

Convicting the Innocent: Japanese American Youth at Topaz (text only)

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Introduction to the Exhibit

In March 1942, just months after Pearl Harbor, the United States government forcibly relocated over 120,000 Japanese Americans from the West Coast, citing it as a military necessity. Both the U.S. government and citizens alike feared that Japanese Americans would betray the United States to Japan. Even before Pearl Harbor, anti-Japanese sentiment had been growing for decades. During World War II, racism towards Japanese heightened, as it became clear that neither the U.S. government nor its citizens fully acknowledged Japanese Americans as U.S. citizens. Instead, they labeled them “Japanese.” Years later, many Americans consider this event to be one of *the* most serious violations of civil rights in American history, as there was no evidence of Japanese American betrayal. Even more controversial was that children under eighteen made up thirty percent of the population living behind barbed wire at the Central Utah Relocation Center.

This digital exhibit will explore the ways in which Japanese American adolescents, ages ten through eighteen, responded to evacuation and internment at the Central Utah Relocation Center—more commonly known as Topaz, named after the nearby Topaz Mountain. For many, evacuation was a confusing and bewildering process that disrupted their educations, deprived their families of their livelihoods, and marked them as enemies.

The Origins of Evacuation

“A Jap’s a Jap. It makes no difference whether the Jap is a citizen or not.” —John L. Dewitt, General of the Western Defense Command.¹

Anti-Asian sentiment existed in the United States long before Japanese forces bombed Pearl Harbor. In 1882 the United States passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, which prohibited Chinese immigration. Later in 1922, the Supreme Court ruled in the case of Takao Ozawa that Japanese immigrants were ineligible for citizenship.² U.S. immigration laws prohibited Japanese immigration after 1924 by denying entry to all races or nationalities that were ineligible for citizenship.³

¹ Linda L. Ivey and Kevin W. Kaatz, *Citizen Internees: A Second Look at Race and Citizenship in Japanese American Internment Camps* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2017), 7.

² Sandra C. Taylor, *Jewel of the Desert: Japanese American Internment at Topaz* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), 29.

³ “The Immigration Act of 1924,” in “Milestones in the History of U.S. Foreign Relations,” U.S. Office of the Historian, accessed January 26, 2020, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1921-1936/immigration-act>.

Anti-Japanese sentiment peaked in 1941 when Japan bombed Pearl Harbor and invaded the Philippines, which at the time were both U.S. territories. In response, the FBI arrested over a thousand Japanese, Italian, and German Americans, and it concluded that there was no evidence of espionage or sabotage.⁴ Despite this, military leaders such as Lieutenant General John L. Dewitt argued that Japanese Americans posed a threat to U.S. security, as many believed they would side with Japan over the United States.⁵ Anti-Japanese propaganda fueled this fear throughout the war years.

On February 19, 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which created the Western Relocation Authority (WRA) and forced the removal of Japanese Americans from the West Coast. Although the FBI continued to monitor German and Italian Americans, only Japanese Americans were forced to relocate, indicating that internment was racially motivated.⁶

(2) Japanese American Youth: U.S. Citizens

In 1942, because the U.S. had banned Japanese immigration to the United States for eighteen years, nearly all Japanese American youth were American-born, U.S. citizens.

Most were Nisei: Nisei were second-generation Japanese Americans. Although many of their parents were Japanese immigrants, most Nisei had never been to Japan. Nisei attended the same schools as other American children, although some attended Japanese language schools after normal school hours so they could better communicate using their parents' language. As they were born and raised in the United States, Nisei were very loyal to the United States—they were American and viewed themselves as such. Before evacuation, the U.S. government concluded that the Nisei were “90 to 98 percent loyal to the United States, if the Japanese-educated element of the Kibei is excluded.”⁸

Some were Kibei: Kibei were born in the United States but lived in Japan for a part of their education and were more likely to identify with Japan than other Japanese American youth. However, they experienced exclusion in Japan *and* the United States, even among the Nisei. Nisei youth used the term Kibei to refer to youth who were not like themselves—preferring

⁴Taylor, 45.

Impounded People: Japanese-Americans in the Relocation Centers, ed. Edward H. Spicer (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 2016), 11.

⁵ Taylor, 46.

⁶ Still, not all Japanese Americans were forced to relocate, *only Japanese Americans living on the West Coast*. The government allowed Japanese Americans who lived in Utah and the Midwest to remain in their communities. Before the government made relocation mandatory, they encouraged voluntary evacuation. Some Japanese American families relocated early to places such as Utah and retained their freedom while their relatives lived in the relocation centers.

⁸ Taylor, 46.

Japanese to English and exhibiting more “Japanese” behaviors.⁹ The Kibei made up only 9,000 of the 110,000 Japanese Americans interned.¹⁰

(2a) Pearl Harbor and Japanese American Youth

*“I was nine at the time of Pearl Harbor, and I was in third grade. That Sunday we were on our way home from church and we had the radio on in the car. Everybody was excited. We said, ‘Oh, those Japs, what are they doing that for?’ We didn’t think of ourselves as Japs.” —Kay Uno, *A Fence Away from Freedom*¹¹*

After Pearl Harbor, many Japanese American youth recalled being bullied or ignored at schools on the West Coast. One seventh-grade student at Topaz recalled in 1943:

“When we reached our school the boys and girls who were not Japanese called us names and stared at us but we were glad of the teacher because they were very kind to us and the teacher told the boys and girls who called us names not to call us names but be friendly like other times when we used to play together and have lots of fun. When recess came the boys and girls were quiet but still they were staring at us and they started to giggle over nothing at all and some of the boys started to laugh and start whispering so we felt very funny then. When the school was over we just ranned [sic] home because the boys and girls was [sic] talking about us.”¹²

Because of Pearl Harbor and the anti-Japanese backlash that ensued, many Japanese American youth became highly conscious of their Japanese ancestry. Although Kazuko Iwahashi never learned the reason why her classmates did not invite her to a party, she suggested it was because she was of Japanese descent:

“I remember thinking, well, gee, I never heard about the party. And I guess the kids were talking about it during recess or something you know. And I remember thinking I think just quickly that oh, maybe it’s because I’m . . . because of the war, because Japan attacked Pearl Harbor.”¹³

Iwahashi avoids using the word “Japanese” in her oral history. She believed she was excluded by her classmates because of her race. At the same time, she refused to label herself as “Japanese” because she was not born in Japan, but in the United States.

⁹ War Relocation Authority, “Japanese Americans Educated in Japan,” January 28, 1944, 1, accessed January 28, 2020, http://www.mansell.com/eo9066/WRA-pub/WRA1944-12-28-Japanese_Americans_Educated_in_Japan_The_Kibei.pdf.

¹⁰ War Relocation Authority, 1.

¹¹ Kay Uno, “Pearl Harbor Remembered,” in *Only What We Could Carry: The Japanese American Internment Experience*, ed. Lawson Fusao Inada (Berkeley, CA: Heyday, 2000), 31.

¹² Seventh-graders of ’43, “Little Citizens Speak,” in *All Aboard*, (Spring 1944): 23.

¹³ Kazuko Iwahashi, interview by Martha Nakagawa, “Kazuko Iwahashi Interview,” May 26, 2011, Densho Digital Archive, Densho Visual History Collection, accessed January 31, 2020, <https://ddr.densho.org/media/ddr-densho-1000/ddr-densho-1000-337-transcript-ba5ef751c7.htm>.

Ellipsis in the original transcript.

(3) Evacuation

“But [Father] always mentioned, ‘This is America. They won’t treat you badly,’ all the way through the time that the FBI came and took him, arrested him separately . . . Our date of evacuation was—and ‘evacuation’ is the wrong word—I wasn’t hurt . . . and we’re being sent to somewhere ‘safer.’ Anyway, that’s what, I guess, kept us going, my dad’s last words of, ‘Don’t worry, don’t worry, this is America.’ ”
—Grace F. Oshita¹⁴

After Executive Order 9066, the Western Defense Command announced that all persons of Japanese descent would need to evacuate the West Coast. Some were only given a week to do so. While many were able to store their belongings in government-provided facilities, many had to sell their businesses, give up their rental properties, and give away their pets.

In a paper for her English class at the Tule Lake Relocation Center, a girl named Mineko wrote:

“May 21, 1942 is a day which will live in my memory forever, for this was my last day home. My last day in my hometown, Auburn, Washington . . . On this day my head was filled with many problems. Problems, I’ve never experienced before. Problems like would I ever come back again to the town I knew so well; would I ever see my friends that I had grown up with again? This with the last minute shopping and every other thing on my mind made this a day which was everything but a happy day.”¹⁵

After they left their homes, Japanese Americans from all over the West Coast were transported to assembly centers which would house them until the relocation centers were built.

(4) Tanforan Assembly Center

A First Impression of Tanforan:

When ten-year-old Harry Kawahara entered Tanforan for the first time, he was bewildered. As he witnessed the patrolling guards carrying rifles, he recalled his first impression: “Why are they doing this to us? I didn’t do anything wrong.”¹⁶ Kawahara understood that he and his family were interned because they were of Japanese ancestry, which led him, as well as many other young adolescents, to internalize that it was bad to have Japanese blood.¹⁷

Life at Tanforan

Most Japanese Americans who relocated to Topaz were first interned at Tanforan, in San Bruno, California. Before the WRA transformed Tanforan into an assembly center, it was a racetrack.

¹⁴ Grace F. Oshita, interview by Megan Asaka, “Grace F. Oshita Interview,” June 4, 2008, Densho Digital Archive, Topaz Museum Collection, accessed January 28, 2020, <https://ddr.densho.org/media/ddr-densho-1013/ddr-densho-1013-4-transcript-3fadde549d.htm>.

¹⁵ Mineko, “My Last Day Home,” in the Japanese American relocation collection, University of Utah Special Collections & Archives, MS 144, Box 4, Fd. 4, pg. 2.

¹⁶ Harry Kawahara, interview by Sharon Yamoto, “Harry Kawahara Interview,” September 20, 2011, Densho Digital Archive, Densho Visual History Collection, accessed January 27, 2020, <https://ddr.densho.org/media/ddr-densho-1000/ddr-densho-1000-368-transcript-007ea39eec.htm>.

¹⁷ Harry Kawahara, “Harry Kawahara Interview.”

There were some constructed barracks at Tanforan, but many families were housed in hastily refurbished horse stalls that were covered in wood shavings and stunk of manure.¹⁸

Despite the difficult living conditions at Tanforan and having very few resources, the evacuees worked with the WRA to establish a community by creating makeshift schools, a community government, and organizing recreational activities. Still, life at Tanforan was very dull as the evacuees had to become accustomed to ample amounts of free time as the WRA could only employ a fifth of the assembly center.¹⁹ The evacuees organized events such as sports, games, talent shows, musicals, and dances to entertain themselves. By June, they had organized 110 softball teams that consisted of 1,670 players.²⁰

War Morale Behind Barbed Wire

While in Tanforan, some adolescents approached the idea of internment with optimism by asserting that evacuees must continue to support the war effort despite the trial of evacuation.

Teruko Kaneko, a sophomore, wrote in the camp newspaper:

“We should all face the inconveniences, the hot or cold climate, the dust and the barrack life of the assembly and relocation centers cheerfully. To do our share toward winning the war in any way we can is the duty and responsibility which we must undertake as a public demonstration of our loyalty and devotion to this country.”²¹

Motoichi Yanagi, a Kibei junior, similarly wrote that the “task of winning the future for American-Japanese is what we can look forward to in the relocation center.”²² To some Japanese American youth, the internment experience was synonymous with proving their Americanness and their loyalty to the nation that imprisoned.

While this reaction to internment was not uncommon during internment, the *Tanforan Totalizer* does not account for the negative responses to internment. The WRA censored and edited all camp newspapers, removing viewpoints they deemed inappropriate. This same issue of the *Tanforan Totalizer* noted that some youth responded “satirically” to internment but claimed that such views were rare.²³ Negative views towards internment were more common than this statement implied.

(5) Topaz: Utah’s Fifth-Largest City

¹⁸ Yoshiko Uchida, *Desert Exile: The Uprooting of a Japanese American Family* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1982), 69–70.

¹⁹ Taro Katayama, ed., *Tanforan Totalizer* Vol 1. No. 19, September 12, 1942, 10.

²⁰ *Tanforan Totalizer*, 10.

²¹ *Tanforan Totalizer*, 16.

²² *Tanforan Totalizer*, 16.

²³ *Tanforan Totalizer*, 15. A high school senior satirically wrote, “as for my preparation of the future, I am starting to learn how to clean my house, iron my shirt and wash my own clothes, so that I can prepare to be a houseboy when I get out into the city.”

“You are now in Topaz, Utah. Here we say Dining Hall not Mess Hall; Safety Council, not Internal Police; Residents, not Evacuees; and last but not least, Mental Climate, not Morale.” — from the first issue of the *Topaz Times*²⁴

In September of 1942, Japanese Americans began arriving in Topaz via crowded trains. During its operation, the Central Utah Relocation Center was Utah’s fifth-largest city with a peak population of 8,100 people living within a square mile.²⁵

Why Central Utah?

Delta, located just east of Topaz, was the only community that expressed interest in hosting a relocation center. Other city governments and councils were opposed to the idea of “Japanese enemy aliens” being held near their cities, fearing that Japanese Americans would harm civilians.²⁶ After the Depression of the 1930s, the Millard County government believed creating and maintaining a relocation center would boost their local economy.²⁷

Living Conditions at Topaz

Like Tanforan, living conditions at Topaz were poor in the beginning. Many of the barracks were incomplete, lacking roofs and windows. Temperatures at Topaz were extreme, sometimes dropping below zero degrees Fahrenheit in the winter and rising above a hundred degrees in the summer. The barracks were not well insulated and the only source of heat they had in the winter was a potbelly stove delivered to each room.

(6) Creating a High School in a Desert:

With a population of approximately 8,500 people, Topaz had around 1,200 teenagers.²⁸ The school district had two goals for education at Topaz: to imitate an ordinary education program as much as possible and to ease the students into relocation. But when schools opened on October 26, 1942, the schools were anything but ordinary.²⁹ Barracks served as classrooms, there was no furniture except for some handmade wooden benches for the students to sit on, and the only textbooks that students had access to were dated, discarded books from California. The barrack classrooms were also freezing during the first autumn months as they had not been properly winterized. It was not until December that the district received new furniture and textbooks.³⁰

Another problem that the school districts encountered was the lack of teachers. Originally, the WRA intended all but a few teachers to be white, but it soon became clear that this was unlikely as the turnover rate was high. Instead, about half of the teachers were white while half were

²⁴ “Words,” *Topaz Times*, September 17, 1942, pg. 2.

²⁵ Central Utah Relocation Center, “Welcome to Topaz,” September 1943, in Leonard J. Arrington papers, LJAHA Coll 1, Series XII, Box 146, Fd. 7.

²⁶ Leonard J. Arrington papers, Coll 1. Series XII, Box 146, Fd. 8.

²⁷ Leonard J. Arrington papers, Coll 1. Series XII, Box 146, Fd. 8.

²⁸ War Relocation Authority, “Guide Book to the Center,” 31.

²⁹ L. G. Noble, “Summary Curriculum Report of Topaz City Education Program,” August 1945, Utah State University Special Collections & Archives, General Book Collection, Call no. 375 Un3, 1–2.

³⁰ Nobel, 20.

evacuees themselves.³¹ While the WRA paid the white teachers between 150 to 200 dollars a month, evacuee teachers were only paid 12 to 19 dollars a month.³² In one case, Tom Ikeda, a Topaz High senior, taught five classes of plane geometry to sophomores.³³

Students' Views of Education at Topaz

When asked about the overall quality of education at Topaz High School, Japanese Americans had several different responses. Some believed that Topaz High School successfully prepared them for college, despite not having many resources. Others believed that Topaz High School was severely lacking because many of the teachers, both white and evacuee, were underqualified.³⁴

(6a) Student-Teacher Relations

Teachers' Views of the Students

While many teachers enjoyed teaching at Topaz, some teachers were frustrated by the negative attitudes that students developed over the course of their time in camp. Some white teachers attributed these problems to their racial and cultural background. In a faculty report, one teacher wrote: "If these lads were in our outside schools social amenities would compel them to change some of their ancestral [sic] concepts."³⁵ This teacher believed that Japanese Americans were heirs of a flawed culture which could be fixed with an Anglo-American education and socialization. In essence, Japanese Americans were not true Americans until they behaved like white Americans, but this statement does not acknowledge that the government placed Americanized Nisei into the camps not because they were disloyal, but because they might be disloyal as they *looked* like the enemy.

Some teachers even suggested that students' negative attitudes were the reason that they were interned in the first place:

"These students are rather self-centered in their outlook on life. That may be one reason why they are wards of the government. Had they been more altruistic, society would have been more receptive. They've got to learn that a worthwhile life consists of a little more *give* and a little less *get*."³⁶

Not all white teachers viewed the students this way, however, and many were sympathetic towards the students' situation.

³¹ Akiko J. Tohmatsu, "Japanese-American Youth in Topaz Relocation Center, Utah: An Oral History" (master's thesis, Utah State University, 1994), 64–66.

³² Leonard J. Arrington, *The Price of Prejudice: The Japanese-American Relocation Center in Utah during World War II* (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 1962), 34–35. In 2020 dollars, this translates roughly to \$2,500 to \$3,300 dollars a month for white teachers and around \$200 to \$315 dollars a month for Japanese American teachers.

³³ Norman I. Hirose, interview by Tome Ikeda, "Norman I. Hirose Interview," July 31, 2008, Densho Digital Archive, Topaz Museum Collection, accessed January 28, 2020, <https://ddr.densho.org/media/ddr-densho-1013/ddr-densho-1013-7-transcript-f4f16d740d.htm>.

³⁴ Tohmatsu, 64–66.

³⁵ "The Education Program Central Utah Relocation Center," 121.

³⁶ "The Education Program," 122.

(Possible Items Included: Excerpts from the Education curriculum of the Central Utah Relocation center, Eleanor Sekerak photographs.)

(6b) Students' Views of the Teachers.

Topaz High students were not oblivious that some teachers disliked them. In one editorial piece in the school newspaper, *Topazette*, one student wrote:

“Attention, faculty members! You complain about the attitude of the students toward their teachers in the classrooms and that some teachers—especially the resident teachers—are so intimate with their students that they do not have their respect. If this is the case, isn’t it up to the teachers to help us “get down to business”? Perhaps it is also due to the resentment of the Nisei students towards the Caucasians that all is not well. It might help a great deal if some faculty members were more friendly.

After being evacuated from home, the students don’t like being told what to do except by someone that they feel understand their troubles. Do all the teachers understand their point of view?”³⁷

The students were more receptive to teachers that they felt they could relate with, rather than teachers who viewed them as delinquents. This passage also shows the discontent that many students had towards internment. While at Topaz, some felt alienated and misunderstood by the staff inside the camps as well as by other Americans outside.

(7) Family Life at Topaz

While internment did bring some families together, for the most part, family relations suffered at Topaz—especially in families with adolescents and young adults. Teenagers did not have to eat with their families, instead they ate in a mess hall with their friends. Cramped living quarters also negatively affected family life as there was no privacy. Some youth returned to their barracks only to sleep.³⁸ As a result, youth became less dependent on the parents and many rebelled against their parents, teachers, and the WRA.

While at Topaz, some youth began to be unruly, destroying and vandalizing property, bullying others, walking out of class, and back-talking to their parents and teachers.³⁹ In one instance, students flung coal-filled snowballs at a teacher.⁴⁰ In another instance, Fumi Hayashi recalls “we had one time a mud fight that turned out to be a little bit of grudge match.”⁴¹ Their parents noted that the children’s behavior was unprecedented, as their children had not behaved this way before the camps.

³⁷ *Topazette* Vol. 1, No. 9 (March 15, 1943), Japanese American relocation collection, University of Utah Special Collections & Archives, MS 144, Box 16, Fd. 11, pg. 4.

³⁸ Taylor, 127.

³⁹ Taylor, 126.

⁴⁰ Tohmatsu, 69.

⁴¹ Tohmatsu, 70.

Grace Fujimoto, who was a high school student at Topaz, explains that this negative behavior typified the negative elements of American behavior. She comments that these students were just “being American.”⁴² Along the same lines, Hiro Katayama argued in “Our Younger Generation” that the camp dynamic at Topaz caused discords among families and the misbehavior of youth. He argued that in order to fix the problem, families must relocate outside of the camp so their children could be raised in a normal environment. Inside the camps, the WRA imposed American ideas onto the youth in an artificial and destructive setting, but outside of the camps, youth would be able to Americanize naturally.⁴³

(8) Conflicting Identities

“It was a time of very confusing events. I was considered a disloyal person until I was 18 years old. Then suddenly, I was considered a loyal citizen and drafted into the army.” —Jim Noda⁴⁴

During internment, Japanese American adolescents faced an identity crisis. Internment signified to most that they could not be viewed as American while they were viewed as “Japanese.” In order to combat this, many began replacing Japanese cultural elements with American ones and encouraged their parents to do the same. In class papers, students suggested that they and their parents adopt American manners such as eating with a knife and fork, always washing before eating, and men removing their hats when ladies were present.⁴⁵ Many Japanese American youth believed that if they displayed themselves as Americans, they might be viewed as such. This caused many Nisei youth to distance themselves from the Kibei, who were more likely to behave like “Japanese.”

Minoru Kiyota, a Kibei, recalls how he was rejected by other Nisei at school in California. He states: “I reacted against them with contempt, becoming more and more attracted to the Japanese tradition that had been the source of so much solace to my soul. In fact, I had begun to take great pride in that tradition.”⁴⁶ Because of the Kibei’s cultural preferences, the WRA and FBI were more suspicious of the Kibei than they were of the Nisei. As a senior at Topaz High School, Kiyota was summoned to an interview with an FBI agent who interrogated him and called him a “dirty Jap.” The FBI agent deemed he was a “dangerous individual” and that he must remain in camp.⁴⁷

Even before internment, many Nisei and Kibei were compelled to choose a cultural identity, but internment exacerbated this. Some began to side with the United States in order to prove their loyalty while others did not want to do so as they felt betrayed.

Loyalty Questionnaires:

⁴² Taylor, 126.

⁴³ Hiro Katayama, “Our Younger Generation,” in *All Aboard*, 43–45.

⁴⁴ Tohmatsu, 77.

⁴⁵ “The Education Program,” 118.

⁴⁶ Minoru Kiyota, *Beyond Loyalty: The Story of a Kibei* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai’i Press, 1998), 295.

⁴⁷ Kiyota, 294.

In February of 1943, the WRA and the War Department began issuing “Loyalty Questionnaires” to all adults, Nisei and Issei (Japanese immigrants) alike. The War Department used these forms to assess Nisei recruitment into an all-Nisei combat unit, which later became known as the 442 Regimental Combat Team, while the WRA used these forms to register loyalty so that they could decide who they could relocate outside of the camps.

This form was very controversial for both the Nisei and Issei. For the Issei, the form asked them to declare loyalty to a country that banned them from obtaining citizenship, while for the Nisei, it asked them to declare loyalty to a country that had questioned and betrayed their citizenship. After assessing loyalty, the WRA sent Japanese Americans they deemed disloyal to isolation centers (such as the one in Moab for Topaz residents) or Tule Lake, which became a “segregation” center where the WRA isolated the “disloyal” to their own camp.⁴⁸ Draft-eligible men whom the War Department deemed loyal could be registered into the U.S. Military as a part of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. As these young Nisei fought abroad in Europe and at times encountered Nazi concentration camps, their family members remained confined in the relocation centers in the United States.⁴⁹

Some Japanese American youth were directly affected by the Loyalty Questionnaires, even though not all were of the draft age. Some had family members who were drafted to fight while other youth, whose parents the government deemed disloyal, had to relocate to Tule Lake.⁵⁰

(9) Leaving Topaz:

“Right now, they want us to relocate to our homes on the West Coast or other parts of the United States. We want to go back but are afraid. Why? Because the Japanese-Americans are treated bad by some people I call not-Americans.” —anonymous Topaz High School student

In October 1942, less than a month after they arrived at Topaz, the WRA allowed Japanese Americans, including many high school students, to leave the camps for temporary employment through farms and factories.⁵¹ During this time, many high school graduates began leaving to go to college outside of the camps. Families were not able to move back to the West Coast until early 1945, after the Supreme Court ruled in *Endo v. the United States* that the WRA must allow loyal citizens to leave the camps. Topaz closed in October 1945.⁵²

⁴⁸ Cherstin M. Lyon, “Loyalty Questionnaire,” *Densho Encyclopedia*, accessed April 1, 2020, https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Loyalty_questionnaire/.

⁴⁹ Solly Ganor, “From ‘Light One Candle,’” in *Only What We Could Carry: The Japanese American Internment Experience*, ed. Lawson Fusao Inada (Berkeley, CA: Heyday, 2000), 377–387.

⁵⁰ Tom Akashi, interview by Tom Ikeda and Chizu Omori, “Tom Akashi Interview,” July 3, 2004, *Densho Digital Archive*, Topaz Museum Collection, accessed January 28, 2020, <https://ddr.densho.org/media/ddr-densho-1000/ddr-densho-1000-164-transcript-d12438ff26.htm>.

⁵¹ Taylor, 117.

⁵² Brian Niiya, “Mitsuye Endo: The Woman Behind the Landmark Supreme Court Case,” *Densho*, March 24, 2016, accessed February 5, 2020, <https://densho.org/mitsuye-endo/>.

Leaving camp was almost as hard for many youth as coming to camp was. For adults, relocation meant that many had to reapply for jobs, rebuild the wealth they had lost, and find a place to live. Adolescents, however, were more concerned with acceptance than rebuilding their lives. Only 10 percent of adolescents considered a shortage of housing, food, and jobs as the major problem they would face outside of the camps while 90 percent believed that discrimination would be the major problem.⁵³

(10) Conclusion

Possible Items Included: Alyson's pictures of Topaz, Donald Nakahata Oral History,

"After we came back from camp, we were afraid to make noises. But when our kids came up; 'What is the matter with guys?' . . . You don't want to call attention to yourself. You want to just be quiet and do your things and not make any waves and go by your very calm order of being. . . . Because in many ways if you went to prison or something really bad happened to you, and you weren't happy about it, you are not going to sit there and tell your kids about it." —Fumi Hayashi⁵⁴

At the beginning of internment, many Japanese American youth blamed the reason for their internment on the war and not on prejudice towards those of Japanese American ancestry.⁵⁵ Although not at Topaz but another internment camp, Tule Lake, Nancy Takahashi stated in a class paper: "I fully realize the fact of why they relocated the Japanese citizens for I know some who are disloyal Americans and some who are loyal."⁵⁶ Many youth did not feel the effects of internment until later in their lives. When asked what evacuation meant to him, Isao Baba reflected: "Being young at the time, I thought it was quite an experience. As I grew older, I began to realize it was a great injustice to the people of Japanese ancestry."⁵⁷

Looking at what youth wrote while at camp, it is clear that many were aware of racial prejudice towards them, although many did not label it as such. They also knew that internment was unfair to them. Although they understood that internment was not their fault, many attempted to alleviate the situation by proving their loyalty. This did not solve the problem because the U.S. government did not imprison Japanese Americans in internment camps because of questions of loyalty alone but because they assumed that the evacuees' international and racial heritage determined their allegiance. The United States had convicted the innocent, deciding that Japanese Americans were guilty because of their race.

⁵³ "The Education Program," 120.

⁵⁴ Tohmatsu, 78–79.

⁵⁵ Benson Tong, "Race, Culture, and Citizenship among Japanese American Children and Adolescents during the Internment Era," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 23, no. 3 (Spring 2004): 24, accessed January 13, 2020, https://www.jstor.org/stable/27501456?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents.

⁵⁶ Nancy Takahashi, "My Attitude Toward Camp," in Japanese American relocation collection, University of Utah Special Collections & Archives, MS 144, Box 4, Fd. 4, pg. 10.

⁵⁷ Tohmatsu, 77.