and Native Americans. Myer undertook aggressive campaigns to annihilate their culture and their sense of community. Furthermore, Myer's violent disciplinary methods to control Japanese in the United States camps belied his claims that concentration camps were paradisiacal sites inhabited by passive creatures.<sup>32</sup>

In 1971, historian Roger Daniels saw the internment of the Japanese population in the United States as the product of systemic racism and economic interests. In *Concentration Camps USA*, Daniels placed final responsibility for the relocation program on Franklin D. Roosevelt, who signed Executive Order 9066 allowing the internment of persons of Japanese descent in concentration camps. Like Western Defense Commander General John L. DeWitt and other high ranking officials who were educated by every social institution to accept American racial hierarchies, President Roosevelt was not free from prejudice against persons of Asian origin. Daniels argues that the level of aggressiveness the American population exhibited against

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<sup>31</sup> Dillon S. Myer, *Uprooted Americans: The Japanese Americans and the War Relocation Authority During World War II* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1971).

<sup>32</sup> Drinnon, *Keeper of Concentration Camps*.

ethnic Japanese following the attack on Pearl Harbor did not demand the immediate protection of the Japanese community, or their punishment. Instead, the government itself organized official campaigns against Japanese persons through the search of Japanese homes which resulted in the arrest of several Japanese men. The mass media published the results of the searches as proof of the disloyalty of Japanese residents. Most objects seized were notebooks, cameras, radios and binoculars, common items found in non-Japanese households as well. In Daniels' view, President Roosevelt and other government officials could have contained racial prejudice but decided instead to spread it in order to justify the internment of Japanese immigrants and their children.<sup>33</sup>

In 1985, historian Donald E. Collins published an exhaustive analysis of the denationalization process in United States concentration camps through the "loyalty questionnaire." Among other consequences, responses to the WRA questionnaire would determine who could be deported to Japan. In *Native American Aliens*, Collins interrogated the constitutionality of the procedure to deprive American nationals of Japanese descent of their citizenship. Concurring with other researchers, Collins considered the internment "a mass probing and surveillance process which was almost certainly without parallel in American history." As a preamble to his description of the internment program, Collins stated that "Japanese immigrants had tended to settle" on the Pacific Coast without explaining that capitalists required their presence in the region as a cheap labor force. This scholar placed responsibility for their disfranchisement on the same Japanese immigrants reporting their "failure to disperse among the native population of the West Coast" and their creation of "unacculturated homes" in which Nisei were trained to "act in accordance with their cultural heritage." Thus,

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<sup>33</sup> Roger Daniels, *Concentration Camps USA: Japanese Americans and World War II* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1971).

Collins asserted that Nisei who renounced their United States citizenship did so out of obedience to parental desires or because they gave in to the pressure of their traditional Japanese networks.<sup>34</sup>

In 1991, historian Gary Y. Okihiro challenged Collin's findings. Okihiro placed the relocation program in the context of global organization of the economy as United States capitalists imported Asian workers while displacing Native Americans in Hawai'i. Okihiro viewed the internment of Japanese as a disciplinary measure and a backlash to the organization of labor in the sugar plantations. In *Cane Fires*, Okihiro argued that the planter plutocracy in association with the military sector in Hawai'i planned the confinement of Japanese laborers since the 1920s. Their objective was to keep the cost of labor down, claiming Japanese immigrants were agents of the Japanese Empire. In 1936, long before the attack on Pearl Harbor, President Franklin Roosevelt proposed the creation of internment camps for Japanese labor leaders. In 1942, thousands of Japanese immigrants and their descendants were either interned in Honolulu's camp or sent inland for their detention at Crystal City camp, in the state of Texas, under the custody of the Department of Justice. Their detention was, thus, not a result of World War II, but a planned punishment to contain labor demands.<sup>35</sup>

Most recent accounts of the relocation program, both in the form of memories and academic research, have continued to provide information on the operation of the camps.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Donald E. Collins, *Native American Aliens: Disloyalty and the Renunciation of Citizenship by Japanese Americans During World War II* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1985 ), 5.

<sup>35</sup> Gary Y. Okihiro, *Cane Fires: The Anti-Japanese Movement in Hawaii, 1865-1943* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991).

<sup>36</sup> Following a series of personal narratives which presented in first voice the impact the internment program had on Japanese individuals and families, Louis Fiset published a series of letters between Iwao Matsushita and Hanaye Tamura, husband and wife detained in different camps. See Louis Fiset, *Imprisoned Apart. The World War II Correspondence of an Issei Couple* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997); Lawson Fusao Inada, ed. *Only What We Could Carry: The Japanese American Internment Experience* (Berkeley: Heyday Books, 2000); Tetsuden Kashima, *Judgment without Trial: Japanese American Imprisonment During World War II* (Seattle:

Historian Mae Ngai refutes the idea that the mass incarceration of Japanese immigrants and their descendants was an exception in the history of the United States. She frames the internment program within the context of American territorial and economic expansion.<sup>37</sup>

According to Ngai, immigration and the status of immigrants in the United States are the result of the military and economic intervention of this nation in other countries. When American interests disrupt the economy of their countries, a large number of displaced workers immigrate to the metropolitan center of power: the United States. In spite of nationalist claims that immigrants are “proxies for foreign troops,” sojourners have historically “pursued not the political interest of states but individual and family improvement.” Arguing that persons of Japanese descent were a threat to national security, however, the government of the United States not only confined Japanese immigrants and their descendants in concentration camps, but also denationalized a number of their children. Ngai concurs with sociologists Broom and Kitsuse in stating that internees had complex personal reasons, not related to their loyalty to the United States or Japan, to renounce or to keep the United States citizenship.<sup>38</sup>

Mae Ngai’s approach to the internment and denationalization of Japanese immigrants and their descendants in the United States advances the dialogue on the interrelationship between race, class, human rights, and nation. By contrast, investigations of the impact of the relocation program in Latin American and Mexico remains thin. Several historians include briefly this episode in their appraisal of the history of the Japanese Diaspora in Latin America. Maria Elena Ota Mishima explored the uprooting of Japanese Mexicans during World War II in her research

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University of Washington Press, 2003); Mary Matsuda Gruenewald, *Looking Like the Enemy: My Story of Imprisonment in Japanese American Internment Camps* (Troutdale: NewSage Press, 2005); Greg Robinson, *By Order of the President: FDR and the Internment of Japanese Americans* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).

<sup>37</sup> Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004), 11.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 11, 169-201.

on the Japanese Mexican community in *Siete Migraciones Japonesas en México*, published in 1982;<sup>39</sup> Stephen Niblo analyzes the relocation program in the context of the new era of commercial trade between the United States and Mexico inaugurated in 1942 in *War, Diplomacy and Development*, and in *Mexico in the 1940s*. Niblo explores in part the Japanese Mexican experience in his analysis of the ways in which Mexico treated pro-Axis organizations and individuals during the same period.<sup>40</sup> Historians Daniel Masterson and Sayaka Funada Classen contributed to the understanding of the relocation program from a continental perspective in several chapters of their monograph titled *The Japanese in Latin America*.<sup>41</sup> *The Encyclopedia of Japanese Descendants in the Americas*, edited by Akemi Kikumura-Yano also represents a laudable effort in the documentation of the Japanese Diaspora, particularly because Latin American writers of Japanese descent voice the experiences of their families.<sup>42</sup>

Scholars researching the relocation of persons of Japanese descent from a hemispheric perspective have contributed to the understanding of the United States as a world power with the ability to impose questionable policies over other countries. Such historians have thrown light on the relationships between local elites and the United States that made possible the internment of thousands of Latin American Japanese in United States concentration camps. Because the United States had the intention of exchanging Japanese, German, and Italian Latin Americans during World War II for American citizens living in Japanese controlled territory, several United

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<sup>39</sup> María Elena Ota Mishima, *Siete Migraciones Japonesas En México, 1890-1978* (México: El Colegio de México, 1982).

<sup>40</sup> Stephen R. Niblo, *War, Diplomacy, and Development. The United States and Mexico 1938-1954* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 1995).

<sup>41</sup> Daniel M. Masterson and Sayaka Funada-Classen, *The Japanese in Latin America* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004).

<sup>42</sup> Akemi Kikumura-Yano, ed. *Encyclopedia of Japanese Descendants in the Americas: An Illustrated History* (Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 2002).

States agencies seized Latin American citizens, with the complicity of their governments, to use them as pawns during World War II.

Harvey Gardiner's *Pawns in a Triangle of Hate: The Peruvian Japanese and the United States* (1981); Scott Corbett's *Quiet Passages: The Exchange of Civilians Between the United States and Japan During the Second World War* (1987); and, Thomas Connell's *America's Japanese Hostages: the World War II Plan for a Japanese Free Latin America* (2002), remain the most exhaustive reports on the relocation program of Latin American citizens of Japanese descent.<sup>43</sup>

Harvey Gardiner denounced in *Pawns in a Triangle of Hate* the illegality of the transportation of Peruvian citizens who, he proves, were not a danger to the national security of the United States or Peru. According to Gardiner, racism and paranoia in Latin America and the United States caused the displacement and denationalization of thousands of Latin American Japanese.<sup>44</sup> Thomas Connell argues also that racism and wartime hysteria in the United States extended beyond national borders, affecting thousands of residents of Latin America who did not represent a danger to the defense of the hemisphere.<sup>45</sup> On his part, Scott Corbett studies the exchange of civilians between the United States and Japan. Corbett describes the role of the Special Division, a unit within the State Department in solving issues concerning Latin American citizens waiting for their exchange in internment camps. Ethical and legal conflicts in the handling of Latin American Japanese emerged, but Corbett provided evidence that several officials of the Special Unit attempted to provide the best care for Latin American internees to

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<sup>43</sup> Thomas Connell, *America's Japanese Hostages: The World War II Plan for a Japanese Free Latin America* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2002); Corbett, *Quiet Passages*; Harvis Gardiner, *Pawns in a Triangle of Hate. The Peruvian Japanese and the United States* (Seattle: University of Washington, 1981).

<sup>44</sup> Gardiner, *Pawns in a Triangle of Hate*.

<sup>45</sup> Connell, *America's Japanese Hostages*.

guarantee an equal treatment for American civilians under the control of the Japanese military forces.<sup>46</sup>

Although other scholars and sources inform my research, Elena Ota Mishima and Stephen Niblo's works are fundamental in the writing of the history of the relocation program. Mishima's monograph on the Japanese diaspora in Mexico provides detailed demographic information and periodizes the history of Japanese Mexicans according to the types of immigrants who entered the country. Niblo's study on the economic and diplomatic relations between the United States and Mexico during World War II informs my interpretation of the centrality of the Japanese relocation program in fostering a new era of amicable relations between Mexico and the United States in the face of war.<sup>47</sup>

It is correct to note that modern historians interested in researching the Second Great War have turned their efforts to the analysis of the social processes that took place in internment camps and other sites of captivity within the United States and in relationship to Japan, but scant consideration has been given to the hemispheric and international character of racial control or forced migration that originated with the United States' efforts to seize the property and bodies of ethnic Japanese in the larger Americas. Nowhere is this more evident than in the borderland regions, historically diverse and multicultural, where United States' directives and actions and the Mexican government's complicity led to the capture and removal of those of Japanese descent despite their previous condition, citizenry, and loyalty. War interests and national security trumped all other factors related to the Japanese and Japanese Mexicans in the U.S./Mexican borderland regions. The intent of this dissertation is to explore these issues,

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<sup>46</sup> Corbett, *Quiet Passages*.

<sup>47</sup> Stephen Niblo, *Mexico in the 1940s: Modernity, Politics, and Corruption* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources Books, 2000).

related to race, gender, and class, within the context of borderlands history, both geographical and theoretical, filling gaps in the study of the relocation program.

### **Description of Chapters**

Chapter One studies the formation of Japanese Mexican communities in the United States borderlands as the product of a transnational capitalist organization of economy, examining at the same time the policies and laws which shaped the lives of persons of Japanese origin in the Mexico/United States borderlands from 1882 to 1945.

Chapter Two examines the international factors that determined the removal of Japanese Mexicans from the Mexico/United States borderlands: the history of strained relations between Mexico and the United States culminating in the expropriation of the petroleum industry by President Lázaro Cárdenas; the ascent of Manuel Ávila Camacho to the presidency and his alliance with the United States in the construction of a new nationalism and racial relations; and, the creation of Japanese Mexicans as the internal enemy during World War II.

Chapter Three reviews the immediate effects of the relocation program on persons of Japanese descent living in the United States/Mexico borderlands. Among those effects were: family separation and economic destitution. However, Japanese Mexicans and their allies attempted to avoid relocation, searching for legal recourse to protect them from the presidential suspension of civil rights.

Chapter Four follows the relocation of the Gushiken, a Japanese Mexican family living in Cd. Juarez at the onset of World War II. It examines how the internment of Latin American Japanese in United States camps exemplifies the complexities of transnational societies. Each generation in this family had a different national or immigration status and was subjected to

various immigration laws which made difficult their staying together in Mexico or the United States during World War II. This chapter describes their separation, material losses, and the decisions the Gushikens had to take in order to keep their family together in the face of internment in a United States concentration camp and their eventual deportation to Japan.

Chapter Five describes the operation of Villa Aldama Camp, in the state of Chihuahua, the first concentration camp in Mexico during World War II. This chapter also discusses the role of the Comité Japonés de Ayuda Mutua (Japanese Committee of Mutual Assistance or CJAM) in the relocation program and the negotiations this organization made with the government of Mexico.

Chapter Six examines the experiences of Japanese Mexicans along the border both through a gender lens and through the inextricable intersections of class and race. Lack of official documentation regarding the uprooting of women during World War II makes difficult the reconstruction with exactitude of their histories and the patriarchal system under which the relocation program took place. From inchoate data, however, we are able to examine changes in gender roles and how they were modified during this acute crisis of relocation and internment.

Chapter Seven explores the origins of resistance to the relocation program and the ways in which Japanese Mexicans attempted to stay in their towns against their relocation orders. Their degree of success was affected by their racial classification, class, and gender as the Mexican state sought to control in particular working class Japanese men. Among the objectors to the relocation program, Sinaloa's Governor Rodolfo T. Loaiza refused to comply with federal orders and protected several Japanese Mexicans. This confrontation tested the relationship between the federal government and state power, and destabilized the chain of command in the political structure of Mexico.

Chapter Eight analyses several aspects of the camp operating in Temixco, Morelos which operated under the administration of the CJAM. It explores labor exploitation, gender relations, and the conflict resulting from revolutionary institutions in Mexico who claimed their right to own the land on which Temixco's concentration camp operated. This chapter examines the procedures to close this and other camps in the interior of Mexico.

The relocation program affected simultaneously different communities in various social and geographical spaces. Thus, the objective to render the complexity of local histories and their relation to a larger context makes necessary revisiting periods of time already dealt with in previous chapters in this dissertation

In studying the displacement of Japanese Mexicans during World War II, I have provided more information on the many-sided border experience and Borderlands History at a time in history when superpowers' militarism –from concentration camps to dropping of the atomic bomb – had grave psychological and physical consequences for those people of color who resided in the margins of modern nations.

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE FORMATION OF JAPANESE MEXICAN COMMUNITIES IN THE MEXICO/UNITED STATES BORDERLANDS BEFORE WORLD WAR II

The presence of Japanese immigrants in Mexico and the United States before World War II was the product of changes in the global economy and the expansion of capitalism. Japanese emigration was nonexistent from 1638 to 1865 when the Tokugawa dynasty considered it a capital crime. Only when Japan became engaged in the global economic marketplace, competing with European and American industries and their attendant capitalist and colonial model, did the nation lift emigration restrictions in 1865. Among Japanese immigrants to North America there were middle class intellectuals, students, and entrepreneurs; however, Japanese immigrants in the Mexico/United States borderlands at the end of the nineteenth century arrived primarily to supply the labor American companies required on both sides of the international border.<sup>1</sup>

American investors considered Asian immigrants easy to manage and a temporary, disposable labor force. The first groups of such Japanese immigrants in North America did not establish themselves in the borderlands initially. American companies with interests outside of the United States imported most Japanese as contract laborers to their Hawaiian and Mexican plantations. While Hawaiian sugar plantations started hiring Japanese men in 1865, it would be another forty two years before Japanese immigrants arrived in Mexico.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Eiichiro Azuma, *Between Two Empires: Race, History, and Transnationalism in Japanese America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 18-19; Yen Le Espiritu, *Asian American Women and Men*, ed. Judith Howard, Barbara Risman, and Joey Sprague, *The Gender Lens* (Walnut Creek: Sage Publications, 1997), 16-30.

<sup>2</sup> Gary Y. Okihiro, *Cane Fires: The Anti-Japanese Movement in Hawaii, 1865-1943* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), 16-20.

The international labor market was not entirely exploitative. Japanese men saw several advantages in migrating to work in the United States and in Mexico. The promise of earning higher wages and returning to Japan in three or four years with their savings was attractive, although low salaries made it almost impossible to fulfill their initial plans. Different working conditions, social expectations, and laws in Mexico and in the United States, would transform their lives significantly: their sexuality, growing families, mobility on the economic ladder, citizenship rights, and interracial relationships. In Mexico's borderland, Japanese immigrants found fewer legal restrictions, but not a life free from racism; anti-Asian attitudes targeted them and made them vulnerable. In the United States, their low social status was more evident and legally sanctioned.<sup>3</sup>

The first thirty four Japanese immigrants arrived in Chiapas, Mexico in 1897 to establish a coffee plantation. They had a colonizing mission linked to Japan's imperialist plans. Although the immigrants' personal plans and motivations differed from those of the Japanese state, Japanese officials expected this and other colonies on the American continent to be a prosperous extension of Japan, eventually contributing to the economy of the metropolis. As a show of their support for the colonists, the Japanese government created the Sociedad Colonizadora Japón-México to provide colonists with loans and land.<sup>4</sup>

Japanese and Mexican officials treated the pioneering Japanese sojourners with great respect. They referred to them as colonists, not as immigrants, and the Japanese government selected the members of the commercial adventure in Mexico according to their skills in

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<sup>3</sup> Espiritu, *Asian American Women and Men*, 16-30.

<sup>4</sup> The Sociedad signed a contract with the Mexican government to acquire 160,550 acres in Chiapas, at \$1.50 (pesos) per hectare in installments. Azuma, *Between Two Empires*, 18-20; Kiyoshi Karl Kawakami, *Japan in World Politics* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1919), 224; Daniel M. Masterson and Sayaka Funada-Classon, *The Japanese in Latin America* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 27.

agriculture. The newly arrived Japanese technicians, however, found it difficult to establish themselves in land that had not been cleared and or developed. After some failed attempts at producing coffee, the Sociedad Colonizadora Japón-México stopped financing the colonists' effort to establish a plantation in Chiapas. The colony lost all opportunities to recover their costs from its failed enterprise when the Japanese administrators suspended payment for the land which was then repossessed by the Mexican government. Disheartened, nine Japanese colonists returned to their country of origin.<sup>5</sup>

The twenty five Japanese men who remained in Mexico formed a second cooperative titled Compañía Japonesa Mexicana in 1901. Marriage to Mexican women and the resulting mestizaje of their children solidified their relationships with their receiving communities. The social services they provided for their communities also assisted their integration into Mexican local societies. In rural Mexico, where medical care or other government services were almost nonexistent, the cooperative provided free medicine, paid for the construction of bridges and funded schools.<sup>6</sup>

The characteristics of Japanese immigrants in Mexico would change in the following years. As the pioneers established themselves in the Mexico/Guatemala borderlands, other groups of Japanese men were travelling to the United States/Mexico border. The new cohorts of immigrants would receive different treatment; the Japanese and Mexican states would not be as interested in their welfare as they were in the Chiapas colonists because these subsequent waves

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<sup>5</sup> Azuma, *Between Two Empires*, 18-20; Kawakami, *Japan in World Politics*, 224; Masterson and Funada-Classen, *The Japanese in Latin America*, 27.

<sup>6</sup> In spite of their good relations with their host communities, the cooperative's relative prosperity was interrupted during the Mexican Revolution when several factions and individuals attacked Japanese immigrants' homes and property. The economic disruption of the period caused the cooperative to stop its operations, but its members continued residing in the area and were later joined by other immigrants. Kawakami, *Japan in World Politics*, 225-226; Akemi Kikumura-Yano, ed. *Encyclopedia of Japanese Descendants in the Americas: An Illustrated History* (Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 2002), 204.

of immigrants were contract laborers, belonging to an economic class that did not have important leverage in Mexico or Japan.

In the United/States borderlands, American companies had been already importing Chinese immigrants as contract laborers to work in the railroad, mining, and agricultural sectors since the 1840s and their treatment of the Japanese workers would not be different.<sup>7</sup> Chinese immigrants faced increasing restrictions to their integration into the mainstream society in the United States. Particularly in California, Chinese endured segregation, fines, taxes, and physical harm aimed to curtail their economic prosperity. When the United States passed the Immigration Act of 1882, prohibiting the entry of Chinese workers into the country, American industrialists were already hiring Japanese transmigrants from Hawaii, but started to import Japanese contract laborers to substitute, in part, for Chinese workers. Japanese contract laborers worked mainly in the agribusiness sector of California and would endure later the same racist systems Chinese confronted at their arrival in the United States.<sup>8</sup>

In Mexico, American investors dominated the Mexican industry and altered the demographic composition of northern Mexico with the introduction of Chinese, African American, and European American workers during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. Protected by dictator Porfirio Díaz, United States capitalists aggressively took over livestock, mining, timber and plantations in Mexico, displacing Mexican entrepreneurs or land owners. By the end of the nineteenth century, American landholders owned between 22 and 27

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<sup>7</sup> Roger Daniels, *Asian America: Chinese and Japanese in the United States Since 1850* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988), 107-110; Eithne Luibheid, *Entry Denied: Controlling Sexuality at the Border* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 56-58.

<sup>8</sup> Daniels, *Asian America*, 107-110; Luibheid, *Entry Denied*, 56-58. For a discussion on racial relations in the United States and their implications on the cultural and legal spheres see also Espiritu, *Asian American Women and Men*; Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996).

percent of the Mexican landholdings.<sup>9</sup> American mining companies, in particular, invested one hundred and twenty million dollars between 1902 and 1907, and channeled more than fifty percent of this capital to northern Mexico's mines. Like their counterparts in California, the next cohorts of Japanese immigrants arrived in Mexico's borderlands to supply some of the labor United States companies required during the Porfiriato.<sup>10</sup>

American capitalists and their British competitors in the Mexico/United States borderlands expected workers of color to have minimal needs to cover. Married employees would need adequate housing, schools for their children, and medical care for their families, increasing the costs of labor. Consequently, companies operating in Mexico imported single men from China and Japan.<sup>11</sup> A total of 11,000 Japanese immigrants entered Mexico between 1901 and 1907, 8,706 were contract laborers or imported workers who agreed to work for a fixed salary and number of years before seeking employment anywhere else.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> John Mason Hart, *Revolutionary Mexico: The Coming and Process of the Mexican Revolution* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1997), 156-60; Kawakami, *Japan in World Politics*, 226; Masterson and Funada-Classens, *The Japanese in Latin America*, 29.

<sup>10</sup> Cargill, the Corallitos, Hearst, Huller, International Lumber, the MacManus Land Company, Southwestern Land and Cattle, Rio Bravo Land and Cattle, and the Riverside Ranch became owners of a vast territory of Chihuahua and Durango which Porfirio Díaz expropriated from Mexican peasants. In Coahuila, the Seminole/black, *mestizo*, and Kickapoo *pueblos* lost their landholdings to Eagle Pass Lumber, Jennings-Blocker, Magnum, Ord, while at La Laguna Mexican peasants and farmers were displaced by Noble and McClellan, Potter, Rockefeller, and Brown Brothers interests. In Sonora the Mexican government expelled Yaqui and Mayo Indians from their river valley farming landholdings as the Compañía Constructora Richardson acquired 993,650 acres, extending from south of Guaymas to the Mayo River. The railroad holdings of E. H. Harriman and his associates James Stillman and William Rockefeller of the National City Bank/Southern Pacific Railroad extended across the state. Other holdings in Sonora included R. H. Vick's Compañía de Terrenos y Ganados with 1,500,000 acres; Phelps Dodge's 350,000 acres, and the Wheeler Land Company, owned by Chicago and Rockport capitalists, which held 1,450,000 acres, contiguous to William Randolph Hearst and other American landholdings in Chihuahua. The Cananea Copper Company held 346,000 acres. See John Mason Hart, "Social Unrest, Nationalism, and American Capital in the Mexican Countryside, 1876-1920," in *Rural Revolt in Mexico: U.S. Intervention and the Domain of Subaltern Politics*, ed. Daniel Nugent (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998). See also R. G. Dunn & Company, "Real Estate in Mexico," *Dunn's International Review* 11, no. (1907): 25.

<sup>11</sup> Espiritu, *Asian American Women and Men*, 16-30; Yamato Ichihashi, *Japanese Immigration: Its Status in California* (San Francisco: The Marshall Press, 1915), 3.

<sup>12</sup> Daniels, *Asian America*, 110-112; Masterson and Funada-Classens, *The Japanese in Latin America*, 29; Gary Y. Okihiro, *The Columbia Guide to Asian America History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 96-97.

Japanese contract laborers in North America had heavy restrictions upon their geographic and social mobility. They did not have enough money to pay for their travel expenses, back or forth. They often received a loan to pay for their ticket to the American continent, signing contracts for up to four years, and they were not free to look for better salaries at other places to pay their debt at an earlier date.<sup>13</sup> By 1910, 4407 Japanese men travelled to Mexico under labor contracts with American and British companies operating sugar plantations in the southern region of Mexico, particularly Oaxaca and Veracruz. Another 3,000 Japanese workers were hired to work in the coal mine of La Esperanza in Coahuila. An additional group of 500 immigrants was hired at the coal mine of El Boreo in Baja California in 1904. Between 1906 and 1907, the American Central Railroad Company hired 1,400 Japanese laborers to work in Colima. They also migrated to Northern Mexico when the construction of the railway line ended.<sup>14</sup>

Working conditions in mines, plantations and railroads were harsh and unhealthy. Low wages, dust, heat, accidents, long working days, and diseases were incentives to break their contracts and looked for a way to cross the border to the United States.<sup>15</sup> Japanese contract labor immigrants in Peru found the same harsh environment. Some of them migrated to Mexico before 1910, with the hope of eventually moving to the United States to earn higher wages.<sup>16</sup> While Japanese men earned .50 (pesos) a day in Mexico, they could earn \$1.35 (dollars) in the United

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<sup>13</sup> Daniels, *Asian America*, 110-112; Masterson and Funada-Classens, *The Japanese in Latin America*, 29; Okihiro, *The Columbia Guide to Asian America History*, 96-97.

<sup>14</sup> Kikumura-Yano, ed. *Encyclopedia of Japanese Descendants*, 206. Kawakami, *Japan in World Politics*, 226; Masterson and Funada-Classens, *The Japanese in Latin America*, 29.

<sup>15</sup> The 1910 census reported only ten Japanese people living in the state of Oaxaca revealing that most Japanese immigrants in the Oaxaca's sugar mills had broken their contract to migrate to northern Mexico or beyond, Francie R. Chassen de López, *From Liberal to Revolutionary Oaxaca: The View from the South, Mexico 1867-1911* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005), 253; Patrick Ettinger, *Imaginary Lines: Border Enforcement and the Origins of Undocumented, 1882-1930* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009); Kikumura-Yano, ed. *Encyclopedia of Japanese Descendants*, 102.

<sup>16</sup> Samuel L. Baily and Eduardo José Míguez, *Mass Migration to Modern Latin America* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 2003), 117.

States in the agricultural fields near Los Angeles, California. Consequently, they crossed into Nuevo Laredo, El Paso, and Piedras Negras to reside in the United States as “illegal migrants.”<sup>17</sup>

Japanese migrant workers earned higher salaries in the United States, but they met a harsher racial system in their new places of residence. As in other Asian communities in North America, Japanese men and women faced legal obstacles to their integration into the larger society as laws in the United States promoted racial segregation, impeded interracial marriages, and made Japanese and other people of color ineligible to become citizens. In order to combat economic oppression along racial lines, Japanese and Mexican workers formed the Japanese Mexican Labor Association (JMLA) in 1903, which successfully staged a strike against the Oxnard beet business in that year.<sup>18</sup>

Although collaboration between Japanese and Mexicans laborers proved beneficial, Chinese and Japanese workers failed to form, in general, a united front against racial economic oppression in the United States during the first years of the twentieth century. Fighting for resources, they competed against each other for employment in the railroad, mining, lumber, and agricultural industries. According to historian Roger Daniels, Japanese laborers in Santa Clara, California would accept \$.50 per hour when Chinese workers received \$1.00. This competition would virtually end due to the 1882 immigration act which made very difficult the replenishing of the Chinese labor force. Eventually, the Chinese population declined further due to death, sickness or age and stopped posing an important competition to Japanese workers. On their part,

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<sup>17</sup>Masterson and Funada-Classen, *The Japanese in Latin America*, 31.

<sup>18</sup> When the JMLA requested its incorporation to the American Federation of Labor, the president of the American Federation of Labor, Samuel Gompers, attempted to negotiate with the Mexican union leader J. M. Lizarras the acceptance of a charter on the condition of withholding union membership of Japanese and Chinese. The Japanese Mexican alliance prevailed with Lizarras' refusal to exclude Japanese or Chinese laborers from the union. Tomás Almaguer, "Racial Domination and Class Conflict in Capitalist Agriculture: The Oxnard Sugar Beet Workers Strike of 1903," *Labor History* 23, no. 3 (1984); Xiaojian Zhao, *Asian American Chronology: Chronologies of the American Mosaic* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2009), 28-29.

a constant flow of Japanese immigrants from Hawaii and Japan increased their number in the continental United States at the end of the nineteenth century. Japanese laborers began to demand higher wages once Chinese laborers were almost completely displaced in California, improving their quality of life to the extent that racist laws would allow them.<sup>19</sup>

Among those Japanese immigrants who had bettered their economic situation in the United States, some decided to acquire citizenship rights through naturalization. The Naturalization Act of 1790 stated that only white persons could become citizens and Japanese applicants assumed they fulfilled this racial requirement. Because race is a fluid notion that is constantly negotiated and reconstructed, and diplomatic relations between Japan and the United States provided some degree of protection for Japanese naturalization applicants during this period, immigration officials classified 420 Japanese persons as white before 1906 and granted them the United States citizenship. However, social restrictions impeded the actual assimilation of Japanese immigrants into the larger society; local laws also deterred the formation of interracial families that could have ended the isolation of the Japanese communities in the United States.<sup>20</sup>

The sexual lives of Japanese immigrants in the borderlands were shaped by different factors and would eventually determine their degree of integration into the United States and Mexico. South of the border, Japanese women immigrants were almost nonexistent during this period; however, Japanese men did not suffer significant legal restrictions on their sexual lives. They were able to marry Mexican women or as temporary or permanent sexual partners in spite of the racial prejudice that made such unions challenging. By contrast, in the United States the

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<sup>19</sup> Daniels, *Asian America*, 107-110; Luibheid, *Entry Denied*, 56-58.

<sup>20</sup> Roger Daniels, *The Politics of Prejudice: The Anti-Japanese Movement in California and the Struggle for the Japanese Exclusion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 39,46,59; Hyung-chan Kim, *Asian Americans and the Supreme Court: A Documentary History* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1992), 513.

prohibition for interracial marriages and the imbalance in the number of Japanese men and women made prostitution the main occupation of Japanese female immigrants at the end of the twentieth century.<sup>21</sup> Most of the 985 Japanese women living in the United States during this period worked temporarily or permanently as sex workers, like many other immigrant women from Asia and Europe.<sup>22</sup>

Asian women sold sexual services to Asian male laborers for economic survival, but they serviced as well the desires of other non-white and white men in the United States. According to historian Eithne Luibheid, racist European American women and men saw sexual contact between Asian women and white men as a source of moral and physical sickness. Accordingly, the 1891 Immigration Act and the Page Law of 1875 aimed to protect allegedly pure white families and laborers from physical and moral contamination through the prohibition of immigration of sex workers. Race, sex, sexuality, and criminality were intertwined and resulted in the legal exclusion of Asian women from Euroamerican United States.<sup>23</sup>

Although the United States' scientists and general public confined Japanese and Chinese within the same racial category, the Japanese state protected Japanese immigrants to a larger extent through diplomatic negotiations until the end of the nineteenth century. In 1906, the anti-Japanese riots in San Francisco and the placement of Japanese children in segregated schools signaled a new era of exclusion. The so-called Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907 between Japan and the United States forced the Japanese government to restrict issuing visas for travel to the

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<sup>21</sup> Erika Lee, *At America's Gates. Chinese Immigration During the Exclusion Era, 1882-1943* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 30-31; Huping Ling, *Surviving on the Gold Mountain: A History of Chinese Women and Their Lives* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 57-59; Luibheid, *Entry Denied*, 2-7, 31-53; Peggy Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally: Miscegenation Law and the Making of Race in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 15-30.

<sup>22</sup> Daniels, *Asian America*, 107-110; Luibheid, *Entry Denied*, 56-58.

<sup>23</sup> Lee, *At America's Gates*, 30-31; Luibheid, *Entry Denied*, 2-7, 31-53; Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally*, 15-30.

United States. In Mexico, the government negotiated similar policies with Japan. To comply with the request of the United States to halt illegal entry from Mexico, the Japanese government stopped issuing travel documents for Mexico. Consequently, in 1908 the flow of immigrants from Japan to Mexico stopped completely only to resume again in 1909. The same agreement, however, allowed the wives of Japanese men to enter the United States. Men who had the means to pay for the travel expenses of “picture brides” (fiancés selected with the help of photographs) were able to start a family in the United States and the ratio of married Japanese women to men in the United States grew after 1907. In Mexico, Japanese women continued to constitute a very small percentage of the population.<sup>24</sup>

The Mexican Revolution starting in 1910 reduced the number of Japanese residents in the country. They numbered 2,623 immigrants of which only 167 were women. More than half of the Japanese persons established in Mexico lived in the northern borderland states of Sonora, Coahuila and Chihuahua whose mines and agricultural fields were devastated between 1910 and 1920.<sup>25</sup> Like other residents of Mexico, Japanese immigrants crossed the border northwards to find a refuge from violence in the United States. Nevertheless, other Japanese men in northern Mexico remained in the country to fight in the revolutionary and federal forces during the military conflict and a few of them were promoted to commissioned officers.<sup>26</sup>

While Japanese immigrants faced economic and social disruption with the rest of the population during the Revolution in Mexico, in the United States established and new Japanese

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<sup>24</sup> A League of Nations, "Immigration and the 'Gentlemen's Agreement'," in *A League of Nations* (Boston: World Peace Foundation, 1917-1918), 449; Daniels, *Asian America*, 112-114; Masterson and Funada-Classen, *The Japanese in Latin America*, 34.

<sup>25</sup> Masterson and Funada-Classen, *The Japanese in Latin America*, 33.

<sup>26</sup> Daniels, *Asian America*, 115; Charles H. Harris and Louis R. Sadler, *The Texas Rangers and the Mexican Revolution: The Bloodiest Decade* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2007), 613; Kikumura-Yano, ed. *Encyclopedia of Japanese Descendants*, 210-211; Masterson and Funada-Classen, *The Japanese in Latin America*, 31, 59-61, 109. From Alberto Violante Pérez to C. Secretario de Gobernación regarding Luis So, dated March 21, 1944. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)1208.

immigrants met increasing resistance to their assimilation on the part of white America. Gary Y. Okihiro and David Drummond explain that legal impediments to the integration of Asian immigrants channeled Japanese and Chinese into a low-wage labor sector. Japanese immigrants who became small growers represented a loss of human capital for the largest agribusiness investors and competition with European American small farmers. Consequently, employers of Asian workers, politicians, and small growers made possible the passing of the Alien Land Law of 1913 prohibiting persons ineligible for citizenship from owning property. To circumvent the provisions of this regulation Japanese immigrants transferred their property to their children born in the United States. On both sides of the borderlands, however, Japanese immigrants and their descendants faced instability as they accommodated to different economic and legal environments during the first two decades of the twentieth century.<sup>27</sup>

In 1914, Japanese Ambassador Shotuko Baba visited Mexico to find a solution for the troubles Japanese immigrants were experiencing as a result of the Mexican Revolution. In the midst of the conflict, groups belonging to the various revolutionary factions or to the federal army took Japanese immigrants' property and lives. Although Ambassador Baba's objective was to obtain a temporary permit for Japanese to reside in the United States until the end of the Revolution, the American government refused to grant visas, instead enforcing the exclusionary provisions of the Gentlemen's Agreement. The Japanese diplomat thus negotiated a contract for a group of Japanese men to work in American-owned cotton plantations in the Baja California peninsula, a relatively isolated area of northern Mexico.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Daniels, *Asian America*, 113; Gary Y. Okihiro and David Drummond, "The Concentration Camp and Japanese Economic Losses in California Agriculture, 1900-1942," in *Japanese Americans. From Relocation to Redress*, ed. Roger Daniels et al. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1992), 167-169.

<sup>28</sup> Masterson and Funada-Classen, *The Japanese in Latin America*, 60; William K. Meyers, *Forge of Progress, Crucible of Revolt: Origins of the Mexican Revolution in La Comarca Lagunera, 1880-1911*

Alongside farming, fishing became an important economic activity in the Baja California peninsula for Japanese immigrants. During the 1910s Japanese entrepreneur Seiji Kondo, whose fishing company was based in San Diego, California, hired Mexican employees and brought fishermen from Japan to catch and pack tuna and abalone in Ensenada. Kondo's employees entered Mexico, according to historian Antonieta Kiyoko Nishikawa Aceves, without being registered by immigration officers due to the upheaval of the Mexican Revolution.<sup>29</sup>

Certain political moves by the leaders of the revolution shaped once again the demographic characteristics of the Japanese community in Mexico. President Venustiano Carranza sought to exterminate the revolutionary forces of leftist Generals Francisco Villa and Emiliano Zapata. In order to face his enemies, Carranza needed to buy armament and the favor of the United States government; thus, some American corporations operated in Mexico in relative safety under the protection of Carranza's government. Gradually, Japanese immigrants found work at American companies in Sonora and Sinaloa which supplied cotton and other products for the United States Army during World War I.<sup>30</sup> Carranza's political decisions once again impacted the Japanese community in Mexico when he consented to a bilateral agreement with Japan in 1917, accepting licensed Japanese medical doctors, dentists, pharmacists, obstetricians, and veterinarians to practice in Mexico.<sup>31</sup> Signed when the Mexican Revolution had not concluded, the treaty reflected President Venustiano Carranza's decision to keep an

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(Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994), 239. Kikumura-Yano, ed. *Encyclopedia of Japanese Descendants*, 212; *Mexico and the United States* (Tarrytown: Marshall Cavendish, 2003), s.v. "Cananea Mines."

<sup>29</sup> Antonieta Kiyoko Nishikawa Aceves, "La Inmigración Japonesa a Ensenada Durante La Primera Mitad Del Siglo XX," *Revista Meyibó/Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas* I, no. 201-8. <http://www.uabc.mx/historicas/Revista/Vol-I/Numero%201-8/Contenido/La%20inmigracion.htm>.

<sup>30</sup> Masterson and Funada-Classens, *The Japanese in Latin America*, 60. Kikumura-Yano, ed. *Encyclopedia of Japanese Descendants*, 212.

<sup>31</sup> María Elena Ota-Mishima, *Siete Migraciones Japonesas En México, 1890-1978* (México: El Colegio de México, 1982), 67; Gabriel Trujillo, *Entrecruzamientos: La Cultura Bajacaliforniana, Sus Autores Y Sus Obras* (Mexicali: Universidad Autónoma de Baja California, 2002), 43.

avenue open for the purchase of armament through Japan and allowed for the diversification of occupations within the Japanese Mexican community.<sup>32</sup>

In spite of the introduction of professional immigrants in Mexico, nationalist activism imposed more limits to the assimilation of Japanese Mexicans and the exercise of their rights, affecting mainly working class Japanese Mexicans. In 1919, President Carranza modified Article 106 of the Labor Law. The new provisions established that naturalized citizens were not considered nationals under the law that regulated labor in Mexico; therefore, they were not entitled to its protection.<sup>33</sup> In consequence, Japanese Mexicans found it more attractive to work in their own businesses even when their profits were minimal as they could not aspire to enjoy the nominal benefits and stability of the nationalist labor laws.

Distinct racist legal frameworks continued to operate in the northern Mexican borderlands at different levels. In 1921, a new law prohibited the entry of contract laborers, reducing the possibilities of poor Japanese workers to migrate to Mexico. Only investors or relatives and friends of already established immigrants received permits to migrate to Mexico.<sup>34</sup> In 1924, local regulations prohibited the marriage of Chinese men and Mexican women in Sonora.<sup>35</sup> Although directed to men of Chinese descent, the anti-miscegenation law portrayed all Asian men under a negative light since Mexicans usually did not acknowledge any difference

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<sup>32</sup> During the Mexican Revolution, Japan and Germany were interested in creating an alliance with Mexico, never solidified due to the different factions struggling to gain power. In Baja California, expressions of anti-American sentiments, supposedly shared by Mexicans and Japanese, were highly publicized in both the United States and Latin America. See Friedrich Katz, *La Guerra Secreta En México* (Mexico City: Ediciones Era, 2005). Also, Gerald Horne, *Black and Brown: African Americans and the Mexican Revolution, 1910-1920* (Ithaca: New York University Press, 2005), 177.

<sup>33</sup> Gerardo Reñique, *Región, Raza Y Nación En El Antichinismo Sonorense*, ed. Aarón Grageda Bustamante, *Seis Expulsiones Y Un Adiós: Despojos Y Exclusiones En Sonora* (México, D. F.: Universidad de Sonora/Editorial Plaza y Valdés, 2003), 284.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid; Julia Maria Schiavone Camacho, "Traversing Boundaries: Chinese, Mexicans, and Chinese Mexicans in the Formation of Gender, Race, and Nation in the Twentieth-Century United States-Mexican Borderlands" (University of Texas at El Paso, January 1, 2006), 63.

<sup>35</sup> Schiavone Camacho, "Traversing Boundaries", 63; José Luis Trueba Lara, *Los Chinos En Sonora: Una Historia Olvidada* (Hermosillo: Universidad de Sonora, 1990), 22-23, .

between Chinese and Japanese persons. During La Matanza de Torreón (Torreón's Massacre) of 1911, Mexican launderers incited Maderista troops to kill 303 Chinese and 5 Japanese persons, addressing all of them as "chinos."<sup>36</sup>

In spite of the damages Japanese immigrants suffered during the Revolution, they continued to contribute to the economy of Mexico during the 1920s. In addition to cotton production in Sonora and Sinaloa, they played important roles in the fishing industry. The port of Ensenada intensified commercial activity during this period thanks to Japanese fishermen who caught whale, shark, seal, turtle, lobster, shrimp, abalone, oyster, and many other sea products. International commerce fanned out from this area, catering mainly to the North American, Chinese and Japanese markets. Japanese investors, fishermen, and technicians would have to look for other geographical areas or occupations once Mexican investors and fishermen claimed to have priority over foreigners.<sup>37</sup>

At the end of the Mexican Revolution, politicians cultivated nationalism in part through their support of anti-Asian campaigns. In the 1920s, members of the political elite were also businessmen from northern Mexico, particularly from Sonora, or had strong connections with investors in the borderlands who considered Asian immigrants their competitors. Furthermore, the civil war had resulted in extensive unemployment which politicians and businessmen were

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<sup>36</sup> Marisela Connelly and Romer Cornejo Bustamante, *China-América Latina: Génesis Y Desarrollo De Sus Relaciones* (México, D. F.: Colegio de México, 1992), 43; James W. Russell, *Class and Race Formation in North America* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 65. In October, 1940 Crispin Ayala and J. Asunción Alba illustrated this encompassing view of Asian men as sexual predators. They falsely accused Alfonso Ayshikawa and Carlos Yoshikai of forcing their "beautiful Mexican" female employees to satisfy their "bestial appetites." Ayala and Alba noted that Japanese men behaved just as Chinese deviants. See Chapter XX of this dissertation.

<sup>37</sup> Trujillo, *Entrecruzamientos*, 49.

able to evoke to spur nativists against Asians as scapegoats for the deteriorating conditions of the working class.<sup>38</sup>

Anti-Asians in northern Mexico had a model in the legal system operating in the neighbor country. In 1921, anti-Chinese organizations in Mexico campaigned for a law to exclude Chinese immigration, escalating their physical assaults on the Chinese population. Although the Mexican government did not replicate the Chinese Exclusion Act ratified in the United States in 1882, President Álvaro Obregón prohibited the import of contract labor in 1921 to reduce Asian immigration. According to the new provisions, visa applicants needed to have an affidavit from relatives or friends in Mexico committed to support them. This was a difficult requisite for working class Japanese immigrants; less than 200 immigrants per year from Japan arrived in Mexico during the 1920s.<sup>39</sup>

Previous arrivals established stakes in borderland communities through the marriage of Japanese men to Mexican woman and also through their naturalization as Mexicans. Their children, the *Nisei* generation, had few ties with Japan in spite of the Japanese schools and associations in Sinaloa, Sonora, and Baja California that sought to keep alive Japanese culture.<sup>40</sup> Economically, Japanese immigrants sought to gain a foothold in the country. Some Japanese fishermen saved enough money to buy their own boats and worked independently on a small scale in Baja California, Sonora and Sinaloa. A number of farmers stopped working for wages

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<sup>38</sup> Among the northern business and land owners who were political leaders in the post-revolutionary period are Plutarco Elias Calles, Álvaro Obregón, Abelardo Rodríguez, and Alejandro Lacy. See Manuel González Oropeza, "La Discriminación En México: El Caso De Los Nacionales Chinos," in *La Problemática Del Racismo En Los Umbrales Del Siglo XXI*, ed. Instituto de Investigaciones Jurídicas (Mexico: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1997), 52; Enrique Krauze, *Mexico: Biography of Power. A History of Modern Mexico, 1810-1996* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1998), 342; Ota-Mishima, *Siete Migraciones* 28; Catalina Velázquez-Morales, "Inmigrantes Japoneses En Baja California, 1939-1945," *Clío* 6, no. 35 (2006): 84, 88.

<sup>39</sup> González Oropeza, "La Discriminación En México: El Caso De Los Nacionales Chinos," 52; Ota-Mishima, *Siete Migraciones* 28; Trujillo, *Entrecruzamientos*, 47.

<sup>40</sup> Kikumura-Yano, ed. *Encyclopedia of Japanese Descendants*, 212.

and became tenant farmers in the same area, taking care of the land, tending to the stock and machinery of the mostly American landholders who, in exchange, would allow them to use a portion of the land for themselves. Some Japanese tenant farmers hired other Japanese and Mexican workers. By 1925, Japanese farmers cultivated 70 percent of the total land in Mexicali, Sonora.<sup>41</sup> Japanese men also operated laundries and barbershops in the borderlands. Women and their children labored as unpaid workers to help keep these Japanese Mexican family small businesses running.<sup>42</sup> Frequently, Japanese men worked in partnership with their compatriots, sharing expenses in order to make their businesses prosper.<sup>43</sup>

On the United States side of the border, Japanese American families had steadfastly established roots in spite of the laws and the racist climate restricting their social mobility. By 1919, Japanese farmers owned 74,769 acres through their children and leased an impressive 383,387 more in California, hiring Japanese and Mexican workers in their farms. The same year, gross income for their crops was valued at \$67 million, or 10% of the total agricultural production in California.<sup>44</sup>

Although Japanese immigrants resided in various parts of the United States, they concentrated mainly in the West Coast in rural areas. In 1920, 45,414 Japanese men and 26,538 Japanese women lived in California. These numbers represented seventy percent of all Japanese immigrants in the United States. They resided mainly in the agricultural areas of Fresno,

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<sup>41</sup>Masterson and Funada-Classen, *The Japanese in Latin America*, 60. Kikumura-Yano, ed. *Encyclopedia of Japanese Descendants*, 212; , s.v. "Cananea Mines."

<sup>42</sup>Kikumura-Yano, ed. *Encyclopedia of Japanese Descendants*, 213. Olga Shoko Doode Matsumoto, *Los Claroscuros De La Pesquería De Sardina En Sonora: Contradicciones Y Alternativas Para Un Desarrollo Equilibrado* (Morelia: El Colegio de Michoacán, 1999), 47.

<sup>43</sup> Luis Yide Tamanachi and Ignacio Koba's cases were filed, as other partnerships, within one folder. See IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1110.

<sup>44</sup> Daniels, *Asian America*, 119, 136, 144, 147.

Sacramento, San Francisco, Alameda, and San Joaquin. Almost a third of the Japanese population of California lived in Los Angeles County.<sup>45</sup>

The children of Japanese immigrants were growing as Japanese Americans: like other youth of the diverse communities of color in the United States, second generation ethnic Japanese had nominal citizenship rights and were exposed to the values and culture of the dominant society. But the social status of their parents and the laws sanctioning racial discrimination made the citizenship of men and women of Japanese descent, a second class status. The issue of United States citizenship and race eventually was decided by the 1922 Supreme Court decision *Takao Ozawa v. United States* which declared that Japanese were ineligible for U.S. citizenship through naturalization. The Supreme Court ruled that since Ozawa was neither a “free white person” nor an African by birth or descent, he did not have the right of naturalization as a “Mongolian.”<sup>46</sup>

For the next two decades, European Americans continued to enforce their economic and social privileges through the application of local and federal laws. The complete integration of the first and second generation of Japanese in the United States was halted by the 1923 California Alien Land Law prohibiting Japanese immigrants from controlling the assets of their children or holding them in trust. Once again, they countered the effects of this racist law by hiring white American attorneys who administered the land which Japanese immigrants or their children rented or owned. Several Japanese immigrants living in the Imperial Valley, however, crossed the border southward to invest in the agricultural sector in Baja California while keeping

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Kim, *Asian Americans and the Supreme Court*, 513.

their residence in the United States. Others migrated from the United States to Baja California and Sonora permanently during this period.<sup>47</sup>

The presence of Japanese immigrants in the 1920s was mainly felt in Mexicali, across from Calexico, California. In 1925, more than one thousand Japanese men and women worked as tenant farmers and owned small shops in this city.<sup>48</sup> Japanese tenant farmers harvested two thirds of the cotton production in the Mexicali area. *Issei*, first generation Japanese Mexicans, maintained contact with the Japanese community of Imperial Valley, California in spite of the United States' attempts to impede the entrance of Japanese immigrants. Transnational relations were not limited to Japanese immigrants, however. Persons of various ethnicities and nationalities crossed the border continuously for businesses, employment, and recreation.<sup>49</sup>

In the 1930s, the prohibition on manufacturing, selling, importing, or exporting alcoholic drinks in the United States intensified the visits of American residents to the Mexican borderlands for the purpose of consuming alcohol. By then, Japanese families in Mexicali owned restaurants, shops, barbershops, and brothels, and benefited from the visit of American patrons. This particularly prosperous community of Japanese immigrants and their descendants managed to reproduce in a large degree their Japanese cultural practices, including family structure and hierarchies.<sup>50</sup>

Across the border in California, Japanese Americans continued to form mostly a rural population in the 1930s despite the vibrancy of cultural urban centers in San Francisco and Los Angeles. Fifty percent of the total population of Japanese men, and thirty three percent of the

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<sup>47</sup> Daniels, *Asian America*, 119, 136, 144, 147; Masterson and Funada-Classsen, *The Japanese in Latin America*, 61.

<sup>48</sup> Kikumura-Yano, ed. *Encyclopedia of Japanese Descendants*, 212.

<sup>49</sup> Azuma, *Between Two Empires*, 81; Ota-Mishima, *Siete Migraciones* 87.

<sup>50</sup> Masterson and Funada-Classsen, *The Japanese in Latin America*, 62. Kikumura-Yano, ed. *Encyclopedia of Japanese Descendants*, 212.

total population of Japanese women worked in the agricultural, lumber and fishery sectors. Twenty five percent of all the Japanese population worked in the wholesale and retail trade. Seventeen percent were employed in the personal service sector. A larger number of Japanese women worked outside their homes than white women during this period; however, many women worked in their family business without receiving a salary.<sup>51</sup>

Racial relations in the Mexico/United States borderlands were complex and often involved confrontations among non-white communities. In previous decades Japanese immigrants shared with Mexican workers common grievances against capitalists. Nevertheless, in the 1930s Japanese individuals and families had achieved higher economic status as tenant farmers and their relationship with Mexicans changed. Japanese growers were under the pressure of their landholders who continuously raised the rent on land. On the other side, Japanese tenant farmers hired Mexican and Mexican American workers to do most of the labor intensive tasks. When Mexican workers demanded better wages, some Japanese employers faced organized labor with the same tactics white businessmen employed to subdue the Mexican laborers: they called for the intervention of police and immigration officials to remove those considered communists or illegal from the farm. In addition to the support state institutions lent to Japanese growers, they relied on their own ethnic group to operate their businesses. Japanese farmers survived the 1933 El Monte Berry Strike thanks to the work of friends and relatives who arrived from different areas of California to substitute for Mexican protesters. Relatives continued to provide unpaid labor at all times and in 1933 Japanese children stopped attending school to help in their

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<sup>51</sup> Daniels, *Asian America*, 156-157; Espiritu, *Asian American Women and Men*, 38.

parents' farms. Family and community proved to be of great value for both Japanese employers and Mexican workers during periods of crisis.<sup>52</sup>

In addition to class conflicts, state miscegenation laws and the legal classification of Mexicans in California as "white" diminished the possibility of establishing deeper bonds between Japanese and Mexican men and women through the formation of interracial families. Furthermore, Japanese in communities in the United States tended to marry among themselves and on both sides of the United States/Mexico border Japanese men considered marriage to a Japanese woman a sign of prosperity and higher social status; however, United States and Mexican racial hierarchies held Japanese below whites regardless of their social class.<sup>53</sup>

National and international events affected the Japanese communities in the Mexican borderlands in the 1930s. Prior to World War II, economic depression and the deportation of ethnic Mexicans from the United States raised the level of aggressive nationalist feeling and nativism for various reasons. Government officials and local racist groups attributed unemployment and lack of resources to the presence of Asian immigrants. The Third Mexican Immigration Law responded to this Anti-Asian wave. Formulated by President Pascual Ortiz Rubio in 1930, new regulations established "race" as a primordial element of assimilation and therefore as a category of exclusion in the case of Asian immigrants, since Mexicans considered them "exotic" agents of millenary cultures, unable to blend in Western societies.<sup>54</sup> Because

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<sup>52</sup> Daniels, *Asian America*, 157-159; Vicky Ruiz, *From out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth-Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 76.

<sup>53</sup> Masterson and Funada-Classen, *The Japanese in Latin America*, 51; Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally*, 15-51; Ruiz, *From out of the Shadows*, 76-79.

<sup>54</sup> Estadística e Informática (INEGI) Instituto Nacional de Geografía, "Los Extranjeros En México," (México: INEGI). [http://www.inegi.gob.mx/prod\\_serv/contenidos/espanol/bvinegi/productos/estudios/sociodemografico/ext\\_en\\_mex/extraen\\_mex.pdf](http://www.inegi.gob.mx/prod_serv/contenidos/espanol/bvinegi/productos/estudios/sociodemografico/ext_en_mex/extraen_mex.pdf)

(accessed November 3, 2009). 3. Ota-Mishima, *Siete Migraciones* 20; Nell Irvin Painter, *The History of White People* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010), 323.

Immigration officials were endowed with the power to apply this new law at their discretion, some Asian immigrants were able to enter Mexico in spite of the new regulations, particularly when invited by a relative or friend, but also through the use of the traditional “mordida,” or bribing.<sup>55</sup>

If President Ortiz Rubio openly acknowledged race as an organizing social principle when signing the new immigration law, other policies he signed appeared to be color blind and formulated to strengthen the nation’s economy by expulsing foreign interests. But the most severe effects of nationalism came in the form of land confiscation affecting Asian sharecroppers and tenant farmers. Ortiz Rubio approved in 1934 the agrarian reform acts to nullify the privileges of American, British, and French investors whose exploitation of the Mexican working class spurred the Mexican Revolution.<sup>56</sup> Once in power, the leftist President Lázaro Cárdenas enforced the Agrarian Reform Law to redistribute land in Mexico among the peasant communities in the northeast.<sup>57</sup> Japanese tenants lost their investment when the land they rented changed hands before the harvest. Since the Compañía Industrial Japonesa del Pacífico lent them money to invest in farming, Japanese Mexicans had to struggle for several years to repay their debts when the Ministry of Agriculture forced them to vacate the land they were cultivating.<sup>58</sup>

The pressure from private and public sectors to marginalize “foreigners” of color in Mexico grew stronger as patriotism demanded that economic resources were in the hands of those regarded as Mexicans. The Liga Nacionalista Mexicana del Territorio Norte de Baja

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<sup>55</sup> Ota-Mishima, *Siete Migraciones* 20.

<sup>56</sup> Daniels, *Asian America*, 163.

<sup>57</sup> Francisco Balderrama and Raymond Rodríguez, *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006), 178; , s.v. "Cananea Mines."

<sup>58</sup> Masterson and Funada-Classen, *The Japanese in Latin America*, 62; Velázquez-Morales, "Inmigrantes Japoneses," 92.

California (Nationalist Mexican League of the Territory of Baja California) campaigned to evict Japanese, Jewish, and Chinese persons from the peninsula. Some Government officials felt also compelled to “protect” Mexico from what they considered an inferior race. Anti-Japanese activism actually had concrete results when Japanese Issei who owned property in Tijuana lost it in 1935 on the grounds that ownership of land within 100 kilometers of the territorial limits of Mexico was forbidden to foreigners.<sup>59</sup>

Incidents of clandestine fishing helped nationalists to mount a campaign against all Japanese persons. Contravening Mexican laws that prevented foreign companies from fishing in national waters, both Japanese and Anglo-owned ships registered in the United States would fish within Mexican territory and return to their base on the United States coasts. In 1940, in view of what they perceived as an assault to their rights, nationalist entrepreneurs pressed the federal government to remove the permissions granted to fishing companies in order to return the control of the fishing industries to Mexican owners in the territory of Baja California, and the states of Sonora and Sinaloa.<sup>60</sup> In the same year, the Compañía de Productos Marinos, S A fired Japanese fishermen and employed almost exclusively Mexican workers to comply with the regulations on hiring solely nationals. Out of work, Japanese fishermen were thus forced to fish independently on a small scale or to cultivate land as tenant farmers to support themselves. Before World War II, nationalist policies had economically damaged the most important Japanese Mexican communities, Ensenada and Mexicali. Unemployed fishermen and displaced growers sought to develop farmland or to open small businesses in other areas of the Baja California peninsula;

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<sup>59</sup> Delfino Navarrate, in charge of the Immigration Service office in Tijuana, suggested President Lázaro Cárdenas to completely halt the immigration of Japanese persons in 1935. See Velázquez-Morales, "Inmigrantes Japoneses," 91.

<sup>60</sup> Trujillo, *Entrecruzamientos*, 50. Matsumoto, *Los Claroscuros De La Pesquería*, 124. David Piñera Ramírez, "El Noroeste: Sonora," in *Visión Histórica De La Frontera Norte De México*, ed. David Piñera Ramírez (Centro de Investigaciones Históricas UNAM-UABC, 1987), 215-216.

however, most Japanese Mexicans did not have time to recuperate from their losses before World War II.<sup>61</sup>

By the onset of the Second Great War, the *Nisei* generation continued to face racism in the United States which translated in economic and social isolation. When trained in vocational schools, Japanese American men and women could only work in the civil service sector. White owned private companies and the military would not hire them; consequently, many second generation Japanese Americans worked permanently in their family businesses. Segregation and limited career opportunities coexisted with a certain degree of financial success; Japanese American agricultural enterprises proved to be highly productive. In 1940 Japanese immigrants and their descendants operated 5,135 farms on 220,094 acres in California.

When President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 mandating the internment of approximately 120,000 Japanese and Japanese Americans in concentration camps, this ethnic group was a large contributor to the agricultural development of the nation. As Japanese Americans entered the camps, United State government made sure their interests in agriculture were mainly transferred to European American hands during World War II. Japanese immigrants and their descendants, however, were also employed in other industries and suffered great economic losses in both the United States and Mexico during wartime.<sup>62</sup>

Although Japanese Mexicans in the borderlands had integrated into their host communities through marriages, naturalizations, and businesses, they were vulnerable in any social and economic crisis like Japanese Americans in the United States. After the attack on

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<sup>61</sup> Masterson and Funada-Classen, *The Japanese in Latin America*, 62; Velázquez-Morales, "Inmigrantes Japoneses," 92.

<sup>62</sup> Daniels, *Asian America*, 158, 159; Jacobus tenBroek, Edward N. Barnhart, and Floyd W. Matson, *Prejudice, War and the Constitution*, Japanese American Evacuation and Resettlement, vol. III (Berkeley: University of Los Angeles Press, 1954), 109-136 ; Okihiro and Drummond, "The Concentration Camp and Japanese Economic Losses in California Agriculture, 1900-1942," 169-172.

Pearl Harbor the Mexican government redefined patriotism to display Japanese Mexicans as the enemies and the United States as the ally. On December 11, 1941, a group of blacklisted Japanese Mexicans received orders to abandon their homes in Baja California. On January 2, 1942, at the request of the United States Department of State, all Japanese Mexicans in Baja California relocated to Guadalajara and Mexico City. During the following months, the Mexican government supervised the evacuation of approximately 2,700 Japanese immigrants from the United States/Mexico borderlands. A number of Japanese Mexicans were able to delay their relocation through bribery, the protection of powerful friends in various levels of the government, or surreptitious behavior, but most members of this vibrant community were uprooted by April, 1942.<sup>63</sup> Because the United States was not interested in controlling the Mexico/Guatemala border area, the relocation program did not affect the Japanese Mexican residents of the southern borderlands in the same way. Some Japanese Mexicans in that region were able to remain in their original place of residence for the duration of the war without experiencing large losses in their lives.<sup>64</sup>

At the end of World War II, fifty percent of all Japanese Mexicans lived in Mexico City and most of the remaining population resided in assigned zones in the interior of the country. Only a small number of those persons displaced during the war returned to northern Mexico, where demographics changed and the memory of the Japanese Mexicans during the so called “Good War” was almost lost.<sup>65</sup>

World War II extended the hand of United States into Mexico to expel Japanese Mexicans from the borderlands in the name of national security for both countries. The facile

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<sup>63</sup>Masterson and Funada-Classen, *The Japanese in Latin America*, 127.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid.

<sup>65</sup>Kikumura-Yano, ed. *Encyclopedia of Japanese Descendants*; Masterson and Funada-Classen, *The Japanese in Latin America*, 214-215.

compliance of the Mexican government and its enforcement of United States racial policies is a new chapter in the nation's history. It had severe implications and results for Japanese Mexicans and it is this story of "absent historical memory" that is the topic of this dissertation.

## CHAPTER 2

### WORLD WAR II AND HEMISPHERIC DEFENSE IMPACTING BORDER COMMUNITIES

*Much 'modern power' in democratic societies (is) persuasive and manipulative rather than coercive.*  
Teun A. Van dijk.<sup>1</sup>

Under the banner of hemispheric defense, the United States and several Latin American governments displaced thousands of citizens of German, Italian, and Japanese origin during World War II, resulting in their loss of property, freedom, families, and, in some cases, their lives. In Mexico, diplomatic agreements with the United States caused the eviction of the Japanese Mexican community from the Mexico/United States borderlands. This chapter examines the international factors determining the removal of Japanese Mexicans from northern Mexico during the Second Great War: the history of strained relations between Mexico and the United States which reached one of its nadirs with the expropriation of the oil industry by President Lázaro Cárdenas; the popular unrest created by the ascent of Manuel Ávila Camacho to the presidency; his alliance with the United States in the construction of a new nationalism and newly forged racial relations; and, the creation of Japanese Mexicans as the internal enemy during World War II.

Without distinguishing the objectives of the imperialist Japanese state from those of immigrants who had been living in Mexico for several decades, or their children born in Mexico, President Manuel Ávila Camacho took drastic measures against the entire Japanese Mexican community once the United States declared war against Japan on December 7, 1941. On December 10, 1941, the Mexican President ordered the Ministry of the Interior to stop

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<sup>1</sup> Teun A. Van dijk, "Discourse, Power, and Access," in *Texts and Practices: Readings in Critical Discourse Analysis*, ed. Carmen Rosa Caldas Coulthard and Malcolm Coulthard (London: Routledge, 1995), 85.

processing naturalization applications submitted by Japanese nationals and to cancel naturalization certificates granted within the past two years. Additionally, the Mexican head of state froze their bank accounts. By December 29, federal authorities commanded all citizens from the Axis nations to register at the local Immigration Service Office.<sup>2</sup>

Preceding the internment of Japanese Americans in the United States, the Mexican government began its relocation program on January 2, 1942, expelling all persons of Japanese origin from the Territory of Baja California. Local and federal authorities ordered Japanese Mexicans to take their children with them to the interior of Mexico, even when they were nationals of this country by birth. Italian and Germans did not receive equivalent orders to abandon their homes in the borderlands.<sup>3</sup>

On January 12, the United States and Mexican governments officially created the Joint Mexican-United States Defense Commission "to study the problems relating to the defense of the two countries." The commission established its headquarters in Washington, agreeing to make available the Mexican and United States territory and facilities for the mutual use of military

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<sup>2</sup> María Elena Ota Mishima, *Siete Migraciones Japonesas En México, 1890-1978* (México: El Colegio de México, 1982), 96.

<sup>3</sup> Julio Ramírez Colozzi, Chief of the Servicio de Población (Immigration Department) in Tijuana, Baja California, submitted different lists for persons of Japanese, Italian and German origin in April 1942. In them, Ramírez Colozzi stated that "following orders, (the Japanese Mexicans left the area) to establish their residence in the interior of the Republic." Within the reports on persons of Italian and German origin, Ramírez Colozzi succinctly states that these persons were "residing in the jurisdiction of the Immigration Office in Tijuana, Baja California" without mentioning any relocation. Italian and German Mexicans listed by Ramírez Colozzi were allowed to stay in Tijuana, while Japanese Mexicans did not have, in general, the same privilege. The last name of the Chief of Immigration Service, Colozzi, indicates that, in spite of his Italian origin he remained employed in a federal position that required his overseeing some aspects of the relocation program. "List of Italians naturalized Mexicans", "List of foreign persons of Italian nationality", "List of foreign persons of German nationality", "List of Japanese", "List of children of persons of Japanese origin including the children of naturalized Mexicans (... accompanying their parents who have left Tijuana, B.C.)", all documents signed by Julio Ramírez Colozzi on April 3, 1942, Secretaría de Gobernación. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)600.

forces.<sup>4</sup> As a result, United States troops entered Mexican soil in March 1942 in search of proof of the existence of a fifth column.<sup>5</sup>

### **United States Military Forces on Mexican Soil**

Unaware of the international agreements that dictated his apprehension, Keiji Matsusaka, a Japanese Mexican merchant living in Cd. Juárez, celebrated his son's birthday on March 15, 1942. The special occasion could help his family forget momentarily the hard times Mexicans of Japanese origin were experiencing along the United States /Mexico borderlands. Suddenly, the local police interrupted the birthday celebration to arrest Mr. Matsusaka and several other guests. As they left Matsusaka's home, the apprehended men realized that other soldiers surrounded the building. Among those persons detained, was Dr. Tsunesaburo Hasegawa Araki, a Mexican national by naturalization and a prominent member of the ethnically diverse community, and Yoshio Sato Sato, former president of the extinct *Colonia Japonesa* (Japanese Association). With the incarceration of these men at the local armory, the Japanese Mexican community in Cd. Juárez lost its cohesion and leadership; and thus, the possibility to negotiate the terms of their relocation, if they ever had that opportunity.<sup>6</sup>

On March 16, several soldiers escorted Dr. Hasegawa from the armory to his home. Upon his arrival, this Mexican citizen of Japanese origin was ordered to assist the United States soldiers who had been trying without success to open Hasegawa's drawers. The search was not

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<sup>4</sup> Cited by J. Lloyd Meham, *The United States and Inter-American Security, 1889-1960* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1961), 218.

<sup>5</sup> Report taken by Lic. Alfonso García González, Chief of the Departamento de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales. Rendered by Dr. Tsunesaburo Hasegawa Araki in Mexico City, dated April 2, 1942. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/464.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

in the hands of the Mexican military. United States officials were also present at his home and Douglas Henderson, the United States vice consul at Cd. Juárez, directed the binational military operation with the help of a translator. In addition, agents from the Mexican Police, dressed as civilians, helped the search of Dr. Hasegawa's and fourteen other Japanese Mexican households.<sup>7</sup>

Mexican and American soldiers had joined in their hunt for items to substantiate allegations that Mexican Japanese were involved in acts of espionage and sabotage; nonetheless, they did not uncover definite proof of the existence of a Fifth Column in the borderlands.<sup>8</sup> The presence of United States military personnel on Mexican soil exercising control over a group of civilians was a strong signal that an enormous transformation in the relations between these two neighboring countries had occurred. The new coalition would have deep economic and political consequences for the United States, Mexico, and the Japanese Mexicans.<sup>9</sup>

### **Strained Relationships**

Presently, the alliance between the United States and Mexico during World War II seems a natural consequence of their decision to defend the world from expansionist powers. In 1941, however, the general Mexican citizenry deemed United States businesses and military forces as the largest threat to the integrity of the Mexican territory and sovereignty.

Japanese were aware of the history of conflicts between Mexico and the United States and deemed Mexicans more sympathetic to Japanese immigrants. Hisao Ito, arrested by

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<sup>7</sup> Report taken by Lic. Alfonso García González, Chief of the Departamento de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales. Rendered by Dr. Tsunesaburo Hasegawa Araki in Mexico City, dated April 2, 1942. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/464.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> "Japanese Aliens Moved into Mexico," *El Paso Herald Post*, March 21, 1942. 10:4

American soldiers during the March raid in Cd. Juárez, wrote in his memoirs that Japanese Mexicans had been grateful for the help they had received from many Mexicans during the process of establishing their new communities. Japanese immigrants resented their exclusion from the United States and thought they shared grievances with the Mexican citizenry against the northern country. Nevertheless, in March 1942, Ito noted with sadness that the Mexican soldiers were behaving “like Americans” whilst they, along with a United States platoon, searched the homes of several Japanese Mexican families. Days later, when Mexican soldiers escorted the arrested men as they left their barrios in the company of their wives and children for Mexico City, their neighbors gathered to show their support shouting “¡Viva Japón! ¡Viva México! ¡Mueran los gringos!” With these words, Mexicans in Cd. Juárez were not only expressing their anger for the eviction of their neighbors, but also their shared memory of the multiple offenses the United States government had inflicted upon Mexico since the nineteenth century.<sup>10</sup>

The Mexican government was fully aware of the anti-American sentiment in Mexico and tried to delay information on the raid. National newspapers in Mexico did not publish news of the transnational operation although they included the victories of Japanese troops during the first months of 1942, news which some Mexicans received with pleasure.

Historian Gabriel Trujillo Muñoz states that during this period, in spite of their anti-fascism, “Mexicans saw in the attack on Pearl Harbor and in subsequent victories (for Japan in Singapore, Philippines, and Shanghai) some kind of vengeance for all the atrocities the United States had inflicted upon Mexico (...). Japanese, in the eyes of many Mexicans, were the new

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<sup>10</sup> Akemi Kikumura-Yano, ed. *Encyclopedia of Japanese Descendants in the Americas: An Illustrated History* (Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 2002), 19.

Pancho Villa, the new Joaquin Murrieta of the world.”<sup>11</sup> Even when Ávila Camacho had declared war against Japan, the American search of Japanese Mexican homes was a United States intervention in Mexican affairs many Mexicans would not have easily tolerated in March 1942 had they been informed of the transnational operation in timely ways.<sup>12</sup>

A history of tense affairs between the United States and Mexico developed when the United States supported the Independence of Texas in 1836, motivated in part by the Mexican government’s refusal to allow Anglo colonizers to import the slavery system into the neighboring nation, something forbidden in Mexico since 1821. Relationships deteriorated further when the United States annexed Texas in 1845 and launched a military invasion in 1846 which resulted in the loss of more Mexican land and the displacement or subordination of the Mexican residents of the conquered territory.<sup>13</sup> According to historian David Montejano, both Texas Independence and Mexican War were, “essentially the reflection of ‘manifest destiny.’ The Anglo-Saxon nation was bound to glory; the inferior, decadent Indian race and the half-breed Mexicans were to succumb before the inexorable march of the superior Anglo-Saxon people.”<sup>14</sup> At the conclusion of the war, the United States continued to constitute a menace to its southern neighbor’s quest for economic independence; however, antagonism between the governments of the United States and Mexico subsided at the end of the nineteenth century when Porfirio Díaz took power.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Gabriel Trujillo, *Entrecruzamientos: La Cultura Bajacaliforniana, Sus Autores Y Sus Obras* (Mexicali: Universidad Autónoma de Baja California, 2002), 69.

<sup>12</sup> "Believe Japs Reported on U.S. Units," *El Paso Times*, March 22, 1942.

<sup>13</sup> Ernesto Chávez, *The U.S. War with Mexico: A Brief History with Documents* (New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2007); Quintard Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier: African Americans in the American West. 1528-1990* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1998), 37-56.

<sup>14</sup> David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987), 24.

<sup>15</sup> William D. Carrigan, "The Lynching of Persons of Mexican Origin or Descent in the United States, 1848 to 1928," *Journal of Social History* 37, no. 2 (2003); Mark Wasserman, *Capitalists, Caciques, and Revolution: He*

Dictator Díaz, President of Mexico from 1876 to 1911, allowed the extension of American and British investment in Mexico at the expense of indigenous peoples and the working class. This represented an interregnum in the history of strained relationships between the two governments. During this period of friendly relations, the two nations collaborated to remove rebel indigenous populations fighting in the Mexico/United States borderlands.<sup>16</sup> On their part, and in disagreement with Dictator Diaz's collaboration with the United States, Mexican nationalists and labor leaders continuously rejected foreign intervention and perilous working conditions imposed by both American and European companies over their Mexican employees.<sup>17</sup>

On the United States side, Americans continued to take over the land of Mexican ranchers, forcing persons of Mexican origin into subordinate positions and impoverishing most Mexicans living in the United States occupied territory.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, Mexicans were alerted to the racist treatment of their compatriots or the Mexican Americans residing in the United States.<sup>19</sup>

The Mexican Revolution exploded in 1910 and ended the association between Diaz and the United States businesses and government, but the United States government continued its attempts to control the nation. At the onset of the revolution, several factions had anti-

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*Native Elite and Foreign Enterprise in Chihuahua, Mexico, 1854-1911* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 84-94.

<sup>16</sup> Shelley Bowen Hatfield, *Chasing Shadows: Indians Along the United States-Mexico Border, 1876-1911* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998).

<sup>17</sup> Martha Huggins, *Political Policing: The United States and Latin America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992); Wasserman, *Capitalists*, 84-94.

<sup>18</sup> Deena Gonzalez, *Refusing the Favor: The Spanish Mexican Women of Santa Fe, 1820-1880* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 3-4, 39-50.

<sup>19</sup> Carrigan, "The Lynching of Persons of Mexican Origin or Descent in the United States, 1848 to 1928."; Benjamin Johnson, "The Plan De San Diego," in *Continental Roads*, ed. Samuel Truett (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 273-298; United States Congress. Senate, *Testimony of Henry Lane Wilson*, ed. Subcommittee on Foreign Relations, Investigation of Mexican Affairs: Hearing before a Subcommittee (Washington, D. C.: United States Congress, 1920), 2249-2257.

imperialist agendas and demanded the expulsion of powerful North American and European companies. United States diplomats remained in the Mexican capital, nonetheless, actively involved in designing a new government in favor of American businesses. The intervention of the United States in Mexican affairs added to the complexity of the social unrest. Ambassador Henry Lane Wilson's maneuvers resulted in the assassination of Francisco I. Madero, the first revolutionary Mexican president in 1913 by Victoriano Huerta, who also murdered other members of Madero's cabinet. Wilson's decisive support of Victoriano Huerta and his coup d'état in the same year spurred most Mexicans' condemnation of any United States interference in their country's internal affairs.<sup>20</sup> In the United States, racial relationships between Mexicans and European Americans tensed further when a group of Hispanics resisting oppression in Texas called for insurrection through the Plan de San Diego, its first of three versions signed in January 1915. The plan called for unity among Mexican Americans, African Americans, and Japanese. The insurrection did not take place but Texan forces and vigilantes killed hundreds of Mexican Americans without due process in response to the potential interethnic insurrection.<sup>21</sup>

While Japanese immigrants were forming ties within the Mexican community, the gap between Mexican nationalists and United States interventionists grew larger. The footprints that American troops left in Chihuahua during the 1917 search for General Francisco Villa left a deep scar in the Mexican memory that, as of today, has not healed.<sup>22</sup> As Cultural Studies scholar Claire P. Fox argues, the Mexican Revolution not only made visible the struggles for power at the beginning of the twentieth century, it also elevated local actors to the level of national

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<sup>20</sup> Huerta was a former official in the army of Porfirio Díaz. He betrayed Diaz first, and then Madero. Ilene V. O'Malley, *The Myth of the Revolution: Hero Cults and the Institutionalization of the Mexican State, 1920-1940* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986).

<sup>21</sup> Gerald Horne, *Black and Brown: African Americans and the Mexican Revolution, 1910-1920* (Ithaca: New York University Press, 2005), 157-158; Martínez Óscar J., *U.S.-Mexico Borderlands: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 1996), 141.

<sup>22</sup> Friedrich Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 570.

characters. Many Mexicans viewed Villa as representing the entire country's desires for independence; therefore, most Mexicans interpreted General John J. Pershing's persecution of the northern general as a direct insult to Mexicans. A new American incursion into Mexican soil would require a major catalyst for a collaborative effort between countries, such as the ominous presence of a common enemy. In the meantime, the gap between Mexico's general population and American interests in Mexico grew in the post revolutionary years.<sup>23</sup>

At the end of the Mexican Revolution, during the years between the World War I and World War II, Mexico gained a considerable degree of economic and ideological independence that the United States considered as a menace. The possible spread of Mexico's revolutionary example among Latin American countries increased the tension between the Mexican and the United States governments.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, economic depression exacerbated racism in the United States, resulting in the eviction of approximately half million persons of Mexican origin in the 1930s, an expulsion which Mexicans took as an offense, to say the least.<sup>25</sup>

In response to the unrest of the working class in Latin America, President Theodore Roosevelt signaled a reconsideration of the Monroe Doctrine and its interventionist character. He also demonstrated his awareness of the anti-imperialist sentiment of labor leaders in Latin America. On March 4, 1933, Roosevelt declared that he would "dedicate this nation to the policy

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<sup>23</sup>Claire F. Fox, *The Fence and the River: Culture and Politics at the U.S.-Mexico Border* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 70. See also Horne, *Black and Brown: African Americans and the Mexican Revolution, 1910-1920*, 158; Brendon O'Connor, ed. *Anti Americanism: Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Brendon O'Connor, *Anti Americanism: History, Causes, Themes*, vol. 3 (Oxford: Greenwood World Publisher, 2007), 77-102.

<sup>24</sup>Friedrich E. Schuler, *Mexico between Hitler and Roosevelt: Mexican Foreign Relations in the Age of Lázaro Cárdenas, 1934-1940* 1st. ed. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998), 35.

<sup>25</sup>Francisco Balderrama and Raymond Rodríguez, *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006), 63-90; Camille Guerin-Gonzales, *Mexican Workers and American Dreams: Immigration, Repatriation, and California Farm Labor, 1900-1939* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1994).

of the good neighbor--the neighbor who respects his obligations and respects the sanctity of his agreements in and with a world of neighbors."<sup>26</sup>

President Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940) profoundly tested the Good Neighbor policy and the diplomatic relations between the United States and Mexico when he ordered the nationalization of the oil industry in March 1938. American, British and Dutch owners of petroleum property, who had benefited from their association with Dictator Diaz, were forced to leave their businesses in the hands of the Mexican government.<sup>27</sup> American oil investors who lost their property and businesses in Mexico as a result of the expropriation unsuccessfully demanded United States military intervention to restore their investments. Since the United States needed to gather all its resources to prepare for a possible war against Germany, Italy, and Japan, its military intervention in Mexico to recover American oil property was not strategically possible in 1938.<sup>28</sup> Weakened by the recent economic depression and foreseeing the need to obtain raw materials from its southern neighbor, Roosevelt's United States tried to block Mexico's sale of oil as an alternative, less brusque, means to pressure Mexico to negotiate the terms of the expropriation.<sup>29</sup>

The ensuing international embargo orchestrated by the United States against its southern neighbor made the sale and distribution of Mexican petroleum difficult. American corporations required that their international partners refuse transportation, storage or acquisition of Mexican oil. Furthermore, British agents impeded its delivery in Sweden, making clear that the boycott against Mexico would be enforced at any port in the Atlantic Ocean, and further distancing the

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<sup>26</sup> Richard K. Showman and Lyman S. Judson, eds., *The Monroe Doctrine and the Growth of Western Hemisphere Solidarity* (New York: The H.W. Wilson Company, 1941), 30.

<sup>27</sup> Schuler, *Mexico between Hitler and Roosevelt*, 97.

<sup>28</sup> Don M. Coerver and Linda B. Hall, *Tangled Destinies: Latin America and the United States* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999), 81.

<sup>29</sup> Joe C. Ashby, *Organized Labor and the Mexican Revolution under Lázaro Cárdenas* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1967), 240.

Latin American country from its northern neighbor. These international maneuvers against Mexico fed a strong popular nationalism in the country and reduced the possibility of an alliance between the United States and Mexico.<sup>30</sup>

In the end, the United States economic embargo over Mexico forced Cárdenas to strengthen commercial exchanges with Japan, Germany and Italy and reduced further the influence that the United States had over Mexico.<sup>31</sup> Consequently, Mexico gained certain leverage in its dealings with the United States when its trade with Japan became more consistent. After all, as State Department Undersecretary Sumner Welles recognized during the First Meeting of Foreign Ministers of the American Republics held in 1939 in Panama, the United States had to make plans for the imminent war because: “the struggle that is going on confronts us with difficulties of both an immediate and an ultimate character. We are already experiencing dislocations in our usual commerce.”<sup>32</sup>

Although military intervention in Mexico was not advisable in 1939 in view of the global conflict, the United States government and the American public remained distressed by the ideological struggles taking place in its neighboring country, which in some cases implied opposition to United States interventions in Mexican affairs. President Cárdenas nationalized, in addition to the oil industry, some services deemed to operate for the good of the public, such as telephone, electric energy, and water. Furthermore, the Cárdenas regime promoted the organization of unions, seeking to control them through the official party, and allowing the open political activity of the Mexican Communist Party as well as other leftist individuals and

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Schuler, *Mexico between Hitler and Roosevelt*, 97.

<sup>32</sup> Sumner Welles and Nicholas Murray Butler, *The World of the Four Freedoms* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943), 4.

organizations.<sup>33</sup> On its part, the United States sought to exert a larger influence south of the border to impede the total adoption of what Roosevelt's administration considered a socialist regime in Mexico modeled after the Soviet Union. As reflected in the description of post revolutionary Mexico in *Time Magazine* in the United States:

The most effective slogan used by Lenin & Trotsky to rally rural Russians to their Red standard in 1917 was 'Land to the Peasants!' Today the rulers of Mexico, styling themselves collectively 'The Revolution,' are at last taking seriously and actually carrying out the basic Mexican Constitutional law of 1917 which is simply a fulfillment of this same slogan.<sup>34</sup>

Not only was President Cárdenas an ardent anti-fascist attempting to create a more balanced distribution of resources among peasants and workers, but a recalcitrant popular sentiment against foreign investors remained a strong element of Cárdenas post-revolutionary administration. Anti-imperialist sentiments would fade when the populist Mexican president left office in 1940. Cárdenas' presidential successor General Manuel Ávila Camacho calmed the fears of the American public and the United States government, however, through his public decision to support capitalism in Mexico.<sup>35</sup>

Although a highly popular figure in the United States, Ávila Camacho confronted disapproval in his own country. Elected in 1940 in the face of extreme social unrest, Ávila Camacho had the task of controlling the armed opposition of sympathizers of General Juan

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<sup>33</sup> Ashby, *Organized Labor and the Mexican Revolution*, vii, 32-48; John H. Coatsworth, "Measuring Influence: The United States and the Mexican Peasantry," in *Rural Revolt in Mexico: U.S. Intervention and the Domain of Subaltern Politics*, ed. Daniel Nugent (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 69-71; Arturo Grunstein Dicker, "In the Shadow of Oil: Francisco Múgica Vs. Telephone Transnational Corporations in Cardenista Mexico," *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* Vol. 21, no. 1 (Winter, 2005): 1-32.

<sup>34</sup> TIME, "Foreign News: Trotsky, Stalin & Cardenas," *Time Magazine*, January 25, 1937.

<sup>35</sup> Time Magazine reported that "Hombre Libre ran on its front page an anti-British cartoon, on its last page an anti-U. S. cartoon." See TIME, "New President, Old Job," *Time*, December 9, 1940. See also Dan A. Cochran, *Political Stability and Democracy in Mexico: The "Perfect Dictatorship"?* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 1994), 28-30.

Andreu Almazán.<sup>36</sup> Thus, the 1940 presidential inauguration was marked by violent confrontations between police and rebels as

[...] two nights before Ávila Camacho's inauguration came a function which Camachismo particularly enjoyed. Government police and soldiers raided Communist headquarters in Avenida Brasil. In the inevitable gun fight, an Army major was killed and two Communists wounded.”<sup>37</sup>

According to *Time Magazine*, the Mexican police and army arrested 50 persons accused of conspiracy. The Mexican government confiscated during this search “rifles, machine guns, ammunition, bales of propaganda, and alleged evidence of a plot to assassinate Ávila Camacho.”<sup>38</sup> In addition to the leftist challenge to the new president, a group of “young intellectuals and fanatical women” from the right wing staged a protest during the presidential inauguration at the United States Embassy in Mexico chanting and shouting “Viva Almazán.” According to the journalists reporting on the rally, “this was a crowd of supporters of the defeated Presidential candidate (Andreu Almazán and who) disapproved U. S. recognition of Ávila Camacho.” Conservative President Ávila Camacho faced resistance, thus, from left and right but enjoyed the approval of the United States.<sup>39</sup>

In order to gather resources to control the insurrections, the Mexican president established a firmer alliance with Roosevelt’s government, announced during his inauguration speech:

Nothing divides us in this America of ours. Any differences that may exist between our peoples are overcome by a lofty desire to secure the permanence of a continental life of friendliness based on mutual respect and on the victory of reason over brute force, of peaceful cooperation over mechanized destruction.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> TIME, "New President, Old Job."

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

Ávila Camacho translated friendliness and mutual respect between the United States and Mexico into commercial agreements and acceptance of foreign investment in Mexico. He assured American investors that Cardenism was no longer a threat to American or national capitalists stating that “whenever [enterprises and investments] comply with our laws, every legitimate profit they make shall be respected. The companies willing to work with constant effort, and willing to risk the dangers any business may encounter, may count on guarantees from our institutions.”<sup>41</sup> This modernization program challenged the new president’s political skills since it involved not only American investment but also the technical military support of the United States for the suffocation of armed and peaceful political opposition, a move that could trigger vigorous protests from nationalists and labor leaders.<sup>42</sup>

War propaganda was crucial in building a gradual shift in the perception Mexicans had of the United States as an abusive nation. With the financial assistance and supervision of American private and public institutions, Ávila Camacho’s administration downplayed the imperialist shadow the United States had cast for more than a century over Mexican land and resources. In order to comply with the United States demand to control the Japanese Mexican community, Ávila Camacho portrayed Japanese Mexicans as an imminent danger to national security.<sup>43</sup> At the same time, and under the same war rationale, he cancelled the civil rights of all Mexicans to preempt any attempt to resist his plans for Mexico. Eventually, these and other

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Stephen Niblo, *Mexico in the 1940s: Modernity, Politics, and Corruption* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources Books, 2000), 117; Schuler, *Mexico between Hitler and Roosevelt*, 201-202.

<sup>43</sup> See Seith Fein, "Myths of Cultural Imperialism and Nationalism in Golden Age Mexican Cinema," in *Fragments of a Golden Age: The Politics of Culture in Mexico Since 1940*, ed. Anne Rubinstein Michael Joseph Gilbert, Eric Zolov (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001).

factors, such as anti-Nazi sentiments and the solidarity of most Mexicans with the Republic of Spain, worked in favor of Ávila Camacho and his business partners.<sup>44</sup>

The Mexican president took careful steps in building a close relationship with the United States even before he became the candidate of the official party. In exchange for the right to use its territory, Mexico would receive armament, training and financial support for its army from the United States. In order to avoid more insurrections or strong protests by nationalists in the face of American intervention, Ávila Camacho avoided making public his agreements.<sup>45</sup> Not until March 1941 did Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ezequiel Padilla, publicly hint in a speech before Congress at a possibility of joining the United States against a German attack, a move that caused ample protests from anti-American citizens. On April 1, 1941 the Mexican government made a bolder move when it seized 11 German and Italian vessels stationed in different Mexican ports, arresting their 555 sailors whom the Mexican authorities accused of, but did not try in court for, “planning sabotage activities.”<sup>46</sup> Nevertheless, Ávila Camacho and members of his cabinet continued to state that, in case of war, Mexico would not allow the entrance of American troops into Mexican territory.<sup>47</sup>

Censored newspapers in Mexico did not report the United States military incursion into Cd. Juárez in March, 1942. Most Mexicans would not have taken this operation lightly because

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<sup>44</sup> Schuler, *Mexico between Hitler and Roosevelt*, 139-142; Trujillo, *Entrecruzamientos*, 71-72.

<sup>45</sup> Stetson Conn and Byron Fairchild, *U.S. Army in World War II - the Western Hemisphere: The Framework of Hemispheric Defense* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 1960), 333-336; Niblo, *Mexico in the 1940s: Modernity, Politics, and Corruption*, 86.

<sup>46</sup> Mexican authorities maintained the sailors confined in Guadalajara first, and then in Perote for the duration of the war; although many of them escaped or achieved permission to reside in Mexico City. Maria Elena Paz-Salinas, *Strategy, Security, and Spies: Mexico and The. U.S. As Allies in World War II* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 1997), 125.

<sup>47</sup> This sort of official declaration supported the idea that the Mexican government removed the Japanese Mexicans from the West Coast in order to avoid the direct intervention of US military or civil authorities in Mexico; however, the US incursion in Cd. Juárez contradicts the official justification for their uprooting as a measure to preserve the national sovereignty. Trujillo, *Entrecruzamientos*, 66; Catalina Velázquez-Morales, "Inmigrantes Japoneses En Baja California, 1939-1945," *Clío* 6, no. 35 (2006): 93.

of the long history of United States interventions in Mexico. Nevertheless, the United States military raid across the border confirmed a solid deal between both national states. Indeed, the United States had achieved cooperation from most Latin American governments in its war efforts. In January of the same year most American Republics agreed during the Third Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs in Brazil to the uprooting of Japanese Latin Americans. Although this dissertation does not examine the transference of Latin American Japanese to the United States, their abduction formed part of the same hemispheric operation which cancelled the rights of persons of Japanese descent, including Japanese Mexicans, across the American continent.<sup>48</sup>

### **A Call for Continental Solidarity**

The United States was clearly concerned about geopolitics in the Americas as indicated in three major conferences held in 1939, 1940, and 1942. At the request of this nation, Latin American and American diplomats conferred during the First Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the American Republics in Panama in 1939. In view of the global conflict starting on September 1<sup>st</sup> with the German invasion of Poland, the American Republics agreed to remain neutral and to study the possibility of organizing the economy on a continental basis. In addition, they committed their police and judicial authorities to prevent or repress “unlawful activities that individuals, whether they be nationals or aliens, may attempt in favor of a foreign

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<sup>48</sup> For the displacement of other Latin American Japanese populations see Thomas Connell, *America's Japanese Hostages: The World War II Plan for a Japanese Free Latin America* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2002); P. Scott Corbett, *Quiet Passages: The Exchange of Civilians between the United States and Japan During the Second World War* (Kent, Ohio, and London: The Kent State University Press, 1987); John K. Emmerson, *The Japanese Thread: A Life in the U.S. Foreign Service* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1978); Harvis Gardiner, *Pawns in a Triangle of Hate. The Peruvian Japanese and the United States* (Seattle: University of Washington, 1981).

belligerent state.”<sup>49</sup> Participating in this and the two subsequent conferences were Mexico, Ecuador, Cuba, Costa Rica, Peru, Paraguay, Uruguay, Honduras, Chile, Colombia, Venezuela, Argentina, Guatemala, Panama, Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic, Brazil, Bolivia, Haiti, El Salvador, and the United States.<sup>50</sup>

Continuing the conversation on hemispheric matters, Latin American and United States diplomats held the Second Meeting of Foreign Ministers of the American Republics in Havana in February 1941. During this conference, the signatories resolved to support the neutrality of the American Republics in the ongoing military conflicts. Latin American officials agreed to imposed restriction on activities of diplomats representing countries involved in the war, rejecting the intervention of belligerent nations in their domestic affairs.<sup>51</sup>

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 provided the United States with the occasion to call, once again, for hemispheric solidarity.<sup>52</sup> To effect the planning of war strategies, including the organization of economy at a continental scale, President Franklin D. Roosevelt ordered the organization of the Third Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the American Republics (TMMFAAR). At the conclusion of this meeting in Rio de Janeiro in January 1942, the United States and Latin American diplomats agreed to economic measures that would benefit the elites of each nation, and to confine all Axis nationals in concentration camps or exclusive zones, cancelling the citizenship of naturalized Latin American citizens born in Germany, Italy or Japan. Days before, Mexico had set up an example in the management of the

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<sup>49</sup> This first meeting took place in Panama from September 23 to October 3, 1939.

<sup>50</sup> Organization of American States, "Consultative Meeting of Foreign Ministers of the American Republics," *The American Journal of International Law* 34, no. 1, Supplement: Official Documents (1940): 14.

<sup>51</sup> "Second Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the American Republics," *The American Journal of International Law* 35, no. 1, Supplement: Official Documents (Jan., 1941): 6.

<sup>52</sup> See O'Connor, ed. *Anti Americanism: Comparative Perspectives*.

Japanese population: President Manuel Avila Camacho had uprooted almost exclusively Japanese immigrants and their descendents from the Mexico/United States borderlands.<sup>53</sup>

The American Republics took other measures of durable impact during the Rio de Janeiro meeting at the expense of Latin American Japanese. Mexican Minister of Foreign Affairs Ezequiel Padilla and other diplomats agreed to create the Inter-American Defense Board “composed of military and naval technicians appointed by each of the governments to study and to recommend to them the measures necessary for the defense of the Continent.”<sup>54</sup> This board urged President Roosevelt to fulfill his promise to deliver a total of \$459,422,000 in armament to the Latin American governments during World War II. Brazil and Mexico, the main supporters of the United States during the Rio de Janeiro conference, were among the nations which received the largest amount of assistance to outfit their military forces.<sup>55</sup> Such assistance increased the control the administration of Ávila Camacho needed to suppress armed opposition to his programs in Mexico.<sup>56</sup>

While President Avila Camacho justified his soliciting American arms and training to fight against the Axis powers and a possible Fifth Column formed by Mexican Japanese, the Mexican state used military American equipment to control indigenous persons and other rebels. The Mexican government effectively suppressed a number of guerrilla movements organized in the face of inflation, conscription, and unfulfilled land distribution promises, thanks to the armament provided by the United States. In exchange, the Mexican government opened its

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<sup>53</sup> Sumner Welles, *The Time for Decision* (Tennessee: Kinsport Press, 1944), 220.

<sup>54</sup> Organization of American States, "Final Act of the Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the American Republics," (Rio de Janeiro: Organization of American States, 1942), 54. Resolution XXXIX.

<sup>55</sup> Mecham, *The United States and Inter-American Security, 1889-1960*.

<sup>56</sup> Niblo, *Mexico in the 1940s: Modernity, Politics, and Corruption*, 117.

territory to a group of American soldiers who had the authority to search the houses of several Mexican citizens of Japanese descent.<sup>57</sup>

Although a small raid, the American military operation in Cd. Juárez in March 1942 which resulted in the arrest of fifteen Japanese Mexicans is of great significance in the history of the United States /Mexico relations. The incursion of American troops into Mexico was grounded in the Rio de Janeiro Meeting Resolution XVII, which established that World War II demanded “the fullest cooperation in the establishment and enforcement of extraordinary measures of continental defense.” Japanese Latin Americans paid the prize of hemispheric economic and military collaboration. Those Japanese Mexicans living in the United States/Mexico borderlands were subjected to the intervention of the United States Army in their lives.<sup>58</sup>

### **War and Economy**

The hemispheric organization of economic resources and production during World War II, in general, benefited the elites of the United States and Latin America. The United States was able to fulfill the needs of its war industry through the supply of raw materials from Mexico and other American Republics. Sumner Welles, retrospectively, continued to appreciate the collaboration of the Mexican government in achieving the United States objectives:

[...]How different would our situation be today if on our southern border there lay a Republic of Mexico filled with resentment and with antagonism against the United States, instead of a truly friendly and cooperative Mexican people seeking the same objectives as ours,

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> States, "Final Act of the Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the American Republics," 27. Resolution XVII.3.

guided by the same policies, and inspired by the same motives, in their determination to safeguard their independence and the security of the hemisphere, as those which we ourselves possess.<sup>59</sup>

Mexico, as well as other Latin American countries, promised to make a priority of the delivery, in an expeditious manner, of the products and articles that United States considered necessary to conduct its war against Japan, Germany, and Italy. The United States Board of Economic Warfare became the central institution in charge of organizing the industrialization processes of each American Republic. Hence, it approved new administrative procedures and transportation routes, promoted the sale of raw materials to the United States, and distributed United States war funds among American and Latin American companies.<sup>60</sup>

Signatories to the resolutions during the Third Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs agreed to the permanent character of the policies. The Latin American diplomats promised that, at the conclusion of the war, the United States would continue to enjoy inter American trade under the same regulations and low prices. American manufacturers obtained protection against the possible development of industrial processes in Latin American in a post-war period. According to the logic and interests of American corporations, Latin American low-priced goods would be unfair competition to the United States manufacturers even after the war. The Final Act included the commitment to protect post-war American businesses “against competition from goods produced in countries with a low standard of living.”<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Welles and Butler, *The World of the Four Freedoms*, 60.

<sup>60</sup> States, "Final Act of the Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the American Republics," 6. The resolutions taken at the Rio de Janeiro Meeting of 1942 had a large positive economic impact on the United States. The conditions of the economic agreement facilitated the technological and scientific progress of the United States providing this country with an enormous advantage not only during World War II but also during the Cold War. The United States demanded that free market practices between Latin American countries and the United States be set aside under the banner of a state of emergency

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

As war continued, Mexico and other Latin American nations faced internal upheaval caused by the demand to produce more at lower real wages. Ávila Camacho imposed economic measures that demanded more sacrifices from the working class and the political skills of the elites to contain insurrection. With the march of World War II and the implementation of the resolutions passed in Brazil in 1942, agriculture fell under the control of the Mexican-United States Commission for Economic Cooperation, created in 1943 in total coordination with the United States Board of Economic Warfare. Accordingly, this board established priorities in Mexico inhibiting the production of grains essential to the Mexican diet with the consequent rise in malnourishment among the most unprotected populations.<sup>62</sup> The result was that while poor Mexicans were close to famine during World War II, the United States received the resources it required from Mexico. During this period, foreign investment quadrupled, against the desires of those Mexicans who fought during the Mexican Revolution for economic independence from the United States.<sup>63</sup>

In spite of the benefits that the export of raw materials and human labor brought to the United States, to the detriment of the economic growth of Mexico and every other Latin American country signing the Rio de Janeiro Act, Sumner Welles regarded the terms of Inter-American trade established in Brazil as the product of uninterested assistance to the Latin American countries:

[...] because of our material resources, it was obvious that the main brunt of the hemisphere effort to maintain the inter-American economic and commercial structure would have to be borne by this country. [...] The assistance rendered by agencies of this government [...] helped to

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<sup>62</sup> Dana Markiewicz, *The Mexican Revolution and the Limits of Agrarian Reform. 1915-1946* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1993), 131.

<sup>63</sup> Sandra F. Maviglia, "Mexico's Guidelines for Foreign Investment: The Selective Promotion of Necessary Industries," *American Journal of International Law* 80, no. 2 (April, 1986).

stabilize the national economies of our neighbors and enabled them to pass through the most serious crisis they had ever faced.<sup>64</sup>

The Mexican government advertised as well the infusion of American capital in Mexico as a positive aspect of the modernization of Mexico without noting how low real wages had fallen during this period. As Stephen Niblo found in his study of Mexico's economy during World War II, Mexican institutions altered statistics in order to embellish the results of industrialization. Perhaps the best summary of the situation was formulated by a resident of Tepoztlán, in the state of Morelos, who described the results of modernization in Mexico during the 1940s: "We have a new road and many tourists but our children are still dying." The signs of modernity and industrialization, which included the construction of highways, did not necessarily reflect any improvement in the quality of life of most Mexicans.<sup>65</sup>

If workers and peasants did not benefit from the trade agreement between the United States and Mexico during World War II, the elites did. Payment for Manuel Ávila Camacho's collaboration with the United States government and businesses arrived in the form of American financing of his friends and relatives' businesses. American investors also profited from the implementation of new economic projects in Mexico, among them, Samuel R. Rosoff, whose company was in charge of the construction of the Valsequillo/Mirador dam. At its conclusion, this project allowed the irrigation of estates in Puebla owned by President Ávila Camacho and other officers of the Mexican government. Romulo O'Farrill, married to the president's niece and owner of the Automotriz O'Farrill (Packard and Mack Trucks), was highly favored through the import of Mack trucks into Mexico. Approved by the United States War Production Board, the funding of these and other ventures helped to develop the fortunes of members of the

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<sup>64</sup> Welles, *The Time for Decision*, 216-219.

<sup>65</sup> Niblo, *Mexico in the 1940s: Modernity, Politics, and Corruption*, 6.

presidential cabinet as well as of some of their relatives, while Mexican workers' real wages declined as the war produced inflation. In the meantime, nationalism in time of war aided the Mexican government in its management of discontents.<sup>66</sup>

## **Nationalism and War**

The new terms of the relationship between the United States and Mexico did not involve only economics; cultural production was a key element in building the consent of large populations to the collaboration between the two nations. This cooperation included modernization programs demanding low wages, higher production, and improvement of transportation, but also the production of mass media in both countries. Cultural artifacts, such as films, radio programs, and posters demonized Japanese to construct a more cohesive national identity based on race. If, before the war, Mexicans in general constructed a national ideal of citizenship in opposition to United States imperialist projects, during the war Japanese embodied a racial enemy.

According to Communication Science scholar Seith Finn, full collaboration between the Mexican and the United States governments “affected not only industrial and agricultural development, for example, the modernization of Mexican railroads to facilitate the delivery of Mexican resources and labor during the war, but also shaped ideological production.” The Americanization of Mexican society, which took off during World War II implied, thus, a

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<sup>66</sup> The United States Wartime Production Board rejected the application of a Legorreta family for American financing of an alkaline salt recovery and soil reclamation plant, but thanks to their links to the Mexican government the project received eventually the approval and resources to operate from the United States. Stephen R. Niblo, *War, Diplomacy, and Development. The United States and Mexico 1938-1954* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 1995), 117-118.

profound change in the ways in which production and consumption were organized, including new notions of who the enemy was and how to combat it.<sup>67</sup>

To control the content of mass communication in Latin America, President Roosevelt created the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (OCIAA) in July 1941. This department controlled mass media in Mexico during World War II. Combining entertainment with a favorable image of the United States as an ally, Nelson Rockefeller, as chief of the OCIAA, commissioned American entertainment and propaganda industry investors to intervene in the production and distribution of film, radio programs and television shows in Mexico. Under the supervision of the OCIAA, American producers utilized Mexican artists or cultural elements that could contribute to softening any resistance in Mexico to the intervention of the United States in national affairs. They had to work on the Americans' anti-Mexican stance.<sup>68</sup> Walt Disney toured Mexico as an American cultural ambassador, thus, and celebrated pseudo Mexican folklore through the creation of *The Three Caballeros* in which, according to "the persons of Donald, Jose and Panchito, the United States, Brazil, and Mexico were three pals, none more equal than the others." Disney has had a profound impact into the way in which Latin America has been represented in the United States. Before the war, American cultural products demonized Mexicans; at the onset of the war, Disney and other mass media enterprises changed representations about Mexicans to create a friendlier image of Mexicans in relation to Americans.<sup>69</sup>

Cartoons, actors, singers, and other ideological tools exalted nationalism and a sense of national emergency at the expense of Japanese. Mass media productions cultivated a degree of

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<sup>67</sup> Fein, "Myths of Cultural Imperialism and Nationalism in Golden Age Mexican Cinema," 159-166.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Carl J. Mora, *Mexican Cinema: Reflections of a Society, 1896-1980* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 73.

“self-discipline” in the face of the imminent danger Japanese represented during World War II and this awareness of a enemy, embodied in the Japanese Mexicans, helped to suffocate nationalist and labor demands. As historian Stephen Niblo states, Mexican labor leaders occasionally expressed their dissatisfaction with the prevailing working conditions, “however, they made the assessment that it would be parochial and wrong to do anything to hurt the war effort.” Unionist demands, thus, had to be postponed until the threat of the war disappeared.<sup>70</sup>

Historian Monika Rankin research on modernity and propaganda assists our understanding of the control the Mexican government exercised during World War II over dissenters. She argues that “World War II provided a platform for shifting economic development strategies that privileged industrialization” in Mexico. Within this political and economic framework, the Mexican government promoted the idea that the entire country was actively attacking the enemy not only through the confinement of Japanese Mexicans, but also by meeting the United States’ demands of war production.<sup>71</sup>

Indicating the urgency of addressing the status of Japanese Mexicans, President Ávila Camacho reported to the nation his government’s actions against “the enemy” in his presidential address of 1942. In Ávila Camacho’s words, Mexico was spun as a heroic people facing open war against Italy, Germany, and Japan:

[...] because the entire nation has demonstrated with its attitude that, when the time arrives, each Mexican knows how to be a soldier determined to defend the motherland, by taking the arms or at their place of work; through productivity or through sacrifice (Applause).<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Niblo, *Mexico in the 1940s: Modernity, Politics, and Corruption*, 171.

<sup>71</sup> Monika A. Rankin, *Mexico, La Patria: Propaganda and Production During World War II* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010), 2-10.

<sup>72</sup> <http://cronica.diputados.gob.mx/DDebates/38/3er/Ord/19420901.html>

The “defense of the motherland” consisted in the expulsion of Japanese Mexicans and their descendants from the borderlands and the coastal zones.<sup>73</sup> Among the measures to relocate persons of Japanese descent, Ávila Camacho signed a presidential decree suspending individual constitutional rights which “could constitute an obstacle for the expeditious and easy defense of the nation.” Accordingly, his speech heard throughout Mexico over the airwaves stated that:

[...] German, Italian, and Japanese who resided near the coasts and the border, or in faraway places where their presence was deemed undesirable, were transferred to the capital of the Republic and to other places of the interior. Meeting centers belonging to a group of foreigners, our country being in a state of war against theirs, were closed (and other) efficient measures taken in order to avoid the distribution of enemy propaganda and other activities that affect the security of the nation.<sup>74</sup>

Although Ávila Camacho included German and Italian residents of Mexico in his speech, the main target was the Japanese Mexican community. Federal Deputy and Congressional President Manuel Gudiño Díaz replied to the presidential address on the same day with more false accusations against the Japanese Mexican community. Gudiño stated that “because of their activities and origin it was necessary to set (Japanese Mexicans) apart, due to the danger they represent.” Without due trial, the congressman declared that uprooted Japanese Mexicans were disloyal foreigners in spite of their Mexican citizenship.<sup>75</sup>

Whereas during previous decades the Mexican citizenry had often associated nationalism with the struggle against American ownership and exploitation of valuable natural resources, World War II precipitated the creation of a new kind of nationalism. According to Rankin,

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> "Sesión De La Cámara De Diputados Efectuada El Día 1o. De Septiembre De 1942," *Diario de los Debates de la Cámara de Diputados del Congreso de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos* Septiembre 1o. 1942.

“public discussions of the war allowed leaders to fuse those economic strategies with more abstract definitions of democracy and shifting concepts of *la Patria*.”<sup>76</sup>

Labeling Japanese Mexicans as an “internal enemy” partially contributed to Ávila Camacho’s success in achieving national unity. His concept of nation was inextricably linked to racial notions of citizenship. In 1943, Ávila Camacho argued that “because of the war (...Mexico needs) a rigorous selection of immigrants, giving preference to those who are capable of assimilation because of their racial and ideological affinity.”<sup>77</sup> In consequence, when Ávila Camacho removed Japanese Mexicans from the borderlands, he reinforced the idea that Japanese immigrants and their Mexican children were not capable of assimilation and that their inability to integrate into their communities made them agents of the Japanese state. All the while, mass media productions and the official discourse in Mexico emphasized a strong ideological affinity between the peoples of Mexico and the United States.

In spite of narratives claiming that the relocation program was a necessary operation to defend the American continent, Japanese Mexicans were not tried on individual bases to prove their involvement in espionage, sabotage, or military operations. Instead, the Mexican government demonized and uprooted Japanese Mexicans to comply with the United States’ requests. Such deracination had durable and damaging effects on their lives.<sup>78</sup>

Dr. Tsunesaburo Hasegawa Araki, arrested in 1942 on Mexican soil by United States and Mexican soldiers under the direction of the American Vice consul, never returned to the borderlands. The Mexican government did not produce any official document cancelling his

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<sup>76</sup> Rankin, *Mexico, La Patria: Propaganda and Production During World War II*, 2.

<sup>77</sup> Manuel Ávila Camacho, "Tercer Informe Del Presidente Manuel Ávila Camacho," *500 Años de México en Documentos* (1943). <http://www.biblioteca.tv/artman2/uploads/1943.pdf>.

<sup>78</sup> Tetsuden Kashima, *Judgment without Trial: Japanese American Imprisonment During World War II* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003).

naturalization; nor did he recover his citizenship officially.<sup>79</sup> Like Dr. Hasegawa, thousands of Mexican Japanese remained away from their homes in the borderlands, having lost their property, family ties, and some even their lives during World War II. As of today, however, neither the Mexican nor the United States government has ever offered individual reparations to the uprooted Mexican Japanese for their losses.

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<sup>79</sup> II Informe Presidencial de Manuel Ávila Camacho. 1º. De septiembre de 1942. <http://www.diputados.gob.mx/cedia/sia/re/RE-ISS-09-06-09.pdf> accessed on August 30, 2009. Original in Spanish reads: “el decreto que nulifica las cartas de naturalización dolorosamente adquiridas por alemanes, búlgaros, húngaros, italianos, japoneses, y rumanos y suspenden la expedición de los certificados de nacionalidad que el mismo especifica, expedido el 25 de julio”

## CHAPTER 3

### CITIZENSHIP REVOKED AND THE REALITIES OF DISPLACEMENT DURING WORLD WAR II

The small number of Japanese immigrants in Mexico by 1942 may obliterate the deep consequences their eviction from Mexico/United States borderlands had on the notions of what constitutes a democratic society.<sup>1</sup> As is the case of the Japanese American community or any other social group whose civil rights were suspended during World War II, the implications of targeting a racialized sector in times of crisis are enormous if principles of equality and freedom are to be held as permanent and universal. Historians of the Japanese diaspora in Mexico believe that the number of Japanese immigrants in the borderlands ranged between 2,700 and 4,700 in 1942. Regardless of their number, the relocation program left all members of the Japanese Mexican community, including those born in Mexico, naturalized citizens, and the Mexican children and wives of Japanese immigrants, without the protection of the Mexican constitution.

#### Unstable Citizenship

While modern states have validated their existence through the notion that the consistent and uniform application of laws ensures a democratic society, in practice the application of any law is subject to the interpretation and will of government officials.<sup>2</sup> The suspension of civil rights during declared national emergencies illustrates the idea that the application of law is unstable and may be a tool to enforce anti-democratic measures. In times of declared national emergencies the only applicable law is that which the head of state regards as necessary. On June 1, 1942, President Manuel Ávila Camacho signed a decree to suspend individual rights claiming

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<sup>1</sup> María Elena Ota-Mishima, *Siete Migraciones Japonesas En México, 1890-1978* (México: El Colegio de México, 1982).

<sup>2</sup> Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1980s* (New York: Routledge, 1986).

they were “an obstacle to facing the situation created by the state of war in an immediate and direct way.” Among the rights the Mexican president temporarily nullified or restricted were: freedom of speech, of the press, of peaceful assembly, of petition, to be secure against unreasonable searches and seizures, as well as the right to a swift and public trial.<sup>3</sup>

Ignacio Koba and Luis Tanamachi of Nogales, Sonora had their civil rights and citizenship taken away, yet they presented resistance to their denationalization. The Mexican government had forced other Japanese Mexicans in more populous areas into sealed trains escorted by soldiers, into packed buses, or into truck beds since January 1942 to be taken to the interior of Mexico. Tanamachi and Koba, however, refused to go along with their uprooting as late as September of that year.<sup>4</sup> When they heard the news that the government of Mexico had ordered all Japanese subjects to present themselves before federal authorities in Mexico City, neither Ignacio nor Luis thought the measure applied to them. After all, Tanamachi and Koba had documents to prove their nationality. Both continued to operate the small barbershop they owned in partnership in Nogales.<sup>5</sup>

In an effort to cancel federal and local orders for them to leave Nogales, Tanamachi and Koba wrote a telegram informing President Ávila Camacho that they both were Mexican citizens. Both men felt that their 40-year residence in the country made them “Mexicans by feeling, more than by naturalization,” noting that having emotional ties to Mexico was more

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<sup>3</sup> President Ávila Camacho’s order to suspend individual rights was applicable to all citizens of Mexico. On June 2, the Mexican Congress not only ratified the decree but stated that “suspension [of individual rights] will last for as long as Mexico is in war against Germany, Italy, and Japan [...] and may be extended, if deemed necessary by the President, up to thirty days after the date of the cessation of hostilities.”<sup>3</sup> The decree and congressional confirmation opened a space for the state to defend itself for actions that were unlawful under “normal” conditions. Leslie T. Hatamiya, *Righting a Wrong: Japanese Americans and the Passage of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 14.

<sup>4</sup> TIME, “Foreign Relations: To Shoe an Achilles Heel,” *Time Magazine*, January 26, 1942. Also, “Japanese Aliens Moved Into Mexico” *El Paso Herald Post*, March 21, 1942, 10:4.

<sup>5</sup> Telegram from Ignacio N. Koba and L. M. Tanamachi to General Manuel Ávila Camacho, September 12, 1942. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1110.

important than being officially citizens of that country. They had both their citizenship documents and the weight of many years living peacefully in their Mexican town.<sup>6</sup>

Tanamachi and Koba believed that once President Ávila Camacho acknowledged their citizenship rights, they would not be obligated to leave their few possessions, family, and friends for relocation. Aside from the violation of their constitutional rights, the move to the interior of Mexico would be too costly for them since no government entity would cover their travel expenses. Additionally they were required, in compliance with the relocation orders, to pay the expenditures for their housing, clothing, and meals for the duration of the war. This arbitrary imposition was in itself a damaging act against the integrity of individuals and families affected by the relocation program, for even criminals who were tried and sentenced were taken care of by the state while their freedom was taken away.

Although the Mexican government insinuated that Japanese Mexicans formed a Fifth Column, it did not officially declare Japanese Mexicans prisoners of war, spies, or civilian internees. All persons in the United States under these classifications were protected by international agreements on war procedures such as the Geneva Convention, but the joint Mexican-United States Defense Commission, which determined the conditions of the uprooting of the Japanese Mexican community from the borderlands, did not follow the protocols of a “civilized” war.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> From Ignacio N. Koba and L. M. Tanamachi to General Manuel Ávila Camacho, dated September 12, 1942. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1110.

<sup>7</sup> The 1899 Hague Convention, and the Geneva Convention in 1929, required that “the Government into whose hands prisoners of war have fallen is bound to maintain them.” Japanese Mexicans suspected of espionage and removed from their place of residence were also entitled to protection by the same convention, as nations signing the Geneva Act had agreed that “a spy taken in the act cannot be punished without previous trial.”<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, the 1934 International Convention on the Condition and Protection of Civilians determined that the Geneva Convention “concerning the treatment of Prisoners of War (was) by analogy applicable to Civilian Internees.” Mexico was a signatory part of the Geneva and Hague Conventions. XVth International Conference of The Red Cross, “International Convention on the Condition and Protection of Civilians of Enemy Nationality Who

Japanese immigrants and their descendants soon reacted to the loss of their civil rights. Naturalized citizens and citizens by birth were initially confused by the orders to evacuate the borderland. Hundreds of them submitted telegrams to various Mexican officials protesting their relocation. Concerned persons objecting to their deportation, or that of their relatives or friends, from the borderlands during World War II, usually received swift official responses to their telegrams. The painful plea of the Japanese Mexican families to remain undivided and at home was, in most cases, expediently denied. Japanese Mexican men and women who were not married likewise endured separation from their community, property, and means of support.<sup>8</sup>

### **A Vulnerable Population**

A younger man and apparently unrelated to Luis Tanamachi of Nogales, Sonora, Luis Tanamachi Yide managed to stay at home in Navolato, a small community in the northern state of Sinaloa until 1943, under the protection of local residents and the governor of Sinaloa, Rodolfo T. Loaiza.<sup>9</sup> Both Tanamachis were barbers, but younger Luis seemed to have had a more difficult situation than Mr. Tanamachi from Nogales. Luis Tanamachi Yide, from Navolato, wrote to the Minister of the Interior Miguel Alemán to provide details of his hardships. Tanamachi Yide was forced to perform “agricultural activities on a small scale because, due to the rising prices of staples (he) needed to undertake other kinds of labor, in addition to practicing his (barber) trade.” He sought to support “in a honorable manner” his wife and his son.<sup>10</sup> The younger Tanamachi also stated he had a family which would have been in difficult circumstances

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Are on Territory Belonging to or Occupied by a Belligerent," (1934). <http://www.icrc.org/ihl.nsf/WebART/320-470017?OpenDocument>.

<sup>8</sup> From Anacleto F. Olmos, Presidente Municipal de Nogales, Sonora, to Luis M. Tanamachi, Oficio No. 2365, dated October 30, 1942. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1110.

<sup>9</sup> The documents pertaining to the two Tanamachi, who shared their first and last names, were filed in the same folder. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1110

<sup>10</sup> Letter from Luis Tanamachi Yide to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated June 28, 1943 (Navolato, Culiacán, Sin.) IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1110.

and “forced to live from public charity” should he obey his relocation orders. Tanamachi stated he did not have anything “to do with the current international situation, having resided in this generous country - which I dearly love - for a long time.”<sup>11</sup> Both Tanamachis based their arguments on their sworn loyalty and their lack of financial resources.

President Camacho did not reply directly to any Japanese Mexican requesting an exception to the relocation orders. In the case of Koba and Tanamachi, Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, then the Chief Officer of the Departamento de Investigación Política y Social (DIPS), answered their plea. Ruiz Cortines, who would be president of Mexico from 1952 to 1958, explained in a telegram to both Mexican citizens that they could remain at home with one condition: the governor of Sonora had to become the party responsible for them.<sup>12</sup> Thus, the fate of Japanese Mexicans could be decided on a personal basis by members of the national elite.

Japanese Mexicans in Sonora saw their chances to remain at home decreased by the political alliances of their governor, Anselmo Macías Valenzuela. Macías, who held the rank of Colonel, fought during the revolution against the forces of Emiliano Zapata and Francisco Villa and supported anti-Asian former presidents Plutarco Elias Calles and Álvaro Obregón.<sup>13</sup> The governor refused to side with the working class Japanese Mexican men who requested his authorization to remain in their town. Nogales was a border community which could not afford

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<sup>11</sup> Telegram from Luis Tanamachi to Lic. Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, Oficial Mayor de la Secretaría de Gobernación, dated August 17, 1943. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1110.

<sup>12</sup> Telegram from Adolfo Ruiz Cortines to Ignacio Koba y L.M. Tanamachi, dated October 3, 1942 .IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1110.

<sup>13</sup> Roderic Ai Camp, *Mexican Political Biographies, 1935-1993*, Third ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), 420. See also Adrian A. Bantjes, *As If Jesus Walked on Earth: Cardenismo, Sonora, and the Mexican Revolution* (Wilmington: SR Books, 1998).

residents of Japanese origin for security reasons, he argued, and Macías could not personally vouch for the “foreigners” Koba and Tanamachi.<sup>14</sup>

### **Legal Recourses Voided**

Ignacio Koba and Luis Tanamachi did not accept the official answer to their plea from the governor of Sonora. Although Governor Macias supported the government’s order to uproot them, the two men were relentless in seeking to maintain their civil rights and citizenship status. A first recourse was provided by Articles 103 and 107 of the Mexican Constitution in which citizens were given the right to request protection from a state court against state abuses through the writ of *amparo*.<sup>15</sup> Tanamachi and Koba petitioned such protection from a judge to suspend any official act against their civil rights while the legality of the government orders was investigated.<sup>16</sup> The procedure was costly as they had to pay an attorney to file their documents in court, but in spite of their scant resources they had much more to lose with their eviction.<sup>17</sup>

Processing the *amparo* delayed their transference for some days; nevertheless, the effort proved futile in the end. The judge in charge of overseeing their case denied them protection from the government’s injunction. On October 30, Anacleto Olmos, mayor of Nogales, ordered Koba and Tanamachi to present themselves at the Departamento de Investigación Política y Social (DIPS), Ministry of the Interior, located in the Mexican capital.<sup>18</sup>

The situation for Japanese Mexicans became more troubling still. The Mexican government ordered that Japanese Mexicans carried documents at all times indicating their official place of residence. Mexican citizens of Japanese descent and Japanese nationals suffered

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<sup>14</sup> General Anselmo Macías Valenzuela to the C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated October 2, 1942. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1110.

<sup>15</sup> Jorge Cicero, “International Law in Mexican Courts”, *Journal of Transnational Law*, Vol. 30, 1997.

<sup>16</sup> An “amparo” is a legal recourse to remedy unfair or illegal actions from a government agency.

<sup>17</sup> From Anacleto F. Olmos to Ignacio K. Koba (sic), dated October 30, 1942. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1110.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

continuous harassment, and had no place to hide. The threat of violence loomed while Japanese Mexicans tried to establish their right to remain at home: police and soldiers could enforce relocation orders at any time. And officials of different ranks and departments had to be informed where Japanese Mexicans were at all times and why.

In small communities, Japanese Mexicans had the support of their neighbors and mayors usually petitioned the cancellation of relocation orders without success. Local officers had to expel Japanese Mexicans from their communities against their own will. As Tanamachi and Koba exhausted their legal recourses, federal and local authorities hurried them to leave for Mexico City. The mayor of Nogales, Mr. Olmos, set their departure date on November 2. Emphasizing the power of federal institutions over local power, on November 3, Adolfo Ruíz Cortines, then director of the DIPS, inquired as to the whereabouts of these two Mexican citizens and demanded their immediate presentation in Mexico City.<sup>19</sup>

The recently created DIPS gave a number of inspectors the task of secretly visiting remote populations in search of members of the Axis countries. Such federal employees acting as undercover agents occasionally wrote anonymous reports, identifying themselves with numbers. Inspector number 135, in charge of surveying North Sonora, diligently sent a telegram on November , 1942, to the Ministry of the Interior informing that, on the same date, Ignacio Koba and Luis Tanamachi, described as “Japanese subjects” in spite of their Mexican citizenship, had taken the train in the direction of Mexico City in the company of Hitsa Matsuo de Tanamachi, Luis’ wife.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> From Adolfo Ruíz Cortines to General Anselmo Macías Valenzuela, dated November 3, 1942. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1110.

<sup>20</sup> From Inspector 135 to Secretaría de Gobernación/Migración, dated November 4, 1942. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1110.

In spite of the uneven pace of the relocation program, no amount of time was sufficient to allow Japanese Mexicans in the borderlands to prepare for their displacement. They knew that they would be left to their own means, but many relocated persons of Japanese origin did not have property to convert to cash in order to fund their removal from their communities. Tenant farmers had serious difficulties as they had invested most of their resources in crops they would not be able to harvest due to the order to abandon their homes. They attempted to delay their relocation in order to avoid total bankruptcy.<sup>21</sup> Hiroshi Tanaka Ykeda, Suematzu Tanaka, and Sigueru Sata, who lived in the state of Sonora, requested permission to remain working in their fields until the end of the harvest season.<sup>22</sup> Mr. Tanaka explained their situation in detail to the Ministry of the Interior:

I arrived in this country in 1917, residing in the Yaqui region since 1927, to become a small scale farmer. Once in this region, I married a Mexican national, Maria Petra González [...] Because the past years have not been fruitful in terms of farming, I have no money. The only hope I have is the harvest of wheat and vegetables I planted in 20 hectares located in Sapochopo. Having invested everything I have in the fields, I have worked in partnership with Suematzu Tanaka and Sigueru Sata who are also in very bad financial shape, but hopeful to recover through this year's harvest. It is because of this situation that [...] I beg you, and with me Sigueru Sata and Suematzu Tanaka, the latter having a wife Kimie Tanaka and five little children born in this country, to postpone the deadline set for us to leave this place.<sup>23</sup>

Although at the foundation of the modern nation is the idea that abiding existing laws will guarantee equal opportunities for all citizens, the suspension of laws in states of emergency create or reinforce unequal relations of power. The Mexican government interned Japanese nationals; they also uprooted and stripped citizens by birth and naturalization of their civil and human rights. Such cancellation of human and individual rights, resulted not only in the erasure

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<sup>21</sup> From Margarito T. Hayakawa to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated April 9, 1942, IPS 2/1/362.4(52)1587.

<sup>22</sup> From Hiroshi Tanaka to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated April 23, 1942, IPS 2-1/362.4(52)1221. See also IPS 2-1/362.4(52)994, IPS 2-1/362.4(52)995 and IPS 2-1/362.4(52)1179.

<sup>23</sup> From Hiroshi Tanaka to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated April 11, 1942, IPS 2-1/362.4(52)1179. Ibid.

of the political participation of Japanese Mexicans, but also in material losses that deprived them of their livelihoods.

In spite of their pleas, Mexican Japanese farmers were now forced to abandon the fields they had tended with great effort. Other small businesses owners transferred or closed their shops with negative consequences for the communities in which they resided with their families.<sup>24</sup> Initially, the Mexican government gave most Japanese Mexicans in the borderlands only two alternatives to relocate in the interior of the country to keep them under the control of centralized police and military offices: they could reside in Mexico City or in Guadalajara, the two largest metropolitan centers in the country. Upon their arrival in these two cities, uprooted Japanese Mexicans faced unemployment, homelessness, and separation from their families.

## **Mexico City**

The rising unemployment rate in Mexico City was the product of rural migration to large urban centers in the 1940s; Japanese Mexicans, however, had specific obstacles to overcome. Legislative measures forbade “enemy aliens” from accepting employment if their hiring would displace a Mexican citizen.<sup>25</sup> The Ministry of the Interior required Japanese Mexicans to present themselves at its offices in Bucareli Street on a regular basis. Some displaced men had to be counted every day and others weekly.<sup>26</sup> Few business owners would grant permission to their employees to miss a workday, much less excuse their absence when the DIPS subjected Japanese

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<sup>24</sup> From Margarito T. Hayakawa to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated April 9, 1942, IPS 2/1/362.4(52)1587.

<sup>25</sup> Stephen R. Niblo, *War, Diplomacy, and Development. The United States and Mexico 1938-1954* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 1995), 5, 6 and 7. From Antonio de P. Araujo to C. Subjefe del Dept. de Investigación Política y Social, dated May 26, 1942. 2-1/362.4(52)/600 II.

<sup>26</sup> From Antonio de P. Araujo to C. Subjefe del Dept. de Investigación Política y Social, dated May 26, 1942. 2-1/362.4(52)/600 II Tome, and From Luis T. Tsuji to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated August 10, 1943. IPS 2/1/362.4(52)1250.

Mexicans to interrogations that lasted several days.<sup>27</sup> Even those who were bedridden due to sickness had to overcome their medical problems to sign their name at the DIPS offices as mandated by the Ministry of the Interior.<sup>28</sup> In general, poor residents of all ethnic backgrounds were already having a hard time trying to make ends meet in Mexico City as inflation elevated staples prizes. Several Japanese Mexicans were blind or disabled; therefore, they had even fewer opportunities than other newcomers to find a job in the capital.<sup>29</sup>

Hunger was prevalent from the first days of the evacuation for Mexican Japanese from the borderlands. Numerous written testimonies describe malnourishment in the Army facilities, police stations, jails, concentration camps, and other designated areas in which Japanese Mexicans were confined.<sup>30</sup> The lack of food impacted significantly and disproportionately children, women, sick and elderly persons whose support had been previously provided by Japanese Mexicans forced to leave their employment or small businesses in the borderlands. Once in Mexico City, men separated from their families were responsible for two households, theirs in the interior of the country, and those of their relatives in their places of origin.<sup>31</sup>

The high rate of unemployment among relocated persons in the capital was noted by Generals Alfredo Delgado and Ramón F. Iturbide. Both generals observed that:

[...] the crowding of foreign persons relocated to this capital is becoming a grave economic problem, since they are exhausting their means of support and they have to compete in a desperate struggle with

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<sup>27</sup> From Antonio de P. Araujo to C. Subjefe del Dept. de Investigación Política y Social, dated May 26, 1942. 2-1/362.4(52)/600 II Tome; and from Luis T. Tsuji to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated July 31, 1943, 2-1/362.4(52)/1106.

<sup>28</sup> Certificate by Dr. Ruperto Bretón, (Manuel Masajiro Kawano) dated December 15, 1942, IPS 2-1/362.4(52)1128.

<sup>29</sup> 59-year old Mauricio Jika Jika from Palau, Coahuila, stated that he did “not have any way to survive in this capital (as I used to do in Palau) since my right leg is paralyzed.” From Mauricio Jika Jika to Secretaría de Gobernación, DIPS, dated August 27, 1942. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)400. See files of Pablo Jayassi, IPS 2-1/362.4(52)1349; Genaro Romero, IPS 2-1/362.4(52)1099; Enrique Sugarawa Sugarawa, IPS 2-1/362.4(52)1355.

<sup>30</sup> From Colonia Japonesa de Mazatlán to Sr. Presidente de la República, dated January 17, 1942. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/600.

<sup>31</sup> From Julio Tukunaga to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated October 29, 1943. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1030.

our nationals in order to survive or to be left to the compassionate care of state or private institutions. In addition, would it not be easier to have them under control in the interior of the country than in an urban center as densely populated as the City of Mexico?<sup>32</sup>

To complicate Japanese Mexicans' search for jobs, officers at the Ministry of Interior followed to the letter the order to constrain their mobility within the limits of the Federal District. The borders of Mexico City were not always clearly defined in relation to the Estado de México, the state surrounding the national capital. When officers in charge of processing employment authorizations could not identify the address of a potential employer as being within jurisdiction of the Federal District, they denied the requested permission, arguing that the place was within a restricted zone.<sup>33</sup>

Even though Mexico City was one of the zones where Japanese Mexicans from the borderlands were ordered to stay, DIPS inspectors arrested and imprisoned Japanese Mexican men who were caught without written authorization from the DIPS in Mexico City.<sup>34</sup> Francisco José Kameyama Kynosuke's experience illustrates the problems Japanese Mexicans faced in the Federal District. Months after his arrival in April 1942 from North Mexico, Kameyama found a job as mechanic and had permission to work at the shop employing him. His employer then moved the shop Francisco José worked at to Tlalnepantla, Estado de México. This municipality was only ten miles away from Mexico City and had officially been part of the Federal District

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<sup>32</sup> From Generals Alfredo Delgado and Ramón F. Iturbide to Lic. Don Miguel Alemán, Secretario de Gobernación, dated October 18, 1943, IPS 2-1/362.4 (52)/973.

<sup>33</sup> From Malaquías Huitrón to C. Oficial Mayor de la Secretaría de Gobernación, dated June 4, 1943, IPS 2-1/362.4(52)395.

<sup>34</sup> Shojiro Shinomiya and Riozo Kaubayashi were arrested by military and civil officers, being incarcerated for approximately ten days in Atlixco, Puebla. A Mr. Varela, their employer, had sent them to work in his ranch while their permit was being processed. From Fernando Luna, Presidente Municipal de Atlixco, to C. Coronel de Caballería, Maximiano Ochoa Moreno, dated August 9, 1944. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/797. Also Kahei Kikimura Katacha was arrested and imprisoned. From Manuel A. Guirado to Jefe DIPS, dated April 18, 1944. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)1880.

until 1856.<sup>35</sup> No visible division separated Tlanepantla's streets from Mexico city. The shop was not located within the area of confinement, however, and Kameyama met with trouble at his new place of employment when DIPS inspectors asked to see his permit. Because Kameyama had a book in Japanese at the time of the inspector's search, and he did not have a permit to live in Tlanepantla, Francisco José was charged by the federal police with being a spy. The 42-year old man, who had been living in Mexico since he was a toddler, spent four days in jail until he was able to demonstrate that his book did not include subversive material. It was a religious text that a priest had given him as a baptismal present.<sup>36</sup>

Policemen in Mexico City could corroborate almost immediately individual permits of Japanese Mexicans, as certified copies were filed at the DIPS offices in the same city. However, they chose to harass displaced Japanese Mexicans and curtail their chances to hold their jobs or find employment. Yadao Yamashita Yamashita, from the state of Coahuila, exemplified the troubles Japanese Mexicans met when they misplaced their documents. When a DIPS inspector interrogated Yamashita in the street, and found out that the Japanese Mexican man did not have his documents with him, he escorted Yamashita to the DIPS office. Yamashita was detained until he produced his "permit" to reside in Mexico City. The inspector could have verified Yamashita's relocation documents by simply examining his file at the same DIPS offices where Yamashita was arrested. The burden of proof fell on Yamashita, however; therefore, he spent time detained until somebody else brought his documents to the DIPS facilities.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Maria Teresa Jarquin, *Historia General Del Estado De Mexico* (Toluca: Colegio Mexiquense, 1998), 112.

<sup>36</sup> Kameyama grew up in Sonora. Official Act signed by Alejandro Ortega on December 22, 1943. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)589.

<sup>37</sup> Report by Sadao Yamachita Yamashita (sic) on November 18, 1943. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1059. See also report by Manuel S. Miyamoto, Matsimoto Toraki, Yukio Tanaka, Otakichi Kano, Kalawa Mulai Shuji and Victor Asai Asai at the DIPS offices after their arrest on December 8, 1942.

Japanese Mexicans were subjected not only to the physical abuse by officials who threatened them with arrest in order to collect bribes. They were also vulnerable to exploitation in their place of work. Employers of Japanese Mexican persons living in Mexico City assumed the role of guards as they were “committed not to authorize [their Japanese employees] to move out of their place of work and residence.”<sup>38</sup> Thus, Japanese Mexican workers were forced to keep their jobs, even when mistreated, until the Ministry of the Interior authorized them to leave them.<sup>39</sup> When their new employers were particularly powerful, as was the case of the seven Japanese Mexicans hired to work in April 1942 at the ranch of the Minister of Economy Francisco Javier Gaxiola, Jr., their obligation to remain at their place of employment undoubtedly felt weightier.<sup>40</sup> Japanese Mexicans frequently worked at military households and haciendas performing housekeeping, gardening, or agricultural chores.<sup>41</sup> Even former president Lázaro Cárdenas employed at least two uprooted Japanese Mexicans during World War II.<sup>42</sup> Since most Japanese Mexicans had achieved self-employment by 1942, albeit some with very small businesses, becoming dependent laborers reduced not only their salaries, but also their social status and self-esteem.

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<sup>38</sup> From José González Ortega to C. jefe del Dept. de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, dated December 27, 1943. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/600.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> From Gustavo F. Nava to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated April 10, 1942. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/387

<sup>41</sup> From Takahashi Tangi Johiro and Gral. Brigadier Sabas Hinojosa R. to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated December 30, 1943. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1340.

<sup>42</sup> From Kaishi Kaishi Chusue Hori to C. Director General de Población, dated March 6, 1943 and to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated May 22, 1943. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/871. Also José G. Jonda, former internee at the Temixco camp, was hired by Ezequiel Padilla, Minister of the Foreign Relation as a gardener in his Cuernavaca’s home in June, 1945. From José G. Jonda to Secretario de Gobernación, June 9, 1945. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1512. From Luis Manuel Moreno to C. Secretario de Gobernación, in reference to Guillermo Kono, dated September 13, 1945. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1556 and from Yoshimura Koshi Kumezo to H. Secretaría de Gobernación, dated June 2, 1943. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/806. Another Mexican Japanese, Manuel Yofu, reported having “been brought [to Pátzcuaro, Michoacán] by General Lázaro Cárdenas who told him that he would not need any documents” to be employed at Escuela Hijos del Ejército as a cook, memorandum from Inspector 51, dated August 25, 1944. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1578.

Unfamiliarity with their surroundings could also have been a reason to stay or to leave a job. Living in the city required more than knowing the names of the streets.<sup>43</sup> Japanese Mexicans who had spent many years in northern Mexico had to learn to be street-wise. Thefts affected Japanese Mexicans greatly since uprooted persons had to carry their original permits at all times with them. When their documents were stolen, policemen suspected Japanese Mexicans of lying and the procedure to replace their permits was long and arduous: police officers visited their homes to conduct an exhaustive investigation before the DIPS could grant a duplicate permit.<sup>44</sup>

Not only uprooted Japanese Mexicans endured tight state control during World War II. Those who had an established life in Mexico City before 1942 saw their lives affected by state policing as well at the onset of the war. For example, the DIPS placed Daniel Okada's restaurant on Luis Moya # 44 under surveillance because inspectors considered it a "place where we know persons of the same nationality meet, with the danger of becoming a center of activities supporting the Axis." Their reasons to consider Okada a spy were that he was blacklisted by United States officials; he purchased American supplies for his restaurant through a Mexican woman; he owned "his own house and car;" and maintained business transactions with a L.U. Funatsu, whose name had also been blacklisted in 1942.<sup>45</sup> Luis M. Takano and Benito Takizawa were also established denizens of Mexico City who faced harassment during World War II. They derived their support from driving a taxi cab. In August 1942, the Japanese Mexican men

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<sup>43</sup> From Manuel Hayashi to Secretaría de Gobernación, dated August 1, 1942. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)843.

<sup>44</sup> From Eduardo Ampudia to C. Inspector Carlos Fontones Paz, dated August 4, 1943. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)1581.

<sup>45</sup> Lic. José Lelo de Larrea to C. Inspector Carlo Saavedra. Confidential letter dated September 28, 1943, and undated report. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1604.

were forced to surrender their driver licenses and car's license plates to police officers who thought persons of Japanese origin were barred from being taxi drivers.<sup>46</sup>

Middle class Japanese Mexicans who had managed to keep some of their possessions or capital found other types of restrictions on the conduct of their businesses. Professionals and businessmen who needed to travel to other cities in the interior of the country to acquire supplies for their offices or shops were forced to request permission in advance.<sup>47</sup> Even some Mexican Japanese who enjoyed certain economic comfort in their new places, faced instability and emotional distress due to their relocation. Hisashi Narihiro, a doctor, stated his situation:

[...] very often we hear rumors that we will be transferred once again to other places and since this [new displacement] implies a grave disturbance in my professional practice and since my financial resources have been affected by the different moves I have been subjected to and having the imperious necessity of working in order to survive decorously, I beg you to order [...] this city as my permanent address.<sup>48</sup>

Seeing resources of Japanese Mexicans reduced, Japanese Mexican entrepreneur Alberto Yoshida begged Secretary of the Interior Miguel Alemán to soften restrictive financial regulations:

It is true that a disposition dictated by the Treasury Department allows the monthly withdrawal of up to five hundred pesos [...] but this measure does not alleviate their desperation and moral suffering [...] for they will have to spend all their savings to live in misery and hunger. [...] I beg you in the name of many of the persons affected (by these dispositions), being a just and a humanitarian measure, the individual release of all frozen bank accounts, so they can choose freely their employment or occupation.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> From Gustavo Takano Araiza to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated August 3, 1942. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1646., and from Carlos Takizawa Lara to C. Secretario de Gobernación del D. F., dated August 3, 1942. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1649.

<sup>47</sup> From Hisashi Narihiro to C. Jefe de la Oficina de Información y Propaganda Política, dated February 20, 1943. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/950.

<sup>48</sup> From Hisashi Narihiro to C. Ministro de Gobernación, dated July 8, 1942. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/950.

<sup>49</sup> From A. S. Yoshida to Lic. Miguel Alemán, dated March 26, 1942. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/600.

Yoshida proposed a new regulation which would only affect middle class and wealthy persons, among them Yoshida himself, since the poorest members of the community did not have bank accounts from which to withdraw money.

Yoshida also requested permission to publish a weekly bulletin “in Japanese language and in Castilian, taking in account that most of our compatriots do not know how to read Castilian.” The publication would inform the community about possible jobs and provide orientation on how to comply with the national measures applying to Japanese Mexicans, “excluding absolutely all political comments about the international situation.” In addition, Yoshida reminded the Minister of the Interior that Japanese Americans interned in concentration camps in the United States had food, employment, and medical care while under the custody of the United States government.<sup>50</sup>

Not only did the Mexican government not provide shelter and meals for uprooted Japanese Mexicans, but it denied them, quite often without explanation, the opportunity to work in order to support their families. Thus, the Ministry of the Interior sabotaged the earnest efforts of Japanese Mexicans to find employment.<sup>51</sup>

Unemployment added to the problems of some uprooted Japanese Mexicans. Destitute and extremely sick, George Yamanouchi, from Rayón, Sonora, faced his own imminent death as soon as he was ordered to leave his ranch in the borderlands. Yamanouchi was a 67 year-old man with a heart condition, arthritis, and severe edema, all problems worsened by the altitude of

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> From Luis Manuel Moreno to C. Secretario de Gobernación, in reference to Guillermo Kono, dated September 13, 1945. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1556 and from Yoshimura Koshi Kumezo to H. Secretaría de Gobernación, dated June 2, 1943. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/806.

Mexico City.<sup>52</sup> In a series of letters addressed to various offices, George Yamanouchi requested to

[...] be allowed to die at the piece of land I lived at for so many years, and where with [the fruit of] my work and thousand sacrifices I acquired some land I love more than life itself. I am very old, Sir, and I only have few days to live, I will always thank you for the favor [to let me die at home], for which I appeal to your generosity and humanitarianism.<sup>53</sup>

The Japanese Mexican elder man did not receive permission to return to Sonora to spend his last days at home. Fortunately, other Japanese Mexican men tended to him in Mexico City for a while. When, for reasons of employment, his roommates were forced to abandon the elderly man, the Comité Japonés de Ayuda Mutua (CJAM), organization mediating between the uprooted Japanese Mexicans and the government, asked the Ministry of the Interior to intern Yamanouchi in a nursing home.<sup>54</sup> Confronted with the moral obligation that the Ministry of the Interior would have to pay for Yamanouchi's care at a nursing home, Eduardo Ampudia, DIPS Chief, gave permission for the Japanese Mexican ailing man to return to Sonora on March 16, 1944.<sup>55</sup> It was too late. Yamanouchi could not make the trip back home because of his grave medical condition.<sup>56</sup> George Yamanouchi entered a concentration camp where he died in August, 1944.<sup>57</sup> He shared with other Japanese Mexicans common circumstances of poverty,

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<sup>52</sup> Certificate by Dr. Eduardo González Hurtado, dated December 14, 1943. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1145.

<sup>53</sup> From G. A. Yamanouchi to C. Jefe del Depto. de Investigación Política, undated. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1145.

<sup>54</sup> From Lujis T. Suji to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated February 21, 1944. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1145.

<sup>55</sup> Permission signed by Lic. Eduardo Ampudia, dated March 16, 1944. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1145.

<sup>56</sup> From Tokumi Tanaka to C. Jefe de la Oficina de Investigación Política, dated April 11, 1944. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1145.

<sup>57</sup> From Donaciano Ceballos to Lic. Eduardo Ampudia, dated August 30, 1944. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1145. From Romualdo J. Cházaro to Lic. J. Lelo de Larrea, dated February 25, 1943; and from Romualdo J. Cházaro to Lic. Eduardo Ampudia, dated August 23, 1943 IPS 2-1/362.4(52)968.

illnesses, and death during the relocation program.<sup>58</sup> The program affected, however, other Mexican denizens of Asian descent.

That Korea had been invaded by Japan and Koreans were victims of Japanese imperialism did not matter to Mexican officials who sought to control the Japanese Mexican community already displaced and living within the limits established for them. In November 1942, Mexico City Police Chief General Miguel Martínez arrested José Hahn Kim, secretary of the Korean Association in Mexico City. Colonel Daniel P. Fort accused Hahn Kim of “having a conversation (with an unidentified person) that was contrary to the democracies.”<sup>59</sup> The policemen’s qualms grew larger when they searched Hahn Kim and found two documents in languages they did not know. One of them was written in Korean, but policemen thought the text showed Japanese characters. The second document was typed in English. This text, signed by Mr. Chi Kin, Chief of the Executive Committee of the Local Korean Association in Mérida, Yucatan, once translated from English to Spanish read (as a DIPS translator reported):

[...] At the present time America and Japan are at war and Mexico has declared war against Japan. This is a good opportunity for Koreans: one in thousand years. After we lost the sovereignty of our country, people in the world called us slaves of a ruined country. (...) The matter we shall worry is that during this bitter war between America and Japan, if the unlawful persons mistake Koreans by Japanese: how should we do concerning the unreasonable and violent actions? (sic).<sup>60</sup>

The Korean community’s fear of falling victims to the anti-Japanese campaign proved justified. José Hahn Kim was detained because a civilian passing by him in the street suspected Kim of being Japanese due to his appearance. His accuser, Daniel P. Fort, did not have to explain in

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<sup>58</sup> From Ernesto Corona Ruesga, Jefe del Servicio de Inspección, to C. Oficial Mayor de la Secretaría de Gobernación, dated June 10, 1943, IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/1141. From Donaciano Ceballos to Lic. Eduardo Ampudia, dated August 30, 1944.

<sup>59</sup> From General Miguel Martínez to C. Licenciado Miguel Alemán, dated November 13, 1942. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)1590. Other arrested Korean Mexican men were Antonio Kim, Pedro Kim and José Sosa. From Ricardo Lee to Sr. José Hahn, dated June 6, 1942. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)1331.

<sup>60</sup> Iun Chi Kin (sic) to Mr. Tsun Yuan Ham, signed “December of the 23<sup>rd</sup> year of the Republic of Korea” IPS 2-1/362.4(52)1590.

detail what kind of statements Hahn Kim had made in order to warrant his arrest. It was Hahn Kim's responsibility to establish his innocence and to prove he was legally in the country. It appears General Martínez released Hahn Kim from jail after a General Rojo vouched for the Mexican Korean. Nevertheless, Japanese and Korean Mexicans lost any civil or human rights they had when Mexico declared war against Japan.<sup>61</sup>

In his examination of the mechanisms through which modern nations operate, Giorgio Agamben recognizes that the enjoyment of human rights is dependent on the projects of the state. Counter to the idea that modern states protect each of their citizens, Agamben argues that citizenship does not imply permanent access to human and civil rights; rather the state dictates the conditions under which some citizens will enjoy their rights and when they will have access to the protection of the laws. In *State of Exception*, Agamben studies how states take actions that in principle violate human rights but that become legal practice during states of emergency. The philosopher concludes that the suspension of laws predicated on the excuse of national crisis allows a state to cancel the citizenship of those who challenge the rule of the state in order to exclude, exploit, or exterminate or them.<sup>62</sup>

The 1942 relocation program contributed to the normalization of state violence against the same citizens it was purportedly created to protect.<sup>63</sup> A common element in the management of populations cited in this and other chapters is the targeting of individuals in terms of legally defined racial characteristics. The territorial exclusion of populations of color which took place

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<sup>61</sup> From General Miguel Martínez to C. Licenciado Miguel Alemán, dated November 13, 1942. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)1590. Other cases of Korean men whose civil rights were cancelled are in the following files: IPS 2-1/362.4(52)1082, IPS 2-1/362.4(52)1331, IPS 2-1/362.4(52)1617.

<sup>62</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

<sup>63</sup> Earl M. Maltz, "The Fourteenth Amendment and Native American Citizenship," *Constitutional Commentary* 17, no. 3 (2000). Camille Guerin-Gonzales, *Mexican Workers and American Dreams: Immigration, Repatriation, and California Farm Labor, 1900-1939* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1994); Yasuko I. Takezawa, *Breaking the Silence: Redress and Japanese American Ethnicity* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995).

in the Mexico/United States borderlands with the consequential loss of their rights reinforces the idea that effective citizenship is limited to persons racially classified as “Mexicans.”

Furthermore, the construction of negative images which surround the uprooting of racialized persons and communities separates human beings into deserving and undeserving citizens. Both the United States and Mexico governments alienated ethnic Japanese through their racial classification in 1942 and deprived them of their civil rights.<sup>64</sup>

The Mexican government forced Japanese Mexicans to travel south in order to relocate to Mexico City. Yet, the evacuation program had a trans-border character that involved many more persons from other regions. Thousands of Latin American families traveled in various directions within and outside of the American Continent. The United States Department of State and the Department of Justice would take control of the lives of thousands of Latin American Japanese during World War II to control and isolate them in concentration camps in the United States for the duration of the war, and beyond.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> See George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006).

<sup>65</sup> Thomas Connell, *America's Japanese Hostages: The World War II Plan for a Japanese Free Latin America* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2002); P. Scott Corbett, *Quiet Passages: The Exchange of Civilians between the United States and Japan During the Second World War* (Kent, Ohio, and London: The Kent State University Press, 1987).

## CHAPTER 4

### A TRANSNATIONAL FAMILY: LIFE IN CRYSTAL CITY CAMP IN TEXAS

When President Franklin D. Roosevelt ordered Japanese Americans interned in camps during World War II, the United States extended its management of the population of Japanese descent to the entire hemisphere. The transference of thousands of Latin American Japanese to concentration camps in the United States, however, was handled by different United States agencies. While the War Relocation Authority controlled Japanese Americans, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) was in charge of confining persons of Japanese, German, and Italian descent practically kidnapped and “delivered” to United States military personnel in 1942 by local police officials in Latin America. Consequently, in the same year, the INS opened several detention facilities in the United States to intern Latin Americans from Peru, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Colombia, Panama, and other American Republics. The INS classified Latin American Japanese as illegal immigrants though they entered the United States against their will. The objective of the United States was to have a pool of civilians from the Axis nations available to exchange for American civilians who remained in Japanese-controlled territories.<sup>1</sup>

The first 2,264 prisoners of Japanese descent from Latin America were men. Later, more prisoners arrived in the United States when the United States Department gave Latin American Japanese interned in American concentration camps the “choice” to bring their families to raise the number of persons available for exchange. Although some wives and children of the Japanese prisoners refused to travel to the United States to enter the concentration

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<sup>1</sup> Ethnicities and nationalities, such as German and Italian determined the place and length of internment of many residents of the United States and Latin American countries as well. See P. Scott Corbett, *Quiet Passages: The Exchange of Civilians between the United States and Japan During the Second World War* (Kent, Ohio, and London: The Kent State University Press, 1987).

camps, others were willing to accept their confinement if they could live with their parents, children, or spouses awaiting their deportation to Japan.<sup>2</sup> This chapter examines the experiences of the Gushikens, a transnational family residing in the United States/Mexico borderlands in 1942. The Gushikens endured separation and internment while awaiting their deportation from the United States during World War II. Their confinement at Crystal City Camp illustrates the troubles of thousands Latin American citizens during World War II.

Denkei Gushiken was one of the first borderlanders to suffer the consequences of the war when he drove his Chevrolet truck over the bridge from Cd. Juárez, Chihuahua to El Paso, Texas on Monday, December 8, 1941 to start his day work as usual.<sup>3</sup> As he crossed the border, INS officials arrested him. He would not see his family from that day until August 1943, when the Gushikens reunited in the concentration camp the INS opened in Crystal City, Texas.

Borderland communities are sites of intense transnational activities and most establish roots on both sides of the border, despite their nationality. Before 1942, Japanese immigrants and other residents of the borderlands tried to avoid the effects of racist measures and to better their lives through daily acts that defied the logics of national boundaries. Denkei Gushiken was a Japanese national whose life was divided between the United States and Mexico. Unlike his wife and children, the INS had authorized him to live and work in the United States, granting him “resident alien” status. But Gushiken crossed the border every day to take care of his family in Cd. Juárez. Even if Denkei Gushiken did not have a permit to reside in Mexico, Mexican immigration officials would not bother him as long as he had a United States residence card.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Letter from L. T. McCollister, Acting Officer in Charge, to W. J. Harmon, Bureau of Customs at El Paso, Texas, dated 4/2/1947. INS NARA File 940/15.

<sup>4</sup> Report of Alien Enemy. United States Department of Justice, Immigration and Naturalization Service. Office of Crystal City, Texas, District No. 940/15. Alien No. 489513, dated April 15, 194. NARA INS File 940/15.

Gushiken, a 45 year old man, was intending to manage the daily operations at his store in El Paso when he was arrested by Military Police and INS officials at the Santa Fe Bridge. Den Produce Co., his store, was a downtown business with customers from Mexico and the United States.<sup>5</sup> While Denkei and his wife, Tsune Gushiken, were Japanese nationals, their children were born in Mexico. Tsune, about 32 years old in 1942, lived in Cd. Juárez with their daughters, Keiko and Haruye, as well as with their five-year old son, Denmei. Keiko and Haruye attended the Emilio Carranza Elementary School in their neighborhood. They were 10 and 7 years old at the time of their father's arrest.<sup>6</sup>

Denkei Gushiken experienced great losses with his arrest. The INS detained the Japanese immigrant for more than a year at the Lordsburg Internment Camp, located 160 miles northwest of El Paso in the state of New Mexico.<sup>7</sup> His detention impacted his family right away, for he was forced to leave his wife and children without economic support in Cd. Juárez. In addition, by government dispositions, his bank account was frozen, his store was closed, every item he owned in the United States was seized, his business partner was arrested, and his father was sent to a farm in New Mexico within days of his arrest.<sup>8</sup>

Conditions in the POW camp in which Denkei Gushiken was interned were deplorable. The United States Army considered the Lordsburg camp a temporary site of confinement. Because prisoners did not have diplomatic representation at the time of their internment, inmates

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<sup>5</sup> Letter from Grover C. Page, cashier at Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, El Paso Branch, to L. T. McCollister, Acting Officer in Charge, U. S. Department of Justice, Alien Internment Camp, Crystal City, Texas, dated January 3, 1943. NARA INS File 940/15.

<sup>6</sup> Application for Repatriation (By alien of enemy nationality under jurisdiction of Immigration and Naturalization Service). Denhichiro Gushiken. Crystal City, Zavala, Texas. Undated. NARA INS File 940/15.

<sup>7</sup> From Frances L. Rand, State Department of Public Welfare, El Paso, Texas, to Mr. N. D. Collaer, Supervisor of Alien Detention, Crystal City, Texas, dated April 7, 1943. NARA INS File 940/15.

<sup>8</sup> From L. T. McCollister, Acting Officer in Charge, Crystal City, Texas, to El Paso Branch Federal Reserve Bank, dated December 30, 1943. (In reference to the "monies, etc. taken from Den Produce Co) NARA INS File 940/15.

were subjected to mistreatment without immediate legal recourse to defend themselves. It was not until August 10 that a Spanish diplomat visited the Lordsburg Camp and reported the prisoners' conditions. They improved only in December 1942 when the United States army accepted that the Geneva Convention applied to the management of its prisoners of war. Inmates, however, remained separated from their families and their confinement contributed to deterioration of their health and emotional states.<sup>9</sup> Censorship of their letters required the hiring of Japanese readers who took a long time reviewing the texts; thus, control over their communications was a demoralizing factor in the lives of inmates at Lordsburg Camp. It delayed news on the arrest of Denkei and made difficult for the family to make plans together to solve their financial problems and to plan how they would reunite.<sup>10</sup>

Several United States and Mexican state institutions affected the lives of the Gushikens during this period of tribulation for the Mexican Japanese in the borderlands. Some of the officials who intervened in the process of their uprooting did so as part of their assigned responsibilities (INS and FBI officials among them); others had a more positive role and went beyond their call of duty when Mr. Gushiken, while being detained, requested their assistance to deliver money from his frozen bank account to his family in Cd. Juárez. Although the federal government had granted detainees permission to withdraw \$30.00 a month to pay for items not supplied by the INS, the amount was not enough to support the Gushiken family in Cd. Juárez, which did not receive any financial assistance for two months after Denkei Gushiken's arrest.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Nancy R. Bartlit and Everett M. Rogers, *Silent Voices of World War II: When Sons of the Land of Enchantment Met Sons* (Sunstone Press, 2005), 152; Tetsuden Kashima, "American Mistreatment of Internees During World War II: Enemy Alien Japanese," in *Japanese Americans: From Relocation to Redress*, ed. Roger Daniels et al., 52-56.

<sup>10</sup> Keiho Soga, *Life Behind Barbed Wire: The World War II Internment Memoirs of a Hawai'i Issei* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007), 113.

<sup>11</sup> From Frances L. Rand, State Department of Public Welfare, El Paso, Texas, to Mr. N. D. Collaer, Supervisor of Alien Detention, Crystal City, Texas, dated April 7, 1943. NARA INS File 940/15

The fact that the residence of the Gushiken family was right across the border made possible the contact between the Gushikens and United States state and federal officials who would help to deliver Mr. Gushiken's money to them.<sup>12</sup> A Mr. Brownlow, Secret Service Agent in El Paso, crossed the border in 1942 several times to deliver \$50.00 on each occasion to Mrs. Gushiken. In November of the same year, however, Mr. Brownlow received orders from his department to transfer the task of taking money to the Gushikens to the "commanding officer in charge of the camps." To the distress of the entire family, this new disposition delayed the delivery of money for the sustenance of Mrs. Gushiken and her children in Cd. Juárez.<sup>13</sup>

After approximately five months, Mr. Gushiken's plea to continue supplying his wife Tsune with some funds from his bank account was heard by the State Department of Public Welfare at El Paso, but it would take another month for action to be taken. The procedure was complicated because the social worker in charge of the case, Mrs. Francis L. Rand, was not aware of the authorization Mr. Gushiken had to withdraw \$50.00 a month for his family. She made several inquiries, making sure she was abiding by the law, before crossing the border to deliver the checks Denkei Gushiken signed for his wife.<sup>14</sup>

In the course of her diligent investigation in Cd Juárez, preliminary to her handing the money over Mrs. Gushiken, Mrs. Rand did not limit herself to visiting the Gushikens, but also had a conversation with their neighbor, Mrs. Mary Romo. Mrs. Rand learned that Tsune Gushiken had been "entirely dependent upon the kindness of Mrs. Romo, who "has given food to the family and has stood good for credit for them, to a certain extent, but does not feel financially able to assume responsibility indefinitely." Forced to accept the charity of her neighbors, Mrs.

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

Gushiken thought joining her husband in an internment camp would solve their most pressing needs.<sup>15</sup>

Mrs. Rand continued visiting Mrs. Gushiken in Cd. Juárez and seemed to sympathize with the Mexican Japanese family. Regardless of her personal feelings, she and every other American official were very aware of racial relations in the United States and how they restricted the mobility of ethnic Japanese. When Mrs. Rand requested permission from Mr. N. D. Collaer, who had the title of “Supervisor of Alien Detention at Crystal City Camp,” to assist the Gushiken family in their financial troubles, Mrs. Rand reminded Collaer “that Mrs. Gushiken cannot come to El Paso, by reason of the Japanese Exclusion Act (sic).” American racial categories impeded, once more, the Gushikens’ access to economic resources so they could partially solve urgent financial problems.<sup>16</sup>

In May 1943, Mrs. Rand’s efforts to provide Tsune Gushiken with some money to support her family finally achieved results. The social worker was able to deliver a check and a letter from Mr. Gushiken to his family in Cd. Juárez. Once Tsune signed the check, the field worker returned to El Paso to cash it. She made a second visit to Mrs. Gushiken’s home to deliver twenty five \$2.00 bills for the support of the family. Mrs. Rand understood Tsune’s apprehensions about being united with her husband and communicated them to the officer in charge of Crystal City Camp in the state of Texas: Mrs. Gushiken “wished that (Mrs. Rand) might tell Mr. Gushiken that she was most anxious to join him, and asked how soon we thought it could be arranged. The procedure that is necessary was explained to her and the time it might

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<sup>15</sup> Mrs. Mary Romo’s address was C. Moctezuma # 514. Undated list of correspondence from the Gushiken family in Crystal City. INS File 940/15. From Frances L. Rand, State Department of Public Welfare, El Paso, Texas, to Mr. N. D. Collaer, Supervisor of Alien Detention, Crystal City, Texas, dated April 7, 1943. NARA INS File 940/15.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

take.” Mrs. Rand felt obligated to tell Mrs. Gushiken “not to be expectant of the outcome” since the United States could decline the internment of the Gushiken family in Crystal City camp. Constituting herself into a subtle source of emotional support, Mrs. Rand sent Denkei Gushiken regards from Tsune and their children.<sup>17</sup>

Mrs. Rand took it upon herself to continue her visits to Mrs. Romo, Tsune’s supportive friend, to inquire about the woman’s condition. Mrs. Romo reported that “Mr. Gushiken had about taken care of her obligations and that she believed that she would get along nicely from now on.” All members of the family, she stated, looked forward to their reunion.<sup>18</sup>

In spite of the labor Mr. Gushiken performed at Lordsburg camp, for which he received an hourly wage of ten cents an hour, his income was not stable or secure enough to support his wife and children in Cd. Juárez.<sup>19</sup> In addition, deportation to Japan was impending for all Latin American Japanese in the United States, dependent on the arrangements between the Japanese and United States governments for the exchange of prisoners.<sup>20</sup> In order to keep his family united and make sure that their basic needs would be covered, Denkei petitioned for a transfer from the Alien Detention Camp in Lordsburg, New Mexico to the Family Detention Center in Crystal City, Texas. This camp allowed unification of “enemy alien” families in order to have

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<sup>17</sup> From Mrs. Frances L. Rand, Field Worker, State Department of Public Welfare, El Paso, Texas, to Mr. N. D. Collaer, INS, Crystal City, dated May 20, 1943. NARA INS 940/15.

<sup>18</sup> Letter from Grover C. Page, cashier at Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, El Paso Branch, to L. T. McCollister, Acting Officer in Charge, U. S. Department of Justice, Alien Internment Camp, Crystal City, Texas, dated January 3, 1943; and letter from Mrs. Frances Rand, Field Worker from the State Department of Public Welfare, to Mr. N.D. Collaer, INS, Crystal City, Texas, dated October 25, 1943. NARA INS 940/15.

<sup>19</sup> Denkei Gushiken earned a total of \$576.20 while interned in the concentration camps of Lordsburg and Crystal City. Certificate by L. Tatum McCollister, Acting Officer in Charge, United States Department of Justice, INS, Crystal City, Texas, dated March 20, 1947. NARA INS 940/15.

<sup>20</sup> From Tsune Gushiken to “Beloved Husband”, from Cd. Juárez, Chih., dated April 13., 1943. NARA INS File 940/15.

control “of even larger numbers of aliens” to hold as pawns in the exchange of American citizens with the Axis powers.<sup>21</sup>

Mr. Gushiken requested from the INS that his wife and children be transported across the border to join him in the camp in Crystal City. When orders arrived for his deportation to Japan, he needed to have his family with him to leave the United States. In a desperate attempt to expedite their reunion, Mr. Gushiken offered to cover at least a portion of his family’s travel expenses to the camp.<sup>22</sup>

The INS Crystal City Camp opened in December 1942 in the county of Zavala, Texas, ninety five miles from Nuevo Laredo in the Mexican border state of Tamaulipas. Persons of Japanese and German origin from Latin America composed the majority of internees, although Latin American Italians and American Japanese from Hawaii and Alaska were also integrated into the camp. The camp was assigned to detain families originally residing outside the continental United States.<sup>23</sup> The American State Department had realized that separating Latin American families would eventually stir anti-American sentiments. As American Secretary of State Cordell Hull stated in 1942 “we left behind for eventual repatriation their inherently non-dangerous wives and minor children. Our representatives in those countries now report that

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<sup>21</sup> See Harvis Gardiner, *Pawns in a Triangle of Hate. The Peruvian Japanese and the United States* (Seattle: University of Washington, 1981), 21.

<sup>22</sup> From Denkei Gushiken to Commissioner, INS, Department of Justice, Washington, D. C., dated July 6, 1943. NARA INS File 940/15.

<sup>23</sup> On December 12, the first internees, a group of Germans, arrived and began the construction of additional facilities. Originally, the camp had 159 buildings which expanded to 694 at the end of the war. Tetsuden Kashima, *Judgment without Trial: Japanese American Imprisonment During World War II* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003), 120; Ronald Nakasone, ed. *Okinawan Diaspora* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 2002 ), 105-106.

these women and children who were left behind constitute a most dangerous focus of anti-American propaganda and that they should be removed at the earliest opportunity.”<sup>24</sup>

The United States State Department’s decision to hold more prisoners of war in the United States aimed to increase the number of civilians available for exchange, avoid anti-American propaganda by relatives of uprooted Latin Americans, and to erase direct testimonies from wives and children of kidnapped Latin American Japanese, Germans, and Italians. The decision of the State Department represented an opportunity for the Gushiken family to be reunited during the war, albeit in an internment camp.<sup>25</sup> On April 13, 1943, fourteen months after his arrest, Mr. Gushiken received news from his family. Tsune let him know of the family’s situation and hopes:

Beloved husband:

I have just received your letter dated March 21<sup>st</sup> in which you said you were leaving the next day for the Family Internment Camp at Crystal City, Texas. You also advise me that you are making arrangements for my reunion with you and the children, you cannot imagine the happiness that your letter has brought me and I am hoping with all my heart that this will come through after all these long months of worrying (sic). God is good to us and will unite us again.

Dear, I do not know how long the permmit (sic) will take, it will be much better if you make arrangements to send me some money because I am completely out of money, if permit comes soon we can always have that money.

The kids send you their love and hope to see you very soon, your devoted wife.

Tsune Gushiken.<sup>26</sup>

Mrs. Gushiken’s signature differs in character from the rest of the letter; we can assume that the letter was written in English by another person to expedite the communication between

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<sup>24</sup> Max Paul Friedman, *Nazis and Good Neighbors. The United States Campaign against the Germans of Latin America in World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 153-154.

<sup>25</sup> Thomas Connell, *America's Japanese Hostages: The World War II Plan for a Japanese Free Latin America* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2002).

<sup>26</sup> From Tsune Gushiken to “Beloved Husband,” from Cd. Juárez, Chih., dated April 13, 1943. NARA INS File 940/15.

husband and wife since censors would not allow the immediate delivery of correspondence written in Japanese. The letter conveys the sense of urgency and despair created by the prolonged separation of the family.

Once the INS approved Mr. Gushiken's request, a series of formal steps were necessary to comply with official requirements justifying the transference of "enemy aliens" across borders. W. F. Kelly, Assistant Commissioner for Alien Control to the INS District Director in El Paso, Texas, submitted instructions to the:

[...] Embassy of Mexico City to effect the transfer of the wife and three children of the above named alien enemy, now interned at Crystal City, Texas, to the United States for the purpose of joining the subject at his present location. The Consulate at Juarez will notify you when this family will be brought to El Paso and the aliens should be accorded hearings before a Board of Special Inquiry.<sup>27</sup>

The Gushikens were not the only ones crossing the Mexican border to join family members in a concentration camp. Although the number of Japanese Mexicans the United States Department of State transferred from Mexico to internment camps in the United States is unknown, their detention was part of the aggressive United States campaign to seize as many Japanese persons as possible for future civilian exchanges.<sup>28</sup> Given the choice between Japanese American and Latin Americans Japanese, the United States general public would be more willing to accept the deportation of persons brought from any area south of the border. United States

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<sup>27</sup> From W. F. Kelly, Assistant Commissioner for Alien Control, to District Director, Immigration and Naturalization Service, El Paso, TX, dated August 14, 1943, NARA INS File 940/15.

<sup>28</sup> Since November 24, 1942, the United States Embassy provided a list of 58 individuals and families in Mexico who would be transported to the United States in an exchange of civilians with Japan. From Ernesto Hidalgo to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated November 24, 1942. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/600. See also letter from Miguel Z. Martínez to Lic. Miguel Alemán, dated May 28, 1942, in regards to Gan Miyasaka. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/600

officials based this conclusion on the assumption that Latin Americans lost all their rights once classified as illegal aliens in the United States.<sup>29</sup>

Previous seizure and transportation of Latin American Japanese to the United States had resulted in serious health problems for the captives. Some spent several weeks under harsh conditions in Latin American jails; then, when the FBI ordered that they board a United States vessel to be interned in a Panama detention center, prisoners spent several weeks without receiving proper meals, in enclosed environments, performing forced labor. Upon their arrival in America, several prisoners suffered grave illnesses as the INS officials were compelled to recognize when Ichikoku Yatomi, a Peruvian Japanese, died from tuberculosis.<sup>30</sup>

The death of Mr. Yatomi in Los Angeles while under the custody of INS made United States Department officials realize they needed to ensure future internees were alive and in fit condition to travel when an exchange of prisoners occurred between Japan and the United States. Consequently, in August 1943 a group of thirty three Japanese Mexican women, men, and children received a medical examination and immunizations to comply with INS requirements before they crossed the border towards the United States.<sup>31</sup>

To follow international protocols in the transference of residents of Mexico, the United States Embassy requested permission from the Ministry of the Interior for the Gushikens to leave the country, an authorization granted without question. Mrs. Gushiken had decided to join her husband even if in an internment camp, instead of accepting relocation to the interior of Mexico. In this sense, she and her children crossed the border of their own will. INS officials wrote in the

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<sup>29</sup> From H.S.B., United States Embassy, to the Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores in relation to Toshimi Hidano, her newborn Katsumi Hidano, Tsdune Gushiken and her three children, dated May 23, 1943. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1540.

<sup>30</sup> Corbett, *Quiet Passages*, 113.

<sup>31</sup> From Dr. Enrique García González, dated 8/23, 1943 and from Manuel Tello to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated August 24, 1943. IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/600.

Gushikens' records, nevertheless, that local authorities had apprehended Tsune and her children in Cd. Juárez and "delivered" them to the INS. This was a common process in the transference of Latin American Japanese to United States.

INS officials registered Latin American residents interned in United States concentration camps as "apprehended" persons. Whether seized by local police or United States soldiers or "voluntarily" boarding the United States ships or planes to reunite with their families, in the officials' logic, their apprehension changed their status to "prisoners of war." This procedure took place in order to satisfy the United States government's desire to comply with the Geneva Convention in some of the steps for internment in American territory. Under the 1929 Geneva Convention, the United States was entitled to deprive "prisoners of war" of their freedom.<sup>32</sup>

Tsune Gushiken's management of her possessions is one example of how INS restrictions affected an individual's economic stability during World War II. She had to dispose of most of her possessions when she left Cd. Juárez for the internment camp in Crystal City. At her entry into the United States through the Santa Fe Bridge United States, she was carrying \$1,848.00 in cash and \$242.65 in endorsed checks, perhaps the product of selling all her property in light of the impending family's departure to Japan. INS camps regulations did not allow internees to have large amounts of money, and thus Tsune surrendered cash and checks to the INS officials at the bridge.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> From Denkei Gushiken to Commissioner, INS, Department of Justice, Washington, D. C., dated July 6, 1943. NARA INS File 940/15; and, fingerprint record card for Tsune Gushiken, from Alien Internment Camp, Crystal City, Texas, undated, NARA, INS. According to Article 5, "Prisoners of war may be interned in a town, fortress, camp, or other place, and bound not to go beyond certain fixed limits."  
*Convention between the United States of America and Other Powers, Relating to Prisoners of War; July 27, 1929*, Geneva Convention of 1929 (Yale Law School, 1929).

<sup>33</sup> From J. L. O'Rourke, Officer in Charge of the Alien Internment Camp at Crystal City, Texas, to Collector of Customs, United States Custom Service, El Paso, TX, dated October 25, 1943. NARA INS File 940/15.

Once across the border, the Gushikens endured a hearing before an INS Board of Special Inquiry. Every civilian Latin American prisoner entering the United States during World War II had the same type of hearing before his or her transfer to Department of Justice concentration camp. The members of each INS board followed a script they knew would result inevitably in the classification of each Latin American Japanese in custody of United States authorities as an alien ineligible to enter the United States.<sup>34</sup> The Chairman of the board, Mr. Paul L. Stoops, was the translator from Spanish to English between the officials and the Gushiken family. Mr. Gordon W. Bulger and a Mr. Coggeshall (whose first name is omitted in the records) were the other two INS inspectors who deliberated on the Gushikens' application for admission into the United States. Mr. Coggeshall, acted, at the same time, as secretary of the Board, stating out loud that the immediate grounds for the detention of the family by the INS was their "race."<sup>35</sup>

After stating for the record that the Gushikens were members of a "race ineligible to citizenship," Mr. Coggeshall proceeded to provide biographical information pertaining to Tsune and her children, including their racial categorization. Denkei's wife was interrogated exhaustively. Questions and answers revealed that Tsune had been married in Japan, traveling in 1930 to join her husband in Mexico. She had attempted on four occasions to obtain a tourist visa for the United States, but had been excluded each time because of her racial classification.<sup>36</sup> Members of the Special Inquiry Board queried Tsune about her attempts to obtain a visa in an accusatory tone:

Q. You are advised that the records of this service show that one Tsune Gushiken has been excluded from admission to the United States at the port of El Paso, Texas as follows:  
August 12, 1930 (Central Office File No. 55733/534)

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<sup>34</sup> Form I-111, Record of Hearing before a Board of Special Inquiry held at El Paso, TX, dated August 20, 1943. El Paso File No. 3900/38406. NARA INS File 940/15.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

February 6, 1932 (Central Office File No. 55813/908)

May 19, 1934 (Central Office File No. 55813/908)

November 30, 1936

As an alien found to be ineligible to citizenship and not entitled to the benefit of any of the exemptions provided in Paragraph (C). Section 13 of the Immigration Act of 1924, and as an immigrant not in possession of an unexpired Immigration Visa as required by the Immigration Act of 1924 (El Paso District Director's File No. 7001/405) To whom do these records refer?

A. They refer to me.

Q. When and where were your children, Keiko, Haruye, and Denmei, born, and of what country are they citizens?

A. They were all born in Juarez, Chihuahua, Mexico (...) They are citizens of Mexico by birth, and citizens of Japan through my husband and myself.

Q. Of what race are your children?

A. They are of the Japanese race.<sup>37</sup>

The entire predetermined procedure had the objective of establishing for the record that Tsune Gushiken and their children had attempted to commit the crime of entering the United States when her “race” was legally excluded. While the white actors in this hearing enjoyed the power to prevent Tsune and her children from reuniting with their father, Tsune found herself in a vulnerable position having already been forced to sell, give away, or abandon everything her family had in Mexico. She did not have but \$100.00 in her possession, the largest amount INS internees were allowed to bring with them into the camps.

The inspectors continued providing details of Tsune’s futile attempts to obtain a visa for her and her children to enter the United States during the 1930s. The board was emotionally abusive. There was no need to prove that Tsune Gushiken and her children had dared to apply for visas to enter the United States. They were still racially ineligible to enter the country since they had “admitted” to being of the “Japanese race.” Yet, in spite of the prearranged agreement among the various departments that Tsune and her children would enter the Crystal City detention camp, the INS officers, throughout their irrelevant interrogation, tried to find inconsistencies between their records and Mrs. Gushiken’s answers.

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

In reviewing the Gushiken family's files, the inspectors found that only Keiko, the oldest daughter, had been granted a temporary visa from 1939 to 1941 to study in El Paso, and that she had been excluded on other occasions. The INS officers took every opportunity to repeat during the hearing that children of Japanese descent were ineligible to visit, live or work in the United States due to their racial classification in the United States. Tsune's children heard from the INS authorities that their racial phenotype was linked to illegality and crime, and that the mere fact that they were of Asian descent disqualified them to be in the United States. Nevertheless, Mr. Coggeshall made sure to state for the record that the "children (were) brought before the Board, but not questioned due to their tender years."<sup>38</sup>

While interrogated by the INS Board of Special Inquiry, Mrs. Gushiken stated that she had never been in the United States and that she intended to remain in a United States Government Camp for the "duration of hostilities." At the conclusion of the harsh interview, the Board deliberated on its findings. Inspector Bulger voted to

EXCLUDE the alien, Tsune Gushiken and children, Keiko, Haruye and Denmei, as aliens found to be INELIGIBLE TO CITIZENSHIP AND NOT ENTITLED TO ANY OF THE BENEFITS OF ANY OF THE EXEMPTIONS PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH (C), SECTION 13 OF THE IMMIGRATION ACT OF 1924;<sup>39</sup>

In addition to their exclusion on the grounds of being racially ineligible to enter the country, the INS board excluded them because they did not have a passport:

[...] and as persons NOT IN POSSESSION OF VALID PASSPORTS OR OTHER OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS IN THE NATURE OF PASSPORTS SHOWING THEIR ORIGIN AND IDENTITY (sic).<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Capital letters in original text. Ibid. Page 6.

This last part of the sentence asserting the lack of passports was a reason to exclude the Gushikens was part of the arbitrary INS procedures to make Latin American Japanese illegal. Historian C. Harvey Gardiner states that United States officials collected all documents, including passports, from Latin American Japanese after their arrest in the American Republics, and before they had their INS hearings in the United States. When INS members of the hearing board asked Latin American prisoners if they had a passport, “with varying degrees of suppressed bitterness, they responded firmly ‘No’.” Each heard an official declare, “You must recognize the fact that your entry into the United States is illegal.”<sup>41</sup> Although the board members determined that Tsune and her children were to be excluded from entrance to the United States, the INS officials granted a temporary permit for them to join Denkei Gushiken at an internment camp.

The entire procedure converted Latin American prisoners in “illegal aliens” committing a crime entering the United States without a visa and passport. As many other contradictions of the relocation program, and in United States society generally, exclusion and temporary permits were tools to create a façade that legality prevailed in this country. United States immigration laws made illegal the entry of Asians; consequently the Gushikens’ presence in the United States was a crime. As illegal aliens the Gushikens would not be entitled to the protection of the United States’ laws. The board’s verdict, and the immigration law, criminalized their racialized bodies, not their nationality. The INS verdict did not refer to Tsune’s Japanese citizenship, but insisted on her race and that of her children who were Mexican by birth. Consequently, because of their race, Tsune and her children could be punished should they remain in the United States without a visa. But the United States needed them as war hostages; therefore, the INS board granted the

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<sup>41</sup> Gardiner, *Pawns in a Triangle of Hate*.

Gushikens a temporary permit to make their presence “legal” in the United States for the duration of their travel from El Paso to Crystal Camp. Once there, Tsune and her children would again be defined by their criminal status, as illegal aliens without civil rights.<sup>42</sup>

The INS board ordered “the four alien enemies” to take the Southern Pacific train to Uvalde, New Mexico. Tsune and her children left El Paso on the same day of their hearing. After ten years of building a life in Mexico, the family was reduced to two suitcases of possessions. Mrs. Gushiken “took one suitcase in the coach with her and another suitcase was checked on her ticket for transportation in the baggage car. She also had a few personal effects consisting of one ironing board, one washboard, one small bicycle, one bundle of bed clothes, one wash tub filled with dishes and other articles, and one straw basket of miscellaneous articles” which were crated for shipment to Crystal City camp at a later date.<sup>43</sup> The family would try to make a home in the internment camp with the few belongings they could bring with them. They did not know whether they would be deported to Japan or to Mexico at the end of the war or how long they would remain in United States concentration camps, but their main objective was to remain united.<sup>44</sup>

Unaware of the Gushiken’s transference to Crystal City camp, Mrs. Rand knocked at the door of what had been the family’s home in Juarez in September 1943. The social worker from the State Department of Public Welfare attempted to deliver a check for Mrs. Gushiken from Mr. Gushiken’s account. When the field worker learned that the house was empty, she paid a visit to Mrs. Romo, the neighbor, who informed Mrs. Rand of their internment in an INS Camp in the

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> From H. B. Mathews, Assistant District Director, El Paso District, United States Department of Justice, INS, U. S. Courthouse to the Officer in Charge, Alien Internment Camp. Crystal City, Texas, dated August 21, 1943. NARA 940/15 and 930/M.

<sup>44</sup> Gardiner, *Pawns in a Triangle of Hate*.

United States. Mary Romo asked Mrs. Rand to let Mrs. Gushiken know how worried she was about her friend and their children. She expected Tsune to send a card to:

[...] let her know if she arrived there safely. Mrs. Romo said that she had seen Mrs. Gushiken as far as El Paso and saw her and the children on the train, but that she had not heard of her since. She says that an Immigration official was to meet Mrs. Gushiken and her children in Uvalde and take them by car to join Mr. Gushiken in the Camp there.<sup>45</sup>

Thanks to Mrs. Rand's reports, and the answers Tsune gave to INS authorities, we learn of the Gushikens strong relationships in Mexico.<sup>46</sup> Although this is an obvious consequence of having resided for several years in the same place, social scientists have argued the inability of Asian immigrants to develop a sense of community with the receiving societies as one of the factors in the creation of anti-Asian sentiments and activities.<sup>47</sup> In the course of denouncing the mistreatment of Japanese, for example, historian Donald Collins placed partial responsibility for popular anti-Japanese sentiment and internment on the Japanese themselves. He argued that Japanese isolated themselves, clustering in certain residential areas and economic activities and did not assimilate into their communities. The danger of such statements is that they render Japanese as permanently and exotic and superfluous element of their societies, obliterating legal and social segregation of Asian immigrants in the American continent.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> From Frances L. Rand, Field Worker at the State Department of Public Welfare, El Paso, Texas, to Mr. N. D. Collaer, INS, Crystal City, Texas, dated September 23, 1943, NARA INS 940/15.

<sup>46</sup> Form I-111, Record of Hearing before a Board of Special Inquiry held at El Paso, TX, dated August 20, 1943. El Paso File No. 3900/38406. NARA INS File 940/15.

<sup>47</sup> Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 6, 26, 29, 71-80, 211-216.

<sup>48</sup> Historian C. Harvey Gardiner considered that endogenous marriages, and "exclusive Japanese schools and societies," contributed to the anti-Japanese sentiment that allowed deportation. On his part, historian Thomas Connell explains that, although Peruvians had isolated Japanese immigrants, "the cultural chasm between the Japanese and "native" Peruvians, never smooth, was exacerbated by the "clannish" behavior of the Peruvian Japanese." Additionally, Connell states that, in Costa Rica, "the closed nature of the Japanese colonies drew great suspicion from others." While Japanese immigrants continued to practice some elements of their culture, this was not the main reason for their seizing and deportation: Latin American and United States political and economical elites determined their uprooting and transfer to the United States. Donald E. Collins, *Native American Aliens:*

Contrary to academic arguments and traditional beliefs that Japanese immigrants and their children were a closed community, Japanese immigrants created several kinds of networks.<sup>49</sup> Mrs. Romo, for example, was only one of the many relationships the Gushikens had. The younger members of the family had even deeper relationships within their communities than their parents did. Although their parents were torn between accepting their deportation to Japan, or fighting to stay on the American continent, second and third generation Japanese Mexicans thought of their country of birth as home and had few ties with their parents' or grandparents' country. Keiko, Haruye and Denmei Gushiken did not know another way of life aside from the one they had in Mexico. The youngsters had never been in Japan; they had been raised in Mexico, spoke Spanish, and were attached to their teachers, friends, and neighbors. Now they had to create new networks with immigrants from many other countries. And their family would face even more complex issues while in the custody of the INS.<sup>50</sup>

Denkei Gushiken's struggles to support his family were not totally solved when his wife and children arrived in Crystal City. Other familiar matters concerned him. The Japanese immigrant remained worried by his own father's precarious situation.<sup>51</sup> At approximately seventy years of age, Denhichiro Gushiken had been sent by the INS to the Spence-Champion Farm in Tularosa, New Mexico. In order to earn money to cover his basic living expenses, Denhichiro worked on the farm "at odd jobs." Mrs. Nowell, the wife of the farm foreman,

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*Disloyalty and the Renunciation of Citizenship by Japanese Americans During World War II* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1985 ), 5; Connell, *America's Japanese Hostages*, 24-25; Gardiner, *Pawns in a Triangle of Hate*, 9.

<sup>49</sup>President Manuel Ávila Camacho, referring to Japanese immigrants, publicly declared that the war had taught Mexicans to rigorously select immigrants according to their race. According to Ávila Camacho, race defined the capability of immigrants to assimilate in Mexico. Manuel Ávila Camacho, "Tercer Informe Del Presidente Manuel Ávila Camacho," *500 Años de México en Documentos* (1943).  
<http://www.biblioteca.tv/artman2/uploads/1943.pdf>.

<sup>50</sup> Akemi Kikumura-Yano, ed. *Encyclopedia of Japanese Descendants in the Americas: An Illustrated History* (Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 2002).

<sup>51</sup> Fingerprint Record Card, INS Form 8-73 undated, NARA, INS 940/15. According to his fingerprint record card, Denhichiro Gushiken arrived in the United States through Mexico.

whose first name is not reported in the INS files, was worried about the health and the quality of life of the elder Gushiken. She informed Fern Aument, employee at the Department of Public Welfare, that she “had been concerned about what would happen to Mr. Gushiken should he become ill enough to require nursing care. There is no hospital in this country where he could be admitted and consequently, she would feel that she should take care of him.” Mrs. Norrell thought that no public facilities would admit a Japanese immigrant and although she was worried about Denhichiro Gushiken she reported that she would not be able to take care of him:

[...] She really is not able to do so since she has several small children in addition to her household duties, helps with the outside work. She advanced the theory that Mr. Gushiken is lonely and a little frightened.<sup>52</sup>

In an attempt to take care of every member of his family, Denkei Gushiken requested the internment of his father in the Crystal City INS camp.<sup>53</sup> He did not want to be deported leaving behind the elderly Gushiken. In January 1945, the INS approved his petition. Mr. Denhichiro Gushiken was “assisted” by Border Patrol officers at Alamogordo, New Mexico in boarding the train for Crystal City. “Because of subject’s age and small command of English” great care was taken by the Crystal City Camp Officer in charge, Joseph L. O’Rourke, to make sure that the “Patrol Officers contact the dining car steward on the train at El Paso and assist in arranging for meals” for Denhichiro Gushiken.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Letter from Mrs. Fern Aument, Otero County Director, The State of New Mexico, Department of Public Welfare to Mr. J. L. O’Rourke, INS, Alien Internment Camp, Crystal City, NM, dated November 22, 1944, NARA INS 940/15.

<sup>53</sup> Letter from Denkei Gushiken to Mr. J. L. O’Rourke, Officer in “Charge, Alien Internment Camp, Crystal City, Texas, dated October 24, 1944, NARA INS 950/15..

<sup>54</sup> From J.L. O’Rourke, INS, Crystal City, Texas, to Grover C. Wilmoth, District Director, INS, El Paso, Texas. Dated January 26, 1945. NARA INS 950/15.

With the arrival of Mr. Gushiken at the INS camp, all members of the transnational family in the American continent were finally together to take care of one another. Internees did not endure the same harsh conditions other Japanese Americans experienced in WRA administered camps. Or at least, this is what the INS authorities wanted to convey to foreign officials. The Crystal City camp had become something of a showcase since its first building was erected. The supervision of the Spanish diplomats who inspected the facilities and reported to the Japanese government on the material conditions of the Japanese internees guaranteed better facilities than in other camps ran by the WRA.<sup>55</sup>

The internees section included housing facilities, schools, a grocery store, a meat market, a hospital, and a library. Families lived in three-room cottages and in apartments of one to two rooms and shared bathrooms. Internees were in charge of their own cooking and they had a voucher system to buy food. They operated a canteen, a beauty parlor, and a barbershop in the camp. In addition to running these businesses, Latin American Japanese had a Spanish language newspaper. Yet, despite the apparent comfort and independence internees enjoyed in the camp, they were still hostages of the United States government and the officials handling the camp treated them as such.<sup>56</sup>

Although INS Public Relations Director Jerre Mangione described the camp as a happy “town behind barbed wires,” and reported after his visit to the camp that children thought camp administrator Joseph O’Rourke was the “Pied Piper reincarnated,” conditions were not satisfactory from the prisoners’ point of view. O’Rourke, a former Border Patrol officer “with no

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<sup>55</sup> James J. Barnes and Patience P. Barnes, *Nazi Refugee Turned Gestapo Spy: The Life of Hans Wesemann, 1895-1971* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2001), 156; Friedman, *Nazis and Good Neighbors*, 146-148; Karen Lea Riley, *Schools Behind Barbed Wires* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2002), 33.

<sup>56</sup> Barnes and Barnes, *Nazi Refugee Turned Gestapo Spy: The Life of Hans Wesemann, 1895-1971*, 156; Friedman, *Nazis and Good Neighbors*, 146-148; Riley, *Schools Behind Barbed Wires*, 33.

college education, or special training,” insisted on making children believe that “the fence around them was intended for the people on the other side of it.” However, only the youngest did not know the truth. O’Rourke worried that the older children’s “bitterness and resentment ... might affect the younger children.”<sup>57</sup> Although O’Rourke did not provide details on how children expressed their bitterness and resentment, his was an official recognition that they were unhappy within the camp. The experience inevitably traumatized children.<sup>58</sup>

Heidi Gurcke Donald, a Latin American German child interned in the camp regrets the time her family spent in Crystal City. As an adult, she recalls the permanent surveillance she and her family were subjected. The last image she had before going to sleep symbolized their imprisonment: “at night, there were stars, though the floodlights along the fence hampered our view.” Heidi has a strong memory of “the shadows those lights cast through the curtain” in their bedroom.<sup>59</sup>

The children’s bitterness reported by O’Rourke did not come exclusively from the threatening sentries and the barbed wire surrounding their living quarters. They missed home in spite of O’Rourke’s paternalistic administration of the camp or Mangione’s claims that the camp had a “lively...almost cheerful atmosphere.”<sup>60</sup> Adults also had reasons to feel depressed and material conditions added to their emotional distress. Housing was not designed for families who had more than four children. The tin-and-plywood barracks built in the desert left the internees exposed to the 120 degrees summer temperature. Former internee Seiichi Higashide reported that the desert temperature “became so hot that we blistered if we touched metal parts of beds (...). Every evening we hosed down the roof of our barracks and cooled its floor by washing it

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<sup>57</sup> Connell, *America's Japanese Hostages*, 131-132.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> Heidi Gurcke Donald, *We Were Not the Enemy* (New York: iUniverse Inc., 2006), 56.

<sup>60</sup> Connell, *America's Japanese Hostages*, 132.

with water. We then spread our thin straw mats on which to sleep, because the beds were too hot to sleep in.” Whatever comfort they managed, it did not erase the fact that they had been uprooted and awaited deportation.<sup>61</sup>

Latin American Japanese and other prisoners in the camp proved their resilience facing uncertainty and altering their environment to fit their needs. The cold winter was harsh in the non-insulated barracks whose exterior and interior walls were covered with tarpaper, but prisoners adjusted to their facilities. They beautified them, created gardens, made furniture for their rooms, and built additional rooms and porches. From 1943 to 1945 internees paid \$50,000 out of their own pockets, earned through their labor. Administrator Joseph L. O’Rourke boasted about the investment internees made to improve the concentration camp. Yet, former internee Heidi Gurcke Donald reminds us that O’Rourke wrote his report in 1945 –i.e previous years. She recalls that “while we were there, the area within the fences was bleak, with raw, new construction and dirt roads.” In her view, embellishment of the camp would not be enough to make internees happy and INS officials manipulated images and information to render the camp more amenable than it actually was for children and adults.<sup>62</sup>

Heidi argues that all inmates were conscious of their status as prisoners in spite of O’Rourke’s claims that this was a happy town: walking around the camp was depressing when the view was blocked by the guards and behind them the desert reminded them of their isolation and helplessness. Prisoners from Latin America who were used to a different climate and landscape did not enjoy the dusty roads in summer and the mud that covered them in the winter

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<sup>61</sup> Seiichi Higashide, *Adios to Tears: The Memoirs of a Japanese Peruvian Internee in U. S. Concentration Camps* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000), 71.

<sup>62</sup> Connell, *America's Japanese Hostages*, 129-131; Donald, *We Were Not the Enemy*, 57; Gardiner, *Pawns in a Triangle of Hate*, 87; Arthur D. Jacobs and Joseph E. Fallon, *The Prison Called Hohenasperg: An American Boy Betrayed by His Government During World War II*; Riley, *Schools Behind Barbed Wires*, 33.

once the snow had melted. Heidi Gurcke Donald remembers that “grit seeped into the buildings, and the furniture of even the most dedicated housewives was filmed with dust. Scorpions, cockroaches, spiders, and biting red ants were frequent houseguests; outdoors rattlesnakes were not uncommon.” The camp was an unsafe, bleak environment.<sup>63</sup>

Publishing a beautified image of the camp, INS administrators emphasized its high level activity, both economic and recreational. Based on his visits to numerous internment camps, INS Public Relations Director Mangione wrote a report claiming that there was no evidence of emotional stress among the internees. In spite of Mangione’s opinion that Crystal Camp internees did not experience stress, racial categories defined many the activities in the camp and generated tensions. Although today the justification for such racial divisions is that the Geneva Convention dictated separation by nationalities, Italians and Germans shared living quarters in which the division was racial, not national. Elsewhere, WRA camps and United States military quarters were racially segregating American citizens, just to mention some of the institutions in the United States that compelled separation among races.<sup>64</sup> On the other hand, the Department of Justice placed in the same group Latin American Jews and Nazis, which, in addition to the presence of socialist and anti-Nazi “white” Latin Americans, caused complex internal conflicts among prisoners.<sup>65</sup>

Lower ranking officials did not stray from their supervisors’ racial views. INS camp guards embodied popular and official racial ideas that had prevailed in most of the history of the United States. Moreover, during World War II, white sentries were particularly displeased when

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<sup>63</sup> Donald, *We Were Not the Enemy*, 57.

<sup>64</sup> Karen Lea Riley cites contact among Japanese and German children; however, their schools were separated and the “American” school had most of the time an overwhelming number of Japanese children. See Riley Heidi Gurcke Donald, a child internee of German descent at Crystal City Camp, does not record interactions with Japanese children or adults. *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> Friedman, *Nazis and Good Neighbors*, 137-141; Kashima, *Judgement without Trial*, 120; Riley, *Schools Behind Barbed Wires*, 33.

Japanese internees received butter and other items rationed in the United States. Their feelings were fueled by newspaper articles with titles such as “America’s Jap ‘guests’ Refuse to Work But Nips enslave Yankees,” or “Hostile Group is Pampered at Wyoming Camp.” Such hostility did not manifest itself exclusively in the camps. Outside, American policies on racial relations segregated and marginalized communities of color.<sup>66</sup> Historian Antonia Castañeda, Crystal City native, reported the effects of racism on Mexican Americans intertwined with the fate of Japanese Americans. She narrated her family’s experience in her hometown during World War II:

[...]The family migrated, my mother told me, because the only work my father, Jose Castaneda, could get in our native Texas was at "Mexican or peon wages." His last job in our hometown of Crystal City, as a day laborer on the Justice Department's Japanese-American internment camp, ended with the arrival of the internees. "They didn't like the Japanese either," she whispered (...) He returned to Texas in 1946 only to find the same virulent racism, dual-wage labor system, and segregated education.<sup>67</sup>

Like the Mexican Americans they displaced in Crystal City and against newspaper allegations that Japanese internees refused to work, they contributed to war production working in farms surrounding the camps. They received reduced wages and had to pay the wages of the sentries who ensured they would not escape. Latin American Japanese worked in the construction of roads under the Public Roads Administration, filling the same roles Chinese contract laborers had in the nineteenth century. Their duties included digging three-foot holes, inserting charges of dynamite to expedite the excavation of the terrain over which roads were constructed, and hanging from a rope to drill on difficult to reach slopes.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Richard Drinnon, *Keeper of Concentration Camps: Dillon S. Myer and American Racism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 47, 64-65. For racism against Mexican Americans in Crystal City during World War II and their perception that Japanese Americans were treated in the same way see Antonia Castaneda, "Que Se Pudieran Defender' (So You Could Defend Yourselves): Chicanas, Regional History, and National Discourses," *Frontiers - A Journal of Women's Studies* 22, no. 3 (2001).

<sup>67</sup> Castaneda, "Que Se Pudieran Defender' (So You Could Defend Yourselves): Chicanas, Regional History, and National Discourses."

<sup>68</sup> Gardiner, *Pawns in a Triangle of Hate*, 97-98.

Internees had several reasons to work in the concentration camps. Knowing that they could be deported at any moment, and that they would need as much money as possible to start their lives anew, most internees accepted employment in and out of the camps. In spite of the INS praise of these communal economic activities, they did not have the entrepreneurial character the INS public relations office advertised. Historian Richard Drinnon states that in some of the United States concentration camps, shops did not operate to make profits for the internees, but rather catered to Caucasian employees. In any case, the operations of shops followed Article 12 of the Geneva Convention which stated that “canteens shall be installed in all camps where prisoners may obtain, at the local market price, food products and ordinary objects” and that profits were to be “used for the benefit of prisoners.”<sup>69</sup> Internees working in the “self-administered” shops received a fixed salary in cash, ten cents an hour, or vouchers and tokens. They received a maximum of \$16.00 per month which helped them pay for the items they did not receive from the INS.<sup>70</sup>

The INS Crystal City camp dealt with internees classified as illegal aliens; they endured an oppressive atmosphere which beauty parlors and barbershops could not diffuse. Searchlights and guard dogs helped to heighten security, while identification numbers were stenciled on their shirts and jackets. At their arrival, the INS administrators threatened them with dividing their families again if their members did not behave according to the camp’s rules.<sup>71</sup>

Indeed, reunification of Latin American families was a privilege. Although the United States desired to have as many prisoners as possible, INS officials were counting on a continuous exchange to leave room for subsequent internees. Thus, some Latin American Japanese had their

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<sup>69</sup> *Geneva Convention, 1929*. Article 12.

<sup>70</sup> Connell, *America's Japanese Hostages*, 130-131; Gardiner, *Pawns in a Triangle of Hate*, 97-98.

<sup>71</sup> Bartlit and Rogers, *Silent Voices*, 170.

application to reunite with their relatives in the Cristal City camp denied when there was not space available to intern them.<sup>72</sup>

War strategies made the exchange of prisoners with Japan difficult and the Department of Justice cancelled the import of family members of Latin American prisoners by October 1944.<sup>73</sup> The INS, nonetheless, continued to take measures to keep Latin Americans confined.<sup>74</sup> To ensure the inmates would not escape, armed guards patrolled the area and they would shoot internees attempting to leave the camp: camp guards had killed four internees at other concentration and wounded others.<sup>75</sup> As historian Richard Drinnon states, the murders of internees made the “euphemisms ‘temporary havens’ or ‘wayside stations’ grotesqueries. That such killings were relatively infrequent made them no less exemplary. The possibility was always no farther away than the nearest armed sentry.”<sup>76</sup> Because the Department of Justice and the Department of State transferred their prisoners to various camps, news of extreme disciplinary actions and deaths spread with the arrival of new internees.

In spite of the oppressive environment in the camp, inmates had certain protections and the possibility to defer their deportation thanks to the provisions of the Geneva Convention. The Spanish Embassy was officially designated by the Japanese state to serve as the liaison between the Japanese in the exterior and the United States government. Spanish diplomats visited on several occasions the facilities to make sure internees were treated according to the Geneva Convention. They requested that INS officials document express consent for repatriation from

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<sup>72</sup> Mrs. Tsuruyo Moda, at the Colorado River Relocation Center had her application denied to reunite with her Husband, Kinsaburo Noda, who was in Mexico. From W. Kelly, Assistant Commissioner for Alien Control to Mrs. Tsuruyo Noda, dated August 3, 1944. NARA 16-29-01-1-1 Box 2426, 85-580734, 56125/64E.

<sup>73</sup> Gardiner, *Pawns in a Triangle of Hate*, 106-107.

<sup>74</sup> Connell, *America's Japanese Hostages*, 122; Kashima, *Judgement without Trial*, 119-121; Riley, *Schools Behind Barbed Wires*, 32.

<sup>75</sup> Drinnon, *Keeper of Concentration Camps*, 43-47.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

internees. The United States Department of State assured the Spanish Embassy that, although it had received the prisoners for their repatriation, they would ask the internees if they wished to be repatriated.<sup>77</sup> For that reason, Crystal City managers required Denkei and Tsune Gushiken to express their will in relation to their possible deportation in February 1944.<sup>78</sup>

Husband and wife initially refused repatriation. They desired to stay on the American continent, but the reunion of the elder Denhichiro Gushiken with his family in Crystal City made their decision very difficult to carry out. The elder Gushiken desired to return to his country, while his children and grandchildren elected to remain in the concentration camp for the duration of the war.<sup>79</sup>

The decision to stay or to accept deportation to Japan created tensions among internees over the years and reach its climax at the conclusion of the war. Some internees thought that censors had not allowed news of the Japanese victory and were willing to accept deportation to join a triumphant nation. Many patriotic internees felt that, even if Japan had been defeated, they had the duty to return to their country to help in its reconstruction. Others felt a deeper attachment to the Latin American country from which they had been seized. Some elderly internees wanted to spend their last years in Japan, but others did not have anyone to take care of them in their place of birth. Others believed that the camp school had taught their children to disdain the Japanese culture, and to diminish the value of family union; thus, among other reasons, they made the decision to raise them in Japan. Discussions of their feelings created resentment, accusations, and changes of mind.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Connell, *America's Japanese Hostages*, 174.

<sup>78</sup> Form signed by Denkei Gushiken, dated February 4, 1944. NARA 950/15.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> Gardiner, *Pawns in a Triangle of Hate*, 117-122; Daniel M. Masterson and Sayaka Funada-Classen, *The Japanese in Latin America* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 170.

With the passage of time the conflicting desires of the various generations confined in Crystal City camp fluctuated according to international events affecting the lives of transnational families. On February 25, 1946, months after the United States dropped two atomic bombs on Japan, Mrs. Gushiken confirmed her decision to stay in the United States:

[...] it is a well known fact that my native province, Okinawa, had been a battle field. Consequently, a number of towns and villages, including my native town of Motobu, had been demolished and ruined and many natives are now homeless. For the welfare and happiness of my family, I do not wish to repatriate. Furthermore, my father-in-law is in an advanced age of 72, and though he had at one time desired to return, [he] has now changed his mind after giving careful consideration as to the family welfare. It is my earnest desire and hope that you will kindly grant me and my family our wish to remain in the United States.<sup>81</sup>

Denhichiro Gushiken gave a similar explanation for his desire to remain in the United States, suggesting that his and Tsune's statement were written in English by the same person. In all probability the writer used the same format to express the desire of other internees desiring to avoid repatriation to a devastated country:

[...]Because of the fact that my wife is in Okinawa and her well-being being unknown (sic), I had applied for the repatriation. However, I have absolute confidence in the American Occupation Forces that she will be well cared for and after giving careful consideration to the happiness and well-being of the family here, I have decided to remain in the United States. I will greatly appreciate your kind consideration given my request and that it be granted.<sup>82</sup>

At the end of World War II, the camp continued operating, with its inmates being mainly Latin American Japanese. Mr. Gushiken and his family planned to return to El Paso, hoping they would be allowed to remain together in the United States.<sup>83</sup> On June 11, 1946, however, they received a statement from the INS advising the family that only Denkei Gushiken would be

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<sup>81</sup> Application for non-Repatriation, by Tsune Gushiken, signed on February 26, 1946. NARA 950/15.

<sup>82</sup> Application for Repatriation by Denhichiro Gushiken, INS, dated February 26, 1946.

<sup>83</sup> From L. T. McCollister, Acting Officer in Charge, Crystal City, Texas, to District Director, INS, El Paso, Texas, dated June 11, 1946. NATA INS 940/15.

allowed to reside in the United States. He was the only member of their nuclear family to have the status of “United States legal resident.” Tsune and their children would be deported.<sup>84</sup>

Latin American Japanese did not have the option to return to their homelands in the American Republics. Many nations, among them Mexico, considered minor children of Japanese subjects as Japanese nationals. This meant that not only Tsune and Denkei would have a great difficulty re-entering Mexico, but Keiko, Haruye and Denmei could be also rejected by the Ministry of the Interior, in charge of immigration matters in Mexico, in spite of having Mexican birth certificates. Confronting their family’s separation once more, Tsune and Denkei Gushiken requested their repatriation to Japan in the company of their children and Denkei’s father.<sup>85</sup> Their situation was made even more stressful as Tsune was carrying a baby and enduring a complicated pregnancy. In June, Denkei confirmed his desire to return to Japan in the company of his entire family:

I have been informed that I am released, but I refuse to accept (the option granted by the INS to stay in the United States). I desire repatriation to Japan together with my family at the earliest possible moment. This is my final decision and I am fully aware that under no circumstances will I be permitted to change my mind.<sup>86</sup>

Almost one year had passed since two American atomic bombs destroyed Nagasaki and Hiroshima, ensuring victory for the United States. Yet, Latin American Japanese prisoners remained at the Crystal City Camp. Unlike German prisoners whom many Latin American Republics accepted back, or who were released by the INS under a “relaxed parole” to live in freedom in the United States, Latin American Japanese faced uncertainty and rejection.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> From J. L. O’Rourke, Officer in Charge Crystal City, Internment Camp to Grover C. Wilmoth, District Director, INS, El Paso, Texas, dated June 24, 1946, NARA INS 940/15.

<sup>85</sup> Application for Repatriation, by Tsune Gushiken, dated June 26, 1946. NARA INS 940/15.

<sup>86</sup> Application for Repatriation, by Denkei Gushiken, dated June 26, 1946. NARA INS 940/15.

<sup>87</sup> Connell, *America's Japanese Hostages*, 192-217; Friedman, *Nazis and Good Neighbors*, 165-166.

“We were, without question, ‘birds in a cage,’” stated Japanese Peruvian Seiichi Higashide describing how Latin American internees felt while detained in the Crystal City Camp.<sup>88</sup> The stress did not help Tsune’s health; she lost her baby on July 14, 1946 in Crystal City Camp. In the meantime, the Gushikens continued to provide the best care they could for their children.<sup>89</sup>

In January 1947, Denkei and Tsune made a request to the Financial Officer at Crystal City camp to buy a portable typewriter, deducting \$70.00 from their own funds held by the INS to pay for it (most likely ordered through a catalog). “My daughter, Keiko Gushiken, is now learning typing at this camp school and wish (sic) to purchase the typewriter for the purpose,” wrote one of the parents or a translator to justify the purchase. Signing this petition, they probably recognized one of the multiple ironies that informed their lives at the camp: a portable typewriter had been seized from Denkei’s store by federal officers in 1941, lost among other essential items during the relocation program.<sup>90</sup>

In preparation for the repatriation of the entire family, and aware that starting a new life in a destroyed Japan would require every cent he could collect, Denkei Gushiken tried to obtain information from the United States Treasury Department Bureau in March 1947 about the property he owned at the time of his detention.<sup>91</sup> In spite of Mr. Gushiken’s previous refusal to authorize the sale of his belongings to pay for the storage of articles seized by federal authorities, Mr. Mike Dipp, owner of the City Market, adjacent to Gushiken’s shop at El Paso, had received the items from federal officers, perhaps gratis. Mr. Dipp auctioned the items, keeping the money

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<sup>88</sup> Higashide, *Adios to Tears*, 166.

<sup>89</sup> Clinical Record, Form 1946A, dated July 24, 1946. NARA INS 940/15.

<sup>90</sup> Purchase request from Denkei and Tsune Gushiken to the Financial Officer INS, Crystal City, dated January 22, 1947, NARA INS File 940/15.

<sup>91</sup> From W. J. Harmon, Supervising Customs Agent to Mr. Denkei Gushiken, dated 3/14/1947, NARA INS File 940/15.

collected as payment for storage of Mr. Gushiken's remaining property.<sup>92</sup> In addition to the loss of his store and its inventory, Gushiken was informed that one of his trucks was deemed an "abandoned worthless chassis" and was turned over to the "scrap drive committee" in El Paso. Denkei's other truck was sold to the Price's Dairy-Creamery in El Paso for \$770.00, a sum that was deposited in his blocked account at El Paso National Bank in August 1942.<sup>93</sup>

Leaving behind debts, property, and friends, the Gushiken family travelled under escort to San Francisco for repatriation to Japan on April 15, 1947.<sup>94</sup> Mrs. Gushiken, 36 years old at the time was expecting a baby again. She was about six months pregnant and risked her health and that of her baby while enduring a long trip to a destroyed country. L. T. McCollister, Acting Officer in Charge of Crystal City Internment Camp, informed Central Office that, if deportation did not take effect soon, Tsune's pregnancy would impede it later. Her previous miscarriage made "doubtful whether she would be able to travel at a later date." Once in Japan, Denkei notified Mr. McCollister of their most recent trouble: "Although we arrived safely in Yokohama we were a little disappointed for we haven't received our four handbags and a suitcase that belongs to Mr. Hayashi (...)." The Gushikens could not even make sure that the few possessions they had salvaged from their displacement would arrive with them to their final destination. And so, the youngest members of the family, who had faint ties with the country of their parents, landed a war-ravaged place to start a new life with serious material wants.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> From Mike Dipp, owner of City Market, to the United States Government, dated March 14, 1947; Memorandum and Routing form signed by "MPA", undated, NARA INS File 940/15.

<sup>93</sup> From Joseph L. Brownlow, Agent, United States Secret Service, to Supervising Customs Agent, El Paso, Texas, dated March 7, 1947. NARA INS File 940/15.

<sup>94</sup> Report of Alien enemy, United States Department of Justice, INS, Office of Crystal City, dated April 15, 1947. NARA INS, Alien No. 4895135. NARA INS File 940/15.

<sup>95</sup> From Denkei Gushiken to Mr. McCollister, dated May 12, 1947, Okinawa, Japan. NARA INS File 940/15.

The losses the Gushikens experienced, including their freedom and the right of the youngest members of the family to remain in their country of birth, were a result of nationalist policies, racist ideologies, and international economic imbalance. Citizenship rights, already so closely linked to racial classification in the United States and Mexico, totally disappeared with the urgencies of World War II and the implementation of the relocation program on both sides of the border. Along with the Gushiken family, Mexican and other Latin American Japanese remained under tight control even after the end of World War II in 1945, remaining either interned in camps or banned from the United States/Mexico borderland area.<sup>96</sup>

To this day, the Mexican government denies having deported any person of Japanese descent to the United States during World War II.<sup>97</sup> The language and the procedures used to uproot Japanese Mexicans have only masked the fact that the Mexican government, led by Ávila Camacho, was complicit in the United States' plans to use Latin American Japanese as pawns. The transference of Japanese Mexican civilians to the control of the United States government was coordinated with the assistance of the Portuguese Embassy, the liaison between the Japanese and the Mexican governments.<sup>98</sup>

Although the relocation program took a different character in each nation, the United States and Mexico declared those persons of Japanese descent “enemy aliens,” without

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<sup>96</sup> From Dr. Bernardo Batiz to Hachiro Uyeji, dated May 23, 1946. IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/1039, and from Manuel Palacio to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated August 6, 1946. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/385.

<sup>97</sup> Mexican Ambassador Sergio González Gálvez stated on December 8, 2008 that “while the Japanese residing in Central America were arrested to be taken to the United States, Mexico did not give away even one Japanese to the neighbor country.” Sergio González Gálvez, “Eventos Históricos De La Relación México-Japón”, Asociación México Japonesa, [http://www.kaikan.com.mx/kaikan/aportaciones\\_Colaboradores.php?id=55](http://www.kaikan.com.mx/kaikan/aportaciones_Colaboradores.php?id=55) (accessed May 22, 2010). In August 1943, thirty three persons of Japanese origin were deported to the United States. The Mexican state claimed they were part of an “exchange between nationals of the American Republics for Japanese residents of the same republics.” No records of Mexican nationals exchanged for the Mexican residents of Japanese origin listed here were found in the course of this research. From Manuel Tello to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated August 24, 1943. IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/600.

<sup>98</sup> From Dr. Enrique García González, dated August 23, 1943 and from Manuel Tello to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated August 24, 1943. IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/600.

consideration of their age, personal values, religious affiliation, financial status, prior citizenship, or nationality. No resident of the borderlands area was ever tried or condemned for espionage or conspiracy in Mexico or the United States during World War II. On the contrary, persons like the Gushikens had been valued members of their communities as several written testimonies confirm. Some were Mexican citizens by birth, other had acquired their Mexican citizenship through naturalization, while the rest were relatives of Mexican citizens. Most refused to be passive victims and made use of every legal recourse to nullify the effects of the relocation program on their lives. None proved to be a danger to the national security of Mexico or the United States, but their value as pawns of economic and political interests placed them in harm's way.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE ROAD TO CONCENTRATION CAMPS: VILLA ALDAMA AND BATÁN

*(Alberto) Shunji Yoshida and Sanshiro Matsumoto (...) founded a farm in Temixco, Morelos, where the Japanese were concentrated during the First Great War (sic.)*<sup>1</sup>

Sergio González Gálvez  
Mexican ambassador.

This chapter analyzes the role of the CJAM and the Mexican state in the creation, operation, and closure of concentration camps and other zones of confinement in 1942. Such analysis of concentration camps in Mexico assists us to establish the responsibility for the loss of civil rights, freedom, property, and lives of Japanese Mexicans during World War II. Although the Mexican state ordered the evacuation of the Japanese Mexican communities from the borderlands and coerced destitute men and women into concentration camps, the Mexican government has refused to acknowledge that such camps existed in Mexico during this period or that the state acted against basic principles of human rights and international conventions in the treatment of prisoners.

Current friendly relations between Japanese Mexican leaders and members of the Mexican government have aided in the impression that Mexico protected all Japanese Mexicans from the United States' control during World War II. Confirming this affable relationship, on December 3, 2008, the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Relations organized the academic symposium "Ciento Veinte Años de Amistad entre México y Japón" (One Hundred and Twenty Years of Friendship between Mexico and Japan). Mexican and Japanese diplomats, scholars,

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<sup>1</sup> Sergio González Gálvez, "Eventos Históricos De La Relación México-Japón," in *Ciento Veinte Años de Amistad entre México y Japón* (Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores: Asociación México Japonesa, 2008). This transcription of Sergio González Gálvez's presentation differs slightly from that published by the Mexican Foreign Ministry. For example, González Gálvez states in this version that the "farm" was established during the First Great War, while in the Ministry of the Interior's publication he refers to the war as the "Pacific War."

and businessmen celebrated in Mexico City what, in the official news reporting the event, has been a long-lasting, uninterrupted “relationship of deep respect, sincere friendship, and mutual collaboration” between Japan and Mexico.<sup>2</sup>

The speeches Mexican officials addressed to the audience during this conference reflect the will to ignore the damage the Mexican government inflicted on the Japanese Mexican community during World War II. Mexican Ambassador Emeritus Sergio González Gálvez praised the virtues of those Japanese Mexicans he regarded as memorable heroes of the Mexican Revolution. Among them, González mentioned Shunji Yoshida and Sanshiro Matsumoto who, according to the educator and diplomat, “founded a farm in Temixco, Morelos, where the Japanese were concentrated during World War I (sic).” González Gálvez stated the uprooting of Japanese Mexicans occurred during the First Great War, not during World War II, and insisted on denying the effects of their eviction from the borderlands.<sup>3</sup> Distancing himself from the reality of the Japanese Mexicans experience, the ambassador not only described Temixco camp as a farm and the product of Sanshiro Matsumoto and Alberto Shunji Yoshida’s entrepreneurship, but he merged the names of these two businessmen with those of the Japanese Mexicans who participated in the Mexican Revolution against social injustice, placing them in the pantheon of heroes of the civil war.<sup>4</sup> In sum, the concentration camp was a farm, and the

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<sup>2</sup> Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, "Comunicado 357," *Sala de Prensa del Gobierno Federal* (2008). <http://portal.sre.gob.mx/imr/pdf/8601glezgalvez.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> González Gálvez, "Eventos Históricos De La Relación México-Japón." This transcription of Sergio González Gálvez’ presentation posted on the Asociación México Japonesa’s website differs slightly from that published by the Mexican Foreign Ministry. For example, González Gálvez states in the version he read to an audience on December 3, 2008, which included the Japanese Ambassador, that the “farm” was established during the First Great War, while in the Ministry of the Interior’s publication refers to the war as the “Pacific War.”

<sup>4</sup> Ibid; Sergio González Gálvez, "Eventos Históricos De La Relación México-Japón," (2008). <http://portal.sre.gob.mx/imr/pdf/8601glezgalvez.pdf> (accessed May 24, 2010); SRE, "Portal", Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores <http://portal.sre.gob.mx/imr/popups/articleswindow.php?id=78> (accessed July 7, 2010).

privileged Japanese Mexicans who ran the camp for the Mexican state, were heroes of the Mexican Revolution in the view of the Mexican diplomat.

Contributing to the misinterpretation of the relocation program, Dr. González Gálvez omitted the fact that most displaced Japanese Mexicans did not enjoy Matsumoto and Yoshida's freedom to administer the finances of Temixco's concentration camp and other businesses during World War II. Furthermore, González Gálvez stated the eviction of the Japanese Mexicans from the borderlands as occurring during the First Great War, a conflict in which the Mexican state did not take part directly. If his time frame was an involuntary mistake, Ambassador González Gálvez elected to omit from his narrative the existence of other concentration camps in Mexico, the material losses of most Japanese Mexicans, and the suspension of their basic civil rights which resulted in hunger, homelessness, and even death. The Mexican diplomat, and those who applauded him in December 2008, refused to recognize the responsibility of the Mexican and United States governments in the dislocation of the Japanese Mexican community during the Second Great War.<sup>5</sup>

Refuting González Gálvez' declaration, hundreds of files in the DIPS archives and the direct testimony of some displaced Japanese Mexicans attest to the violence and coercion that defined the lives of uprooted borderlanders during World War II. Immediately after the Mexican state evicted Japanese Mexicans from the borderlands, the victims endured lack of economic resources and uncertainty. Their internment in concentration camps gave a different dimension to

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<sup>5</sup> González Gálvez, "Eventos Históricos De La Relación México-Japón." This transcription of González Gálvez's presentation differs slightly from the text published by the Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores (Mexican Foreign Ministry). For example, González Gálvez states in this version that the "farm" was established during the First Great War, while in the Ministry of the Interior's publication refers to the war as the "Pacific War."

the experience of Japanese Mexicans during World War II, characterized by forced labor, lack of freedom, and class conflicts.<sup>6</sup>

In view of the presidential suspension of civil rights and Ávila Camacho's decision to ignore the Geneva Convention's protocols during World War II, no individual or institution in Mexico had enough power to protect working class Japanese from the Mexican state's orders to evacuate the borderlands. The emergent Comité Japonés de Ayuda Mutua (Japanese Committee of Mutual Assistance), nevertheless, represented the Japanese Mexican community and negotiated some aspects of its relocation. Although the association (referred from now on as CJAM) tended to the most urgent needs of the displaced borderlanders during World War II, its main objective, as ordered by the Ministry of the Interior, was to assist the Mexican government in the management of Japanese Mexicans. In this capacity, the CJAM operated the concentration camps in Temixco, Villa Corregidora, and Rancho Castro Urdiales, three of the five known camps in Mexico, and requested the closure of the first concentration camp in Villa Aldama, Chihuahua.<sup>7</sup>

The CJAM intervention in the operation of concentration camps during the Second Great War, except for Villa Aldama camp, has supported the widespread idea that Japanese Mexicans formed a self-governed society in the camps. This research uncovers the lack of power and the degree of coercion Japanese Mexicans were exposed to in World War II. While there were various instances in which the CJAM assisted the uprooted population, particularly in the case of Villa Aldama's camp, the CJAM's involvement in their lives was quite complex. Though legal

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<sup>6</sup> Since the very first days Japanese Mexicans were escorted with their children by soldiers who "delivered" them to officers in the Regional Military Command in Mexico City. From José Pacheco Iturribarria to C. Comandante de la Escolta del Tren Num. 6 Nocturno de Guadalajara a México, dated January 29, 1942. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/600.

<sup>7</sup> From Alfonso García González to Luis Y. Shigematsu (Yoshida), dated January 27, 1942. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/600.

recourse to protect the Japanese Mexicans was not possible, the CJAM navigated the same system of corruption and personal favors that permeated the relationships between United States and Mexican officials during World War II.<sup>8</sup>

### **The Role of the Japanese Committee of Mutual Assistance in the Management of Concentration Camps**

In January 1942, the Mexican government, showing its support for the United States nation, ordered the deportation of all Japanese diplomats, leaving Japanese immigrants without effective diplomatic representation in Mexico.<sup>9</sup> As hundreds of empty-handed Japanese Mexicans arrived in Mexico City with their children, the Mexican government realized that, without the means to cover their most urgent needs, the displaced persons would become a visible problem in the capital. Having forbidden the operation of Japanese clubs or associations and intending to transfer to a third party the responsibility of feeding and housing the “citizens of an enemy nation” as well as their descendants, the Mexican state granted a special permission for the establishment of the CJAM in March, 1942.<sup>10</sup> Although local Japanese associations had provided direction and cohesion for immigrants and their descendents before 1942, the CJAM acquired an unprecedented role when the Mexican government allowed the intervention of its leaders in the management of Japanese Mexicans during World War II.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> See Stephen Niblo, *Mexico in the 1940s: Modernity, Politics, and Corruption* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources Books, 2000), 293.

<sup>9</sup> Geoffrey C. Gunn, *New World Hegemony in the Malay World* (Lawrenceville: The Read Sea Press, 2000), 192-195.

<sup>10</sup> A Japanese Association existed before World War II; however, when a presidential decree prohibited the existence of clubs or associations related to the Axis nations, the Japanese community suspended meetings and the organization ceased to exist. From Alfonso García González to Luis Y. Shigematsu, dated January 27, 1942. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)600.

<sup>11</sup> Akemi Kikumura-Yano, ed. *Encyclopedia of Japanese Descendants in the Americas: An Illustrated History* (Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 2002), 212-213.

The CJAM originated out of the relationship Japanese diplomats had with some members of the Japanese Mexican elite. Before leaving for Japan in January 1942, Ambassador Yoshioki Miura left three of the most prominent Issei in Mexico in charge of the Japanese Mexican community: Sanshiro Matsumoto, former gardener of the Presidential palace and owner of a chain of nurseries; Heiji Kato, manager of *El Nuevo Japón*; and Kiso Tsuru, owner of the oil company *La Veracruzana* and other enterprises.<sup>12</sup> The three men received \$100,000.00 (one hundred thousand pesos) from Kyoho Hamanaka, Japanese naval attaché in Mexico. In turn, the Japanese Mexican entrepreneurs deposited this amount in cash in the hands of Attorney-in-law Abelardo Paniagua Lara, a close friend of Alberto Yoshida. Paniagua made financial transactions on behalf of the CJAM board members when the Japanese Mexican entrepreneurs could not personally sign certain contracts due to the restrictions on Japanese businesses.<sup>13</sup>

Although the Mexican and United States government had blacklisted Kiso Tsuru and Heiji Kato as collaborators of the Japanese state, the two wealthy Japanese Mexicans received the initial monetary funding for the CJAM operations from the Japanese state. They became also members of the board deciding the financial affairs of the CJAM.<sup>14</sup> Kiso Tsuru, Sanshiro Matsumoto, Heiji Kato, and Alberto S. Yoshida were the highest authority within this Japanese Mexican association and, in that capacity and within the limits the Mexican state imposed upon

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<sup>12</sup> Issei is a term that describes first generation Japanese immigrants. Maria Elena Paz-Salinas, *Strategy, Security, and Spies: Mexico and The U.S. As Allies in World War II* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 1997), 37.

<sup>13</sup> Francis Peddie, "Una Presencia Incómoda: La Colonia Japonesa De México Durante La Segunda Guerra Mundial " *Estudios de Historia Moderna y Contemporánea de México* 32 (2006): 86. Abelardo Paniagua, attorney-in-law negotiated in representation of the CJAM leaders the purchase of a hacienda in Temixco. "Mexico En La Guerra ", *Tiempo* 1943, 11.

<sup>14</sup> "Relation of the ("estimables") persons and groups who donated to the "Comité Japonés de Ayuda Mutua," dated March 4, 1942. IPS 2- 1./362.4(52)/1149. Kiso Tsuru and Heiji Kato donated \$10,000.00 (ten thousand pesos) each. The Colonia Japonesa requested the intervention of the Ministry of the Interior to remove at least two Japanese Mexican men, accusing them of criminals, from Guadalajara (Shinichi Morihita and Kawahara, whose first name the CJAM in Guadalajara did not provide). From Colonia Japonesa. De Guadalajara (sic) to Sr. Inspector Durán, dated November 4, 1942. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)600.

them, they negotiated most aspects of the relocation program with the Mexican government and administered the CJAM resources.<sup>15</sup>

The financial support the Japanese state gave to the Japanese Mexican elite, as official diplomats left Mexico, provided the CJAM with the power to manage the Japanese Mexican community. Most Japanese Mexicans were trying to solve everyday problems caused by their relocation and persecution and did not have the means or time to participate more actively in the decisions the CJAM leaders made for them. Homeless and confused, uprooted Issei and Nisei Japanese Mexicans gratefully accepted housing and meals from CJAM leaders upon their arrival in Mexico City.<sup>16</sup> Similar to its counterpart in the United States, the Japanese American Citizens League, the CJAM would be an interpreter and mediator between the victims of the relocation program and the government, and it also would be ready to make agreements in the name of the entire Japanese Mexican community.<sup>17</sup> Such deals sometimes had a negative impact and at other times a positive influence on the quality of life of working class Japanese Mexicans.

Although personal relations and sympathy could have influenced President Ávila Camacho's decision to give the CJAM the power to manage displaced Japanese Mexicans, corruption and the accumulation of wealth through questionable operations characterized Ávila Camacho's administration.<sup>18</sup> In addition to money and personal connections, protection required knowledge of the way corruption operated at the highest levels of the Mexican government, and that familiarity with the mechanisms of bribery was reserved for entrepreneurs. Unlike the Japanese Mexican leading the CJAM, who were wealthy or had close relations with politicians,

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<sup>15</sup> Estatutos del Comité Japonés de Ayuda Mutua, undated. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)1149.

<sup>16</sup> Notes taken during interview with Fidelia Takaki in Mexico City. July 16, 2006.

<sup>17</sup> B.A. Stephanie Wössner, *Japanese American Positionality in Hawaii and on the Mainland* (Munich: Grin Verlag, 2002), 25-26.

<sup>18</sup> Although Stephen Niblo does not focus on corruption manifested in the relocation program, he examines mechanisms and instances of illegal or unethical deals in Mexico during WWII. See Niblo, *Mexico in the 1940s: Modernity, Politics, and Corruption*, 254 and 255.

disfranchised evacuees were unshielded and suffered systematic humiliation, incarceration, and continuous displacement.<sup>19</sup>

### **In Preparation for the Relocation Program**

Alberto S. Yoshida was among those Japanese entrepreneurs who had personal contact with powerful Mexican politicians. Acting on the news that Japanese Mexicans were being forced to evacuate the borderlands, Yoshida, then a businessman residing in Mexico City, wrote a letter to Congressman Jesús M. Ramírez in January 1942. He explained to Ramírez that he had learned of the creation of a commission in charge of deciding how the property of nationals of the Axis nations would be allocated. The Japanese Mexican businessman invoked his 12-year friendship with the Mexican congressman who was a member of that commission, asking the politician to serve as a middle man between the Japanese Mexican community and the President of Mexico. Yoshida implored the Mexican government

[...] to rent or to indicate the facilities where the [Japanese Mexicans] could work the land, concentrated up to certain number in each hacienda in order to optimize the control over [the Japanese Mexicans]. This measure would be beneficial *to us* because *we* would not live as recluses in a Concentration Camp, we would have certain liberties in our private lives although we could not avoid the natural surveillance that the Mexican authority would exercise over us. (My emphasis).<sup>20</sup>

In the same letter, Yoshida suggested that Japanese Mexicans pay for expenses derived from their forced relocation. Equally important was his assurance that profits would result from the labor of the displaced persons:

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<sup>19</sup> From Abraham H. Castellanos to C. Jefe del Depto. de Investigación Política y Social, dated February 8, 1945. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)785.

<sup>20</sup> From Alberto S. Yoshida to Sr. Dip. Jesús Ramírez, dated January 4, 1941 (sic). The year is actually 1942 as Yoshida wishes Happy New Year and specifies 1942 as the current year. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1672.

[...] for the government the benefits would be as follows: to obtain a surplus from the agricultural production as a remedy to the scarcity [of agricultural products]. In addition, [the government] would not have to pay for the food, facilities, etc. In sum, instead of being a burden for the public treasury, [the haciendas] would be a source of production for the national economy.<sup>21</sup>

Yoshida's proposal was very attractive to President Ávila Camacho because it meant sharing the profits of the labor and also transferring the expenses of the concentration camp to the Japanese Mexican community itself. The American State Department had discussed with the Mexican government the issue of concentration camps before the uprooting of the Japanese Mexicans began in January, 1942.<sup>22</sup> Harold D. Finley, First Secretary of the American embassy in Mexico City, recommended that United States diplomats pressure the Mexican government to obtain cooperation from Mexico to open a camp exclusively for Japanese Mexicans in the Maria Islands, a Mexican archipelago in the Pacific Ocean. The United States officials thought Japanese Mexicans deserved to be subjected to the strictest incarceration systems. This island had been home of federal maximum security prisons since 1908.<sup>23</sup> Eventually, President Ávila Camacho authorized camps in other parts of Mexico under the most convenient terms for the Mexican and the United States governments: neither state would have to finance any camp in Mexico. The financial matters concerning Japanese Mexican internees were, from the inception of the concentration camps, in the hands of private parties.

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> The American State Department had contemplated internment of Latin American Japanese since 1941. Ambassador to Panama Edwin C. Wilson negotiated the conditions under which Panama would allow the operation of concentration camps. Initially, Panama's government would run the camp under the supervision of the United States. Wilson proposed the arrest of Panamanian Japanese and their internment at Toboga Island. Internees would be classified as Panamanians being guarded by Panamanian officers. The United States agreed to cover all expenses involved in the operation of the internment and to be responsible for any claims originating from the internment. In the end, the United States government took over the administration of the camp. P. Scott Corbett, *Quiet Passages: The Exchange of Civilians between the United States and Japan During the Second World War* (Kent, Ohio, and London: The Kent State University Press, 1987), 140.

<sup>23</sup> Robert M. Buffington, *Criminal and Citizen in Modern Mexico* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 98-105; Corbett, *Quiet Passages*, 141.

During World War II, the Mexican government officially referred to the facilities in Temixco, Villa Corregidora, and Rancho Castro Urdiales as concentration camps. However, Japanese Mexican inmates did not endure the same lethal violence suffered by internees in Europe's death camps. Nevertheless, internment in Mexican camps resulted in the decrease of quality of life, isolation, death for some inmates, disintegration of families, and loss of other networks of support.<sup>24</sup>

In March 1942, Japanese Mexican families in Cd. Juárez were not fully aware of the conditions of their impending uprooting. After the United States and the Mexican armies searched the homes of fifteen Japanese Mexicans in that city, and escorted them to the Federal District the Japanese Mexican community split. The remaining Japanese Mexican families received orders to board a train to Camargo in the state of Chihuahua. Eventually, Chihuahua's governor, Alfredo Chávez, ordered their internment in a labor camp in Villa Aldama. Under the pressure of the relatives and friends of Villa Aldama's inmates, the CJAM leaders negotiated with the Mexican government for the release of the Japanese Mexicans interned in the camp.

### **Villa Aldama Camp**

On March 27, 1942, El Paso's newspapers informed their readers that a group of eighty "Japs" from Cd. Juarez would have to leave the border city. If there were any qualms about their uprooting, the newspapers calmed them down stating that the Japanese Mexicans had "been offered farming land in the prosperous farming community of Santa Rosalía (Camargo), near Chihuahua City, where they will be able to earn a living for the duration of the war."<sup>25</sup> In fact,

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<sup>24</sup> From Romualdo J. Cházaro to Lic. J. Lelo de Larrea, dated February 25, 1943; and from Romualdo J. Cházaro to Lic. Eduardo Ampudia, dated August 23, 1943, IPS 2-1/362.4(52)968.

<sup>25</sup> "Japs Must Leave Juarez in Five Days," *El Paso Herald Times*, March 27, 1942.

the displaced Japanese Mexicans did not stay in Santa Rosalía de Camargo or receive farming land. This group of uprooted borderlanders was held captive in Villa Aldama, Chihuahua. The governor of Chihuahua, Alfredo Chávez, forced them to work for Tomás Valles de Vivar, a wealthy politician and Chihuahua's Treasurer.<sup>26</sup>

In April 1942, in spite of their lack of resources to start a new life somewhere else, entire families took the train that would take them to South of the state of Chihuahua.<sup>27</sup> When allowed, other men chose to leave their children and spouses in Cd. Juárez since their fates and the length of time they would be away from their usual occupations and means of support were unknown.<sup>28</sup>

Japanese Mexicans in Cd. Juárez were not the first group to evacuate the borderlands. The Mexican army and police in Baja California had already removed Japanese Mexican communities in January, 1942 from the North Pacific area adjacent to the United States. By April, only those Mexican Japanese who could not travel to the interior for reasons validated by the Ministry of the Interior (Secretaría de Gobernación) remained at home.<sup>29</sup>

When military authorities ordered him to leave his home in Cd. Juárez, Mr. Kihara did not bring his family with him to Camargo. His Mexican wife and children would fare better in the company of their friends and they all hoped the period of internment in a concentration camp would end soon. The haste of his travel did not allow him, or the rest of his travel companions, to carry any but the essential items they would need while away from their homes for an

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<sup>26</sup> From Governor Alfredo Chávez to Lic. Miguel Alemán, Srio. De Gobernación, dated March 16, 1942; and from Arturo Tamura to José Y. Sato, undated. IPS 2-1/362.4(52) 600, II Tome.

<sup>27</sup> Japanese Mexicans from Cd. Juarez were escorted to Camargo by federal police officers under the supervision of Italian Mexican DIPS inspector José Ramírez Colozzi. Telegram from J. Ramírez Colozzi to Secretaría de Gobernación, April 21, 1942. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)600.

<sup>28</sup> Tahei Ogawa, his wife and children, were forced by the Jefe de Población (Chief of the Immigration Office) to leave Cd. Juárez although both parents were naturalized citizens and their children were Mexicans by birth. IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)1597.

<sup>29</sup> "List of Japanese and children of Japanese persons who remain in Tijuana for various reasons," signed by Julio Ramírez Colozzi, dated April 3, 1942. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)600.

unspecified period of time. Later, uprooted Japanese Mexicans from Cd. Juárez would learn that, without appropriate housing, no amount of clothing would be enough to protect their bodies from the weather they endured for several months in Villa Aldama, Chihuahua.<sup>30</sup>

Jesús Kihara's experience is an example of the troubles and tribulations that many Japanese Mexicans had to endure during the relocation program. Kihara and other Japanese Mexican men and women from Cd. Juárez arrived in Santa Rosalía de Camargo in the Southeast region of the state of Chihuahua at the end of March 1942.<sup>31</sup> Because the Mexican state did not supply the necessary food or clothing for the Japanese Mexican evacuees, the displaced men and women were responsible for the acquisition of the basic supplies to survive during the days they spent in Camargo, a city located approximately seven hundred miles south of Cd. Juárez. Some Japanese Mexican men managed in only a few days the difficult task of getting a job in the small city in order to pay for some of their life expenses. Such sources of income disappeared almost immediately, however.<sup>32</sup>

On May 7, Mr. Kihara's group from Cd. Juárez, in addition to other elderly Mexican Japanese individuals from Camargo, was forced to enter the city's jail.<sup>33</sup> Chihuahua's governor Alfredo Chávez ordered the incarceration of "non-dangerous" civilians in a crowded space for three days "under the strictest surveillance." Even though Chávez admitted the innocence of the Japanese Mexican detained, he ordered their arrest. The group of displaced Japanese Mexicans

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<sup>30</sup> Certificate signed by 37 residents of Cd. Juárez, dated January 28, 1943, IPS 2-1/362.4(52)1179.

<sup>31</sup> "Japs Must Leave Juarez in Five Days."; "Japs Removed from Border Area," *El Paso Times*, April 1, 1942.

<sup>32</sup> Merced Gómez de Okubo to C. Lic. Miguel Alemán, Secretario de Gobernación, dated May 21, 1942. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)1206.

<sup>33</sup> Eighty two residents of Camargo to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated May 28, 1942. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)1577.

was then escorted out and northwards of Santa Rosalía Camargo to the hacienda property of Tomás Valles Vivar in Villa Aldama.<sup>34</sup>

In 1942, Valles was the General Treasurer of the state of Chihuahua and would soon become senator. Adding to his titles and power, Valles had other important posts in the national public and private sector: he was appointed ambassador of Mexico in Portugal, member of the First Credit, Money, and Credit Institutions Committee, affiliate of the First Tariffs and Foreign Trade Committee, and President of the First Mines Committee and the Special Livestock Committee.<sup>35</sup> Valles reaped immediate benefits from the confinement and exploitation of Japanese Mexicans during World War II. He did not offer compensation for the jobs the evacuees performed in his agricultural fields. Nor did he provide housing, sanitary facilities, or adequate clothing for the type of labor and weather conditions Japanese Mexicans and their families were exposed.<sup>36</sup>

Among the forty eight internees the Ministry of the Interior categorized as “foreigners,” four were farmers. The ages of twenty three inmates of the inmates ranged between 52 and 63; however all men, regardless of their profession, health status, or age, were forced to work in the fields.<sup>37</sup> It would take several months as well as the efforts of their relatives, friends, and the CMJA to achieve the release of the internees from the concentration camp in Villa Aldama.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> From Governor Alfredo Chávez to Lic. Miguel Alemán, Srio. De Gobernación, dated March 16, 1942; and from Arturo Tamura to José Y. Sato, undated. IPS 2-1/362.4(52) 600, II Tome.

<sup>35</sup> Roderic Ai Camp, *Mexican Political Biographies, 1935-1993*, Third ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), 716.

<sup>36</sup> Daniel M. Masterson and Sayaka Funada-Classen, *The Japanese in Latin America* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 126.

<sup>37</sup> Undated list titled “Nombres de los súbditos japoneses concentrados en V. Aldama.” IPS 2-1/362.4(52)600, II Tome.

<sup>38</sup> From Ernesto Hidalgo, Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated January 6, 1943. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)1179.

Due to the isolation of the interned Mexican Japanese, the state of affairs at Villa Aldama's camp was not immediately known to the Portuguese Embassy, at the time the liaison between Japanese subjects and Mexican officials, or the incipient CJAM. The closest city to Villa Aldama was Ojinaga, a border city across from Presidio, Texas. On the Mexican side, the hacienda was distant from the main roads and urban centers of the state of Chihuahua; the postal service did not reach the camp. In the absence of means of communication such as telephone, telegraph or regular mail, Tomás Valles Vivar had little accountability in handling Japanese Mexican internees.

In an attempt to obtain help, internee Arturo Tamura submitted a letter on May 20, 1942 to Yoshio Sato who was already living in Mexico. Tamura hoped Sato would inform authorities of the circumstances Japanese Mexicans in Villa Aldama endured:

[...] our situation is highly critical and painful since this concentration camp is on an immense solitary plain, there are no houses or trees where to protect ourselves from the intense heat. Furthermore, we are mistreated as if we were slaves [...] Considering that current circumstances are the result of international affairs and not personal, we believe it is fair to be treated in a little bit more humanitarian and generous terms.<sup>39</sup>

The lack of official communication between the Ministry of the Interior and Chávez, however, was not the product of isolation, but federal and state officials' disinterest in reporting or obtaining a report on the conditions of the Japanese Mexicans detained in Villa Aldama. It reflects a degree of autonomy on the part of governor and the treasurer of the state of Chihuahua as well as a desire on the side of the federal government to please local politicians in the borderlands. Nevertheless, Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, Chief Officer of the Departamento de Investigación Política y Social (DIPS), attempted to obtain a report from Governor Chávez in June 1942, about the living conditions of the "foreigners." A response to the Chief Officer's

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<sup>39</sup> From R. Tamura to Yoshio Sato, dated May 20, 1942. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)600, II Tome.

request, if ever formulated, is not filed in the DIPS archives; in any case, Ruiz Cortines, future president of Mexico, did not take any action to alleviate the situation of the internees in Villa Aldama until months later, when pressure from the internees' relatives and friends increased.<sup>40</sup>

In the face of the neglect of the federal government, Japanese Mexicans who had been already relocated in Mexico City attempted to obtain the freedom of Villa Aldama's internees. On November 4, fifty Japanese Mexican men signed a petition to the President of Mexico asking him to order the transfer of the persons interned in Villa Aldama to Mexico City. Among the signatories were Japanese Mexican residents of Cd. Juárez who had been apprehended, detained, and interrogated by Mexican and American military officers. Ironically, they had fared better than the rest of the Japanese community in Cd. Juárez, having been escorted directly to the capital of Mexico.<sup>41</sup> This group of men advocating for the internees of Villa Aldama camp was committed to "provide financial assistance to [the internees] and to pay for their travelling expenses [to the capital]." They reminded General Ávila Camacho that among those Japanese Mexicans in Villa Aldama there was "not even one criminal or idle person, all of them having lived in the Mexican Republic under the traditional hospitality of this country and dedicated to compensate such hospitality with their honest labor." In the meantime, their relatives continued to seek on their own the release of the Japanese Mexican group in the camp.<sup>42</sup>

It is important to highlight that although Mexican authorities did not make compulsory the internment of Mexican wives of Japanese Mexicans in the camp, several Mexican women and children lived in Villa Aldama. They were unaccounted for in the official records but

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<sup>40</sup> From Adolfo Ruiz Cortines to C. Gobernador del Estado de Chihuahua, dated June 5, 1942. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)600, II Tome.

<sup>41</sup> Report taken by Lic. Alfonso García González, Chief of the Departamento de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales. Rendered by Dr. Tsunesaburo Hasegawa Araki in Mexico City, on April 2, 1942. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/464.

<sup>42</sup> From Enedina López de Kihara and Julia R. de Ogata to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated November 29, 1942, IPS 2-1/362.4(52)1179..

correspondence between Mexican women and officials attest for their presence.<sup>43</sup> Mexican wives or daughters of the internees who could pay for their transportation became the intermediaries between federal and state official representatives and the inmates, traveling between Cd. Juárez and Villa Aldama, or between the city of Chihuahua and the internment camp.<sup>44</sup>

On November 29, 1942, Mrs. Enedina López de Kihara and Julia R. De Ogata, the Mexican wives of two internees in Villa Aldama, wrote a petition to the Minister of the Interior on behalf of the thirty seven Japanese men interned in the concentration camp near Villa Aldama. Knowing that the return of their husbands to their homes in the borderlands would be impossible due to the uprooting of ethnic Japanese on both sides of the border and the general atmosphere of hatred and racism against them, but trying to remove their relatives from the concentration camp, the two Mexican women requested the transference of all internees to the capital of Mexico. Not having received a response to her prior request, Mrs. López de Kihara wrote another letter to the Minister of the Interior on December 29, 1942. The message had a desperate tone; her husband's health was rapidly deteriorating. The woman was afraid Mr. Kihara, a 55-year old Japanese Mexican, was in danger in the absence of a doctor and "relatives who take care of his health."<sup>45</sup>

Other relatives of the concentration camp inmates joined Enedina López de Kihara two days later to write a new petition to the Minister of the Interior. On December 31, wives and

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<sup>43</sup> From Enedina López de Kihara, Carmen L. de Komori, Carmen Fukumoto, Beatriz Harada, Emilia Tamura, and Ema Ogawa to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated December 31, 1942, IPS 2-1/362.4(52)1179.

<sup>44</sup> From Enedina López de Kikara (sic) to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated December 29, 1942, IPS 2-1/362.4(52)1179.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

daughters of several Japanese men begged Minister of the Interior Miguel Alemán to free the inmates and their families. The petitioners stated that they were

(...) living in the open under the protection of some tents where the cold weather is extremely intense and unbearable [...]. [The Japanese Mexican] men are forced to start working from very early in the morning until the darkness covers the camp, with no salary except for the insufficient meals the men receive. Their families do not collect provisions, much less money [for their work]. Since this is happening since April, the little money we brought with us when we left Ciudad Juárez is completely gone.<sup>46</sup>

The general economic instability of the country worsened the living conditions of Japanese Mexican individuals and their families in the Villa Aldama concentration camp. War inflation accelerated their economic losses as “staples are at a high price.” Excessive cold and malnourishment exposed the men and their families to grave illnesses. Children of various ages living in the camp were not attending school or receiving any formal education.<sup>47</sup>

Newspapers in Mexico and the United States treated the relocation as a benign form of control and focused on the activities of the adults, obliterating the experiences of children.<sup>48</sup> At the present moment, it is difficult to find written narratives on the relocation program in Mexico assessing the pain of children who had to part with their parents, in some cases both, or leave their school, their home and their friends in their place of origin to accompany them. The generation who endured the pain of internment is passing away. The valuable information interviewees gave me and the written appeals their parents wrote to Mexican officials allow me to state that whether in the concentration camps or at home, Japanese Mexican children, some of

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<sup>46</sup> From Enedina López de Kihara, Carmen L. de Komori, Carmen Fukumoto, Beatriz Harada, Emilia Tamura, and Ema Ogawa to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated December 31, 1942, IPS 2-1/362.4(52)1179.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. Corroborating inflation during World War II is Niblo, *Mexico in the 1940s: Modernity, Politics, and Corruption*, xxi and 16.

<sup>48</sup> TIME, "Foreign Relations: To Shoe an Achilles Heel," *Time Magazine*, January 26, 1942.

them newborn, experienced harassment and hunger.<sup>49</sup> Their families were, in many cases, of modest means before the war started; consequently, their parents were hardly able to face the expenses involved in moving to distant places.<sup>50</sup>

In the Villa Aldama concentration camp, the extremely cold winter of 1942 affected all internees, and their Mexican mothers, daughters and wives in the camp reported to the Ministry of the Interior that children and adults went “almost naked without hope to recover from their losses since their husbands [...] did not earn a cent” for their labor at the camp.<sup>51</sup> Desperate, they demanded the freedom of all Japanese Mexican internees. In lieu of their freedom once again they requested adequate housing to protect the captives from the inclement weather, a doctor paid by the Ministry to tend to their sicknesses, and means to provide for their families until the end of the global conflict. Minister of the Interior Miguel Alemán did not respond to these requests. Nor did he act to remove the Japanese Mexican prisoners from the concentration camp.<sup>52</sup>

In the meantime, unrelenting neighbors and friends of Jesús Kihara tried other personal routes to bring the Japanese Mexican man back to Cd. Juárez to obtain the medical care he urgently needed. Oswaldo Álvarez, a business man established in the same border city, offered to place a bond to guarantee that Mr. Kihara would not become a threat to national security.

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<sup>49</sup> See complete file of Leonardo Arita Arita, IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/601 and Naoji Yano, IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/404, among other cases of displaced Japanese Mexican children who accompanied their parents. From Yanome Mitsuo to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated March 13, 1942. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/786.

<sup>50</sup> Middle class Japanese Mexican children living in the borderlands experienced also a sudden change in their status when the Junta de Administración y Vigilancia de la Propiedad Extranjera (Commission for the Administration and Surveillance of Foreign Property) ordered bank accounts of Axis nationals frozen. This commission was formed in December, 1942. Masterson and Funada-Classon, *The Japanese in Latin America*, 60-62. Real estate and businesses fell often out of the control of Japanese Mexicans who sold or transferred their valuables in order to avoid larger losses through confiscation. From J. Ramírez Colozzi to Gobernación, dated April 21, 1942. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/600.

<sup>51</sup> From Enedina López de Kihara, Carmen L. de Komori, Carmen Fukumoto, Beatriz Harada, Emilia Tamura, and Ema Ogawa to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated December 31, 1942. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)1179.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

Álvarez deposited his real estate property, valued at \$16,730.00 pesos, as part of the bond. He was willing to risk his assets so the “Mexican Government [would] allow [Mr. Kihara] to live outside of the concentration camp designated for the Japanese Colony [...it] being absolutely necessary to get medical attention for him.” His offer did not receive an answer from the officials in charge of the relocation program.<sup>53</sup>

Álvarez and hundreds of other Mexican citizens confronted their government, appealing to the legal system which they believed would protect Japanese Mexicans from the abuse of the state. Knowing that Mr. Kihara’s sickness had been accentuated by the conditions of the concentration camp and seeking the release of the internee, Oswaldo Álvarez attempted to preempt accusations of espionage and sabotage against the internee, describing him as an honorable, peaceful, hardworking person, whom he had known for several years.<sup>54</sup> Additionally, another thirty six residents of the Barrio Alto in Cd. Juárez certified to having been personally acquainted with Mr. Jesús Kihara for more than 20 years. All of them deemed him “deserving of all consideration,” asked for justice and supported his family’s petition to grant all individual rights provided by the “Laws of Our Country.”<sup>55</sup>

Other complaints from relatives and internees prompted the CJAM in Mexico City to denounce to the Ministry of the Interior the conditions in which the Japanese Mexican families lived in Villa Aldama in the now harsh winter:

Some are planting, others are carrying stones, and so forth, and they are not provided with housing for which they have been forced to sleep under tents that (the internees) themselves have installed, under which cover they cannot remain during the day because of the excessive heat, and by night (the tents do not protect them from) the cold weather, receiving meals that are worth not even ten cents per day. As a result

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<sup>53</sup> From Oswaldo Álvarez to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated January 28, 194. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)1179.

<sup>54</sup> From Oswaldo Álvarez to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated January 28, 1943, IPS 2-1/362.4(52)1179.

<sup>55</sup> Certificate signed by Eduardo Martínez and other 35 persons, dated January 28, 1943. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)1179.

of such inhumane and unjustified treatment many of them are sick and exhausted. As you may well understand, that place is of the worst kind, even when compared with a concentration camp.<sup>56</sup>

Such comparison rested on Japanese Mexicans' knowledge about the concentration camps in the United States. In spite of their losses and the diminished quality of life endured at the United States internment camps, Japanese prisoners in the care of the American army or the INS received food, housing, and clothing in compliance with the Geneva Convention agreements.<sup>57</sup>

The predicament of the Japanese Mexican families interned in the Villa Aldama concentration camp was partially resolved when the Ministry of the Interior agreed to remove the Japanese Mexican inmates from the property of Tomás Valles Vivar, whose prestige as cattle dealer, financier, and philanthropist remains unblemished in the history of Chihuahua.<sup>58</sup> The Mexican government had finally heard the request of the Portugal Embassy and the CAMJ to relocate the internees, transporting them to Mexico City in January, 1943.<sup>59</sup> The DIPS assigned inspector Manuel Alemán Pérez the task of travelling to Villa Aldama in order to escort the Japanese Mexican men from the camp to Mexico City. Without complete certainty that authorities in Chihuahua would accept the transfer of the internees to Mexico City -- after all it was difficult for Tomás Valles to let go free labor -- some members of the CJAM accompanied

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<sup>56</sup> From Comité de Ayuda Mutua Japonesa to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated June 2, 1942. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)600, II Tome.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> A real estate agency, avenues, schools, grants, and associations are named after Tomás Valles, the owner of the hacienda exploiting the labor of Japanese Mexicans in 1942:

[http://webchihuahua.com/print\\_me.php?ckey=2974](http://webchihuahua.com/print_me.php?ckey=2974),

[http://www.municipiochihuahua.gob.mx/transparencia/documentos/DOC\\_5022.PDF](http://www.municipiochihuahua.gob.mx/transparencia/documentos/DOC_5022.PDF),

<http://www.posadatierrablanca.com.mx/>,

<http://www.eldiariodechihuahua.com.mx/notas.php?IDNOTA=178048&IDSECCION=Opini%F3n&IDREPORTER O=Alfredo%20Espinosa>

<sup>59</sup> Masterson and Funada-Classen, *The Japanese in Latin America*, 127.

Alemán Pérez.<sup>60</sup> Their mission was to make sure that the prisoners would indeed be transported to the Federal District and to pay for the expenses derived from their travelling to the interior of the country.<sup>61</sup>

On January 18, 1943, Inspector Manuel Alemán Pérez escorted Villa Aldama's inmates to Mexico City.<sup>62</sup> Once they left the Villa Aldama concentration camp, the former internees joined other evacuees in their predicaments in the Federal District. They all continued to face dire conditions since the government that had ordered their relocation conveniently accepted Alberto S. Yoshida's proposition to let uprooted Japanese Mexicans pay for their own expenses while confined in designated places.<sup>63</sup>

## **Batán**

The impact of the relocation program on the Japanese Mexican community was not uniform. Some Japanese Mexican businessmen who already lived in Mexico City at the onset of World War II did not see their assets affected. Thus, the evacuation program accentuated the gap between economic classes within the same Japanese Mexican community. The distance between wealthy and working class Japanese Mexicans grew as Mexican officials increasingly shared their power over displaced borderlanders with the CJAM leaders.

The case of Sanshiro Matsumoto is an example of the class differences that determined the quality of life of Japanese Mexicans during the Second Great War. An icon of the Japanese

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<sup>60</sup> Although Masterson and Funada report that internees received a salary of fifty cents per day, I did not find the same evidence of wages in the DIPS files. In any case, I share the same conclusion Masterson and Funada: Japanese Mexicans worked "virtually as slaves" in Valles property. Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> From Lamberto Ortega Peregrina to Whom it May Concern, dated January 18, 1943, IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1179.

<sup>62</sup> Yoshio Sato, former leader of the Japanese community in Cd. Juárez was among the CJAM members who travelled with Alemán Pérez in order to pay for the expenses of the Japanese Mexicans from Villa Aldama. From Adolfo Ruiz Cortines to C. Alfredo Chávez, dated January 2, 1942. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)465.

<sup>63</sup> From Jesús Kihara to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated January 15, 1943, IPS 2-1/362.4(52)1179.

Mexican community since World War II and member of the CJAM board of directors, Matsumoto conveniently continues to be revered by the Mexican officials to this day.<sup>64</sup> The entrepreneur, whose father Tatsugoro arrived in Mexico from Japan in 1892, administered and expanded the family's flower farming business during the first decades of the twentieth century. Clients of the Matsumotos included Presidents Porfirio Díaz, Álvaro Obregón, and Manuel Ávila Camacho, along with other high ranking politicians and generals. Undoubtedly, Matsumoto's relations with powerful clients allowed him to negotiate the destiny of hundreds of destitute persons of Japanese origin during relocation.<sup>65</sup>

Sanshiro Matsumoto and the Ministry of the Interior opened a camp in January, 1942 on Matsumoto's ranch named Batán and located in the southern area of Mexico City, with the understanding that internees would be financially responsible for their living expenses.<sup>66</sup> In all probability, however, a large part of the \$100,000 (one hundred thousand pesos) in the care of

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<sup>64</sup> On July 27, 2006, Mexican President Vicente Fox attended the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Asociación México-Japonesa (AMJ), an association which stemmed from the CJAM, and was founded in 1956 by the same board. This association was financed with the funds the Mexican government confiscated from Japanese institutions operating in Mexico during World War II. In 2006, President Fox unveiled a bust of Sanshiro Matsumoto at the AMJ on the same date. Presidencia de la República, "Diversas Intervenciones Durante La Ceremonia Conmemorativa Del 50 Aniversario De La Asociación México-Japonesa, Asociación Civil," (2006). <http://fox.presidencia.gob.mx/actividades/?contenido=26200> (accessed July 27, 2010).

<sup>65</sup> Sanshiro Matsumoto had the financial means to follow some Japanese traditions, unlike many Mexican Japanese who were displaced and interned in camps. He married his wife, who adopted the name of Maria Consuelo, through the picture bride system, sending their children to Japan to be educated in his country of origin. Their daughter, Mari, returned to Mexico in one of the last commercial ships authorized to leave Japan for the American continent during WWII. Matsumoto's family hard work and expertise in floriculture gained them a sizable capital, keeping their wealth throughout World War II. See "Cambian La Historia Del Paisaje Urbano," *Reforma*, April 2, 2003.

<sup>66</sup> Matsumoto's ranch was situated in the *delegación* Magdalena Contreras which was connected to the more populated areas of Federal District through Calzada de Tlalpan. One of the most important avenues in Mexico City, Calzada de Tlalpan was only paved in the developed area of the capital. Access to the ranch was, therefore, difficult, particularly for persons who were not familiar with the area, which was the case of the Japanese Mexicans evacuated from the borderlands. Gobierno del Distrito Federal, "Historia De La Delegación La Magdalena Contreras", Delegación La Magdalena Contreras <http://www.mcontreras.df.gob.mx/historia/constitucion2.html> (accessed November 9, 2009). Also Niblo, *Mexico in the 1940s: Modernity, Politics, and Corruption*, 29.

Abelardo Paniagua was used during the first weeks of the relocation program to provide meals for uprooted Japanese Mexicans while interned in the camp or housed at the CJAM's facilities.<sup>67</sup>

Given the state of emergency under which Japanese Mexicans were displaced, it was difficult to accommodate hundreds of evacuees from the borderlands in a short period of time. The Ministry of the Interior registered 569 women, men and children interned in Batán, although some researchers account for more than 900 persons living in the ranch during the first days of the relocation program.<sup>68</sup> Internees of Batán were a diverse population from several geographical areas of Mexico and Japan, with different religious beliefs, age, cultural background, economic class, occupations, ethnicity and nationality.<sup>69</sup>

Because of the lack of information about the relocation program, conditions under which Japanese Mexicans lived and worked in the ranch remain unknown. The ranch was situated in a very isolated area of Mexico City and it was difficult for displaced Japanese Mexicans to search for other places of residence or employment. Against the official version that Batán served as a site of protection for displaced Japanese Mexicans, one of the interviewees, who was born in Mexico City within an uprooted family is quoted as saying "there was abuse, but people do not want to talk about it, we don't want outsiders learn what happened in Contreras (at Batán camp)." This statement reveals a code of silence that has made it difficult to construct a narrative of the internment of Japanese Mexicans from the perspective of the internees.<sup>70</sup>

While the government of Mexico was ultimately responsible for the welfare of the displaced civilians, the administrators of the camps and their owners were their only

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<sup>67</sup> Internees at Batán's camp are included in the lists of "Japanese subjects deployed from various places." From Lamberto Ortega P, to C. Director General de Poblacion, dated May 21, 1942. IPS 2-1/362.4 (52)600, II Tome.

<sup>68</sup> Masterson and Funada-Classen, *The Japanese in Latin America*.

<sup>69</sup> Undated list of persons of Japanese origin interned at Rancho "Batán." IPS 2-1/362.4 (52)600, II Tome.

<sup>70</sup> Notes taken during phone interview on December 15, 2009. At the request of my interviewee I will not disclose personal information that may reveal the identity of the person interviewed.

representatives before the Ministry of the Interior, so they were “juez y parte” (judge and defendant) when disagreements or complaints arose. While internees at United States concentration camps administered by the Army or the INS had the recourse to complain before the Spanish Ambassador, no semblance of protection against illegal or unjust practices existed in the Mexican camps.<sup>71</sup>

In spite of the restrictions the Ministry of the Interior imposed upon Japanese Mexicans during World War II, CJAM leaders obtained from the Ministry of the Interior several permits to travel searching for land to buy, but also to visit their families, or spend their vacations at resorts. Thanks to their political and geographical mobility, Sanshiro Matsumoto and his partners acquired the hacienda of Temixco, Morelos to open a third concentration camp.<sup>72</sup>

If details of the conditions and activities of Japanese Mexicans at Batán are largely unknown, the concentration camp the CJAM opened in the state of Morelos in July, 1942 may reflect the complexity of the role its leaders played during World War II. Undeniably, these influential Japanese Mexicans still enjoy the praise of the Mexican government officials.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Thomas Connell, *America's Japanese Hostages: The World War II Plan for a Japanese Free Latin America* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2002), 100.

<sup>72</sup> Kiso Tsuru enjoyed a remarkable degree of freedom during World War II. This dissertation analysis his relationship with the Mexican state in chapter 7. The operation of the camp established in the state of Morelos will be discussed in chapter 8.

<sup>73</sup> See numerous permits granted to CJAM leaders to visit ranches and haciendas. IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/600.

## CHAPTER 6

### THE ROLE OF GENDER IN THE TREATMENT OF JAPANESE MEXICANS DURING WORLD WAR II

A review of documents in the National Archives of Mexico reveals that Japanese Mexican men and women faced gender expectations in complex and contradictory manners. They adhered to gendered normative behaviors in their attempt to prove their loyalty to the Mexican nation and to avoid the effects of anti-Japanese campaigns. Women in the Japanese Mexican community deviated also from patriarchal codes of conduct to take care of their families in the absence of Japanese Mexican men or their decreased ability to provide for their relatives during the Second Great War. On its part, the Mexican state treated Japanese Mexicans according to their gender. Criminalization of Japanese Mexican men contrasted with the oblivion with which the Mexican state treated Japanese Mexican women. Mexican officials regarded Japanese Mexican men as dangerous, abnormal human beings, and saw Japanese Mexican men as guards of the women in their families. Such gendered, racial views defined the lives of Japanese Mexicans in their families during World War II.

Flora Kikutake Yahiro's predicament reveals the complexity of interracial gender relations as well as aspects of the gendered criminalization of Japanese Mexicans during World War II. Unlike most Japanese Mexican women, Kikutake had a file of her own at the DIPS because she was not officially associated with a man in Mexico. In spite of her status as a single woman in a patriarchal world, Kikutake used her resources and was able to overcome what she believed were serious difficulties on her own, figuring out ways to survive in Mexico City during World War II.

Kikutake was immersed in the Mexican culture from the time she was very young, acquiring the social and technical skills which would ensure her a job when most Japanese Mexicans were struggling to regain financial stability in the face of War World II, but the war placed her in a vulnerable position. Kikutake was born in Seattle, Washington on January 22, 1914. The date of her arrival in Mexico is not registered, but Kikutake must have been a child when her parents decided to move south of the border, for she was a student enrolled in the elementary school Josefa Ortiz de Domínguez in Orizaba, Veracruz. Flora, thus, had the opportunity to learn Spanish early in her life; this increased her chances in finding and holding a job. In a patriarchal world limiting educational opportunities for women, the young woman had academic aspirations that translated into a selection of educational institutions: she attended the secondary school that formed part of the Universidad Veracruzana, and later the Escuela Nacional Preparatoria where she was enrolled in the pre-medicine program. Kikutake also sought training as secretary at the Chamber of Commerce trade school in Orizaba, Veracruz. When she relocated to Mexico City, Kikutake was ready to take a clerical job.<sup>1</sup>

In hindsight, Kikutake's employment application of October 1941 reflects the apprehension Japanese Mexicans may have held in view of international hostilities that could affect their immigration status. Although she was born in the United States, she declared she was Japanese when she applied for employment at Banco General de Capitalización in Mexico City. The attack on Pearl Harbor had not taken place at the time the bank's administrator interviewed Kikutake as a candidate for a clerical position at the financial institution; nonetheless, uncertainty as to the direction that Mexico would take in the global conflict made persons of Japanese origin

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<sup>1</sup> She had already worked at clerical jobs at two other companies, earning between \$200.00 and \$280.00 (pesos) a month. That amount seemed sufficient to pay the \$75.00 for the rent of an apartment she shared with her mother. Application for employment at the Banco General de Capitalización, S. A., dated October 1, 1941. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)1620.

cautious.<sup>2</sup> Thus, Flora Kikutake neglected to note in her application that she had a child living in Japan, declaring herself as single.<sup>3</sup>

Mexico's entrance in World War II changed Flora Kikutake's situation drastically. Her job was jeopardized by restrictions on hiring nationals of the Axis countries.<sup>4</sup> The new dispositions prompted the Associate Director of the Bank, Julio Novoa, to ask Kikutake to obtain a written authorization from the Ministry of the Interior to work at the bank. In November 1942, DIPS Chief José Lelo de Larrea wrote a letter to the Banco General de Capitalización stating that a search into Miss Flora Kikutake's records had produced no "charges against the *expresada señorita*, for which th[e] Department ha[d] no objection against her continuing rendering her services at that institution."<sup>5</sup> In a period of hardship and unemployment for many Mexicans, and particularly for Mexican Japanese persons, Flora Kikutake was fortunate enough to have a clerical job that seemed secure and comfortable. Yet, the war would take its toll on Kikutake's life.

One day after DIPS Chief Lelo de Larrea authorized Kikutake to continue working at the bank, Novelo accused Kikutake of falsifying a series of documents to cash checks fraudulently worth approximately \$3,000.00 (pesos).<sup>6</sup> What prompted Kikutake to commit a crime during World War II? She was an educated woman, aware of the dire circumstances Japanese Mexicans were facing at the time. Her salary was enough to pay her rent and for more than the most basic needs of her mother and herself. Hers was not an act of theft motivated by greed or the desire to

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<sup>2</sup> "Juarez Japs Put on U.S. Blacklist," *El Paso Herald Post*, December 26, 1941, 139-166.

<sup>3</sup> Application for employment at the Banco General de Capitalización, S. A., dated October 1, 1941. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)1620.

<sup>4</sup> From Ing. Eugenio Riquelme, to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated March 15, 1944. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)1637.

<sup>5</sup> From J. Lelo de Larrea to Banco General de Capitalización, dated November 30, 1942. IPS 2-1362.4(52)/1620.

<sup>6</sup> From F. Kikutake Y. to Sr. D. Julio Novoa, dated December 1st, 1942. IPS 2-1362.4(52)/1620.

acquire a higher standard of life. Confronted by Julio Novoa, who had detected the deceit, Flora explained her predicament:

[...] Because I needed to bring my little son Kiyoshi Imahashi from Japan, I acted in an incorrect manner; it is with pain that I confess having cashed falsified documents [...] to give an amount of money to a man who left in the *Gripsholm*, and then to pay the enormous interests charged by those persons who lent me money to complete [the amount required to bring Kiyoshi from Japan].<sup>7</sup>

Kikutake's Spanish vocabulary and grammar reflected her formal education and her middle class status, favorable factors in presenting her case. She conveyed in her letters to Julio Novoa her anguish as well as her remorse in a dignified manner, stating that she had no accomplices and that she would repay in small amounts the amount in question. The young woman promised to notify the bank of her new employment information to calculate a reasonable deduction from her future paycheck to cover her debt:

[...]I recognized that these were the least honorable means through which I [could obtain the money] but my desire to bring my son to Mexico before the situation worsens in Japan was the reason that forced me to proceed in this way.<sup>8</sup>

Kikutake had taken drastic measures in the face of prejudice and discrimination during World War II and she acknowledged both her duty to her employer and her responsibility to take care of her child. The owners of the bank decided not to press charges against Flora Kikutake, but they notified the DIPS about the conditions of her dismissal.<sup>9</sup> Both the bank and the DIPS officers elected to avoid harsh punishment for Kikutake's actions, anticipating that she would repay the amount improperly appropriated.<sup>10</sup> Kikutake's technical training as a clerk made her reliable and the expectations to repay the amount were reasonable given her employability.

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<sup>7</sup>From F. Kikutake Y. to Sr. D. Julio Novoa, dated December 1st, 1942. IPS 2-1362.4(52)/1620. The *Gripsholm* was the American/Swedish vessel which transported civilians between Japan and the United States during World War II.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

Furthermore, in view of the state of war and under the conditions of the relocation program, Kikutake could not leave the city or the country. To ensure that she would remain in sight, the DIPS officials were notified of the arrangements. No more correspondence was filed in Flora's chart until almost two years later when, in December 1944, the DIPS Chief ordered inspector Mercedes Ramírez Mendoza, the only female official registered in this institution's archives, to investigate her.<sup>11</sup>

Inspector Ramírez visited Flora Kikutake's home and reported on the conditions and activities of the Japanese Mexican woman. Kikutake was then a poor working woman who took care of her mother:

[...] The furniture is old, without luxuries, better described as humble. She lives in the company of her mother, I was informed that she works for the enterprise managing the Metropolitan Movie Theater, and that she has no other employment, she has been living at the apartment she lives at currently for four years (sic).<sup>12</sup>

Inspector Ramírez interrogated some neighbors of Kikutake, collecting details on the Japanese Mexican woman's routine. The DIPS officer obtained most of her information from a Mr. Gonzalo Novelo M., who lived in front of Kikutake's apartment and who provided an exhaustive report on Flora's daily life:

[Mr. Novelo] informed me that she carries a decent life, she has not made any friendship with other renters [in the building], generally stays awake until very late at night, her boyfriend visits her, between twelve and one in the morning she has brothers and currently they are fighting on the side of the Japanese Government, but that she eludes any conversation about the War.<sup>13</sup>

Inspector Ramírez and Kikutake's neighbor, Novelo, did not find definitive proof of Kikutake's involvement in espionage or sabotage activities. However, Novelo insinuated that

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<sup>11</sup> From F. Kikutake Y. to Sr. D. Julio Novoa, dated December 1st, 1942. IPS 2-1362.4(52)/1620.

<sup>12</sup> From IPS 224, Mercedes Ramírez Mendoza to Lic. Eduardo Ampudia Valle, dated September 18, 1944. IPS 2-1362.4(52)/1620

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

Kikutake was part of a pro-Axis group and he reported Kikutake's visits to a Japanese Mexican dentist who, according to Novelo, had "made [Axis] propaganda by giving free consultations."<sup>14</sup> Ramírez wrote her own impression of Kikutake whom the inspector deemed a "decent, educated woman" who mastered the Spanish language to perfection. According to Ramírez, although Kikutake had lived many years in Mexico, she "ke(pt) an oriental appearance (sic)."<sup>15</sup> The inspector did not consider Kikutake fully assimilated into the Mexican culture. Whatever Ramírez' idea of oriental was, in her eyes it was worth noting that Kikutake still remained foreign to the country in spite of her education and long residence in Mexico.

Kikutake's neighbor and Inspector Ramírez insisted on noting that Kikutake was "decent" but that she was not to be entirely trusted. Novelo reported that he used to hear suspicious noises coming from her radio at about four o'clock and then he proceeded to state that such noises could be the product of his imagination caused by the "distrust these persons inspired in him."<sup>16</sup> To conclude her report, the female DIPS inspector wrote that Gonzalo Novelo gave her his business card and volunteered to keep close watch on Kikutake, taking note of her guests and the hours she received visitors at her apartment. Although under surveillance, and in spite of her neighbor's ill-founded insinuations of involvement in pro-Axis activities, Kikutake was able to continue her life employed at a theater in Mexico City to support her mother.<sup>17</sup>

The decision of the DIPS and bank officials not to prosecute legally Flora Kikutake stands in contrast with the harsh prosecution and incarceration suffered by Japanese Mexican men. Mexican officials punished Japanese Mexican men for crimes ranging from protesting

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> From IPS 224, Mercedes Ramírez Mendoza to Lic. Eduardo Ampudia Valle, dated September 18, 1944. IPS 2-1362.4(52)/1620.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

their living conditions at the concentration camp to changing address without obtaining permission from the DIPS. Men suffered, in general, more violent forms of control than women during World War II.<sup>18</sup> Miguel L. Yshida, for example, was incarcerated in Perote in September 1942 after being arrested in the company of his father at Agua Caliente, in the state of Chihuahua. Yshida was Mexican by birth and his main crime, according to DIPS inspector R. Candiani, was to “perfectly command our language to serve as a messenger among the [Japanese Mexicans].” State officials did not try him in court to prove he was guilty of espionage, but ordered his incarceration based on his ability to speak Spanish.<sup>19</sup> Inspector Candiani, of Italian descent, thought that when Japanese Mexican men answered questions with “astuteness” and demonstrated “high culture,” the Mexican state had enough evidence of sabotage and espionage activities warranting the incarceration of such intelligent men.<sup>20</sup>

Since the Mexican police looked for signs of extraordinary skills to revile Japanese Mexican men, the victims of the displacement program sought to accentuate their normalcy and the ordinary, but indispensable gendered function they had within their families. Jorge Sato, for example, invoked his role as head of his family, declaring that he was forced to abandon his wife and three children when the Mexican government forced him to leave his home in Mexicali, Baja California:<sup>21</sup>

[...] As man and as father I ask you to consider allowing me to go to Baja California in order to reunite with my family since, I repeat, my children are minor and they cannot work yet and I cannot get a job here to support them.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Report signed by Alejandro Ortega in reference to Santiago Cobayasi (sic), dated August 21, 1942. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)1446.

<sup>19</sup> From R. Candiani, to C. Jefe del Departamento Investigación Política y Social, dated September 30, 1942. IPS 2-1362.4(52)/1442.

<sup>20</sup> Unsigned resolution in regards to Dr. Manuel Seiki Hiromoto, with a seal stating: Secretaria de Gobernación, dated January 10, 1944. IPS 2-1362.4(52)/1444.

<sup>21</sup> From Jorge Sato to Sr. Lic. Miguel Alemán, dated August 27, 1942. IPS 2/1/362.4(52)995.

<sup>22</sup> From Jorge Sato to Lic. Miguel Alemán, dated August 27, 1942. IPS 2/1/362.4(52)995.

Japanese Mexican men insisted in their official letters that the economic sustenance of their household derived exclusively from their work, although many Japanese Mexican women performed unpaid labor at home and at their family's small businesses.<sup>23</sup> While the intent of Japanese Mexican men was to evoke the empathy of the Mexican officials who ordered their displacement, obliterating the equally important productive role of women in their families supported patriarchal values. In addition to emphasizing their role as providers, Japanese Mexican men volunteered to guard Mexican sovereignty, arguing that the defense of their country fell to the men in their homes: "I and my sons, even when they are not yet qualified to enter the military because of their age, are willing to take the arms at any time our motherland calls us." As Sato offered in his plea to remain at home, the men in his family were trained to be providers and protectors. By promising to take arms in the name of the nation, Sato was enforcing patriarchal notions endowing men with authority and power.<sup>24</sup>

The Mexican government had made men guards of women and officials almost exclusively addressed Japanese men in written communications when dealing with uprooted families. Immigration laws stated that women acquired the citizenship status of their husbands automatically. Considering Japanese Mexican women appendages of men, in the absence of Tochini Hidanos's husband, and enforcing a patriarchal system, the DIPS opened a file for Mrs. Hidano under the name of the only male in her life: her son. Tochini Hidano and her son Katsumi were living in Mexico City in April, 1943 when, at the request of the Embassy of the United States, the Ministry of the Interior initiated an investigation into the activities of both,

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<sup>23</sup> From Shizutuo Matzumoto Mouaque (Pedro Matzumoto) to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated June 9, 1943. IPS 2/1/362.4(52)1315.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

mother and son.<sup>25</sup> After a visit to Mrs. Hidanos's home, and following due interrogation of her neighbors, a DIPS inspector learned that Mrs. Hidano "did not work at all, her son being a one-year-four-months old child." The inspector did not consider Mrs. Hidano's tending to her son to be labor because it was an unpaid job. The DIPS officer found that Mrs. Hidano's husband lived in the United States. It is difficult to ascertain if Tochini Hidanos's husband was interned in a concentration camp in that country or possibly had been deported from the United States. In any case, he was unable to meet with his family or send money for their support.<sup>26</sup>

Facing the difficulty of taking care of her child and finding a job in Mexico City to provide for both her infant and herself, Mrs. Hidano accepted to be deported to Japan when American diplomats offered. The United States Embassy "transported" Ms. Hidano and her son to the United States in August 1943 along with other Japanese Mexicans to be exchanged at a later date for American civilians living in Japanese controlled territories. No more information on her is in the DIPS files and her final destination and that of her husband and child remain unknown.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Translation of "verbal note" number 1318, From H.S.B. (USA Embassy), dated 5/28/1943. IPS 2/1/362.4(52)1540.

<sup>26</sup> Although it is not possible to verify at this time Toshino Hidano's husband internment in a United States concentration camp, Executive Order 9066 had "exclude[d] any and all persons, citizens, and aliens from designated areas in order to provide security against sabotage, espionage, and fifth column activity." Roger Daniels, *Prisoners without Trial: Japanese Americans in WWII* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), 129.

<sup>27</sup> The United States Department of State interest in interning Latin American Japanese in the United States stemmed from the possibility to exchange them for United States civilians in Japan. Translation of "verbal note" number 1318, From H.S.B. (USA Embassy), dated 5/28/1943. IPS 2/1/362.4(52)1540. See also P. Scott Corbett, *Quiet Passages: The Exchange of Civilians between the United States and Japan During the Second World War* (Kent, Ohio, and London: The Kent State University Press, 1987), 139-166.

If some aspects of the relocation program perpetuated a patriarchal system in Mexico, other elements of the same program opened the opportunity for some women to acquire a decisive role in the representation of their families and the administration of their possessions.<sup>28</sup> From the beginning of World War II, Ignacio Shinagawa avoided the loss of the family's property to the Mexican government and other rapacious individuals taking advantage of the anti-Japanese environment. He transferred all valuables to his wife and declared that "all capital my wife is talking about is exclusively hers and my children's."<sup>29</sup>

The case of Margarita Fude de Kawano (who did not have a file of her own at the DIPS) illustrates other gender dynamics taking place during World War II. Mrs. Fude de Kawano saw her husband and oldest son leave for Mexico City in 1942, with lamentable consequences for her whole clan. In July 1942, authorities removed Margarita Fude de Kawano's husband, Manuel Kawano, and her son Manuel Guillermo Kawano Fude from Portugués de Galvez, a municipality of Navojoa, Sonora. Both men were naturalized Mexican citizens.<sup>30</sup> In her struggle to keep her family's residence in Sonora, Mrs. Fude de Kawano acknowledged with clarity in a letter addressed to the Minister of the Interior that the relocation program had been implemented because "the Government of this noble and great country had to satisfy its compromise" with the United States to uproot the Japanese Mexicans, but when ordered to leave her town along with her son and her husband, she would not follow presidential orders.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> From Francisca Montoya de Shinagawa to Lic. Lelo de Larrea, dated September 6, 1943; from Lic. Alberto de la Peña Borja to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated May 14, 1943; from Camilo Marín Talavera to Sr. J. Lelo de Larrea, dated July 26, 1943. IPS 2-1362.4(52)/1321.

<sup>29</sup> From Ignacio Shinagawa to C. Lic. Del Departamento de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, dated September 6, 1943. 2-1362.4(52)/1321

<sup>30</sup> Naturalization certificate signed by Jaime Torres Bodet in reference to Tosita Masato Kawano, dated October 21, 1941. IPS 2-1362.4(52)/883.

<sup>31</sup> From Margarita F. de Kawano to Ciudadano Secretario de Gobernación, dated November 19, 1942. IPS 2-1362.4(52)/883.

Manuel Kawano was gravely ill when ordered to abandon his home. On his arrival in Mexico City, Manuel Kawano's health condition worsened and he was admitted to the Huipilco Sanatorium. Not only was the 59-year old man's appeal to return to his family denied, but the DIPS officers insisted on expelling his wife, Margarita Fune de Kawano, from Sonora along with their children.<sup>32</sup>

Margarita Fune de Kawano actively opposed her relocation orders. She gathered the support of at least 175 residents of Portugués de Galvez, "un pueblo humilde, pero fuerte en unificación" ("a humble community but strong in its unity.") In order to obtain the sympathy of federal officials, the signatories used the official discourse that highlighted acceleration in production through the application of male labor.<sup>33</sup> They stated that, by requesting Mr. Kawano's return to his original town, they were following the orders of President "General Manuel Ávila Camacho who recommends A LARGER PRODUCTION (capital letters in the original)." <sup>34</sup>

The message from the pueblo did not affect the stance of the officials in charge of the relocation program. Margarita was forced to continue fighting the Ministry of the Interior orders to leave Sonora immediately:

[...]Besides tending to my already numerous family, I have to take care of that of my son Manuel Guillermo Kawano [who was removed from Sonora along with his father], composed of the following persons: his

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<sup>32</sup> From 175 signatories to C. Coronel Rodolfo T. Loaiza, dated July 18, 1942. IPS 2-1362.4(52)/883.

<sup>33</sup> Capitalization in the original. From 175 signatories to C. Coronel Rodolfo T. Loaiza, dated July 18, 1942. IPS 2-1362.4(52)/883. Every post-revolution Mexican president, including leftist Lázaro Cárdenas, proposed industrialization of the nation as a solution to poverty. Manuel Ávila Camacho emphasized during his presidential period the link between production and war in every report to the nation requesting from the Mexican workers their application to increase production. The following are examples of his production discourse: "(...) Because the entire nation has demonstrated with its attitude that, when the time arrives, each Mexican knows how to be a soldier willing to defend the motherland, both in the armed struggle and at work, in the production or in the sacrifice." Manuel Ávila Camacho, *Informes Presidenciales - Manuel Ávila Camacho* (Mexico City: Cámara de Diputados LX Legislatura 1942). And "(...) when addressing my compatriots during these last months I have repeatedly exhorted them to work and to achieve harmony (applause). A nation with deficient or no production, or which superfluously spends on what does not manufacture, is a defeated nation from the star." <http://cronica.diputados.gob.mx/DDebates/38/3er/Ord/19420901.html>

<sup>34</sup> Capitalization in the original. 175 signatories to C. Coronel Rodolfo T. Loaiza, dated July 18, 1942. IPS 2-1362.4(52)/883.

wife Rosa Covarrubias de Kawano, and their children: Guillermo, 12 years old; Victoria, 10 years old; Antonina, 8 years old; Roman, 7 years old; and Rosa, 2 years old. [...] Our belongings in this municipality are very small and they are barely enough to live in bad conditions; should we be forced to abandon them to comply with the orders given by that respectable Ministry to concentrate [in Mexico City] we would have to live from the public charity, since in Mexico City, without relatives, business or capital to survive, we could not do anything else.<sup>35</sup>

Margarita Kawano appealed, like other affected Japanese Mexicans, to the notion of family as the basic unit of the Patria. In a letter to President Ávila Camacho, she stated her circumstances:

[...] to avoid forcing this family into ruin and misery, even more when my children and my grandchildren are children of this fortunate country, for which certainly tomorrow, when they learn this just determination you are taking, and that I hope to deserve, they will apply themselves with more strength to be useful to a country where they not only saw the first light, but in which its officials, models of human responsibility, were kindly and legitimately fair, of elevated principles and unblemished charity.<sup>36</sup>

Margarita's plea did not result in the cancellation of her relocation orders this time either. In view of the urgency of the matter, her son Guillermo, already relocated in Mexico City, visited the Ministry of the Interior offices. Although there is no record of an actual interview with Minister Miguel Alemán, Guillermo Kawano wrote a letter addressed to the future president of Mexico which contained his petition to allow the Kawano family to stay in Sonora. The message attempted to appeal to the Minister's sympathy through gender considerations:

[...] My Mother takes care of a numerous family composed of six children [...] as well as her five grandchildren [...] and her daughter in law Rosa Covarrubias de Kawano; who, as you can see, are in its majority women with the only support of my Mother.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> From Margarita F. de Kawano to Ciudadano Secretario de Gobernación, dated November 19, 1942. IPS 2-1362.4(52)/883.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> From Guillermo Masato Kawano J. to Ciudadano Secretario de Gobernación, dated November 13, 1942. IPS 2-1362.4(52)/883.

Either the DIPS officials started to realize that the Kawano family was in no immediate condition to travel to or live in Mexico City or they were impressed by the support the family received from their community. The Ministry of the Interior granted an extension of 10 days for Margarita to leave town.<sup>38</sup> After several extensions, the final decision arrived on December 30, 1942: Margarita Fude de Kawano could stay in Sonora permanently. Her family continued to face serious difficulties, however. They did not get to see their father ever again: Manuel Kawano died in Mexico on March 3, 1943 from a kidney condition.<sup>39</sup>

For their part, the women in the Kawano family, in charge of the *Molino de nixtamal* business (corn mill), were facing the loss of their business. In January 1944, Congressman Saturnino Saldívar addressed Minister of the Interior Miguel Alemán to request an investigation of the Kawano family. He had received complaints from the Federación Obrera y Campesina de la Región del Mayo, belonging to the Confederación Mexicana de Trabajadores (CTM).<sup>40</sup>

A member of the PRM, the official party later renamed as PRI (Partido Revolucionario Institucional), the CTM strictly followed the policies of the government in turn. Seeking the expulsion of Margarita de Kawano from the borderlands, the CTM officials in Sonora stated that the Kawano family owned land in the Municipality of Huatabampo, approximately 40 kilometers from Gulf of California's coast. Arguing that Constitutional Article 27 prohibited foreign ownership of land within 100 kilometers of the coast, the CTM members requested the eviction of the Kawano family in spite of their Mexican citizenship and that "of other Japanese whose names [they did] not remember." In their texts, the unionist avoided to mention names or

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<sup>38</sup> From Lamberto Ortega Peregrina to C. Presidente Municipal at Navojoa, Son., dated November 23, 1942. From Margarita F. de Kawano to Ciudadano Secretario de Gobernación, dated November 19, 1942. IPS 2-1362.4(52)/883.

<sup>39</sup> From Lic. J. Lelo de Larrea to Sra. Margarita F. de Kawano, dated December 30, 1942. IPS 2-1362.4(52)/883.

<sup>40</sup> Ward M. Morton, *Woman Suffrage in Mexico* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1962), 47.

pronouns which could reflect the gender of the Japanese Mexicans they were trying to uproot from Sonora. The union described the individuals in question as “japoneses” using the male form to describe Japanese individuals, in their attempt to raise the suspicion of the federal officials.

The CTM unionists knew that the Mexican government criminalized Japanese Mexican men and were not as interested in punishing Japanese Mexican women. The Kawano family operated an “ice factory” which the CTM officials alleged was a health hazard for the “entire” community of Navojoa. In their accusations, the union members used masculine pronouns to convey the idea that Japanese men were in charge of this business.<sup>41</sup> Among the corrective measures suggested by the CTM local officers were the closing of this “ice factory” considered by the Union as a danger to the public health; the expropriation of a corn mill property of the Kanuano family; and the transference of businesses belonging to the Japanese Mexican women to employees Alejo Gutiérrez and Desiderio Rivas.<sup>42</sup>

The Ministry of the Interior decided to take charge of the matters denounced by the CTM. DIPS inspector No. 26, Gerardo L. Molina visited Navojoa to investigate the accusations against the Kawano family. According to Molina, one of the two employees complaining of mistreatment was a *compadre* of Luis Rosales, a member of the CTM branch in that city. Rosales offered to send letters continuously to the Ministry of the Interior until that office made his *compadre* the owner of the corn mill. As for the “ice factory,” Molina reported that “a small stand of popsicles in Mexico City had a larger value than the so-called “factory.”<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> From Diputado Saturnino A. Saldívar to Sr. Lic. Miguel Alemán, dated January 13, 1944. IPS 2-1362.4(52)/883.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> From Gerardo L. Molina to C. Lic. Eduardo Ampudia V., dated April 4, 1944. IPS 2-1362.4(52)/883.

Molina's report confirms that, in spite of the harassment and the absence of Guillermo Kawano, Margarita and her daughters were able to manage their business. The DIPS inspector stated that "this family is mostly composed by women born in Navojoa who work to support themselves and it is obvious that they do not abuse any [employee] or make improper profits."<sup>44</sup> Notwithstanding their capability to operate businesses and work in the agricultural fields, among other occupations, women had to perform as mothers and housekeepers. On these bases, DIPS Inspector Molina viewed Margarita Fude de Kawano and her daughters as inoffensive. On the contrary, and in tune with racist notions prevalent in the United States, among complex popular ideas in Mexico of Asian men was the notion that Japanese men were a sexual threat to Mexican women and to their capability to reproduce.<sup>45</sup>

In June 1942 *Revista Tiempo*, a magazine published in Mexico City, equivalent to *Time Magazine* in the United States, published an article titled "Japs in Mazatlán."<sup>46</sup> The article, whose syntax is unorthodox in Spanish, and thus seems to be a translation from English, attacked Doctor Toshio Shimizu. It is important to transcribe a large portion of the published text because of the innuendos, metaphors and other tools the writer used to depict Dr. Shimizu as a strange, despicable, human being:

[...] Dr. Toshio Shimizu is dedicated to the medical field. His specialty is obstetrics and, within this [medical] branch, premature births are a strong point [sic]. Japan is a prolific and overpopulated land. The strength of this country resides in its overpopulation. The expansive sense of Japanese politics is determined by the need to find land for so many human plants. Dr. Shimizu is a patriot. Even when he has become a Mexican national, his geographic love goes across the ocean and it is placed at the feet of the emperor. Mexico is a rich coveted land. The best a Japanese doctor in Mexico can do is to place his professional skills at the service of the imperial cause. And, after

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> See file of Alfonso Ayshikawa. IPS 2-1362.4(52)/1582. Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996).

<sup>46</sup> From Lic. Rafael Murillo Vidal to C. Jefe del Departamento de Investigación Política y Social, dated June 26, 1942. IPS 2-1362.4(52)/591.

thinking a lot about it, Toshio Shimizu dedicated himself to make Mexican women abort. Every abortion meant one less enemy for Japan. Each abortion was an urgent need in the thinly populated country that gave him asylum.

[...] Between the skillful fingers of Shimizu some Mexican generations disappeared. In the meantime, in his country, governments fomented the increase in the birth rate and factories threw hundreds of thousands of yards of cloth to dress millions and millions of soldiers.

[...] At the same time Shimizu was winning the battle of births in Mazatlán and his chests were filled with gold. Each trace of a child who disappeared was translated into an amount of pesos that oscillated between 15 and 50. Then forty years passed [...] Only Dr. Toshio Shimizu remains untroubled at home, his fingers trained for the abortions and his eye opened to calculate [how to make money].<sup>47</sup>

The magazine accused Dr. Shimizu of practicing abortions, which were illegal in Mexico, to steer populace and officials against him. The Mexican state, however, did not try Dr. Shimizu in court for these charges or any others. Because there is no evidence in the DIPS files of accusations against Dr. Shimizu by other residents of Sinaloa, or in any other source researched, we can discount *Revista Tiempo*'s insidious article as a calumny which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

The notion that Asian men were more dangerous than women predates the onset of the war, but nationalists and opportunists revived racial prejudices based on gender during World War II. Crispin Ayala and J. Asunción Alba, members of the Unión de Comerciantes en Pequeño (Small Businesses Union), in León, Guanajuato requested in October 1940 the investigation of Alfonso Ayshikawa and Carlos K. Yoshikai, accusing them of being spies paid by "Imperialism."<sup>48</sup> Ayala and Alba thought Ayshikawa and Yoshika were "foreigners who tr(ied) to humiliate us as Mexicans" through the alleged sexual abuse of Mexican women. Ayala

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<sup>47</sup> File including the transcription of the article published by *Tiempo* annexed to a letter by Rafael Murillo Vidal to C. Jefe del Departamento de Investigación Política y Social, dated June 26, 1942. IPS 2-1362.4(52)/591.

<sup>48</sup> From Crispín Ayala and J. Asunción Alba Anguiano to C. Director General de Población, dated October 26, 1940. IPS 2/1362.4(52)/1582.

and Alba believed Mexican women embodied the honor of the nation and accused the Japanese Mexican men stating that:

[...] the innumerable group of young women who have rendered their services to these foreigners as modest employees [...] have been forced, because of their inexperience or needs, to fall into the claws of these pusillanimous [men], being victims of bestial appetites these beautiful Mexican women deserving of better luck.<sup>49</sup>

Ayala and Alba's intentions were to take over the property of the two Japanese Mexican businessmen. At the onset of World War II, they escalated their accusations against Ayshikawa and Yoshika and claimed the Japanese Mexican men used women as "bait" to attract Mexican men to their businesses.<sup>50</sup> The letters some Mexicans wrote in defense of Japanese Mexican men attempted to counter this popular idea that Asian men in general sought to "dishonor" women through sexual relations. They insisted consequently on emphasizing the honorable character of their defendants recurrently, stating that the Japanese Mexican men they vouched for were family oriented, productive, and law abiding.<sup>51</sup> Nevertheless, during World War II most uprooted Japanese Mexican men were unemployed, partially employed, or employed in subservient positions that curtailed their capacity to provide for their families, diminishing their value in a patriarchal society that required men to be the bread winners.<sup>52</sup>

Facing the perspective of losing a significant portion of their income, some Mexican women refused to separate their families. They left their homes to follow their Japanese Mexican

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<sup>49</sup>Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> From Enrique González Chao, Inspector PS.5. to Jefe del Departamento de Investigación Política y Social. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)1582.

<sup>51</sup> Pedro Garcia, to Whom it May Concern, dated May 2, 1942, and from Maria Tomasa Castro de Yamaguchi to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated May 19, 1942. IPS 2/1/362.4(52)1224. From Crispin Cobayashi Sacay to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated June 19, 1944. IPS 2/1/362.4(52)1224

<sup>52</sup>Gender, race, and labor in both, Mexico and the United States, were intertwined in the beliefs that Asian men were effeminate. Yen Le Espiritu argues that the displacement of Chinese laborers from the mines and railroads of California forced them to take feminized jobs. Asian men were not employed to perform feminine jobs because they were effeminate, but they were corralled into jobs that emasculated them, and had to train themselves to perform traditionally feminine jobs. See *Asian American Women and Men*.

husbands or sons when unsuccessful in their effort to cancel the relocation orders received.<sup>53</sup> But not only adult women suffered under the relocation program. Minerva Yoshino was approximately 6 years old when the Mexican government ordered her widowed father, Juan Yoshino, to leave the state of Coahuila. Minerva remembers that the world of men and women were segregated most of the time at Temixco. Women at the camp would do the laundry, clean the rooms and fix the meals while their male relatives farmed the land.<sup>54</sup> The bond between women of different generations prevailed in the face of destitution. While some men in Temixco camp thought female internees did not perform a productive role, Minerva Yoshino valued the work of her older sister and her effort to make the best out of their few resources.<sup>55</sup>

Minerva remembers that when she was about seven years of age, she collected small pieces of soap that her older sister Rita, who performed the role of mother for Minerva, used to wash the family's clothes:

I wanted to surprise *madre*. I placed the little pieces in a bucket with water thinking that they would dissolve once the water dried, and that the fragments eventually would form one large cake *madre* would use with more ease. After some days, the soap started to decompose and had a foul smell. I was very sad but *madre* did not get upset at the loss of the soap, although it was hard to get in the camp. She said she was happy I was trying to help her. I think that is why I chose a career in Chemistry.<sup>56</sup>

The reassurance Minerva received from Rita within a gender segregated space was a source of comfort for the child. It also shaped her desire to get a professional degree and do research in chemistry, but Minerva did not forget her years in captivity at Temixco camp as a child.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> List signed by Lic. R. Guzman Araujo, dated October 2, 1945. IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/1141

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Notes from telephone conversation with Minerva Yoshino, on October 5, 2009

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. Eva Watanabe's parents and grandmother were evicted from Tijuana in 1942. Her mother and grandmother took care of Eva and her siblings. Her mother was a seamstress and her grandmother baked Japanese

Mexican women married to men of Japanese origin were more willing than Japanese Mexican women to express their opinion about the injustice of the relocation program during World War II. They were Mexican nationals by birth and their indigenous/Spanish mestizaje made them feel entitled to the protection of a state which claimed mestizos were the pillars of the nation. One of the most provocative messages addressed to the Minister of the Interior came from the pen of Herlinda Cruz de Yanagui, a woman from Rosario, Sinaloa. Herlinda Cruz's letters submitted on behalf of her husband reflect a high degree of education and political awareness:

[...] I remember that Mexico paid Spain three centuries of slavery by providing hospitality to many Spanish children [brought by President Cárdenas as refugees from the civil war]. To England and the United States, a whole history of grave mistakes [our country paid] with the effective help [we provide to those countries] taking a toll on our wealth and that of our children. That is how my mother country has paid all the injuries suffered in her rights.<sup>58</sup>

Herlinda claimed her citizenship status and that of her children to assert her right to present her interpretation of Mexican history and state projects. She underlined the feminine quality of her nation, invoking family values and the need of a man in each household to support his wife and children:

[...] Why today you do not allow our husbands to return to our side, to give their love and support to our children? I ask you in the name of my motherland, in the name of my children, I believe that not all these men are guilty of this situation, that many of them live apart, distant from any issues stemming from the war.<sup>59</sup>

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bread to sell every day in the street. Her father could not recover from his losses and stopped being the main provider for the Watanabe family. Eva formed a stronger bond with her mother and grandmother and she became a school teacher thanks to the support she received from the women in her family. Interview with Eva Watanabe on July 18, 2006.

<sup>58</sup> From Herlinda Cruz de Yanagui to Secretario de Gobernación, dated 8/4/1943. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)1061.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

Herlinda Cruz was not alone in her struggle to free her husband from the effects of the relocation program.<sup>60</sup> Some women affected by the relocation program were vigilant and kept themselves informed of all news concerning their situation, using it to write letters to the authorities in hopes of freedom for their husbands, brothers, or sons. Trinidad Rodriguez demanded the return of her husband in 1944 when she heard the news that “the Citizen President of the Republic signed a decree stating that any foreign persons with more than 5 years of residence in the country must be considered a national.” Rodríguez had proof that her husband fulfilled and exceeded the length of residency required to keep his Mexican citizenship and submitted such proof to the Minister of the Interior without any positive result.<sup>61</sup> Lack of effective political power, not passiveness or ignorance, curtailed the efforts of women to demand the return of their husbands during World War II and afterwards.

In their efforts to counter the effects of World War II, Japanese Mexican men and women altered normative gender roles to accommodate the state, family, and individual agendas. The multiple experiences reflected in this chapter indicate how fluid and intricate notions of gender affected the status of Japanese Mexicans from 1942 to 1945. Sometimes the victim would pursue change to ameliorate conditions. At other times the state, as victimizer, pursued changes to promote its interests even when disrupting traditional notions of family; thus, destroying patriarchal relations through the displacement of the heads of family. In either case, Japanese Mexican women and men endured systematic discrimination along gender, race, and class lines in spite of their adaptation to new gender roles. Such interlocking of power relations are explored further in the next chapter.

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<sup>60</sup> From Enedina López de Kihara, Carmen L. de Komori, Carmen Fukumoto, Beatriz Harada, Emilia Tamura, and Ema Ogawa to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated 12/31/1942. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)1179

<sup>61</sup> From Gral. De Div. Benecio López Padilla in Saltillo, Coah., to Secretaria de Gobernación, Depto. de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, dated May 30, 1944 IPS 2-1/362.4(52)891

## CHAPTER 7

### ATTEMPTS TO CHALLENGE OR POSTPONE DISPLACEMENT

Though faced with the reality of internment and disruption of communal lives, Japanese Mexicans and their allies resisted and sought, steadfastly, to exercise their citizenship rights in Mexico. They challenged or attempted to postpone state pressures and decrees to uproot them from communities, family life, and friendships that prevailed prior to World War II. This chapter seeks to explain the factors that enabled Japanese Mexicans to challenge state power successfully or where they succumbed to government legerdemain to marginalize them.

During World War II, Japanese Mexicans and their allies had to abandon legal recourses which were previously available for the protection of citizens against questionable state measures. President Avila Camacho closed that road when he suspended civil rights in Mexico and constituted himself as the ultimate administrator of justice in the country.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, Japanese Mexicans viewed personal appeals to the President and other state officials as their only possibility to hold their jobs, property, and family together. Such appeals often integrated the nationalist language exhibited in official propaganda.

The intent to produce an image of Japanese Mexicans as dangerous enemies of the nation was evident in Ávila Camacho's state-of-the-nation speech of September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1942. Mexicans listened to the radio as the Mexican President described the uprooting of the Japanese Mexican community as an "efficient measure (...) to avoid the distribution of enemy propaganda and other activities that affect the security of the nation."<sup>2</sup> On his part, Federal Deputy and

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<sup>1</sup> Amparo, similar to the *habeas corpus* recourse, did not have any effect in Mexico during WWII to protect Japanese Mexicans. See Luis Tanamachi and Ignacio Koba's file. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1110.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

Congressional President Manuel Gudiño Díaz congratulated the head of state for “the internment of those foreigners from enemy countries, who, because of their activities and origin it was necessary to set apart, due to the danger they represent, and to their disloyalty to the same country that has offered hospitality to them.”<sup>3</sup>

One of the many examples of communities which disagreed with the presidential program to remove Japanese Mexican members is the appeal of the residents of Cacalotlán, Sinaloa. On August 24, 1943, one hundred and eighty residents requested from the Ministry of the Interior that Jesús Tarao Yanagui, doctor and farmer, be returned “to this town so he (can) continue sheltering his family.”<sup>4</sup>

Aware of the arguments state officials used to uproot Japanese Mexicans, victims of the displacement program and their allies appropriated the prevailing nationalist rhetoric to resist the relocation orders. Cacalotlán residents claimed their own rights as Mexicans by birth to demand the return of Dr. Jesús Yanagui. His defenders noted their status as members of an *ejido*, an institution with political weight in post-revolutionary Mexico. They described Dr. Yanagui as a bona fide member of the Mexican community:<sup>5</sup>

[...] Mr. Yanagui married a Mexican woman eight years ago with whom he has three small children. He has been living among us for ten years and during that period we have not suspected him of concocting shady deals with spies or saboteurs in this country; we know his behavior, and during his residence in this town he has earned our love for his philanthropist and humanitarian services for which we believe that he is a person who deserves our trust.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> "Sesión De La Cámara De Diputados Efectuada El Día 1o. De Septiembre De 1942," *Diario de los Debates de la Cámara de Diputados del Congreso de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos* Septiembre 1o. 1942.

<sup>4</sup> From 180 persons from Cacalotlán, with a signature from the Síndico Municipal certifying that all signatures are valid, Carlos Ramírez, August 24, 1943. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)1061.

<sup>5</sup> Ejidos are societies of peasants who own and work the land under a communal regimen and democratic administration.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

The residents of Cacalotlán asserted Dr. Yanagui's assimilation through his marriage to a Mexican woman, and his having fathered three children in this country. The period of time he had spent with this small community of *ejidatarios* was long enough to make its members feel he was not a part of any international conspiracies. Cacotlán residents factored into their plea their right to represent the country's ideals based on their participation in the revolution and their assertion of its expressed democratic principles: "we are a pueblo with a revolutionary and democratic history; we do not refuse to acknowledge the situation of our motherland."<sup>7</sup>

The inhabitants of Cacalotlán who opposed the displacement of Dr. Yanagui promised to "sacrifice themselves to defend the sacred rights of our country," and reiterated their desire to fight, using their constitutional rights, for the Japanese who were "good men, useful to the pueblos." To conclude, the signatories manifested their conviction that "an entire town expect(ed) to be tended to in its petition and wishing a favorable resolution."<sup>8</sup>

Like many other Japanese medical practitioners who had chosen to live in rural communities and to provide their services for free or at a very low cost while working the land, Dr. Yanagui was well respected and loved by his patients, neighbors, and relatives.<sup>9</sup> Although the plea of the *ejidatarios* was officially denied on December 21, 1943 by José Lelo de Larrea, DIPS Chief, Dr. Jesús Yanagui's case exemplifies a degree of resistance the relocation program provoked among several communities in the borderlands.<sup>10</sup> Other files exist with a similar

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Dr. Martin Otsuka, Dr. Manuel Hiromoto, and Dr. Octavio Kazusa, were among the Japanese medical practitioners who held a life style very similar to that of his poor patients in rural Mexico.

<sup>10</sup> From Lic. José Lelo de Larrea, Jefe del Departamento de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, dated 12/21/1943. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)1061.

number of signatures protesting the expulsion of Japanese Mexicans from their places of origin.<sup>11</sup>

Octavio Kazusa, a medical doctor who resided in Camargo, Chihuahua, also received overwhelming support from his community. The Ministry of the Interior received during the first months of 1942 more than seventy telegrams from individuals and institutions protesting Kazusa's relocation. The petitions came from civic associations, private clubs, public institutions, business groups, and unions. In addition, patients who received medical care at no cost, neighbors, and other citizens of Camargo testified to Dr. Kazusa's attributes as a professional and a citizen and demanded the suspension of the relocation order for him.<sup>12</sup>

Old and sick men were able to postpone their transfers to Mexico City, but local or federal authorities eventually forced elderly Japanese Mexican men to abandon their towns and relatives in spite of their ill health.<sup>13</sup> DIPS inspectors travelled at different times between 1942 and 1945 to rural Mexico in order to verify that all ethnic Japanese had been relocated. That is how the DIPS officers found Tetsuo Taniyama Hueda had disobeyed his relocation orders. Taniyama was originally evicted from Culiacán, Sinaloa in August 1943. Having been separated from his family for five months, Taniyama requested in January 1944 a permit from the Ministry of the Interior to return to his place of origin.<sup>14</sup> As was the Mexican custom when writing official reports, Taniyama wrote his petition in third person, explaining that he had left "his wife

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<sup>11</sup> See Dr. Octavio Kazusa, Dr. Manuel Hiromoto, Manuel Hayashi's files for cases of communities valuing medical care from Japanese Mexican medical practitioners. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)593 and IPS 2-1/362.4(52)1444, IPS 2-1/362.4(52)843.

<sup>12</sup> Among the petitioners were the local Chamber of Commerce, Asociación Local Ganadera [Local Livestock Farmers' Association], Sociedad Mutualista Benito Juárez [Benito Juárez Mutual Society], Club de Leones [Lions' Club], Casino Camarguense [Camargo Social Club], Federación Obrera [Workers' Federation], The City of Camargo, and the Sindicato de Doctores [Doctors' Trade Union]. See Dr. Kazusa's file. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)593. Today, there is a street in the city of Camargo named after Dr. Kazusa. See [http://www.seccionplatino.com/Aguilar\\_Armendariz\\_Luz\\_Idalia-66279.html](http://www.seccionplatino.com/Aguilar_Armendariz_Luz_Idalia-66279.html)

<sup>13</sup> From Juan Yoshino to C. Presidente Municipal, S. Juan de Sabinas, Coahuila, dated July 13, 1942. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1070.

<sup>14</sup> From Tetsuo Taniyama Hueda to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated January 29, 1944. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1332.

Rosario López de Taniyama, Mexican by birth, and his minor children Leopordo (sic), Ricardo and Amada, 8, 6 and 4 year old respectively, who are in a situation of extreme misery because of the absence of the head of the household.”<sup>15</sup>

Tanimaya did not receive authorization to leave Mexico City. Nonetheless, he defiantly left the Federal District for Culiacán, Sinaloa to tend to his wife and two of his children who “were in a state of grave illness.”<sup>16</sup> When DIPS agents travelled to Sinaloa demanding his return, Taniyama explained that his financial situation had worsened. He did not have money to return to the Capital or to repay the money his friends had lent Tetsuo to enable him to reunite with his family:<sup>17</sup>

[...] Given the circumstances that pain me and the enormous difficulties I struggle with in order to earn the bread for my wife and my children, I come to petition very respectfully from that superiority, as an act of humanity and superior justice, to grant me the permission to stay in this city, where my behavior has been immaculate [...].<sup>18</sup>

Tanimaya’s request was denied in spite of the previous permit he had received from the governor of Sinaloa, General Rodolfo T. Loaiza, to stay with his family.<sup>19</sup>

The ambivalence of state officials allowed room for other Japanese Mexicans to resist relocation orders. Often, high ranking officers resisted the relocation program for personal reasons, interceding on behalf of their friends or acquaintances. As Commander of the First Military Zone in Mexico City, Rodrigo M. Quevedo wrote to the DIPS director on behalf of Toyomatsu Ito, a resident of Cd. Juárez, Chihuahua, claiming his good behavior and poverty

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> From Tetsuo Tamiyama Hueda to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated March 27, 1944. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1332.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. .

<sup>19</sup> From Lic. Gilberto Lizarraga Valdez to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated March 29, 1944. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1332.

were reason enough to cancel his relocation orders in 1943.<sup>20</sup> General Josué M. Benignos insisted on obtaining a permit for Enrique Rikaimatsu Matsumoto whose degree of assimilation into his community was proved, according to Benignos, by his great command of the Spanish language and his inability to speak proper Japanese. In addition, Matsumoto had named one of his children Miguel Hidalgo, after the Mexican priest who led the Independence War in 1821, to express his admiration for Mexican leaders. General Benignos' recommendation only delayed Matsumoto's uprooting for some weeks.<sup>21</sup> Requesting the return of José Yahollosi to Coahuila in March 1943, General Brigadier Régulo Garza invoked a close relationship with the Japanese Mexican man as a friend and former coworker in the mines in Coahuila.<sup>22</sup>

This sort of leverage provided by such personal relationships with powerful politicians or military officers was not available to most Japanese Mexicans. This relationship to military officials found poetic expressions in the writing of Dr. Martín Otsuka. The resident of Namiquipa in the state of Chihuahua gave a literary account of his personal relationship with the military during the relocation program once he returned to Japan in the 1970s. Dr. Otsuka originally wrote his poems in Japanese, then translated some of them to Spanish. While his limited command of Spanish probably does not do justice to his Japanese verses, his readers can ascertain a frank and emotionally charged view of his arrest and the way in which other Mexicans resisted Dr. Otsuka's relocation. Translated to English by Robert Harland, many

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<sup>20</sup> From Rodrigo M. Quevedo to Sr. Lic. Lelo de la Rea (sic), dated April 4, 1943. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1313. General Rodrigo M. Quevedo was a brother of federal deputy Guillermo Quevedo, who represented the state of Chihuahua. Roderic Ai Camp, *Mexican Political Biographies, 1935-1993*, Third ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), 568.

<sup>21</sup> From General de Brigada Josué M. Benignos to Sr. Don Adolfo Ruiz Cortinez (sic), dated September 3, 1942. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/806.

<sup>22</sup> From General Brigadier Régulo Garza Garza to Whom It May Concern, dated March 5, 1943. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1259.

verses of this poem are included to allow Dr. Otsuka to represent himself in the telling of his story:

“The Prisoner”<sup>23</sup>

Suddenly, they surrounded my room with machine guns.  
There were enough men to form a platoon.  
The flash of a gun barrel looked for me.  
The captain unjustly demanded I surrender my radio.  
He wanted to know where the money was.  
He said I had funds to support  
seaborne Japanese soldiers.  
It was a miracle: they did not find my own weapons  
even when they searched every cranny.  
His soldiers were kind: they did not denounce me  
when they saw a few bullets.  
The captain took me where my pregnant wife was:  
she was shopping at a grocery store.  
When she saw my situation the surprise  
caused her to miscarry.  
One of the richest men in town protested my arrest.  
He asked for my freedom and attested to my good behavior.  
The captain mulled over the rich man’s offer.  
The captain was sorry but he said  
-I must follow my orders.  
Thus cursed, he took me to the  
headquarters of the 5<sup>th</sup> military Zone.  
On the day of my arrest, the emperor was celebrating his birthday.<sup>24</sup>

Although much of the expression of Dr. Otsuka’s poetic narrative certainly disappears in the translation, readers can still observe the will of the soldiers not to disclose the presence of firearms at Dr. Otsuka’s home. The silence of the infantry proves their desire to avoid harsher treatment of the Japanese Mexican man. The nature of their employment forced the Mexican soldiers to search the house, but they did not blindly obey their orders to turn in any item that could support conspiracy charges against Dr. Otsuka. Later, senior military officers and the elite of his townsfolk obtained Dr. Otsuka’s release, too late, however, to avoid the loss of life as

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<sup>23</sup> Robert Harland’s translation from Spanish to English. Martín Tameyesu Otsuka, *Poems, Memories of My Home Town, and Chronicle of My Travels in Mexico* (Tokyo: Sumiko Otsuka Publisher, 1987), 115.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

Agrícola Ordóñez de Otsuka, an expectant mother, experienced a miscarriage while trying to free her husband.

The story of Dr. Martín Otsuka's arrest has been transmitted orally in his family from generation to generation. His daughter, Sidoni Otsuka Ordóñez, was too young then to have direct memories of the arrest, yet the pain emerged vivid. She tried to hold back her tears when she narrated this episode to me. According to Sidoni, Mrs. Ordoñez de Otsuka followed her husband to the city of Chihuahua and while waiting outside the jail for news of him:

[...]The guards told her –Señora, leave, don't you see you are bleeding? My mother answered that she knew she was bleeding, but she could not leave her husband there. [...] My father came out of jail too late. My mother had bled out and the baby died. She was taken to a clinic right there in Chihuahua because she had to have surgery [to complete the miscarriage].<sup>25</sup>

Mrs. Ordóñez de Otsuka received free medical care from a local doctor in Chihuahua, but her family was still in need of help to save her life. “The news travelled to the mountains and from Namiquipa came down several persons to donate their blood for mother,” stated Sidoni during her interview. Yet, regular antibiotics were not effective to control a life threatening infection, and the doctor urged the family to buy antibiotics only available in El Paso, Texas. The Otsuka family quickly sold some of their property to obtain Mrs. Ordóñez de Otsuka's expensive medicine.<sup>26</sup>

The Tanaka Otsuka family had many more stories to hand down from both sets of grandparents who tell about the support Japanese Mexicans received during World War II. Ángel Tanaka Gómez, Sidoni's husband, still remembers that in 1942 a platoon searched his home in Guadalajara. Francisco Tanaka Tanaka, Ángel Tanaka's father, sent all the children to the

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<sup>25</sup> Notes taken during conversation with Susuki Otsuka Ordóñez de Tanaka on July 17, 2006.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

basement when hearing soldiers at his door. These experiences were particularly painful for Ángel Tanaka.<sup>27</sup>

Mr. Tanaka Gómez grew up proud of his father's participation in the Revolution; he had fought courageously alongside President Francisco I. Madero in 1911. The son was equally proud of the long lasting friendship Francisco had with General Francisco Villa and Luz Corral de Villa. Although the soldiers' search in 1942 did not have any consequence, and the Tanaka Gómez family did not suffer immediate damages stemming from the relocation program, the father had to support a number of persons expelled from the borderlands. Mr. Tanaka Gómez believes that his father's wealth was greatly diminished when he set up small businesses to help his compatriots in Guadalajara during World War II. He is also proud of his father's role in ameliorating the condition of newcomers in Guadalajara during this period, alleviating the impact of the expulsion for some Japanese Mexicans from the borderlands.<sup>28</sup>

A combination of personal empathy, economic interests, and political decisions created interstices for some Japanese Mexicans, softening or postponing the effects of the relocation program for a few of its victims.<sup>29</sup> This was the case of Governor Rodolfo T. Loaiza who made use of the constitutional powers he had as governor of the state of Sinaloa to challenge the relocation program and managed to delay the eviction of a group of Japanese Mexicans.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Notes taken during conversation with Ángel Tanaka Gómez on July 17, 2006.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> As an instance, Hugo Pedro González attempted to avoid the eviction of Nakano Hideichi and Luis Tanahara from the borderlands. While the politician acknowledged the personal suffering of two of Political allies or personal acquaintances, he did not attempt to cancel the relocation program in its entirety. Lic. Hugo Pedro González, al C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated August 6, 1942. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)970.

<sup>30</sup> A number of files in the DIPS archives show information about Japanese Mexicans from Sinaloa who did not requested authorization or affidavits from Colonel Loaiza. Because these men did not have the leverage Loaiza's protégées enjoyed, they did not obtain permission from the DIPS to stay in Sinaloa. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)1355. Ernesto Mitsuo Akachi Aoki, "Los Mochis: Casa Por Casa, Tienda Por Tienda," in *Los Mochis: Historia Oral De Una Ciudad*, ed. Reba Humphries (Los Mochis: Universidad de Occidente, 1986), 167. From Corl. Rodolfo T. Loaiza to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated July 31, 1942. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)955.

Governor Loaiza, who publicly showed his support of people's institutions such as the *ejidos*, extended his protection over Dr. Manuel Hayashi at the request of several peasant communities in Sinaloa.<sup>31</sup> Twelve *ejidos* officially resisted the relocation of Dr. Hayashi, arguing that, besides his exemplary behavior and good character, he was a productive resident of the region.<sup>32</sup>

Japanese Mexicans had allies, but they also endured the constant surveillance of racist, nativist groups. The Confederación de Trabajadores Mexicanos (CTM) and other zealous anti-Japanese in Sinaloa drew the attention of the central government in Mexico to Loaiza's protection of several Japanese Mexicans in his state.<sup>33</sup> The ensuing clash between state and federal powers held some promise for Mexican Japanese victims of the relocation program. This was evident in the case of Dr. Toshio Shimizu whose resident status became the seed of a confrontation between them.<sup>34</sup>

Dr. Shimizu was a prominent member of the town of Mazatlán, Sinaloa. He also was a naturalized citizen who argued his relocation would inflict "an irreparable damage" on his family should the "unjust deportation" take place. Dr. Shimizu correctly insisted on claiming his civil rights as he was not a "foreigner, but a Mexican according to the law." His relentless struggle to

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<sup>31</sup> During World War II several *ejidos* in the northern states interceded on behalf of Japanese Mexicans who they felt were valuable members of their communities. proximately 130 signatures appeared in this request. Pascacio Leyva, Síndico Municipal's signature certifying authenticity of signatures. From "neighbors of the Sindicatura de Tamazula" to C. Gobernador Constitucional del Estado, April 25, 1943. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)843.

<sup>32</sup> From twenty eight officers representing the *ejidos* of Tamazula, El Amole, Palos verdes, Las Cañadas, La Brecha, San José de la Brecha, Las Playas, Casa Blanca, Pitahayitas, La Cuestona, Cuesta de Arriba and Cofradía de Tamazula to C. Gobernador del Estado, dated April 25, 1942. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)843.

<sup>33</sup> From Tomás Torres Trejo and Filomeno Sánchez C. to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated April 17, 1942. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)1083.

<sup>34</sup> Among the Japanese Mexican persons whose relocation was resisted by Colonel Rodolfo T. Loaiza are: Juan Yoshio Urakami, 1317, Manuel Nishimoto Takayama, IPS 2-1/362.4(52)1322; Fukutaro Toyohara Toyohara, IPS 2-1/362.4(52)1324; Takahashi Tangi Johiro, IPS 2-1/362.4(52)1340; Mariko Maria Ozono, IPS 2-1/362.4(52)955; Jesus Ninomiya, IPS 2-1/362.4(52)954; Alberto Nidome Shitabuke, IPS 2-1/362.4(52)952; Tomokishi YoshidaYoshizu, IPS 2-1/362.4(52)1066; Alberto Kimura Kikuno, IPS 2-1/362.4(52)967; Alejandro Saito Saito, IPS 2-1/362.4(52)989; Seichi Matsumoto Tanaka, 1314; Pedro Ochiqui, IPS 2-1/362.4(52)983.

remain in Sinaloa could have been only one more story of defeat in the face of state power.<sup>35</sup>

Even so, Dr. Shimizu succeeded temporarily in his appeal. On May 14, 1942, Lamberto Ortega Peregrino, DIPS Assistant Chief, granted permission for Dr. Shimizu to stay in Mazatlán. Ortega also sent a copy of the relevant documentation to the Governor and to the Military Commander in Sinaloa. On June 18, DIPS Inspector Federico Márquez visited Sinaloa to make sure all Japanese Mexicans had been removed from the state. Márquez confiscated Dr. Shimizu's citizenship certificate and residence permit as a way to ensure that the physician would travel to Mexico City, and obey his relocation orders.<sup>36</sup>

Since Dr. Shimizu expected to stay in Mexico City for a short period of time, he registered at the hotel Maria Cristina, on June 25, 1942.<sup>37</sup> He trusted Governor Loaiza's power as governor would get him authorization to return to his family and business soon. On the same date, the defamatory article (mentioned in Chapter 6 that dealt with Dr. Shimizu) was published in *Revista Tiempo*.<sup>38</sup> Not only did the magazine accuse Dr. Shimizu of practicing abortions, the anonymous author of the article also described him as an unethical real estate speculator. But the real target was not the physician. The text ended with a message for Governor Loaiza. Although German Mexicans remained in Sinaloa, the article only targeted Japanese Mexicans. The point was to make Loaiza responsible for the presence of Dr. Shimizu in a zone from which Japanese Mexicans were excluded.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> From Toshio Shimizu to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated April 12, 1942. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/591.

<sup>36</sup> Receipt signed by Federico Márquez, dated June 18, 1942. IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/591.

<sup>37</sup> Permission signed by Lic. Alfonso García González, dated June 25, 1942. IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/591.

<sup>38</sup> Tatiana Rodríguez Maldonado, "Imagen Y Discurso: Construcción De Sentido En Las Portadas De Las Revistas Semana Y Cambio 1998-2004," (n.d.).

<http://www.lablaa.org/blaavirtual/todaslasartes/monografia/mono2a.htm> (accessed Marzo 17, 2009). From Lic. Rafael Murillo Vidal, to C. Jefe del Departamento de Investigación Política y Social, dated June 26, 1942. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/591.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

In spite of his being the focus of malicious anti-Japanese innuendo, Governor Loaiza continued to show support for Dr. Shimizu and other Japanese Mexicans. On June 29, 1942, he confirmed his resolution to guarantee the good behavior of Dr. Shimizu should he return to Sinaloa where he had “resided for more than thirty years [as head of] a Mexican family.”<sup>40</sup> Frictions between the Ministry of the Interior and General Loaiza came to confrontation in the case of Dr. Shimizu.<sup>41</sup>

In July 3, 1942, Dr. Shimizu, who was well known in his community for his acts of charity and respect for impoverished people, requested permission from federal authorities to return for a short period of time to Sinaloa “with the only and exclusive goal to close my house and my medical office, notifying my sick patients of my leaving, and to transfer my family, completely Mexican, to this capital.”<sup>42</sup> Dr. Shimizu was a wealthy man who had only been partially successful in his resistance to the relocation program: he convinced Ministry of the Interior Miguel Alemán to let him return for three weeks to Mazatlán.<sup>43</sup>

Once in Mazatlán, Dr. Shimizu resumed efforts to oppose his expulsion. Upon his return, he met with Governor Loaiza who stated that the Minister of the Interior should have respected the governor’s permits. Encouraged by Loaiza, Dr. Shimizu consulted an attorney in Mexico City asking if he could ignore the DIPS relocation orders once he had the governor’s authorization. Although the attorney’s advice is not filed in the DIPS archives, Dr. Shimizu made clear that he would use every resource at his disposal to remain in Sinaloa.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> From Colonel Rodolfo T. Loaiza to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated June 19, 1942. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/591.

<sup>41</sup> See IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/1110, IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/955, IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/1314.

<sup>42</sup> From Dr. Toshio Shimizu to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated July 3, 1942. IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/591. Also from Inspector PS-1 to C. Jefe del Depto. de Investigación Política y Social., dated August 28, 1943. IPS 2-1/362.4(436)/600.

<sup>43</sup> Permit signed by Lic. J. L. de Larrea, on July 6, 1942. IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/591.

<sup>44</sup> From Toshio Shimizu to Lic. Don Enrique Pérez Arce, dated July 16, 1942. IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/591.

To the distress of the DIPS officials, Governor Loaiza insisted that Dr. Shimizu stay in Sinaloa, as he did for other Japanese Mexicans under his protection whom he vouched for personally. Dr. Shimizu's campaign to remain in Mazatlán, however, became particularly difficult due to the intervention of Rafael Landa Ruiz, chief of Mazatlán Immigration Service.<sup>45</sup>

Landa's rank did not endow him with the kind of power that could prevent the governor from protecting several Japanese Mexicans, but Landa was a *compadre* of Minister of the Interior Miguel Alemán, soon to become president of Mexico, and this relationship emboldened Landa to challenge Governor Loaiza's decisions.<sup>46</sup> Against official protocols, Landa invoked his *compadrazgo* relationship with Miguel Alemán to demand the expulsion of Dr. Shimizu. Alemán's compadre wanted to strip Dr. Shimizu of his property, including a mine in Cosalá and real estate in Culiacán, and the Mexican immigration official requested its confiscation.<sup>47</sup>

Landa's insistence on Dr. Shimizu's relocation was a turning point in the history of Sinaloa and relationship between state and federal powers. When Alemán's compadre personally demanded the physician's expulsion from the state, Governor Loaiza assertively informed Landa his orders as governor superseded the instructions of a local Immigration Service official: "as long as the Ministry of the Interior does not cancel my government's instructions, you must respect the permission I granted to some foreigners to remain in this state."<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> From Colonel Rodolfo T. Loaiza to C. Jefe de la Oficina de Población, dated July 14, 1942, IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/591.

<sup>46</sup> The export of minerals to Japan was prohibited in Mexico and one Maximino Ávila Camacho, the president's brother, was involved with. Until now, however, there is no evidence that Dr. Shimizu was implicated in the smuggling of any of the metals Japan was interested in. Landa was trying to obtain Alemán's support reminding him that they were compadres. The godfather, or *compadre* is obligated through this relationship to protect his grandchild's family.

<sup>47</sup> From Rafael Landa Ruiz to Sr. Lic. Miguel Alemán, dated July 23, 1942. IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/591. A

<sup>48</sup> Telegram signed by Landa Ruiz to Depto. Investigación Política y Social, without date, IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/591.

The reaction from the Ministry of the Interior was to persist in its attempted relocation of Dr. Shimizu and other Japanese Mexicans and German Mexicans who remained in the state protected by Colonel Loaiza and owned property Landa wanted to seize.<sup>49</sup> But Governor Loaiza defied the centralized political system. He angrily insisted on discussing change-of-command procedures privately in a coded telegram to the Under Secretary of the Interior, Fernando Casas Alemán, demanding that: “whenever that Ministry judges necessary to cancel the authorizations this government granted to foreigners to remain in this state, you must inform me [personally] in order to cancel such authorizations. The Chief of the office of Immigration in Mazatlán is receiving direct orders [from your office, countering mine].”<sup>50</sup>

In Mazatlán, Landa Ruiz ignored the permit Dr. Shimizu had from Governor Loaiza to stay in Sinaloa and visited the physician’s home, ordering him to leave for Mexico City on August 7. At the sight of the inspector, Dr. Shimizu called Governor Loaiza on the telephone. Responding to the provocation, Loaiza asked Dr. Shimizu not to leave his residence. Emboldened by the governor’s support, the Japanese Mexican physician defied Landa Ruiz, once again refusing to leave Mazatlán.<sup>51</sup> Landa left Dr. Shimizu’s residence temporarily defeated to request the support of Under Secretary of the Interior, Adolfo Ruiz Cortines. Aware of the consequences of further confrontations, Ruiz Cortines ordered Landa to “leave things as they are.”<sup>52</sup> Landa did not obey Ruiz Cortines’s instructions and contacted the local garrison to

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<sup>49</sup> Lic. J. Lelo de Larrea to Jefe Servicio Población, August 3, 1942. IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/591.

<sup>50</sup> From Colonel Rodolfo T. Loaiza to Lic. Fernando Casas Alemán, Subsecretario de Gobernación, dated August 6, 1942. IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/591.

<sup>51</sup> From Landa Ruiz to Investigación Política y Social, dated August 7, 1942. IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/591.

<sup>52</sup> From Adolfo Ruiz Cortines to Jefe del Servicio de Población in Mazatlán, Sin., August 8, 1942, IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/591.

remove Dr. Shimizu from Mazatlán.<sup>53</sup> Fortunately, Landa never followed through with his threatened use of a platoon of soldiers to arrest Shimizu.<sup>54</sup>

Correspondence between Governor Loaiza, Landa Ruiz, and the Ministry of the Interior officers made it clear that it was Dr. Shimizu's property Landa Ruiz wanted. Landa's insistence in evicting Dr. Shimizu offended Governor Loaiza, however. In turn, Loaiza's refusal to comply with the federal officers' instruction disrupted an expected code of complete obedience to the presidential administration of which the Ministry of the Interior was part.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, Loaiza's protection of Japanese Mexicans compromised diplomatic relations between Mexico and the United States. American consuls, when they learned of the presence of "enemy aliens" in the borderlands or coastal zones, contacted the Ministry of the Interior to demand the immediate eviction of Japanese Mexicans. Thus, Loaiza's disobedience was particularly upsetting when friendly relations between the United States and Mexico were a priority for the government of Mexico during World War II.<sup>56</sup>

Matters between Governor Loaiza and the Ministry of the Interior did not end when Landa gave up on the idea of using the Mexican army to evict Dr. Shimizu. Landa's compadre, Minister of the Interior Miguel Alemán, consulted his own legal department to confront Governor Loaiza and to uproot Dr. Shimizu and other Japanese Mexicans in his state. The Ministry of the Interior legal team concluded that:

[...] [Because] the internment of Axis nationals is an exclusive power of the Citizen President of the Republic who carries it out via the

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<sup>53</sup> Agreement sent by Oficina de Población, Mazatlán, Sin, dated August 17, 1942, IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/591.

<sup>54</sup> From Rafael Landa Ruiz to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated August 8, 1942, IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/591.

<sup>55</sup> Other Japanese Mexicans protected by Loaiza were harassed, and some eventually relocated to Mexico City; but none was accosted with the same insistence as Dr. Shimizu by Landa. From Rafael Landa Ruiz to Sr. Lic. Miguel Alemán, dated July 23, 1942. IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/591.

<sup>56</sup> From General Pedro Torres Ortiz to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated December 21, 1942. IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/783.

responsible institution, [that institution being] the Ministry of the Interior, the Citizen Governors of the states absolutely lack the power to grant residence permits to the foreign residents in their respective regions. [...] Because the power to grant such permits is discretionary, the Ministry of the Interior may revoke them at any time, without having to communicate such cancellation to the Citizen Governors of the Federal Institutions.

[...] Dr. Shimizu, the particular case we are dealing with here, his internment in this capital being ordered by the Citizen Chief of the Department of Political and Social Investigation, IS TO BE CARRIED OUT [sic] [...].<sup>57</sup>

In spite of the legal team's recommendation to remove Dr. Shimizu from Mazatlán, the DIPS granted a permit for the medical caregiver and entrepreneur to remain in his home state.<sup>58</sup>

Any deal between Governor Loaiza and the Minister of the Interior was probably verbal; Dr. Shimizu's file is silent on the issue. Loaiza's refusal to comply blindly with federal orders had damaged his status in the Mexican political machinery.

Japanese Mexicans unfortunately lost a protector when Governor Loaiza was assassinated less than one year after he defied Minister of the Interior Miguel Alemán. On February 20, 1944, Rodolfo Valdés, "El Gitano," and other gangsters shot Governor Loaiza in a contract killing paid for by unknown sources. Although it is clear that his murder stemmed from political reasons, the Mexican government did not conduct an exhaustive investigation. The identity of the person who ordered his execution remains a mystery. Loaiza had become a dispensable politician and his family did not see justice.<sup>59</sup>

Governor Loaiza's resistance to the total implementation of the relocation program in the state of Sinaloa led him to disobey the most powerful institution at the heart of the Mexican

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<sup>57</sup> Memorandum, without signature, without date. RE: Joshio Shimizu, nac. Japonesa (sic). IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/591.

<sup>58</sup> From Adolfo Ruiz Cortines to H. Junta de Administración y Vigilancia de la Propiedad Extranjera, dated March 1st, 1943. IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/591.

<sup>59</sup> <http://www.sipse.com/noticias/21966--gitano-primer-sicario-sinaloa.html>

state: the entrenched political machinery of the PRN (later the PRI), an organization that granted power and wealth in exchange for total submission to the chain of command.

In the absence of personal protection from powerful officials, most Japanese Mexicans were forced to leave their homes. Once in Mexico City some parents realized their children would grow amid tight restrictions, economic misery, and discrimination. In order to avoid the harshness of the relocation program, they gave up their children for adoption. Such was the case of the Takaki family evicted from the port of Veracruz in 1942.

When the Takaki family obeyed orders to leave their home and business in Veracruz, they became dependent on the assistance of other Japanese Mexicans during World War II for their subsistence in Mexico City. “Everything was lost, the *mercería* (fine hardware store) and our house, everything...” stated Fidelia Takaki. Doña María (Naru) Takaki, fell gravely ill and was unable to take care of her children.” They stayed in the CJAM house for three months and “when we could rent a place we moved... Never, the place we rented in Mexico was nothing compared to what we had in Minatitlán.” Doña María died just three months after they moved out of the CJAM quarters. “A doctor said a surgery could save her life but we just did not have the money for that surgery.” Angel Takaki, the father, could not obtain employment and the responsibility fell on his Spanish speaking children. They struggled to find employment because they “were daughters of foreigners, there were not many places were to get a job; therefore, their employees paid them very little.” Clara, the third daughter, took care of her three younger siblings, but she was only fourteen years old.

Fidelia Takaki remembers that, although their neighbors were polite, she and her two brothers had a hard time walking to school. “They treated us like if we were the Japanese nation in war (against Mexico). Hurting words... It was ugly... They used to tell me “china chale

japonés come cuacha y no me des” (Chinese chink Japanese eat shit and do not give it to me”). That was new for us.” Although her new friends learned to defend the Japanese Mexican children from other young attackers, the family felt the environment in Mexico was not safe for Japanese Mexican youngsters. The family then met Eiji Matuda, who was among the privileged Japanese Mexicans in the capital requesting authorization to remain in their hometowns<sup>60</sup>.

Dr. Eiji Matuda was a world- renowned scientist who had founded a school in Chiapas. The scientist’s prestige and his political relationships ensured he kept his residence and property in the Mexican region bordering Guatemala. Dr. Matuda, however, had to process his authorization in Mexico City and while in that city he learned of the troubles of the Takaki family.<sup>61</sup>

In an effort to shelter Fidelia Takaki and her brother Yoshio, Dr. Matuda adopted the two children. They grew up in Chiapas in the care of Mrs. Matuda. Fidelia Takaki, who later became a successful biologist, was very grateful for the protection provided to her from her adoptive parents in Chiapas. But she resented her separation from her original family and attributes the death of her mother to her inability obtain proper medical care in Mexico City. She talks with great nostalgia about her home in Veracruz and her biological parents. When she grew up she returned to Mexico City to follow a career years later and resumed a caring relationship with her father, Ángel Tanaka.<sup>62</sup>

Adult Japanese Mexicans continued to resist the relocation program in peaceful ways, but sometimes the results were tragic. Rodolfo Nakamura, a child uprooted during World War II, remembered during an interview a Japanese Mexican man who died after leaving the

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<sup>60</sup> Notes taken during interview with Fidelia Takaki in Mexico City. July 16, 2006.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

concentration camp in Temixco. Nakamura blames Mexican officials for the death of the internee who left the camp without official authorization. Mexican authorities sought the escapee in places Japanese Mexicans were known to meet, including the small business Umezo Nakamura, Rodolfo's father, operated with Alberto Imai in Mexico City. Rodolfo Nakamura did not remember the name of the man when discussing the Japanese Mexican's efforts to avoid the police, but recalled other details:

[...]By the way, they say that he was sick and died; but no... I know that is not true. [The policemen] came and left him here at my dad's home, already dead, all bathed, as if they had thrown water on him or something. That's it. I know that because, when a group of well-groomed men came with the body, I was playing out there in the little patio. [They asked me] "Mr. Imai?" [I answered] "Yes". And he came out, Alberto Imai. He talked to them and got near the body and all that and the men who looked like policemen took him out of the car and he looked strange because he was already dead. When I wanted to enter the room [where the body was] my father did not let me in. [...] How did he die? They wrote that his death was due to illness."<sup>63</sup>

Rodolfo Nakamura believed the police killed the Japanese Mexican man. His belief is consistent with the vulnerability Japanese Mexicans experienced during World War II. They did not have the civil rights the general population or police forces were bound to respect. In this context of suspension of human and civil rights, the delivery of a Japanese Mexican man's body by Mexican officials to his friends did not warrant a full investigation of the conditions of his death.

Another form of resistance to the relocation program was to leave Temixco concentration camp without authorization.<sup>64</sup> Haruji Yokayama Kawada left it without permission in July, 1943. DIPS officers searched several places to locate Yokayama. They needed to reestablish control over him and force him to pay a fine for his unauthorized departure. There is no evidence or

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<sup>63</sup> Notes taken during interview with Rodolfo Nakamura in Mexico City, July 25, 2006.

<sup>64</sup> Ernesto Corona Ruesga, Jefe del Servicio de Inspección, to C. Oficial Mayor de la Secretaría de Gobernación, dated June 10, 1943 and from Dr. Guillermo Gaona Salazar, to C. Jefe del Depto. de Investigación Política y Social, dated July 16, 1943. IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/1141 in regards to Haruji Yoyakama Kawada.

information in his file, however, on the final results of the search effected by DIPS inspectors to locate him. Because Japanese Mexicans were monitored by civilians and police at all times, Yokoyama did not have a permanent place to hide. Consistent with Niblo's report on corruption in Mexico during World War II, a plausible explanation for the lack of records reporting on Yokoyama after his escape is that he bribed the policeman to avoid penalty and incarceration.<sup>65</sup>

Limitations such as money and language as well as altered mental conditions in the face of emotional and physical hardships forced some persons to resist in ways that were damaging to themselves. A narrative from DIPS officer Rodolfo Candiani conveys the desperation that drove some persons of Japanese origin to avoid the relocation program. Candiani combed the mountains of northern Mexico in September 1942 in the company of four soldiers and a sergeant. He and his military escort went through small towns and ranches in the mountains of Chihuahua in search of Japanese Mexicans. His mission was successful; he found five Japanese Mexican men working in a mine at Agua Caliente: Tomás Hayakawa, José Iduma, Ysac Sasaki, José Yshida and Miguel L. Yshida Lopez. Candiani reported the Japanese Mexican were "fugitives" and that José Yshida had a gun and a 30/30 rifle in his possession.<sup>66</sup>

After Candiani arrested the five Japanese Mexican men, he transferred his prisoners to Mexico City where they relayed their own version of events. Tomás Tokuhei Hayakawa explained that before World War II began, he had rented a ranch in Sonora to work the land. The Japanese Mexican sharecropper obtained loans from the National Bank of Mexico and from private parties. At the onset of the war, Hayakawa had sizable debts plus the responsibility to pay for his family's transportation and living expenses in Mexico City under the relocation

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> From R. Candiani, Inspector 108 to C. Jefe Departamento Investigación Política y Social, dated September 30, 1942. 1/362.4(52)/1442.

program. When Hayakawa found himself without resources to comply with his orders, he left for Agua Caliente. Hayakawa had hoped to partially solve his financial problems by collecting \$2,000.00 (two thousand pesos) which a mechanic in Agua Caliente owed him.<sup>67</sup>

According to Hayakawa, the mechanic died before he could repay the two thousand pesos; consequently, the Japanese Mexican man did not have money to comply with the relocation orders. He then obtained employment as a miner to provide for his family in Sonora. Other Japanese Mexican men arrived later to work in the same mine, not having resources or the desire to obey the relocation orders and hoping to stay out of the sight of the DIPS in spite of the small salary they received as miners. Although DIPS Inspector Candiani confiscated some weapons, they were the kind inhabitants of the mountains used for hunting or self-defense and the Japanese Mexican men did not use those firearms to resist their arrest.<sup>68</sup>

During the same raid, Candiani learned of the presence of Dr. Manuel Diaz (Hiromoto) in the mountains of Chihuahua. The Japanese Mexican man was a deserter of a Japanese vessel who had established himself in Urique, Chihuahua, when World War II broke. When a Mr. Johnson, the mechanic who owed money to Tomás Hayakawa, fell ill in Aguacaliente, Dr. Hiromoto, one of the few doctors in the area, was called to tend to Johnson's sickness but the Japanese doctor arrived too late. Johnson died. Dr. Hiromoto, pleased to see other Japanese Mexicans in Aguacaliente, stayed for some days in the mining town. That is until a platoon arrived in search of Japanese Mexicans living in the mountains. Indigenous and mestizos protected the doctor and alerted him of the search. Having lost his passport when he deserted the Japanese ship in Sonora's coast, Dr. Hiromoto did not want to confront the Mexican authorities.

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<sup>67</sup> Report taken by José Lelo de Larrea, by Tokuhei Hayakawa Hayakawa (Tomas Tokuhei Hayakawa), on October 12, 1942. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1442.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

He went into hiding and, with the help of indigenous communities, neighbors of Urique, and military officials who heed Dr. Hiromoto in high esteem, he managed to delay his arrest until January, 1944.<sup>69</sup>

While most Japanese Mexicans resisted relocation peacefully and to no avail, Dr. Kiso Tsuru managed to live a life of luxury and travel during World War II. Before Mexico declared war against Japan, Dr. Tsuru owned the *Compañía Internacional de Comercio*, a medical products distribution business based in Mexico City. In addition, he owned other businesses, including mines, and he was the General Manager and owner of the *Compañía Petrolera Veracruzana*, an oil company the Japanese government financed but Tsuru presented as if it were a Mexican enterprise. Dr. Tsuru had a close relationship with the Japanese and the Mexican states through the operation of *La Veracruzana* and *La Laguna*, both companies in which Mexican officials were shareholders. His transactions with Mexican politicians facilitated his financial success and freedom during World War II.<sup>70</sup>

Dr. Kiso Tsuru, a prominent leader of the Japanese Mexican community during World War II, supported the idea –originally proposed by Alberto Yoshida - that the Mexican government did not have financial responsibility for the displacement of Japanese Mexicans.<sup>71</sup> Dr. Tsuru requested that the Ministry of the Interior send police officials to a camp he planned to open. Police would ensure that internees were “dedicated to the exclusive cultivation of the land

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<sup>69</sup> Report by Manuel Hiromoto given on January 10, 1944 at the Ministry of the Interior. 2-1/362.4(52)/1444.

<sup>70</sup>Daniel M. Masterson and Sayaka Funada-Classen, *The Japanese in Latin America* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 116; Stephen R. Niblo, *War, Diplomacy, and Development. The United States and Mexico 1938-1954* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 1995), 68; Maria Elena Paz-Salinas, *Strategy, Security, and Spies: Mexico and The. U.S. As Allies in World War II* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 1997), 36-38, 41-44, 82-85.

<sup>71</sup> Accordingly, Kiso Tsuru requested “permission” from the Minister of the Interior to transfer 350 persons to a ranch in the state of San Luis Potosi to cultivate the land. Dr. Tsuru proposed the Mexican government to leave the selection and control of the inmates in the hands of the Japanese leaders. This was a separate petition from that which Yoshida addressed in December, 1941. From K. Tsuru to the Ministry of the Interior, dated August 11, 1942.

they are responsible for.” Both the CJAM and the Mexican government were to guarantee the camp’s efficiency as a labor center.<sup>72</sup> While Dr. Tsuru’s plan for a camp did not seem to materialize in San Luis Potosi, several camps opened in Temixco, Castro Urdiales, and Villa Corregidora, under the conditions Dr. Tsuru proposed to the Ministry of the Interior.<sup>73</sup>

In addition to the operation of concentration camps, Dr. Tsuru and several high ranking officials in the Mexican government were business partners during World War II. After the United States forced President Manuel Ávila Camacho to prohibit the trade of mercury and other minerals with Japan in July 1941, several Mexican officials including the president’s brother, Maximino Ávila Camacho, continued the illegal trade of metals with Japan.<sup>74</sup> According to historian Maria Elena Paz, Dr. Tsuru was a key individual in Japan’s illegal acquisition of metals from Mexico. Mexican officials involved in the clandestine trade valued Dr. Tsuru’s role as a liaison with the Japanese state.<sup>75</sup>

Dr. Tsuru’s public relationship with the Mexican state heeled the official need to satisfy the United States demands to control the Japanese Mexicans. The Mexican Government seized four million pesos from Dr. Tsuru’s account at the beginning of War World II, but the investments he made using Japanese state money were larger than the amount the Mexican government took from him. Dr. Tsuru invested 18 million yen (one hundred million pesos) in 1937 to finance the operations of the Compañía Internacional Petrolera and the Veracruzana Tsuru Mining Company.<sup>76</sup> Although the United States blacklisted Dr. Tsuru, he built strong

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<sup>72</sup> From K. Tsuru to the Ministry of the Interior, dated August 11, 1942.

<sup>73</sup> See this dissertation’s chapter on Temixco’s camp.

<sup>74</sup> Paz-Salinas, *Strategy, Security, and Spies: Mexico and The U.S. As Allies in World War II*, 83.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>76</sup> Memorandum in reference to Dr. Kiso Tsuru, May (undated), 1942, not signed. IPS 1/362.4(52)/1339.

relations with the Mexican presidential family resulting from the deals the Japanese government made with Maximino Ávila Camacho to obtain clandestine mineral resources in 1941.<sup>77</sup>

Dr. Tsuru became a national sensation when he was tried in May 16, 1943 for fraud. A newspaper article narrated a segment of the trial and referred to it as a “Scandalous Incident at the Supreme Court.” The origins of the legal case lay in his business partnership with two notorious Mexican men. Military Engineer Carlos Almazán and General Juan Barragán, both shareholders of Tsuru’s mining company, sued the physician for his allegedly unethical business practices. According to the newspaper article, Dr. Tsuru made them believe that the mining company’s seams of ore were no longer profitable, and so they stopped production and lost their investment. Then, Tsuru sold the same company to his *prestanombres* or front man, Cipriano Rodríguez Pastor, who kept official control over the administration and profits of the company, which continued to operate.<sup>78</sup> At the time of the “transfer” of ownership, Rodríguez Pastor signed a letter stating that the mine had belonged, at all times, to Dr. Tsuru.<sup>79</sup>

Dr. Tsuru’s case in court and his effort to defend himself against charges of fraud were complex and involved political alliances and conflicts. Carlos Almazán was a relative of Juan Andreu Almazán, a mortal enemy of President Manuel Ávila Camacho. General Juan Barragán was a wealthy man who was active in the political arena during the 1940s. Almazán and Barragán made their case against Dr. Tsuru in as negative language as possible, evoking racist comments from journalist and judge:

[..] Depressed, and somehow indignant from the tone of [Dr. Tsuru’s attacks when referring to his accusers], Judge Olea y Leyva stated that the honor of General Barragán was, in his opinion, above the suspicions

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<sup>77</sup> Memorandum II signed by Juan Sánchez de Tagle and José R. Gracián, dated November 17, 1942. IPS 1/362.4(52)/1339.

<sup>78</sup> “Unknown newspaper source”. Second section, page 14, dated March 16, 1943, in file IPS 1/362.4(52)/1339.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

of Tsuru, as well as that of the officers whom the inmate maliciously mentioned in his written testimony and whom he did not respect, forgetting the nature of his situation as accused, his condition of foreigner and as subject of a country with whom Mexico is at war. "Frankly," –he said, " I do not grant any right to a foreigner to treat in that impolite way the officers of my country, not even in the event of his opinion having some basis [in fact], which in this case is lacking."<sup>80</sup>

The public treatment of the Japanese Mexican businessman was humiliating and helped perpetuate stereotypes of persons of Asian descent in Mexico. In contrast to the experience of most Japanese Mexicans during World War II, however, powerful statesmen protected Dr. Tsuru's private life and freedom of movement. The final verdict was not public and, in spite of the judge's nativist speech, and the anti-Japanese climate, Dr. Tsuru did not go to prison.

After the trial, Dr. Tsuru continued the exploitation of fluoride and zinc in his mines, notwithstanding the United States' insistence on strict control over such resources.<sup>81</sup> Furthermore, for the duration of World War II, the Ministry of the Interior granted Dr. Tsuru permit after permit to visit various regions of the Mexican Republic for weeks and months, including the port of Veracruz and Acapulco, sites from which Japanese Mexicans were banned. The physician continued to supervise his businesses and property without interruption. He gave medical reasons for his trips: "because of my health, I have to make a trip to the spa located in Ixtapan de la Sal, in the state of Mexico [...] where I will bathe to recuperate my broken health." Thus, Dr. Tsuru managed his business and received the care he needed during World War II while impoverished and ill Japanese Mexicans died in Mexico City and the Temixco camp without medical care or any hope of seeing their relatives again.<sup>82</sup>

Dr. Tsuru could travel and operate his businesses because of his wealth and his relationships with the political and economic elite of Mexico. Among them was his powerful

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> "Mexico: Flirting with Fluor Spat," *Time*, November 4, 1940.

<sup>82</sup> From K. Tsuru to C. Minister of the Interior, dated October 1<sup>st</sup>. 1943, IPS 1/362.4(52)/1339.

friend, Congressman Francisco Turrent Artigas from Veracruz, who requested from the DIPS periodic authorization for Dr. Tsuru to travel.<sup>83</sup> Unlike many Japanese Mexicans who had to visit the Ministry of the Interior offices in Mexico City on daily bases, Dr. Tsuru did not even have to be present at the DIPS desk to receive his permits. His employees would pick them up for him.<sup>84</sup> DIPS Chief José Lelo de Larrea was aware of the extraordinary relationship between Dr. Tsuru and the Minister of the Interior. When signing permits for the physician, Lelo de Larrea added the phrase “By superior orders,” to make it clear that it was not in his power to deny authorizations for Dr. Tsuru to travel practically anywhere in Mexico.<sup>85</sup>

Dr. Tsuru’s experience as a free individual, effectively, during World War II is not indicative or representative of most Japanese Mexicans during this period. While Tsuru’s chauffeur took the physician in his Cadillac through cities across the Mexican Republic on business trips, other men and women literally struggled to stay alive. Even when not presenting active resistance to their displacement, the deteriorating health of many Japanese Mexicans provides evidence of the lack of medical care during World War II.

A number of illnesses may be attributed to the stress and economic conditions inflicted by the program on internees or their loved ones from the border region. As historian George Lipsitz states in *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness*, there is a relation between health and race in racist societies. Lipsitz explains that victims of racism are exposed to stress, depression, anxiety, and anger which place them at risk of developing heart disease.<sup>86</sup> Undoubtedly,

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<sup>83</sup>Handwritten notes over some DIPS permits for Dr. Tsuru read “Lic. Turrent,” as an explanation for granting travel authorizations From Miho Kayaba de Tsuru, Kimitaka Tsuru to C. Jefe del Departamento de Información, dated March 9, 1945. IPS 1/362.4(52)/1339. “Lic.” is the Spanish abbreviation for “licenciado” or lawyer.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Permit signed by José Lelo de Larrea, dated October 18, 1943. IPS 1/362.4(52)/1339.

<sup>86</sup> George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006), 112.

Japanese Mexican residents and their relatives were subjected to great emotional pressures affecting their health during World War II.<sup>87</sup>

During World War II, death or wealth in some instances became the only way Japanese Mexican men or women could escape control. In spite of their attempt to comply with the conditions of their relocation, persons of Japanese origin were dealing with a series of bureaucratic practices that required certain familiarity with legal language and official protocol. Although most Japanese Mexicans who did not comply with official paperwork requirements were not active resisters, the DIPS classified them as such. Among them, 58-year old Minoju Satiu Fukunaga, who had been uprooted from Navojoa, Sonora became a wanted man sought after by DIPS inspectors and local authorities of Guanajuato and Jalisco.<sup>88</sup>

Unknowingly, Mr. Fukunaga raised the ire of the DIPS Chief Lelo de Larrea when he moved from Celaya to Guadalajara. Trying to follow official procedures in February 1943, Mr. Fukunaga notified the National Registry of Foreigners at Celaya of his new address in Guadalajara, Jalisco.<sup>89</sup> In spite of being one of the two cities the Mexican government had ordered Japanese Mexicans to move, Fukunaga change of address notification outraged the DIPS

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<sup>87</sup> Several wives of interned husbands were already sick prior to their spouses' arrest, but others reacted, involuntarily, to the expulsion of their husbands from their places of origin with new or worsening illnesses. Among the many cases of sicknesses recorded in the DIPS files, we can cite that of María Dolores L. de Hayashi who had four appendicitis episodes in 1942 during the time her husband, Dr. Manuel Hayashi, was relocated in Mexico City. Antonia Villanueva also reported an unspecified sickness leaving her unable to take care of her seven children when her husband Toichi Urano was relocated. The mother of Isidro Yamamoto, whose name is not recorded in the DIPS files, suffered an unmentioned disease from which she eventually died. Her condition was aggravated by the departure of her son to Mexico City under the relocation program. In the long list of sick persons of Japanese origin during the relocation program was the case of Enrique Sugawara Sugawara who was interned in Temixco camp due to his inability to work as a result of an also undetermined disease. Dr. Joaquín Camacho Téllez's note, dated September 5, 1942. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)843; from Antonia Villanueva to C. Secretario de Gobernación, n.d., received on August 18, 1942. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)1105; from an unknown person (illegible signature) to Isidro Yamamoto, dated October 23, 1944. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)1049; and from Luis T. Tsuji to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated April 4, 1944, IPS 2-1/362.4(52)1355.

<sup>88</sup> From Minoju Satiu Fugunaga to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated September 11, 1942. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1158.

<sup>89</sup> Request to cancel registration at the Registro de Extranjeros at Celaya, Guanajuato, signed by Minoju Fukunaga Satio and J. Jesús Ortiz Balderas, dated February 9, 1943. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1158.

Chief officer, Lic. José Lelo de Larrea, who thought Mr. Fukunaga had not humbly asked for his authorization, but merely informed him of his change of address. Larrea informed the Mayor of Celaya, Jesús Ortiz Balderas, that the DIPS was the only entity with the power to authorize Mr. Fukunaga's transfer. Lelo de Larrea ordered Ortiz Balderas to force Mr. Fukunaga to return to Celaya. The DIPS official was upset because Mr. Fukunaga did not follow the chain of command and official protocol.<sup>90</sup>

In order to ensure the return of Mr. Fukunaga to Celaya, and with the authorization to use force if necessary, Lelo de Larrea commanded Inspector Loreto Orozco, stationed in Guadalajara, Jalisco, to escort the Japanese Mexican man to the place he was authorized to live in the state of Guanajuato, just across the state line.<sup>91</sup> At the same time, the DIPS urged Guadalajara's Mayor to notify Mr. Fukunaga that he had the obligation to "return immediately to [Celaya] where he must continue residing."<sup>92</sup>

As a result of the DIPS efforts and investigation, finally on April 27, 1943, inspector Loreto Orozco was able to render his report on the Japanese Mexican man who had not followed the relocation program procedures to the letter. Loreto Orozco notified José Lelo de Larrea that Mr. Minoju Fukunaga lived his last days alone and had died in an unauthorized place on March 24, unfortunately breaking the legal paper trail which was supposed to follow Japanese Mexicans all the way to their internal exile as overseen by the DIPS officials. Following protocol, Larrea collected Mr. Fukunaga's documentation for submission to the Ministry of the Interior. In sharp

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<sup>90</sup> From José Lelo de Larrea to C. J. Jesús Ortiz Balderas, dated February 22, 1943, IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1158.

<sup>91</sup> From José Lelo de Larrea to C. Inspector Loreto Orozco, dated February 24, 1943. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1158.

<sup>92</sup> From Jesús Ortiz Balderas to C. Presidente Municipal de Guadalajara, Jal, dated February 25, 1943. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1158.

contrast with the privileges Dr. Kiso Tsuru enjoyed during World War II, Minoju Satiu Fukunaga died while the Mexican government pursued him as a criminal.<sup>93</sup>

Lack of organized, extensive resistance against the relocation program resulted in the irreparable loss of civil rights, property, and lives for the Japanese Mexican communities. Although many towns and individuals sought the freedom of their beloved relatives, friends or neighbors, their efforts did not find a general, organized response at a national level. Furthermore, supporters of Japanese Mexicans usually adhered to the nationalist rhetoric and accepted the limitations the federal government imposed upon local societies. As time passed, President Ávila Camacho was able to gather the consent of the majority through assertions of supposed racial unity that included only persons of Spanish and indigenous descent. When requesting the freedom of the Japanese Mexican members of their local communities, Mexicans claimed exceptions to a rule they obeyed in more general terms. In turn, the Mexican government granted a few exceptions in exchange for the support of most Mexicans for the relocation program and other policies derived from the alliance between the United States and Mexico elites.

For their part, Japanese Mexicans examined their place in their communities and in relation to the Mexican nation, searching for ways to avoid the effects of the relocation program. They claimed their Mexican citizenship, long residence, or having Mexican children and spouses as ways to confirm their membership in their communities. Nevertheless, in spite of the links they formed with their communities through daily experiences, their resistance to the relocation program and the support offered at times by entire towns, only wealthy Japanese Mexicans with

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<sup>93</sup> From Inspector IPS. – 65 (signed L. Orozco) to Lic. José Lelo de Larrea, “Request to cancel registration at the Registro de Extranjeros at Celaya, Gto.” IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/1158.

ties to the Japanese and Mexican national elites managed to maintain a life free from major disruptions during World Word II.

## CHAPTER 8

### TEMIXCO CONCENTRATION CAMP

Historians of the relocation program and government officials mention the former hacienda Temixco as the most emblematic site of “concentration” during World War II and a model of mild population control.<sup>1</sup> Temixco is cited in contrast to the Perote Jail, a high security prison in which the Mexican government confined those Japanese Mexicans considered extremely dangerous. In 2008, Mexican diplomat Sergio González Gálvez described Temixco as a “farm,” and other historians have defined it as “a loosely organized internment camp.” Refuting the idea that Temixco was an agricultural enterprise employing free labor, DIPS files provide evidence that this was a site of confinement where inmates were forced to work under surveillance. At the same time, Temixco was a site of conflict among Japanese Mexicans and of uneven distribution of power yielding privileges for the Japanese Mexican elite.<sup>2</sup>

During the first months of 1942, hundreds of uprooted Japanese Mexicans entered camp “Batán” but the growing number of relocated persons made the already precarious conditions of internees impossible to sustain. In addition, many inmates were not employable due to their age or sickness. Outside “Batán” the state of poverty to which entire families were subjected in

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<sup>1</sup> The Marquesado del Valle de Oaxaca given to Hernán Cortés in the sixteenth century was the first estate or hacienda in Mexico that rearranged an entire indigenous community to serve the needs of the Spanish conquerors. The hacienda was designed according to the economic and social requirements of the Spanish rulers: a main building, or *casco*, where the estate owner lived, quarters for the animals, quarters for the indigenous persons serving in the *casco*, fields for the cultivation of crops, a warehouse for the harvested crops, a *capilla* or church for religious services. At a short distance, indigenous people lived in the town but were under the dominion of the *hacendado*. Belonging to Cortés, Temixco’s hacienda originally included the land and its indigenous inhabitants. Alvin Eustis, Lesley Byrd Simpson, and Francois Chevalier, *Land and Society in Colonial Mexico: The Great Hacienda* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963), 127.

<sup>2</sup> Sergio González Gálvez, “Eventos Históricos De La Relación México-Japón,” (2008). <http://portal.sre.gob.mx/imr/pdf/8601glezgalvez.pdf> (accessed May 24, 2010); Akemi Kikumura-Yano, ed. *Encyclopedia of Japanese Descendants in the Americas: An Illustrated History* (Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 2002), 214.

Mexico City spurred both the Comité Japonés de Ayuda Mutua (CJAM) and Mexican government officials to open another camp. Displaced Japanese Mexicans could support themselves in this camp and provide housing and food for other disabled Japanese Mexicans who had evacuated the borderlands and the coastal zones of Mexico.<sup>3</sup> In July 1942, leaders of the CJAM Sanshiro Matsumoto and Alberto Shunji Yoshida notified the Ministry of the Interior that they had acquired the hacienda Temixco, in the southern state of Morelos, from Alejandro Lacy Orci, a Sonoran landowner. A short eighty five kilometers from Mexico City, the hacienda was also only 6 kilometers from Cuernavaca, the capital of the state of Morelos.<sup>4</sup>

Military and civilian authorities participated in the creation of the camp and in the identification of every interned man in Temixco. Cuernavaca's Mayor and the Commander of the Military zone received copies of individual permits granted to Japanese Mexicans moving into Temixco.<sup>5</sup> Japanese Mexicans were tightly controlled by the state and restricted to a rigidly demarcated area. The hacienda was a very convenient place to isolate and manage the labor of Japanese Mexicans, which the Ministry of the Interior had placed in the hands of the CJAM leaders. In preparation for the arrival of the internees, CJAM officials Sanshiro Matsumoto and Alberto S. Yoshida received a special permit to employ the Japanese Mexican workforce at the

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<sup>3</sup> From Luis T. Suji to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated November 16, 1942. IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/1141.

<sup>4</sup> From Lic. Ernesto Escobar Muñoz, Secretario General del Gobierno de Morelos, to C. Presidente Municipal, Temixco, dated July 23, 1942, IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/1141. On July 13, 1942, Luis Tsuji, representing the CJAM, informed DIPS Chief Officer Adolfo Ruiz Cortines that the CJAM had bought the Hacienda de Temixco to "employ some Japanese men relocated in Mexico City." Although CJAM leader Sanshiro Matsumoto initiated the process to buy the hacienda, other names appeared in the title: Vicente Kadiyama Hamaguchi, Tago Tomaru Kokuro, Leji Seiguchi Seiguchi, Thuji Okamara, and Luis Tadasu.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Oficio 4835 (Ando Kawade Kanzichii) Permit signed by Lic. J. Lelo de Larrea, dated August 27, 1942. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)1141.

Temixco Hacienda. The term “employment” did not imply hiring displaced men and women for wages of, but their use in the hacienda’s economic activities.<sup>6</sup>

This hacienda had always been one of the jewels of the state of Morelos, cherished by powerful families in Mexico but also claimed by indigenous peasants. Although one of the objectives of the revolution was to make peasants the owners of the same land they worked, the Zapatista slogan being “la tierra es de quien la trabaja” (the land is of those who labor over it), politicians and their families ignored this principle to appropriate vast tracts of land, Temixco among them.<sup>7</sup>

Temixco’s previous owner, Alejandro Lacy Orci was able to acquire the hacienda when the state of Morelos auctioned the estate in the Revolution’s aftermath. Plutarco Elias Calles was president of Mexico and he and Orci were related through the marriage of their grandchildren. A common place of birth, political networks, and ethnocentric perceptions against indigenous and Asian peoples were also bonded the Calles and the Lacy families in the post-revolutionary period.<sup>8</sup>

When president Lázaro Cárdenas exiled Plutarco Elias Calles in 1935, his relatives and supporters gradually returned to Sonora. Alejandro Lacy Orci decided to follow his family to northern Mexico.<sup>9</sup> In 1938, Cárdenas granted portions of hacienda to the peasant communities of Palmira and Temixco. Not willing to comply with the official disposition, Alejandro Lacy

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<sup>6</sup> From Adolfo Ruiz Cortines IPS l Oficial Mayor, to Lic. Jesús Castillo López, Morelos Governor, dated August 27, 1942. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)1141.

<sup>7</sup> For a discussion of the Zapatista movement in Mexico see Samuel Brunk, *Emiliano Zapata: Revolution & Betrayal in Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995).

<sup>8</sup> José Jorge Gómez Izquierdo, *El Movimiento Antichino En México (1871-1934): Problemas Del Racismo Y Del Nacionalismo Durante La Revolucion Mexicana* (D.F.: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1991), 148.

<sup>9</sup> Internet communication with Alberto Ruy Sánchez, greatgrandchild of Alejandro Lacy Orci. April 22, 2010. Lacy Orci’s son was congressman and director of the Anti-Chinese League, Alejandro Lacy, Jr. See Gerardo Cornejo Murrieta, *Historia Contemporánea De Sonora, 1929-1984*, Historia General De Sonora, vol. V (Hermosillo: Gobierno del Estado de Sonora, 1985), 85-86.

transferred the problem of dealing with agrarian authorities by selling it.<sup>10</sup> In 1942, the CJAM leaders, unaware of the property rights and claims the indigenous communities had on the hacienda, bought the property from Lacy for the sum of \$85,000 (pesos), approximately \$26,435.00 (dollars).<sup>11</sup>

The CJAM faced the challenge of fulfilling the potential of the hacienda. They had acquired 250 hectares, but only sixty of them had irrigation systems.<sup>12</sup> Although in the past sugarcane was the main crop in Temixco, the CJAM decided to forego its cultivation cashing immediately on this decision. The CJAM leaders and new owners of Temixco sold the machinery needed to process sugarcane in the hacienda for about the same price they paid for the property.<sup>13</sup>

Temixco's distribution of the buildings was ideal for the management of the uprooted Japanese Mexicans, as it was built by Spanish conquerors to control indigenous populations working for the *hacendados*. Its *casco*, or main premises of the hacienda, was divided in three wings. One of them was a two-floor building. When the internees arrived, three Mexican families lived in the first floor, which was in very bad condition, lacking a ceiling. The administrator, Takugoro Shibayama, made urgent repairs in the facilities, particularly in the

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<sup>10</sup> Diario Oficial, February 19, 1944.

<sup>11</sup> 3.11 dollars for each peso. Lawrence H. Officer, "Exchange Rates Between the United States Dollar and Forty-one Currencies," MeasuringWorth, 2009. URL: <http://www.measuringworth.org/exchange/global/rom> Inspector PS-1 to C. Jefe del Depto. De Investigación Política y Social, dated September, 1942. From Ernesto Corona Ruesga, Jefe del Servicio de Inspección, to C. Oficial Mayor de la Secretaría de Gobernación, dated June 10, 1943, IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/1141.

<sup>12</sup> From Ernesto Corona Ruesga, Jefe del Servicio de Inspección, to C. Oficial Mayor de la Secretaría de Gobernación, dated June 10, 1943, IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/1141

<sup>13</sup> Alberto Ruy Sánchez, Alejandro Lacy Orci's great grandchild and renowned writer told me that his great grandfather made a hurried and bad business transaction. Internet communication with Alberto Ruy Sánchez. April 22, 2010.

living quarters of his own family in the second floor, and was referred to as “guard” by Mexican officials.<sup>14</sup>

Originally an ambulant merchant in Mexicali, Shibayama acquired an important role in Mexico City within the CJAM. While controlling internees at Temixco, he was simultaneously charged with the task of finding other haciendas so the CJAM could “intern and place the Japanese who are currently concentrated in the capital.”<sup>15</sup> Temixco’s administrator fulfilled his mission by travelling to San Luis Potosi, Tamaulipas, and Puebla.<sup>16</sup>

Minerva Yoshino, then a child forced to live in Temixco’s concentration camp, remembers the “beautiful” stairs that led into the Shibayama family’s rooms. During her interview, she recalled also that the Shibayama quarters were never open to the rest of the inmates. Only the Japanese Mexican women who helped cleaning the living quarters of the administrator and his family would have brief access to the administrator’s and his family’s rooms. Children living in the camp were not usually allowed to play with Shibayama’s six children living in the hacienda another indication that there were clear hierarchies and boundaries between the internees and the Japanese Mexican administrators of the internment camp.<sup>17</sup>

Living conditions for most internees were harsh. The hacienda had three large patios that were adapted to the needs of the CJAM. Only the third patio had a cement floor. The CJAM constructed a communal dormitory for those internees who had family with them in this area and ordered the installation of boilers in the same patio to provide hot water for parboiling the rice

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<sup>14</sup> From Dr. Felipe García Sánchez to Secretaría de Gobernación, dated December 17, 1942, IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1141.

<sup>15</sup> From Luis T. Tsuji and Takugoro Shibayama to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated August 24, 1942. IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/301.

<sup>16</sup> Permit signed by J. Lelo de Larrea , dated August 25, 1942. IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/301.

<sup>17</sup> Telephone conversation with Minerva Yoshino, on October 5, 2009.

harvested by the Japanese Mexican internees. In addition, the *casco* had two empty, humid, warehouses that were cleaned by the Japanese Mexicans upon their arrival. Other small rooms in this area housed eight families of Mexican peasants hired by the CJAM. Although the DIPS documents do not show in what capacity the peasants were employed, *hacendados* used to hire indigenous persons as maids, to tend the animals, or to farm the land. The presence of these free employees indicates the CJAM had enough funds to pay their salaries and reflected the need for laborers in the hacienda.<sup>18</sup>

The camp continued to grow over time. On September 21, 1942, Luis T. Tsuji, General Secretary of the CJAM, requested authorization from the Ministry of the Interior to intern a second group composed of forty nine persons classified as Japanese nationals. As in the case of Villa Aldama camp, Mexican women and their Japanese Mexican children who were relatives of the interned men entered the camp without having to request individual permission.<sup>19</sup> In October of the same year, a third smaller group was transferred to the hacienda. The DIPS processed subsequent permits to intern other men of Japanese origin and also dealt with sporadic requests to leave the hacienda.<sup>20</sup> Due to their frequent visits to supervise the internees living in the camp, the Ministry of the Interior granted Luis T. Tsuji and other members of the CJAM permanent special permits to travel between Mexico City and the state of Morelos.<sup>21</sup>

Although the CJAM administered the hacienda and promised the Ministry of the Interior to control the residents of Temixco, each adult male or single female internee had to obtain direct permission from the DIPS to exit the premises, either temporarily or permanently. Internees had to own a typewriter, have command of the Spanish language and writing skills to compose a

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> From Luis T. Tsuji to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated September 21, 1942. IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/1141.

<sup>20</sup> From Luis T. Tsuji, to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated October 5, 1942. IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/1141.

<sup>21</sup> Permits signed by Lic. J. Lelo de Larrea, dated November 26, 1942, IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/1141.

legal document if they desired to apply on their own for permits to move in or out of the hacienda. Even when internees could afford to pay an expert to type their requests, the Ministry of the Interior denied employment or new address authorizations without explanation.<sup>22</sup> It was common for an officer from the CJAM to write such letters, reinforcing the control that the association exercised over the interned Japanese Mexicans.<sup>23</sup> Ultimately, the DIPS had the last word on the permits to enter or exit the hacienda.<sup>24</sup>

More than five hundred persons entered the internment camp from 1942 to 1945.<sup>25</sup> The most impoverished uprooted Japanese Mexicans regarded the Hacienda de Temixco as a refuge from harsher alternatives, such as not having a roof over their heads or a source of income at all. After all, relocation had resulted in unemployment or insufficient wages for Japanese Mexicans who were self-sufficient before the Second Great War and many displaced Japanese Mexicans and their dependents turned to charity after 1942.<sup>26</sup> Particularly those persons with physical disabilities and the elderly who before their relocation had been able to earn a living in their place of origin found themselves in a hostile urban environment with scarce opportunities to find employment.<sup>27</sup>

Other reasons impelled Japanese Mexicans to accept internment. Takeshi Morita, for example, was willing to become an inmate at Temixco in order to terminate his confinement in Camp Livingston, Louisiana. A naturalized Mexican citizen, Takeshi was apprehended by the

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<sup>22</sup> From Tanamachi Satus Utaro to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated March 3, 1943 and from José Lelo de Larrea to Tanamachi Satus Utaro, dated March 17, 1943. IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/1141.

<sup>23</sup> Interview with Rodolfo Nakamura. July 25, 2006.

<sup>24</sup> From Namikawa Mitsusaki Kitaro to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated June 28, 1943. IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/330.

<sup>25</sup> Kikumura-Yano, ed. *Encyclopedia of Japanese Descendants*, 214.

<sup>26</sup> Oficio 4812, Lic. J. Lelo de Larrea to Whom It may Concern, in relation to Masaru Takeo, his wife and seven children, dated August 27, 1942. IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/1141.

<sup>27</sup> Such was the case of Genaro Romero, born in Mexico of a Mexican mother. Genaro was “completely deaf and (could) not support himself, for which the Comité [decided to intern him in order] to provide for [him] in Temixco.” From Luis T. Tsuji, to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated November 16, 1942. IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/1141.

United States Army in the United States in 1942. He then requested assistance from the Mexican Consulate at Salt Lake City to obtain his freedom from the American concentration camp.<sup>28</sup>

After several consultations within the Ministry of the Interior, Attorney Juan de la C. García advised its Minister to accept Okamura:

[...]taking in consideration that [he] became Mexican by naturalization long before his country of origin was in war against Mexico; that he legally entered our country at a young age; and that in the state of Morelos, in Temixco, near Cuernavaca, the Mexican government has a concentration camp destined for the Japanese, it is fair that, as he is entitled to protection due to his [Mexican] nationality, he is allowed to come to Mexico [...] to intern him in Temixco camp, where he will be subjected to vigilance just as the rest of his countrymen.<sup>29</sup>

As stated by García, the camp was under surveillance. The Ministry of the Interior gave Romualdo Cházaro, an officer from the DIPS, the responsibility of making sure that all Japanese Mexicans registered as internees were within the hacienda's limits at all times.<sup>30</sup> Cházaro constantly submitted detailed information to the Ministry of the Interior and military authorities in the area on the status of Japanese Mexican men in the camp, including transfers to other facilities or employment, sickness, or death of those had been classified as “enemy aliens.”<sup>31</sup>

The privileged accommodations of the Shibayama family created some discontent among the internees in Temixco who, while trying to keep a community spirit, felt the direct control of the CJAM over their lives.<sup>32</sup> In addition to better quarters, the CJAM had assigned Takugoro an assistant named Tsumeo Somea.<sup>33</sup> Alberto Yoshida also had an advantaged position within the

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<sup>28</sup> From Enrique Monterrubio to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated March 13, 1944. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1574.

<sup>29</sup> From Juan de la C. García to C. Jefe del Departamento, August 1st., 1944. IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/1574

<sup>30</sup> From J. Lelo de Larrea to C. Inspector Romualdo J. Cházaro, dated December 14, 1942. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1141.

<sup>31</sup> From Romualdo J. Cházaro, dated February 25, 1943, IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/1141.

<sup>32</sup> Telephone conversation with Dr. Raúl Hiromoto on November 7, 2006.

<sup>33</sup> From Kobayashi Somea Tsumeo to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated December 11, 1942, IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1141.

hacienda as leader of the CJAM and co-owner of the hacienda. Although he lived in Mexico City, Yoshida's presence in Temixco became more constant in December 1942. In order to manage the funds, the sale of products, and the payment of taxes, while representing the legal and commercial interests of the Hacienda, Yoshida enjoyed a permanent permit to travel between Temixco and Mexico City.<sup>34</sup>

In spite of the orders to bring their children and wives with them, some men just could not afford to pay for their transportation to the interior.<sup>35</sup> On the other hand, some interned Japanese Mexicans did not desire to see their children growing up in captivity. Rodolfo Nakamura was only 9 years old in 1942 when his only surviving parent was ordered to evacuate Palau, Coahuila, in North Mexico.<sup>36</sup> During interview, he talked about the circumstances under which he remained in the care of his older siblings in the borderlands for some months. Rodolfo Nakamura was very attached to his father and could not stay apart from him, particularly without receiving news from him. The child decided to take to the road on his own in search of Umezo Nakamura Nakamura. Once in Mexico City, he heard that his father was in Temixco.

I found my father but first I had to look for him because I did not know where he was. I was told that he was in [the state of] Morelos. It was very hard to find out in Cuernavaca where my father was, where all Japanese were, because I was eleven years old and nobody took me seriously. I went all the way to Temixco and there it was pretty easy to locate the hacienda. There were no businesses, there was nothing [in Temixco]. Today there are stores, restaurants, hotels. Then there was only the hacienda, the highway. I tried not to be noticed, I entered [the hacienda] and nobody asked me why I was there. I kept walking until I met some Japanese persons to whom I asked for Nakamura.

-Nakamura!

They were calling his name, asking for his whereabouts in Japanese language. They told me where my father was. I walked in the direction of the fields but I did not find him on that day. I asked [the other internees] if I could stay overnight.

-Did you get registered?

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<sup>34</sup> From Alberto S. Yoshida to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated December 15, 1942, IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1141. Permit signed by Lic. J. Lelo de Larrea, dated December 15, 1942. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1141.

<sup>35</sup> From Jotema Chojó to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated August 27, 1942. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/822.

<sup>36</sup> Born on February 11, 1933.

-No. They did not even notice me when I walked through the door.  
-Fine. Look, you can sleep right here.  
The morning after, when I opened my eyes my father was already there. They had told him that I was looking for him.  
-What are you doing here?  
-I came to look for you because we did not have news about you.  
-No. I am fine. You must leave.<sup>37</sup>

Rodolfo Nakamura left the hacienda immediately since his father found the thought of raising him in such a restrictive environment intolerable. Soon, Umezo Nakamura requested permission to relocate in Mexico City in order to live with his youngest son, Rodolfo. The elder Nakamura lived his last years in Mexico City missing the miner community of Palau, Coahuila. He died in an accident some years later, leaving Rodolfo once again in the care of his older siblings, who by then had also been relocated to Mexico City.<sup>38</sup>

Although the land was rich and highly productive, proper housing was not available for all internees when Matsumoto and Yoshida bought the hacienda. In December 1942 Dr. Felipe García Sánchez, an officer from the Department of Health, inspected the hacienda and reported the immediate problems that internees were facing. Dr. García was appalled by the circumstances of the Japanese Mexicans who had installed “casetas de madera” (small wooden compartments) as “bedrooms” for approximately 200 persons. A section of the hacienda was assigned as a dormitory for Japanese men who were single, widowed, or forced to abandon their families. A wooden platform, rising 40 centimeters from the floor, was installed from wall to wall,

[...] covered by some kind of pigeonholes, each division functioning as the space where each person sleeps. They tend their blankets over the overcrowded wooden platform, constituting a constant danger, since a contagious sickness would become general and inevitable. Such dormitories do not have doors.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Notes taken during interview with Rodolfo Nakamura in Mexico City, July 25, 2006.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> From Manuel M. Barrera, Rodolfo Candiani, and Romualdo J. Cházaro to C. Jefe del Departamento de IPS, dated January 4, 1944, IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/1141.

A section was reserved for the kitchen where men without a family in the hacienda fixed their own meals. It had a 10-meter table, with benches on the sides. The floor consisted of “tierra suelta” (dirt), with some patches remaining from a previously stone paved floor.<sup>40</sup> A line of *lavaderos* (special basins made of cement to do the laundry) allowed internees to wash their clothes, using rationed cake soap.<sup>41</sup>

Dr. García reported that the facilities were insufficient for the number of persons living in the hacienda and expressed his dismay at the sight of the dormitories where “a great number of children (were) crowded” in unsanitary conditions. Latrines had been installed over drainage channels that could carry contaminated material to the vegetable gardens. He noted that the internees did not have bathrooms to follow personal hygiene routines and he urged the construction of better sanitary facilities.<sup>42</sup>

The Japanese Mexican community led quiet lives within the hacienda of Temixco, starting their days at 4:00 in the morning. Only men worked in the agricultural fields; women took care of domestic tasks that included preparing of meals, washing clothes, and keeping their living quarters, as well as those of the Shibayama family, as clean as possible.<sup>43</sup> Local police officers assisted the only in-house DIPS inspector to make sure that internees remained confined. While DIPS inspector Romualdo Cházaro regularly confirmed the presence of male inmates at Temixco, women and children continued to be unaccounted for in Mr. Cházaro’s daily rounds.

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> From D.C.G. to C. Jefe del Depto. de IPS, dated August 5, 1944. IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/1141.

<sup>42</sup> Dr. Felipe García Sánchez, to Secretaría de Gobernación, dated December 17, 1942. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1141. Article 13 of the Geneva Convention clauses on prisoners of war stated that “belligerents shall be bound to take all sanitary measures necessary to assure the cleanliness and healthfulness of camps and to prevent epidemics. Prisoners of war shall have at their disposal, day and night, installations conforming to sanitary rules and constantly maintained in a state of cleanliness.” *Convention between the United States of America and Other Powers, Relating to Prisoners of War; July 27, 1929*, Geneva Convention of 1929 (Yale Law School, 1929).

<sup>43</sup> Conversation with Minerva Yoshino on October 5, 2009.

This procedure criminalized men, contributed to reaffirm patriarchal values, and restricted the official numbers of victims of the relocation program to the registered men. All inmates had to retire to the housing quarters by eight o'clock every evening. Mexican women who joined their families in the camp abided by the rules imposed upon the inmates just like men and women of Japanese descent.<sup>44</sup>

Occasionally, internees had permission to visit the town, located only fifty meters from the main building in the hacienda, to acquire supplies but they had to return quickly to the hacienda.<sup>45</sup> It is tempting to argue that the ability to walk through the hacienda's door to acquire supplies for the camp is a sign that Japanese Mexicans were free or that the hacienda did not function as a concentration camp. Nevertheless, soldiers and officials from the Mexican army occasionally visited the camp to verify that all persons listed in their files were present.<sup>46</sup>

In addition to the visit of soldiers, the control of Japanese Mexicans in concentration camps and other zones of confinement rested mainly on assumed racial attributes in a way that resembled slavery in the United States. Outside the hacienda, any person who appeared to be Asian was a suspect (of being illegally at the place they were at the moment of their interrogation) and subject to the control of civilians and police.<sup>47</sup> In general, Mexicans supervised and restricted the freedom of poor Japanese Mexicans through their racial identification. Any person who, in the eyes of Mexicans, looked Asian was a suspect of belonging to the "Japanese race," thus, obligated to show their official authorization to be in the

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<sup>44</sup> List signed by Lic. R. Guzmán Araujo, dated October 2, 1945. IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/1141.

<sup>45</sup> From Ernesto Corona Ruesga, Jefe del Servicio de Inspección, to C. Oficial Mayor de la Secretaría de Gobernación, dated June 10, 1943, IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/1141.

<sup>46</sup> From Ricardo Herrera, Inspector 67 to C. Jefe del Departamento de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, dated February 8, 1943. IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/1141.

<sup>47</sup> Tyuta Horiuti, for example, was arrested by a civilian who delivered Horiuti to the central offices of the Mexican Army. From General J. Salvador S. Sánchez to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated May 29, 1942. IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/503.

streets or any place considered to be out of boundaries. Racial classification of Japanese Mexicans was very ambiguous -- Mexicans have called any person of Asian ancestry a “Chinese”—but determined their lack of mobility. As a consequence, the Ministry of the Interior did not have to invest in facilities or a large number of guards in order to control persons of Japanese origin. Their physical characteristics alerted society at large, and the Japanese Mexicans themselves, that they were not free. Military and civil authorities were entitled to interrogate any person in or outside of the camp.<sup>48</sup> In addition to surveillance, there was a powerful reason for some internees to remain within the camp: their children were also inmates, sharing the physical characteristics of their parents. It would not be easy to live in hiding preventing them from attending school or having friends to avoid being identified as Japanese. In sum, their phenotype and economic disfranchisement made it impossible for internees to find a place in Mexico to evade the control of the Mexican government during World War II.

Internees of Temixco and other displaced Mexican Japanese were not, however, passive victims of the relocation program. They attempted to carry on normal lives, taking every opportunity to improve their material conditions, and they were particularly interested in the education of their children. By January 1943, ninety children had been interned in the camp and the Mexican government authorized them to attend the local school. The young Japanese Mexican internees who registered created a sudden increase of pupils at the local school which did not have enough chairs for all its students. Parents of the newly arrived provided some chairs

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<sup>48</sup> Classified as Japanese, José Hahn Kim, of Korean descent, was detained in November, 1942, accused of having a conversation with a Mexican man “contrary to Democracy.” Once the documents in his power were determined to be written in Korean, they were translated and provided evidence that Hahn was Korean and anti-Japanese. From General Miguel Martínez, Jefe de la Policía del D. F., to C. Licenciado Miguel Alemán, Secretario de Gobernación. IPS 2/1/362.4/1590.

for the school, making it possible for enrolled Japanese Mexican children to sit while taking their classes.<sup>49</sup>

Initially the local school did not have the capacity to accept all the children from the camp. In addition, some children were not eligible to attend because of their age. Japanese Mexican parents believed that all interned children were in need of an “adequate education” and requested permission to have Mr. Takizawa Y. Seito teach at the camp. The CJAM proposed that Mr. Seito, a former Japanese language teacher from Navojoa, Sonora, give courses of “industria infantil” and Japanese language.<sup>50</sup> Officers of the Minister of the Interior did not grant the requested permission; instead, they suggested that the CJAM hire, and pay for, the services of a teacher of Mexican nationality. They eventually authorized a Japanese teacher in the camp.<sup>51</sup>

All children of school age would, in the end, regularly attend the Temixco elementary school. At night, they received additional instruction from Mr. Seito, who was eventually allowed to teach Japanese Mexican children. During the weekends, students received their classes in Japanese. Teacher and student used to go outdoors, exercising and rehearsing for weekly performances of Japanese plays. Attending the performances of their children was the main source of entertainment for the entire community of internees. Art crafts, physical education, and calligraphy were the only subjects taught by Mr. Seito at the hacienda.<sup>52</sup>

Despite the restrictions and poverty she endured as an internee, Minerva Yoshino is proud of the resilience of their community and their accommodation to a hostile social

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<sup>49</sup> From Ernesto Corona Ruesga, Jefe del Servicio de Inspección, to C. Oficial Mayor de la Secretaría de Gobernación, dated June 10, 1943. IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/1141

<sup>50</sup> From Luis T. Tsuji to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated January 13, 1943. IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/1141.

<sup>51</sup> From Lic. José Lelo de Larrea to Luis T. Tsuji, dated January 29, 1943. IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/1141.

<sup>52</sup> Telephone conversation with Minerva Yoshino on October 5, 2009.

environment. She praises the education she received in the camp and the sense of community which Japanese children developed. They shared prizes, for example, earned at the Temixco school with other children in the camp. During interview, she remembered that colored pencils, notebooks, and other supplies came along with academic awards. A Japanese teacher was able to teach in the camp thanks to the insistence of the inmates who wanted their children to maintain certain aspects of their culture. Minerva explained that their *sensei* trained children to be brave in the face of scary situations. To prove their valor, the teacher asked his students in the camp to climb the chapel stairs to the top in spite of the frightening darkness and the presence of bats. She cherished the parental guidance prevalent in the camp. She states that Japanese men in the camp committed no acts of physical abuse against their offspring. When children misbehaved, their parents used to hug them and hold long conversations to ensure that they would not repeat this misconduct. However, their uprooting, financial destitution, and internment in the camp constituted an abuse itself against children.<sup>53</sup>

While trying to create a healthy environment for their children, most adults in the camp had few resources at their disposal and their lives were organized around the hacienda's production. The Ministry of the Interior received often reports from the CJAM on the efficiency of the hacienda. Alberto Yoshida and Takugoro Shibayama informed the DIPS inspector in February 1943 that eighty Japanese men worked in the fields while thirty others did not due to sickness, age, or because they refused to work.<sup>54</sup>

In their report to the Ministry of the Interior, The CJAM leaders failed to mention that certain inmates were refusing to work without receiving any money in exchange for their labor.

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> From Ricardo Herrera, to Jefe del Departamento de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, dated February 8, 1943, IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/1141.

The CJAM had promised internees a salary but inmates usually did not receive wages. Men who were able to work had to pay for the soap, food, and other items they or their families consumed. Their salary could be lower than the amount owed for the products provided by the CJAM. This situation was an incentive for internees to accept employment as live-in workers at high ranking military officers' households in the same area or back in Mexico City.<sup>55</sup>

The growing tensions in Temixco finally compelled the CJAM leaders to request the intervention of the Ministry of the Interior. Luis T. Tsuji, representing the CJAM, informed Minister of the Interior Miguel Alemán that a group of Japanese Mexicans “under the control of this Committee [...] have always misbehaved affecting other colonizers.” Mr. Tsuji asked from the Ministry of the Interior to relocate the rebellious inmates so they could “look for employment at other places.”<sup>56</sup> Alemán, three years later the president of Mexico, ordered the removal of the internees from the hacienda in accordance with the CJAM request. The blacklisted men were transferred to the detention facilities in Perote, located in an extremely cold area in the coastal state of Veracruz.<sup>57</sup> The “Estación Migratoria Perote” was in fact a jail famous for the terrible conditions under which internees lived. Perote officers received these and other Japanese Mexican men whose only crime was having protested the terms of the compensation for their labor in Temixco.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> From Migashiro Otohjin to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated 3/8/1943, and from Nakao Nakao Saburo to C. Jefe del Departamento de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, dated March 28, 1943. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1141; from Notsuka Shiraki Manabu to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated March 4, 1943, IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1141; from Saburo Ueda Fujimori to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated March 5, 1943, IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1141.

<sup>56</sup> Like other concentration camps in the United States, World War II internees were detained in the zones they were excluded from, or ordered to leave. From Luis T. Tsuji, to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated June 3, 1943. IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/1141.

<sup>57</sup> “General List of Japanese who used to live in Hacienda Temixco, now out of the facilities with the permission of this department”, by Inspector PS-57, DCG, dated August 15, 1944. IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/1141.

<sup>58</sup> List of internees in the Hacienda Temixco, dated July 21, 1943. IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/1141.

The Ministry of the Interior investigated the charges filed by the CJAM against the rebellious internees. Once in Perote, immigration officials took Zintaro Matsu Nakagawa's report and wrote that

Zintaro Matsu Nakagawa did not] have contact with any relatives in Japan; [...]that he never assisted in any way [...] the Japanese government [...] not having enough money for his own basic needs; that he [did] not belong to any secret Japanese association; that he professe[d] the Buddhist religion but [did] not have any contact with the government of Emperor Irohito [sic] since he ha[d] been living in the country for approximately fifty years. That the bad behavior he was accused of consisted in his claiming that the labor or compensation received at the Temixco hacienda in the state of Morelos was not appropriate; [that the laborers originally received] \$2.00 [two pesos] each week plus meals [...] but this arrangement changed to the benefit of the owner [of the hacienda] who determined that the owner [of the hacienda] would take fifty percent of the product, and the other fifty percent would belong to the laborers [...]; that approximately sixty three Japanese persons worked the land receiving an insignificant amount [...] from which the meals were deducted, not only their own meals but everybody's food [was deducted from each working man's salary for which] he suffered serious damages since he did not have relatives [in the hacienda] but had to support the relatives of his coworkers; that most of the time, better said always, he ended up owing money [to the owner of the hacienda] instead of obtaining compensation for his labor. That this was the reason for his discontent and the bad behavior the [CJAM] accused him of, but that he thought an injustice was done against him and his coworkers.<sup>59</sup>

Zintaro Nakagawa had arrived in Mexico in 1906 to work in a plantation in the state of Oaxaca, and later as a miner in the state of Coahuila. Although his exact age was not documented in his file, we can infer that in 1942 he was not a young person at the peak of his productive life. Nevertheless, the Mexican government and the CJAM forced him and other men and women in the same circumstances to work in the fields in exchange for a roof and meals. His declaration reveals a degree of demoralization was settling in the camp as Zintaro, and probably other men in his group at Perote, did not feel they should contribute to cover the expenses of the sick, elderly, disabled, or children interned at Temixco, particularly if their own children and

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<sup>59</sup> Declaration rendered by Zintaro Matsu Nakagawa (sic) on August 28, 1944. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)1463. Mr. Nakagawa's name was spelled Juntaro, Jyuntaro, and Zintaro in different documents.

wives remained without income at their places of origin.<sup>60</sup> In addition, CJAM leaders or male internees did not consider women's labor at the hacienda payable at all. The women's presence in the camp made Zintaro feel that they were an additional "nonproductive" burden, counting men in the fields as the only laborers deserving a salary or a share of the profit resulting from the sales of the harvested products.<sup>61</sup>

A report from an unknown officer from the legal department at the Ministry of the Interior determined that Zintaro Nakagawa's complaints were justified, because the Japanese Mexican man was not a spy or saboteur and, thus, he should not be incarcerated at Perote's jail.<sup>62</sup> The same resolution applied to Kato Kiyomatsu, Sanemón Yamamoto, Kei Hito Misida, and Santiago Shiguez Kobayashi, all of whom the CJAM ordered transferred to Veracruz in the company of Zintaro.<sup>63</sup> Although the Minister of the Interior did not keep this group imprisoned in Perote, he ordered their return to the hacienda in Temixco to be placed again under the control of the CJAM, despite the fact that the Japanese Mexicans expressed their desire not to go back there. On September 14, 1944, Adolfo Nobou Yoshioka, CJAM secretary, informed the DIPS that the CJAM was still in charge of the "surveillance and care" of the dissatisfied laborers.<sup>64</sup>

Temixco inmates had other complaints, besides labor conditions, as the CJAM orders to incarcerate Dr. Seichi Hiromoto in Perote's jail indicate. Years later a revered medical

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<sup>60</sup> Report signed by Alejandro Ortega in reference to Santiago Cobayasi (sic), dated August 21, 1942. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)1446.

<sup>61</sup> Elie Wiesel reported a similar tendency among internees to detach themselves from other inmates erasing signs of empathy within the death camps in Europe. Under extreme hunger, exhaustion, and psychological abuse, Jewish inmates would consider their weakened beloved ones "an encumbrance which could lessen [their] own changes of survival. Of course, the difference in treatment of inmates between the Mexican internment camps and the death camps in Europe is huge for which Japanese Mexicans did not reach such level of dehumanization. See Elie Weisel, *Night* (New York: Bantam Books, 1960), 87.

<sup>62</sup> Illegible signature at the end of the official resolution concerning Zintaro Matzu Nacagawa (sic), dated August 30, 1944. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1463.

<sup>63</sup> From Adolfo Nobuo Yoshioka to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated September 14, 1944. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1463.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

practitioner in the town of Temixco, during World War II Dr. Hiromoto was separated from his wife who was pregnant at the time. While at Perote, Dr. Hiromoto wrote a report to the DIPS accusing the CJAM officers of abusing their power. He denounced the lack of religious freedom in the camp, expressing a feeling of isolation due to his Christian beliefs and stating that the CJAM administrators limited the practice of Catholic rites among internees of Temixco. In addition to religious conflicts, Dr. Hiromoto reported class-based clashes in the concentration camp. According to him, there was a hierarchy within the camp following traditional Japanese class divisions and strictly enforced by the Japanese administrators in Temixco. Dr. Hiromoto made clear that power in the hands of the CJAM contributed to a climate of oppression. He stated that the administrators threatened the internees with incarceration in Perote when they refused to work without compensation for their labor.<sup>65</sup>

In spite of the harsh conditions inmates endured in Temixco, after a long separation from their families, the possibility to reunite in the camp was a powerful reason for Japanese Mexicans to look forward to their internment in Temixco. This was the case of several Japanese men detained at the Estación Migratoria Perote who begged in April, 1943 to CJAM director Luis Tsuji

[...] to take us to a labor camp [to have] the opportunity to work the land, we promise and give our word that we will behave well and that we will not complain or refuse [to do any task] even when the labor is harsher than ordinary, under surveillance, and without compensation. We only ask to be allowed to live with our family, since almost all of us used to support ourselves [and our family] from our labor [for which] since our incarceration, all our relatives are suffering in a state of horrendous misery ... Our future is in your hands and we manifest our desire to collaborate with our second patria. We sign with our own blood [this letter].<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Conversation with Minerva Yoshino on October 5, 2010; see also file IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)1444.

<sup>66</sup> From Tomas Hayakawa, Isaac Sasaki, Ernesto Saito, Ernesto Naito, Jose Yshida, and other illegible signatures, to Luis Tsuji, dated April 10, 1943 IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/1149.

Desperate to see their wives and children, and to save them from hunger, these inmates of Perote were willing to accept the camp conditions which did not differ a great deal from the description these Japanese Mexicans provided in their request. Keeping all members of the family together, however, did not shield children from witnessing the most devastating effects of the relocation program. Although silence surrounds the experience of Japanese Mexican children during World War II, it is undeniable that they were exposed to painful events. During her interview, Minerva Yoshino remembered with pain two deaths that she believes could have been avoided. One of them was an elderly man with chronic diarrhea. She remembers asking him how he felt. Sensing that he needed tea, she returned with the beverage only to find him dead. The other death she laments is that of a young child who, in her view, also died from lack of medical care.<sup>67</sup>

Several internees died while away from their families, without proper health care in Temixco. Particularly, elderly men found it difficult to survive the relocation program. According to Article 14 of the Geneva Convention, “every camp (had to have) an infirmary, where prisoners of war (must) receive every kind of attention they need.” If necessary, isolated quarters had to be “reserved for the sick affected with contagious diseases.”<sup>68</sup> Yoshino stated that such measures were not taken at Temixco Camp. Mr. Shibayama, the hacienda’s administrator, did not allow her adoptive father, Dr. Seichi Hiromoto to take care of the health of Temixco’s sick inmates in retaliation for his addressing what he thought was an uneven distribution of resources among the Japanese Mexicans in the camp.<sup>69</sup> Instead, internees received insufficient medical care from Dr. Tsunesaburo Hasegawa, who was arrested in Cd.

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<sup>67</sup> Report taken by Lic. Alfonso García González, Chief of the Departamento de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales. Rendered by Dr. Tsunesaburo Hasegawa Araki in Mexico City, on April 2, 1942. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/464.

<sup>68</sup> *Geneva Convention, 1929*, Article 14.

<sup>69</sup> Telephone conversation with Minerva Yoshino on October 5, 2009.

Juárez by United States and Mexican Army platoons in March 1942 and evicted from the borderlands in the same year.<sup>70</sup>

The CJMA, through Dr. Hasegawa's services, took care of a number of uprooted Japanese Mexicans in the Federal District and Temixco who could not afford to pay for medical treatment for their illnesses. The CJAM hired him and paid him a monthly salary of \$500.00 (pesos) with funds partially provided by the Red Cross to provide treatment to an excessive number of patients in too large an area to cover. Compared to the \$2.00 (pesos) the CJAM promised to Temixco's laborers, which they stopped receiving eventually, Dr. Hasegawa's salary represented a handsome sum in times of crisis. The physician, nevertheless, had the additional responsibility of making sure that internees in Temixco had their immunizations up to date.<sup>71</sup> In spite of Dr. Hasegawa's efforts, and the palliative care provided by the community, several internees died from various sicknesses.<sup>72</sup> Summer temperatures in the area were a contributing factor and, to aggravate conditions in the hacienda, overcrowding in the dormitories made easy the spread of malaria among inmates.<sup>73</sup>

While internees lacked medical care, appropriate shelter, and sanitary facilities, the hacienda operated from a business perspective and generated profits. The CJAM managers applied the technology available at the moment to raise productivity in Temixco, hiring

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<sup>70</sup> Report taken by Lic. Alfonso García González, Chief of the Departamento de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales. Rendered by Dr. Tsunesaburo Hasegawa Araki in Mexico City, on April 2, 1942. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/464.

<sup>71</sup> From Dr. Kianshi Atsumi and Luis T. Tsuji, to Excmo. Señor Dr. Otto Wuntwyler, dated June 8, 1945. IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/1149. Report titled "Información General De la Sección Médica correspondiente al mes de febrero de 1945," signed by Dr. Tsunesaburo Hasegawa which includes patients in Mexico City, Batán, and Temixco, dated March 6, 1945. IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/1149.

<sup>72</sup> From Ernesto Corona Ruesga, Jefe del Servicio de Inspección, to C. Oficial Mayor de la Secretaría de Gobernación, dated June 10, 1943, IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/1141. From Donaciano Ceballos to Lic. Eduardo Ampudia, dated August 30, 1944.

<sup>73</sup> The parasite that causes this sickness is transmitted through the bite of the Anopheles mosquito. It attacks the liver to feed on red blood cells, multiplying at a fast pace and the sickness it causes is associated with poverty, thus, with the lack of sanitary living quarters. Kenneth F. Kiple, "Malaria: Poverty, Race, and Public Health in the United States," *Journal of Southern History* 69, no. 3 (2003). From Ernesto Corona Ruesga, Jefe del Servicio de Inspección, to C. Oficial Mayor de la Secretaría de Gobernación, dated June 10, 1943, IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/1141

technicians to oversee the operation of their agricultural businesses.<sup>74</sup> Thanks to the intervention of Japanese Mexican experts, 1943 was highly productive: 23 hectares of rice gave a harvest of 95 tons, plus two hectares of tomato, and five more of cucumber, eggplant, cabbage and cantaloupe.<sup>75</sup>

In the eyes of Minerva Yoshino, the results of the communal labor were admirable for she remembers a copious crop of rice sold immediately because of its quality. She laments the lack of accountability on the part of the persons who administered the hacienda, since she believes there must have been a profit and that it had to be enough to provide a better quality of life for all inmates. Instead, the now retired chemical biologist feels her father suffered “for nothing.”<sup>76</sup> The scarcity of material resources showed in the clothes children worn. In addition to Minerva Yoshino, Dr. Raul Hiromoto – who was born in the camp - reported to me that most internees used to wear “ropa en jirones” (ragged clothes) donated by better-off Japanese families and distributed among the families living in the camp. They also remember that the administrator’s family would dress and eat better than the rest of the internees.<sup>77</sup>

Notwithstanding privileges and advantages that some wealthy Japanese entrepreneurs may have enjoyed and augmented through the use of their compatriots as cheap labor or their role in controlling them, there must have been other expenses in the administration of the camp that were not officially accounted for. Stephen Niblo’s research on corruption in Mexico during World War II assists our understanding of the investment of at least part of the profits Japanese Mexicans earned in their businesses. In the case of Temixco, bribes to all levels of authorities to

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<sup>74</sup> The CJAM hired Chori Fujii Morinosuke, an expert in agriculture, to direct the production. The technician resided in the hacienda for three months at the end of 1943 and the beginning of 1944. From Luis T. Tsuji to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated December 9, 1943, IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/1141.

<sup>75</sup> Report by Alejandro Ortega, dated August 21, 1943, IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/1146.

<sup>76</sup> Telephone conversation with Minerva Yoshino on October 5, 2009.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. Conversation with Dr. Raul Hiromoto on November 7, 2006.

avoid harassment of Japanese Mexicans, thus harsher living conditions, is a plausible explanation for the limited resources poor internees had access to.<sup>78</sup> The covert nature of bribes have made it difficult to find accurate records reflecting the flow of money from the CJAM or individual Japanese Mexicans to members of the Mexican government. Aside from bribes, money received by the CJAM was distributed in the form of food or medical care among all Japanese Mexicans in need, productive or not, interned or living in Guadalajara, Mexico City or other areas of confinement. In consequence, productive Japanese Mexicans in Temixco carried on their shoulders the burden of supporting with their labor other displaced persons.<sup>79</sup>

The living conditions of internees in Temixco did not get better with time. The poor state of the hacienda deplored by Dr. Felipe García Sánchez in 1942 was still lamentable two years later. Three health inspectors witnessed and reported the environment endured by the inmates of Temixco in January, 1944 recommending again to improve sanitary facilities and sleeping quarters for the internees.<sup>80</sup>

### **La Tierra Es De Quien La Trabaja: Zapatista claim to Temixco**

In addition to the complaints raised by exasperated inmates and the recommendations from the Health Department to introduce better sanitation facilities, the administrator of the hacienda faced other issues in February 1944. The communal landholders (ejidos) of Palmira and Temixco were the owners of an area of the hacienda, according to a 1938 presidential edict, and they advised the new residents not to plant any new crops. The CJAM leaders realized then that

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<sup>78</sup> See file of Felix Miyazaki Murallama, particularly the report taken by Lic. Eduardo Ampudia in relation to the bribe IPS officials asked from Miyazaki Murallama, dated August 11, 1944. IPS 2-1/362.4(436)/747.

<sup>79</sup> Kikumura-Yano, ed. *Encyclopedia of Japanese Descendants*, 214.

<sup>80</sup> Ejidos are societies of peasants who own and work the land under a communal regimen and democratic administration. From Manuel M. Barrera, Rodolfo Candiani, and Romualdo J. Cházaro to C. Jefe del Departamento de IPS, dated January 4, 1944. IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/1141.

the title of the property they had bought from Alejandro Lacy Orci was not cleared and that the ejidos were demanding the use and occupation of the land which legally belonged to the indigenous members of the community.<sup>81</sup>

In order to solve the matter of establishing rights to Temixco land, the Ministry of the Interior charged DIPS inspector Donaciano Ceballos and Óscar Olvera Villafaña with the task of investigating the situation in Temixco. After a field trip, the inspectors stated that

[...] local agrarian officers, represented by the Comisariado Ejidal, based on the ordinance published on February 7 in the Diario Oficial, notified the Japanese residing there to suspend the preparation of land for new crops [...] The Japanese acquired said land by presidential authorization, for which the agraristas requested the extension of [the property of] the ejidos to integrate [into the same ejidos some of the] land that was already owned by the Japanese.<sup>82</sup>

Ceballos and Villafaña tried to explain a situation that was very complex and which directly involved Ávila Camacho and two other former presidents. Plutarco Elias Calles had “auctioned” it and his relative had acquired it when, according to the principles of the Mexican Revolution, the hacienda had to be granted to the ejidos; Lázaro Cárdenas had ordered its transfer to the ejidos, affecting the interests of Elías Calles’s family; and Ávila Camacho had approved the sale of the hacienda to the CJAM leaders, knowing that it was claimed by the ejidos. On their part, the ejidatarios did not renounce to the rights they had fought for during the revolution and demanded the land that had been granted to them in 1938 by presidential decree.

Donaciano Ceballos was initially sympathetic to the CJAM. He expressed his opinion that the improvements made to the hacienda de Temixco had been costly and that the new owners would, in his view, experience an unfair and great loss. He considered the intervention of the Ministry of the Interior necessary “to request from the Comisariado Ejidal de Temixco to

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<sup>81</sup>Diario Oficial, February 19, 1944.

<sup>82</sup> From Donaciano Ceballos and Oscar Olvera Villafana, to C. Jefe del DIPS, dated March 6, 1944. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1141.

abstain from claiming the right to the land that the Japanese have been cultivating and those that are already cleaned and plowed for new crops.”<sup>83</sup>

In October 1944, the Comisariado Ejidal (ejidos commissariat) an institution which was also product of the socialist changes promoted by the Mexican Revolution, intervened. The Comisariado had the authority to oversee the agreements made between the ejido and the government. Its members demanded from the Ministry of the Interior “to force the transference of the affected land (to the ejidos), avoiding the mocking of the presidential resolution that benefits our (Mexican) peasants lacking land, while the enemies of Mexico are failing to make full use of it.”<sup>84</sup> Nationalist rhetoric had caught up with President Ávila Camacho. If, on one hand, he insisted that war and production were a national priority, promoting the demonization of the Japanese, the Comisariado Ejidal now reminded the Mexican President of the division he had created between Japanese Mexicans and indigenous Mexicans and what side Ávila Camacho was supposed to be on.

Despite their claim to the hacienda’s land, ejidatarios (the owners of the community land) were not demanding the entire property. According to the revolution’s core philosophy, the indigenous community was only asking to take possession of and work the land that had not been cultivated during the years the CJAM had occupied the hacienda.<sup>85</sup>

DIPS agent Donaciano Ceballos switched his position in the conflict after several meetings with the ejido officials, although he did not provide a reason for his new approach to the issue. Ceballos now considered that the land that he previously reported as occupied,

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<sup>83</sup> From Donaciano Caballero to C. Jefe del DIPS, dated March 15, 1944. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1141.

<sup>84</sup> From Pedro Chavarría, (Tierra y Justicia) to C. Inspector de la Secretaría de Gobernación comisionado en Hacienda Temixco, dated October 20, 1944. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1141.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

therefore not available for the taking of the ejido, was vacant. He went beyond his call of duty, recommending that the director of the DIPS, his own supervisor,

[...obey] the resolution of the President of the Republic, [thanks to which] all land that is property of the Japanese, now belongs to the ejidatarios of this area; furthermore, a great area of the land belonging to the mentioned Japanese subjects is not even cultivated. With the purpose of avoiding great problems between the ejidatarios and the subjects in my care, because of the land dispute, I beg you with all respect, to study the case [...] taking in consideration that the ejidatarios are willing to take the land with the intervention of the agrarian officers as soon as the current rice crop is harvested.<sup>86</sup>

On February 19, 1944 General Manuel Ávila Camacho made public his decision to confirm the ownership of the land by the Palmira and Temixco ejidos.<sup>87</sup> In spite of the presidential resolution, and the opinion of inspector Ceballos, the DIPS had switched sides once again confirming ownership of the landholdings by the CJAM.<sup>88</sup> The lower rank officials, thus, apparently defied the presidential order to deliver the tracts of land to the ejidatarios. According to Ricardo Trujillo, DIPS inspector surveying the property in dispute,

[...] in regards to the land, property of the Japanese, supposedly uncultivated, and in application of the term that makes possible that idle land can be claimed by others who will make full use of them, that is not the case, since everything that is cultivable has been sown, or at least plowed and prepared for the next (agricultural cycle).<sup>89</sup>

Eduardo Ampudia, Director of the DIPS, refused to intervene to force the Japanese owners of the hacienda to evacuate the land the ejidatarios were claiming.<sup>90</sup> The legal or illegal methods to calm the ejidatarios remain unknown. The last presidential edict published in the *Diario Oficial*

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<sup>86</sup> From Donaciano Ceballos González, to C. Licenciado Eduardo Ampudia, dated October 24, 1944. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1141.

<sup>87</sup> *Diario Oficial*, February 19, 1944.

<sup>88</sup> From Ricardo Trujillo to C. Lic. Jefe del Departamento, dated November 6, 1944. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1141.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> From Lic. Eduardo Ampudia V. to CC Pedro Chavarría and Efrén Domínguez, dated November 23, 1944. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1141.

in regards to the vacant land in Temixco made it clear that at least some of the area sold by Alberto Lacy Orci was the legal property of the ejidatarios.<sup>91</sup>

Silence and a lack of accurate records have made it difficult to identify how the CJAM leaders withheld the land ejidatarios had requested and obtained through presidential decree. Attributed to the good heart of Ávila Camacho and his sympathy for the Japanese Mexicans, the retention of the entire landholding by the CJAM is still in need of a more complex explanation.<sup>92</sup> Once again, Stephen Niblo's research on corruption in Mexico during World War II is useful in my interpretation of the development and conclusion of this issue. The DIPS officials' continuous switching their support for the parties involved also allow me to speculate that bribing was involved in handling the issue of land tenure. Ávila Camacho's presidential period was characterized by a reversal in land distribution to peasants but the dispute had demanded from him to declare his nationalism by publicly granting the land to the ejido. In the end he allowed low rank DIPS officials to defend the CJAM's property. Given the conditions of the sale, and their vulnerability, the CJAM leaders would be willing to bribe authorities in order to keep the hacienda and their crops. Their paying "mordidas" to Mexican authorities would have been a regular procedure during Ávila Camacho's administration to avoid the enforcement of a law or regulation.<sup>93</sup>

While application of the Agrarian Reform in Mexico threatened the integrity of the landholdings he was administering, Tokugoro Shibayama continued to request small privileges at

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<sup>91</sup>Diario Oficial, February 19, 1944.

<sup>92</sup> Daniel M. Masterson and Sayaka Funada-Classen, *The Japanese in Latin America* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 129.

<sup>93</sup> Other Latin American Japanese used the same recourse to avoid their expulsion from the American Republics and their internment in American concentration camps. Thomas Connell, *America's Japanese Hostages: The World War II Plan for a Japanese Free Latin America* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2002), 159; Stephen Niblo, *Mexico in the 1940s: Modernity, Politics, and Corruption* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources Books, 2000), 94.

Temixco that contributed to the class gap within the hacienda. On January 16, 1945, he described his situation to Eduardo Ampudia, Chief of the DIPS:

Because this is a very sad place, not having access to the entertainment offered by cities, and counting six persons in my family, and wishing to provide them with periods of tranquility and amusement, I beg to that superior office, if you consider it appropriate, to authorize the installation of a long wave radio in my own residence, battery powered.<sup>94</sup>

Ampudia authorized the use of the radio. Although the Shibayama family had access to small or considerable luxuries, most Japanese Mexicans lives were filled with wants and needs that were still not solved when the Mexican government ordered their liberation in December 1945.<sup>95</sup>

Today, the Hacienda functions as a tourist resort, with several luxurious swimming pools and other amenities. The exuberant vegetation, the magnificent weather, and the well paved highway make it one of the main attractions in the Cuernavaca area.<sup>96</sup> The transformation of the hacienda into a tourist attraction, makes it difficult to imagine the poverty endured by Japanese Mexicans. Buried under the beauty of the recreation center and the official narrative is the responsibility of the United States and Mexican governments for the hunger, forced labor, homelessness, family separation, and even death, Japanese Mexicans suffered.

## **Completa Libertad: At the End of World War II**

The relocation program altered the social fabric of local communities allowing the exploitation of working class Japanese Mexicans and the death of the most vulnerable members of this community. Whether euphemistically termed “agricultural cooperatives,” “shelters,”

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<sup>94</sup> From Francisco T. Shibayama to Eduardo Ampudia, Jefe del Depto. de Investigaciones, Pol. Y Soc. IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/301.

<sup>95</sup> Handwritten note on letter from Francisco T. Shibayama to Eduardo Ampudia, Jefe del Depto. de Investigaciones, Pol. Y Soc. IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/301.

<sup>96</sup> <http://www.temixcoacuatico.com/>

“concentration zones,” or “ranches,” in the context of World War II, Japanese Mexicans who did not belong in the circle of the political and economic Mexican elites were subjected in all these centers to surveillance, hunger, sickness, and forced labor.

Although Mexican camps had characteristics that set them apart from American concentration camps, the United States dictated the selection of internees and their release according to the American racial system. On December 17, 1944 the United States government issued Public Proclamation No. 21. This proclamation restored “to all persons of Japanese ancestry (...) their full rights to enter and remain in the military areas of the Western Defense Command.”<sup>97</sup> World War II had not come to an end, but the United States Army officials thought that the: “military situation (made) possible (the) modification and relaxation of restriction and the termination of the system of mass exclusion of persons of Japanese ancestry.” In other words, the release of Japanese Americans from concentration camps was in sight.<sup>98</sup>

In spite of the Western Defense Command’s optimistic statement, the release of internees from concentration camps in the United States was gradual and in 1947, two years after World War II ended, a group of Latin American Japanese remained interned the Crystal City camp.<sup>99</sup> In Mexico, the confinement of Japanese Mexicans continued to make them vulnerable to abuse. The idea that Japanese Mexicans were transferable and exploitable had become accepted to the extent that Rodolfo Perdomo, manager of Azucarera Veracruzana, S. A., requested in January 1945 to

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<sup>97</sup> Copy of Public Proclamation No. 21, dated December 17, 1944 by the Office of the Commanding General, Presidio of San Francisco, California, OM-1886, in IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/600.

<sup>98</sup> The statute prohibiting non-whites to naturalize was repealed until 1952 opening the door for Japanese immigrants in the United States to become landowners. Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004), 276.

<sup>99</sup> Inmates and released persons of Japanese ancestry did not have, anyway, the rights which whites enjoyed during the post-war period. The prohibition for Asian immigrants to naturalize remained, and with it the restrictions to buy or rent land. The statute prohibiting non-whites to naturalize was repealed until 1952 opening the door for Japanese immigrants in the United States to become landowners. Ibid.

[...] *acquire 2 Japanese gardeners from those who are interned in the Hacienda de Temixco*[...] Not having predilection for any of them, their selection will remain yours. (My emphasis).<sup>100</sup>

Only in June 1945, when the Ministry of the Interior received a copy of United States Public Proclamation No. 21, did the Mexican government began to plan lifting the restrictions imposed on the Mexican Japanese community. Because the Mexican Ministry of the Interior followed the United States' instructions to release internees, Mexican officials investigated how the United States racial classifications would apply this time to Mexican candidates for release. The Mexican officials in charge of the DIPS in 1945 understood that the term "persons of Japanese ancestry" used to free internees in the United States meant only mixed Japanese Mexicans (of Japanese and *mestizo* origin); in consequence, "pure" Japanese would not be eligible for release, according to their interpretation of United States guidelines.<sup>101</sup>

American racial classifications became, once again, the foundation for who was eligible for freedom and who should remain in the concentration camps. General Emilio Baig Serra, DIPS Chief, requested clarification in July 1945 from the Mexican Minister of Foreign Affairs in regards to the "interpretation that the North American authorities give to the words 'Japanese ancestry' in order to apply the dispositions dictated by the United States government, through which individuals described in those terms have been allowed to return to their homes in the Pacific Coast of the United States."<sup>102</sup> In response, Pablo Campos Ortiz, Chief Officer of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, informed the Ministry of the Interior that the United States considered persons of Japanese ancestry both mixed and "pure" Japanese. The American racial

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<sup>100</sup> My italics. From Rodolfo Pardomo to Sr. Dr. Héctor Pérez, Secretaría de Gobernación, dated January 9. 1946. IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/1141.

<sup>101</sup> From Lic. Pablo Campos Ortiz to Subsecretario Encargado del Despacho, Secretaría de Gobernación, June 9, 1945. IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/600, II Tome.

<sup>102</sup> From Gral. Emilio Baig Serra to C. Secretario de Relaciones Exteriores, dated July 24. 1945, IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/600, Tome II.

classification of Japanese covered all individuals “with Japanese blood, regardless of their nationality or place of birth. Their policy included all persons who had Japanese ancestors in the last three generations -in other words, whose blood was Japanese in 1/8 or larger quantities.”<sup>103</sup>

Diplomat Campos Ortiz observed that the American racial classification of Japanese had dire consequences for Japanese Mexicans who did not have any relationship with the Japanese state. Campos stated that “naturally, this interpretations (of United States’ racial categories) caused pain and difficulties to a large number of our loyal subjects.” Although the Mexican government had complied with the United States instructions to uproot all persons of Japanese descent, Campos Ortiz stated that, too late to avoid damages suffered by the civilian population, it had been unfair to apply systematically this racial measure of control.<sup>104</sup>

After the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that, according to United States government dispositions, all Japanese Mexican internees were now eligible to leave the internment camps regardless of their generation, it took still three more months to initiate the dismantling of the concentration program. The delay was coordinated with the United States Department of Justice, which ordered that Latin American Japanese in the United States, and by extension in Latin American countries, “continued in internment pending final review of their cases.” Tom C. Clark, United States Attorney General, expected these reviews would result in the removal of “hostile Japanese nationals ” who would be deported to Japan.<sup>105</sup>

On October 1, Héctor Pérez Martínez, Under Secretary of the Ministry of the Interior, communicated the orders to local officials to “grant *complete libertad* (full freedom) to the

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<sup>103</sup> From Lic. Pablo Campos Ortiz to C. Secretario de Gobernación, dated June 30, 1945. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1142.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Document Number 8281, Department of Justice in regard to Japanese internees, dated September 4, 1945 and submitted to the Ministry of the Interior on November 5, 1945. IPS 2-1/362.4(436)/600.

individuals of Japanese nationality, and their relatives (...) and to write a list of all internees and the official act (confirming their release from the camps).”<sup>106</sup> On October 2, 1945 a strange ceremony to make official this closure took effect in Temixco. Roberto Guzmán Araujo, representing the Ministry of the Interior, as well as other state and local officers, Guzmán Araujo addressed the Japanese Mexican Community stating that he was there to

[...] let them know the decision dictated by the President of Mexico to grant you freedom, a dictate that is inspired in the historic trajectory of Mexico in the defense of liberty and democracy, and that is undertaken because Mexico and its allies have ended the war against your nation. The Government of the Republic hopes to see that you respect the laws of our country and that, when returning to the life that you had before, you will follow and respect the institutions of our Motherland. Now you are free.<sup>107</sup>

Although the Mexican and United States governments were responsible for the uprooting of the Japanese Mexicans, both nations, once again, refused to acknowledge the losses the Japanese Mexican community suffered during World War II. In the United States, Japanese Americans received a different message. Dillon Myer director of the War Relocation Authority, promised Japanese internees that

[...] wherever individuals or families find themselves in need of public assistance after relocation, the WRA field offices will help to facilitate arrangements with the appropriate state or local agency. In view of the funds that are available and the arrangements that are being made, the War Relocation Authority feels wholly confident that no evacuee will be deprived of adequate means of subsistence by reason of the closing of the centers.<sup>108</sup>

Temixco internees did not receive public assistance at the closure of Temixco. Moreover, they continued to be vulnerable after their “liberation.” On October 8, 1945, General Eulogio Ortiz

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<sup>106</sup> Telegram from Dr. Héctor Pérez Martínez to General Emilio Baig Serra, dated October 1, 1945. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1142.

<sup>107</sup> Act signed by Lic. Roberto Guzmán Araujo and Adalberto Ortega, dated October 2, 1945. IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/1141.

<sup>108</sup> Message from the Director of the War Relocation Authority, undated, D. S. Myer, filed in IPS 2-1/362.4(52)/600.

wrote a letter to General Emilio Baig Serra, DIPS Chief, asking to be informed if, in fact, Temixco's internees had been freed. If that was the case, General Ortiz wanted to learn the whereabouts of "these Japanese" to offer them employment in his ranch. "After all, nobody will frown upon me if I hire this kind of skunks," wrote Ortiz convinced that the former inmates remained negligible human beings at his disposal.<sup>109</sup>

Approximately thirty four children under the age of seventeen were internees of the Temixco hacienda in October, 1945. Fifty eight of the sixty nine persons registered in the hacienda's census and in the "Act of Freedom" at the time of their liberation from the camp had arrived from the United States /Mexico borderlands. None of them received government assistance to reintegrate into their previous communities, or to start a new life in the places they had been forced to live in.<sup>110</sup> Sixty five years after the conclusion of World War II the experiences of most Japanese Mexican community are not even part of the official narrative. While the Mexican state continues to celebrate the achievements of Japanese Mexican entrepreneurs, congratulating them for the "farms" they opened during the Second Great War, in Mexico's memory, and not in Japan's memory either, Japanese Mexican concentration camps never existed.

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<sup>109</sup> From General Eulogio Ortiz, Commander of the Seventh Military Zone, to General Emilio Baig Serra, dated October 8, 1945. IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/1141

<sup>110</sup> Act signed by Lic. Roberto Guzmán Araujo and Adalberto Ortega, dated October 2, 1945. IPS 2- 1/362.4(52)/1141.

## CONCLUSIONS

*The crime remains the same.  
Injustice can only be judged from within itself;  
it cannot be lessened or mitigated by comparison.*

Wolfgang Sofsky.<sup>1</sup>

Japanese Mexican communities were of critical significance during World War II within the larger scope of Mexico, United States, and World History. The development of international relations and the global organization of the economy directly informed the management of Japanese immigrants and their descendants in the United States/Mexico borderlands. Such social political process began at end of the nineteenth century when American corporations expanded their operations beyond national borders and participated in the organization of an economy of transnational communities. American enterprises exploited Mexican natural resources and imported Asian contract laborers by employing them mainly in the United States/Mexico borderlands. The exploitation of immigrant labor and racist laws marginalized Japanese workers and their descendants in both countries. Racialization and marginalization processes, however, occurred differently within Mexico and the United States. For example, Mexican society allowed Japanese immigrants to marry Mexican women; however, Jim Crow laws in the U.S. strictly prohibited the integration of Japanese immigrants and their descendants into American society.

World War II brought an opportunity for the United States to initiate a series of economic negotiations with Latin American states. During the Third Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the American Republics of January 1942, United States diplomats extracted the promise from Latin American governments to deliver raw materials necessary for the war effort. In exchange, the United States promised economic and military assistance to Latin American elites in need of controlling their local

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<sup>1</sup> Wolfgang Sofsky and William Templer, *The Order of Terror: The Concentration Camp* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 11.

opponents, including a working class demanding a higher standard of life. The consolidation of this hemispheric front informed the management of citizens of the Axis nations at war against the United States.

The creation of a hemispheric alliance in the Americas led to the uprooting and isolation of Japanese immigrants and their descendants across the continent. Consequently, the government in the United States and governments in Latin American countries collaborated in seizing citizens of Japanese, German, and Italian descent to confine them in American camps. The internment of Latin American Japanese men, women, and children followed national policies of segregation and racial exclusion in the United States. While INS inspectors documented their arrival, and following federal immigration racial policies, the American officials in charge of registering the uprooted residents of various American Republics declared Latin American Japanese individuals as “racially ineligible” to enter the country and, thus, not entitled to civil rights. Inside the United States camps, Latin American Japanese, including those born in Mexico, were subjected to national policies of segregation and occupied separated quarters from white internees. Whether in the United States or Mexico, Japanese Mexicans endured material losses, separation from other members of their families and restriction to their mobility well beyond the end of World War II.

The organization of a war economy in the Americas determined the eviction of Japanese Mexicans from the United States/Mexico borderlands during the Second Great War and the expansion of American racial segregation into Mexico. In compliance with the United States’ request to control Japanese Mexicans, President Manuel Ávila Camacho ordered the dislocation of the entire Japanese Mexican community and approved the creation of concentration camps and zones of confinement.

During Ávila Camacho’s administration, a new pro-American nationalism developed, which positioned Japanese Mexicans as an internal racial enemy during World War II.

Japanese immigrants in Mexico's borderlands had contributed to the creation of a hybrid culture during the first forty years of the twentieth century. They created deep ties in their communities through interracial marriages, businesses, participation in labor struggles, and simple residence among Mexican neighbors. The Mexican state, however, made them racial targets during World War II reversing the assimilation process that had steadily taken place in the Mexican borderlands in previous years. When Japanese immigrants, their spouses, children, and grandchildren were forced to abandon their homes, the borderlands lost an important cultural and economic element of its transnational community.

Facing the possibility of strong anti-imperialist protests, the Mexican government demonized Japanese Mexicans and suspended the civil rights of all citizens claiming a state of emergency. President power Ávila Camacho, thus, acquired a large degree of control over the entire Mexican citizenry in the course of handling Japanese Mexicans as an internal enemy. Because the president exercised his power against an already vulnerable racialized target and sustained the privileges of national elites, his antidemocratic rule went unchallenged. The experience of the Japanese Mexican community during the Second Great War demands a critique of the judicial frame of modern states which allow presidents to cancel the citizenship status of certain denizens of the nation and the civil rights of all citizens during alleged states of emergency. Furthermore, the handling of Japanese Mexicans was effected against principles of the 1929 Geneva Convention relative to the treatment of prisoners of war, which both the United States and Mexico subscribed.

The "concentration" of Japanese Mexicans during World War II seemed an innocuous program in view of the small number of Japanese immigrants living in the borderlands. Nevertheless, the uprooting of Japanese Mexicans meant the loss of freedom, property, and lives of Japanese immigrants and their Mexican spouses, children, and grandchildren. The number of affected persons during the Second Great War extended beyond the number of first generation Japanese immigrants "handled" by the Mexican

government during this period. The entire multiethnic social fabric of the borderlands was reconfigured in the absence of Japanese Mexicans during the war.

Lacking legal recourse to challenge the relocation program in view of the cancellation of constitutional rights, Japanese Mexicans and their allies still protested their uprooting. Entire communities wrote and submitted petitions on behalf of Japanese Mexicans, who were considered valuable members of *ejidos* and *pueblos*. Although their efforts proved futile in most cases, they were evidence of the bond developed between Japanese immigrants and their Mexican communities.

Ultimately, Japanese Mexican, Mexican, and United States elites agreed to leave the responsibility to the uprooted Japanese Mexicans for their own sustenance in spite of the provisions of the Geneva Convention which mandated the housing, employment, and medical care of displaced civilians and prisoners of war in zones of conflict. The operation of several concentration camps exploited the labor of destitute Japanese Mexicans; however, experiences varied among them. Gender, class, age, and religion determined the degree of marginalization and isolation Japanese Mexicans endured in concentration camps and zones of confinement. Members of the Japanese elite controlled common funds, and mediated between Japanese Mexican individuals and the government during World War II. Their financial and political capital allowed them to support a certain degree of mobility in sharp contrast with the restrictions the Mexican government imposed upon most Japanese Mexicans.

Until recently, narratives of the relocation program in Mexico have depended largely on the perspective of the government or other institutions. It has focused mainly on the experience of the Japanese Mexican elite and its friendly relationship with the administration of President Manuel Ávila Camacho, obliterating the role of race, gender, and class in the destitution of Japanese Mexicans.

Examining the relocation program from the perspective of subjects of the relocation program allowed us to identify characteristics of the criminalization of Japanese Mexicans during World War II. While men were considered dangerous and suffered arrest and incarceration, the Mexican government regarded

women of the Japanese Mexican community as inoffensive. However, the state forced destitute women to take on a double load of work, outside and at home, to provide for their families. In addition, while the Japanese Mexican community was uprooted en masse regardless of their nationality or citizenship status, the Mexican government treated German Mexicans and Italian Mexicans on an individual basis.

The extent of the damage inflicted by the governments of Mexico and the United States against Japanese Mexicans surpassed material losses. The health of many Japanese Mexicans was deeply affected and several uprooted men and women died from causes related to their eviction from the United States/Mexico borderlands. In the course of writing this dissertation it was impossible to measure the pain families experienced when parents and children scattered or died as a result of the relocation program. Because the loss of memory has contributed to the psychological trauma that entire generations have experienced during and since World War II, it is necessary to insist on the recollection and writing of the history of the victimization and resilience of Japanese Mexican communities. Although reparations will never recover the property, soften the emotional pain suffered, or restore the lives of uprooted Japanese Mexicans, this dissertation has established accountability for such losses which warrant state apologies and financial reparations. It is the responsibility of the Mexican and United States governments to acknowledge their responsibility in the dislocation of the Japanese Mexican community as an integral part of the history of the United States/Mexico borderlands.

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