

# Blood-Sacrifice in the Politics of a Nation-State. Japanese-Americans in Hawai'i During and After World War II

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### Summary

This article examines the impact of acts of blood-sacrifice on the establishment and politics of a nation-state by focusing on the different experiences of the Japanese diaspora on the United States mainland and in the Hawaiian Islands during and after the Second World War.

There is a manifest and recurring pattern of suspicion, hostility and prejudice that has historically greeted members of ethnically diverse diasporic communities, especially the founding members, when they attempt to resurrect their lives in a new country after an often traumatic departure from their homeland. This seems especially true when the diaspora possesses immediately identifiable physical characteristics that differentiate them significantly from those already established in the host land. Skin, hair and eye colour, for example, as well as other physical and sometimes cultural characteristics immediately identified the waves of African immigrants into Europe, Eastern Europeans entering Western Europe and America, Asians into the United States, England and Australia and so forth. Their clearly discernible 'otherness' made them readily identifiable targets for discrimination, exclusion, even acts of violence.

The only path to achieving initial levels of acceptance and tolerance and eventually to gaining political and social power, seemed to be for the diaspora to display patience and fortitude and to exhibit an exemplary record as hard-working and law-abiding members of the community. Consequently, their actions were frequently governed by the presumed attitudes and expectations of the majority who forced upon the diasporic community preconceived assimilationist attitudes, which typically ranged from complete segregation and exclusion to an accelerated program of assimilation based on disavowal of prior cultural beliefs and traditions. However, there is one exception that seemed to hasten the desired result of total inclusion and acceptance: the act of blood-sacrifice.

I refer to the self-sacrificial action intrinsic to war-time volunteers who willingly risk their lives for the good of their new country. For a diasporic community, such acts of blood-sacrifice can almost be viewed as acts of redemption: they are thereby able to prove their loyalty, love and gratitude to their hostland, their new home. Most importantly, they can prove their *right* to live there alongside those with birthright-privileges. In this essay I will illustrate the importance of acts of blood-sacrifice in the establishment and continuation of a nation-state and will also examine the significance of the link between such acts and the subsequent positioning of a diasporic community within that nation-state. I propose that the very act of blood-sacrifice be examined as an integral element of a diasporic community's assimilationist thrust.

I will focus on the remarkably different situation of the Japanese diaspora within parts of North America, specifically, why those in the mainland United States were subjected to a systematic and unconstitutional removal and incarceration from their homes during World War II, while those in the Hawaiian Islands escaped the same fate. What was the impact of this disparity on soldiers of Japanese ancestry from the mainland and the Islands and how did this difference affect their social and political position in the post-war years? This is not, of course, to suggest that the discrimination and segregationist practices of pre-war America disappeared in the post-war era on either the mainland or the Hawaiian Islands. I am suggesting rather that the wider community's perception of the voluntary acts of sacrifice impacted upon the speed and the extent to which these two groups were accepted as rightful and deserving members of American society. Although great progress has been made in their successful integration, the extent to which they have been truly accepted continues to be a contentious issue in some quarters to this day.



**Memorial to the Japanese-American 442nd Regimental Combat Team**

The link between acts of blood-sacrifice and the diasporic community is under-theorised and under-researched. With the notable exception of Kelly and Kaplan's work on the Indo-Fijians and the Japanese-Hawaiians, scholarly studies are rare. The case of the Japanese-Hawaiians offers a unique insight into the consequences of acts of blood-sacrifice. Drawing on Kelly and Kaplan's framework, I will examine literary and oral histories to illustrate the impact of such acts on their community. I begin with a brief overview of the history of the Japanese diaspora and how it established itself in North America. I build on Benedict Anderson's insights in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* to examine the pre-war and wartime periods of their history in order to explain why the emergence of feelings of patriotism and nationalism, which he defines as "an imagined political community" (Anderson 1991:6),

emerged at different moments in the history of Japanese-Americans on the mainland compared to Japanese-Hawaiians. Anderson argued that the imagined community is an example of a cultural artefact of a particular kind which has evolved to command a profound level of emotional legitimacy and arouse deep psychological attachments and this should assist us to better comprehend the willingness of wartime volunteers.

### **(Non) Internment**

The first Japanese immigrants arrived on American soil in 1868 as part of the Meiji government's aim to rapidly modernise Japan. The early immigrants, landing primarily in Honolulu and San Francisco, faced severe hardship, yet they persevered and thousands more flocked to try their luck in the land of opportunity. On the mainland, as the population of Japanese immigrants slowly increased, so too did anti-Japanese sentiment, especially in California. Propaganda whipped up fears of 'Oriental invasion' fuelled prejudice even though, as Bill Hosokawa points out, in the first nine years of the twentieth century, only about 139,000 Japanese immigrants arrived on the mainland compared to the arrival of nearly 10 million European immigrants during the same period. In fact, the percentage of Japanese on the mainland never rose above 0.11% of the entire population before American entry into World War II (Hosokawa 2002:96). It was quite a different story in Hawai'i, however. Although the immigrants also endured open hostility and acts of racism, the small population of Hawai'i meant that the large numbers of Japanese plantation workers soon outnumbered all other ethnic groups, including native Hawaiians, Caucasians and Chinese. [1]



**Women plantation workers in Hawai'i, early 20th century**

In the years leading up to the attack on Pearl Harbor, anti-Japanese sentiment reached fever pitch in step with mounting US-Japan conflicts in Asia, eventually leading to the imposition of US sanctions on Japan. The 1908 Gentlemen's Agreement and the 1924 Immigration Act had effectively ended Japanese immigration and the 1913 California Alien Land Law had barred Japanese immigrants from purchasing land. Despite these obstacles, however, many Japanese families were building successful farming and agricultural businesses which caused growing tension, notably in California. Groups such as the 'Native Sons of the Golden West' lobbied for complete segregation of the Japanese and key influential figures such as San Francisco mayor (later senator) James Phelan used the increasing aggression of the Japanese Imperial Army in Asia in the 1930s and early 1940s to justify his call to halt the spread of the 'yellow peril' by any means necessary. When, on December 7, 1941, Japanese planes all but obliterated the American naval ships stationed in Pearl Harbor, the US responded by declaring war on Japan the following day.

The Japanese and Japanese-American population on the mainland and in Hawai'i was instantly targeted as possible (indeed, probable) saboteurs and traitors by virtue of bloodline, regardless of all other factors

including citizenship. With political groups and newspapers calling for the removal of all persons of Japanese ancestry, on February 19th 1942, Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 authorising the evacuation and internment of over 120,000 people, including some 70,000 *Nisei* (second generation Japanese-Americans, born in America) who were American citizens, from their homes on the west coast as an act of 'military necessity'. In some cases, families were given as little as 48-hours before they were counted, sorted, tagged and finally herded onto darkened buses and trains, guarded by heavily armed members of the Military Police. Treated like prisoners, they were sent first to 'assembly centers', many of them hastily whitewashed horse stalls in which entire families were forced to live in the space previously occupied by one horse, and then onto 'relocation centers', that is internment camps, in which they were forced to stay, on average, for approximately three years (See Smith, 1995 and Hosokawa, 2002).



**Granada Relocation Center**

Those were the events that occurred on the mainland; in Hawai'i, events following the attack on Pearl Harbor were very different. After the attack, Hawai'i was placed under martial law which would have cleared the way for the mass evacuation of the Japanese there also. Lieutenant General John DeWitt, who

successfully convinced Roosevelt to sign the Executive Order, [2] was clear about his feelings on Americans of Japanese ancestry, as in his famous speech in which he stated:

The Japanese race is an enemy race and while many second and third generation Japanese born on United States soil, possessed of United States citizenship, have become 'Americanized,' the racial strains are undiluted. . . . A Jap's a Jap. They are a dangerous element . . . [3]

He consistently tried to persuade Roosevelt to act quickly in order to separate and incarcerate the Japanese in Hawai'i also, an idea that Roosevelt favoured.[4] Despite their desire to isolate the Japanese in Hawai'i and the fact that Hawai'i was the most obvious place for a 'fifth column' to exist, however, only about 1,700 key community leaders were ever evacuated from Hawai'i and interned on the mainland (National Archives, RG210 and Office of the Secretary of War, RG107). Why were the majority of Japanese-Hawaiians spared the fate of the mainlanders?

### **The 'Aloha Spirit'**

The fact that Japanese constituted the largest ethnic group and Chinese a second large group, was among the reasons why ideas about the 'inscrutable Oriental' and fear of the 'yellow peril' were not felt as strongly in the Hawaiian Islands as they were on the mainland. Another reason was their integration into the local culture. From the early twentieth century, it was predominantly Japanese and Hawaiian cultures that merged to create what locals call the 'aloha spirit'. [5] The strength of this spirit was exhibited by the few Japanese-Hawaiians who were sent to internment camps on the mainland. They instinctively sought each other out and found comfort and solace in a shared culture, history and language, differentiating themselves from mainlanders. This is demonstrated in this excerpt from an



internment camp report[6]:

"Hawaiian cohesiveness - and separation from the "mainlander group," is shown in distinct clothing (geta, colors in certain variety, flowered shirts for men, lei worn around neck at parties). . . the use of Hawaiian pidgin. . . and a difference at points in manners, musical instruments and recreational forms. The Hawaiians are a tight in-group, cohesive, and apart from all other locality groups" (Ogawa Collection, 2, 98).

What ultimately saved the Japanese-Hawaiians from mass internment, however, was economic realities. Not only was Roosevelt's desire to transport them all to the island of Moloka'i, the former leper colony, a logistical nightmare but their large population meant they were the backbone of both the labour force and, ironically, the war effort as exemplified by this letter from Secretary of War Stimson to the House of Representatives on the 8th July 1942:

"The Japanese population is so interwoven into the economic fabric of the Islands that if we attempted to evacuate all Japanese aliens and citizens all business, including that concerned with the building up of our defenses, would practically stop" (Ogawa Collection, 10, 362).

It was not just the economy that would suffer from the removal of the Japanese; their integral role to the aforementioned 'aloha spirit' would certainly be extremely harmful to the morale of the wider Hawaiian community.

How did they become so indispensable to the spiritual aspect? Anderson posits that the two most important forms of imagining that first emerged in Western Europe in the eighteenth century were the novel and the newspaper. For readers of a newspaper, a simultaneous imagining occurs - a society is created consisting of those in the articles and their readers; the different articles and the 'characters' in them are connected in the minds of the readers who, in turn, are connected to all other readers who are reading the newspaper that same day. The arbitrariness and juxtaposition of the articles and the simultaneity of the readers creates an imagined community (Anderson 1991:35):

"[The reader is] well aware that the ceremony he performs is being replicated simultaneously by thousands (or millions) of others of whose existence he is confident, yet of whose identity he has not the slightest notion."

The fraternity created by the rapidly expanding newspaper readership within the Japanese diasporic community both on the mainland and in Hawai'i is clear.[7] But Anderson's argument that the most important aspect of language is "its capacity for generating imagined communities, building in effect *particular solidarities*" (Anderson 1991:133), seems particularly applicable to the fraternity created amongst the Japanese-Hawaiians whose bond was strengthened by their unique pidgin language and to the pidgin language they shared with other diasporic groups in Hawai'i. The importance of Hawaiian pidgin, which was created by the early plantation workers as a means of communication across linguistic divides by incorporating all their various languages, cannot be underestimated. In this case, not only was it crucial to communicate amongst themselves, it also created solidarity

among Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Portuguese and Hawaiian labourers. Their significant contribution to the common language and the feeling of fraternity in Hawai'i, their role in the 'aloha spirit', meant their removal would have had a debilitating effect on morale throughout the islands. Not only were Japanese-Americans far more integrated and assimilated in Hawai'i, but something that strengthened that bond and differentiated them further from Japanese on the mainland, was the willingness of many to make the supreme sacrifice for their new country.

### A Question of loyalty

After the attack on Pearl Harbor, many Hawaiian *Nisei* volunteered in emergency medical units and a battalion of the Hawaiian National Guard, which included 1,500 *Nisei*, was deployed into the hills to oppose the rumoured Japanese invasion (Toth, 2007). Those who were unable to fight stood in line for hours to donate blood. When the *Nisei* were forcibly disarmed and relieved of their duties, they formed unarmed voluntary units to perform essential defence work. They were so anxious to help defend their home that a trial all-Hawaiian *Nisei* combat team, the 100th Battalion, was formed, consisting primarily of pre-war *Nisei* draftees. Based on their success, the formation of the now-famous 442nd Regimental Combat Team was proposed in 1943. Although only 1,500 Japanese-Hawaiians were required as volunteers for the 442nd, nearly 10,000 men rushed to enlist immediately (See Chinen & Hiura, 1997). The spirit of the Japanese-Hawaiians is captured in this anonymous essay written by a young Hawaiian *Nisei* just before he volunteered:

"Remember, it is one of the prime duties and obligations of a citizen to bear arms in defense of his country. You don't want to be a member of a

conquered nation. . . . Remember you're fighting to preserve decency and the right to a peaceful pursuit of life for all mankind. It is your duty to fight for home, country, and humanity" (Ogawa 1980:334-335).[8]

This was a commonly-held belief among *Nisei* in Hawai'i who were not faced with the conflicting emotions associated with the crisis and trauma of internment as mainlanders were. Their volunteering was based on a sense of duty for their country. Their decision was an easier one to make because it was not complicated by the betrayal that interned Japanese-Americans on the mainland faced.

Given this situation, it is understandable why the number of volunteers from the mainland was low in contrast. In 1943 the Director of the War Relocation Authority, Dillon Myer, issued what is now known as the 'loyalty questionnaire' to all internees above the age of 17 in order to determine their eligibility to volunteer. Reaction in the camps was mixed; many viewed it as an opportunity to prove their loyalty to the country and were eager to fight, as did those in Hawai'i. However, their situation as prisoners in their own country must have been a very bitter pill to swallow indeed and some regarded it as the final insult causing them to turn their backs on America completely.[9] All were torn between their situation as internees unjustly imprisoned on the one hand, and the duty to serve the country and avoid being branded as traitors. Issues of family loyalty also came into play. Would the government care for their families if they died in combat? It seemed extremely unlikely, given their internment and the precarious nature of their parents' alien status. In the end, although 67,000 men were deemed eligible to volunteer from the camps, only 1,200 did so (Ngai, 2004: 184 and Smith, 2005: 301-302).

When Japanese-Americans from the internment camps were sent to the army training Camp Shelby in Wisconsin, the division between Hawaiians and mainlanders was palpable. The mainlanders thought the Hawaiians were inferior because of their pidgin language and their relaxed attitudes; the Hawaiians thought the mainlanders were condescending with their proper English and polite manners. The Hawaiians called the mainlanders 'kotonks' – that being the sound their heads made when knocked on the floors of the barracks! Mainlanders responded by calling the Hawaiians 'buddhaheads' – a term of contempt derived a play on words derived from the Japanese word *buta* meaning pig. However, the two groups quickly found peace and solidarity when it came to fighting the enemy in Europe and many mainlanders even began to pick up pidgin, further reinforcing the importance language plays in creating a sense of community. When the Hawaiian volunteers learned more about the fate of the families of the mainlanders (and some visited the camps during breaks from training), they were incensed.[10] They felt that they were in effect fighting two wars—the war against fascism and the war against the persecution that their friends and families faced back home.



**Tule Lake Relocation Center**

Others chose to fight against the persecution

they faced in their own homeland, but in a radically different manner. They refused to volunteer through the 'loyalty questionnaire' that was distributed throughout the camps in 1943. They resisted or refused to 'prove' their loyalty in such a manner while their constitutional rights were violated. Consequently, all resisters and their families were moved to the Tule Lake camp which was redesignated as one for housing 'disloyal' Americans. The stigma that was attached to being a resident of Tule Lake and therefore, being branded disloyal, was one that continued to haunt its residents for decades. Between January 1944 and December 1945, the Draft was reintroduced into the camps, and 325 *Nisei* men refused induction and used the opportunity to protest against the unconstitutionality of their internment. They demanded that their citizenship rights be restored before they would comply with draft orders. This was denied and 263 men were convicted and sentenced to a minimum of three years in a federal prison (Ngai, 2004: 185). Despite the fact that the vast majority of these men were fighting the same forces of discrimination and persecution in America as those who chose to fight in the European theatre, a great deal of hostility and anger was generated against those who chose to refuse the call to arms from both the wider American community (it 'proved' their disloyalty) and the Japanese-American community, of whom many believed the only way to prove their loyalty to America was to make the ultimate sacrifice. Sadly, the stigma, the anger and the hostility towards these resisters is something that continues in some quarters to this day.

It is interesting to examine the rationale behind the *Nisei* soldiers who felt such deep attachment for their country in the face of strong provocation, for what Anderson termed "the inventions of their imaginations. . . [and] why people are ready to die for these inventions" (Anderson 1991:141). Whilst the community is imagined, their imagined

relationship has the capacity to create deep, emotional ties linking friends, family and strangers. It is this fraternity that makes it possible for so many to make the ultimate sacrifice, to die for their country. While it is common practice to refer to the roots of nationalism as being embedded in fear and hatred and of its affinities with racism, Anderson argued that the nation also inspires great love and patriotism, evident in the national cultural productions of art, literature and music, but most significantly, it also spurs acts of self-sacrifice. Thus dying for one's country, he argued, assumes a moral grandeur and exemplifies the extent to which the nation inspires love within its people, creating a special kind of contemporaneous community.

### Blood-sacrifice

I turn to Kelly and Kaplan in order to consider why the battlefield acts of Japanese-Americans were so instrumental, not just for ensuring the survival of their traumatic history, but also for the future prosperity of their diasporic community – two aspects of which are, in fact, intertwined. It was not just the 'aloha spirit' and the fact that they were not interned *en masse* that explains the phenomenal rise in social and political standing of the Japanese-Hawaiians. The most important factor in determining their postwar status was the fact that several thousand young men made the ultimate sacrifice for their country.[11] Thus political power was not just taken by those with "claims of priority for primordality" but also by those involved in the Pacific and European "theatrics of bloodshed" (Kelly and Kaplan 2001:64-65). Where Anderson argued that it is patriotism that motivates the individuals of a nation to make these supreme sacrifices, Kelly and Kaplan suggest that it is above all the *value of the stories of martyrdom* that motivate individuals. The narratives of the suffering of the victim and the death of the martyr inspired camaraderie and strengthened the bonds within a suffering community. These narratives

would determine the future of the Japanese diaspora and they would be repeatedly recalled.

The Japanese-American soldiers had a golden opportunity to prove their worth to those who discounted them as second-class citizens. Therefore although elders worried about their children serving in the military[12], especially given their internment, their brave exploits in Europe were proudly reported in the various camp newspapers and the stories of their sacrifices are still celebrated today as examples of great loyalty. Journalist John Terry set the tone by writing favourably about the *Nisei* soldiers as early as their training period:

"... over and beyond the normal  
 loyalties of a  
 Caucasian citizen whose place is  
 secure and  
 unquestioned, these men feel they  
 have to furnish  
 striking proof of their  
 Americanism, and that the  
 battlefield offers them that  
 opportunity. . . . Their  
 future place in America, and the  
 future of their  
 brothers, sisters and children. . . is  
 bound up in  
 their record in battle as members  
 of the 442nd  
 combat team. They know it. . . . the  
 boys of the  
 442nd are a credit to their country,  
 to Hawaii, to  
 their parents, to their uniform. . . .  
 They are good  
 citizens, ready to prove it with  
 their lives. . . ."  
 (Ogawa 1980:336-341).[13]





### 442nd Regimental Combat Team

In fact, the 442nd/100th remains the most highly decorated unit of its size in American military history.[14] And even as one Hawaiian *Issei* tanka poet expressed his sadness at his family's unjust situation:

"Sailing on the same ship -  
The son,  
A U.S. soldier;  
His father,  
A prisoner of war" (Nakano  
& Nakano 1983, 29). [15]

another *Issei* woman confided to her diary the importance of sacrifice and determination for the privilege of citizenship:

"Someone who sincerely desires to  
become a citizen of  
the United States - before he could  
claim that right,  
must exert an earnest endeavor to  
develop an attitude  
of humility and faith toward  
acquiring this privilege"  
(Gorfinkel 1996: 101).

There was an acceptance and understanding within the majority of the Japanese diaspora, especially among those who had a family member serving in the military, that their actions on the battlefield were essential in order to prove their loyalty and ultimately to pursue the equal rights of citizenship.

The importance that Kelly and Kaplan placed on the stories of sacrifice was foreshadowed in Renan's 1882 essay *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?*[16] in which he emphasised the sacrifices an individual can make for the good of the community to the establishment of a nation. Renan argued that the memory of the blood that has been shed is far more important to nationalism than the blood of a 'race' - people understand one another if they have worked and suffered alongside one another, despite differences in language, culture and traditions. In this manner, a strong nation based on sorrow and sacrifice is born and the blood shed by the *Nisei* legitimised their claim for power in the political arena. They had proven themselves to be loyal participants in the continued strengthening of the nation by making the ultimate sacrifice. The *Nisei* as individuals had sacrificed themselves for the community, in Renan's terms, and in so doing constituted an important part of the nation. The value of their actions is in their stories of martyrdom:

"A great aggregation of men, with  
a healthy spirit and  
warmth of heart, creates a moral  
conscience which is  
called a nation. When this moral  
conscience proves its  
strength by sacrifices that demand  
abdication of the  
individual for the benefit of the  
community, it is  
legitimate, and it has a right to  
exist" (Renan 1994:18).

The last statement foreshadows Anderson's claim that those who are willing to make this sacrifice assume a moral grandeur and it is from this platform that the Japanese-Americans, especially the Japanese-Hawaiians, were able to consolidate their post-war political power by passing on memories through the generations and utilizing them politically. Walter Benjamin stresses the importance of

keeping such memories and, through those memories, the dead, safe from danger:

"To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it 'the way it really was' (Ranke). It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger. . . . Only that historian will have the gift of fanning the spark of hope in the past who is firmly convinced that even the dead will not be safe from the enemy if he wins" (Benjamin 1970:257).

U.S. Senator Spark M. Matsunaga's speech entitled *Rededication*[17] echoes Benjamin's words:

If we are to give any real meaning to our observance of this national Memorial Day, we must here resolve as individual citizens that the story of the heroic dead whom we honor shall not lay buried with the dead, but will be kept alive to inspire the poor, the downtrodden, and the disillusioned to rise above social injustices. We must resolve not only to make ourselves, but to help others, to become better Americans in a greater America for a safer world (Hawaii Nikkei History Editorial Board 2000:399-400).

Similarly, veteran Yoshiaki Fujitani argued in his essay *Kin No On - Gratitude to my Country*[18] that the action of the *Nisei* was a way to express gratitude to their country, that the respect they gained was "earned at a very dear price, and we should be forever grateful for their sacrifice" (Hawaii Nikkei History Editorial Board 2000:102). The reiteration of the memories of wartime battles and trauma are crucial to prevent the dominant, grand narratives of white America from drowning out their voices of suffering and martyrdom. Thanks to the exploits of the brave *Nisei*

soldiers and their acts of blood-sacrifice, the rest of the community is able to prove its loyalty and worth as US citizens.



**U.S. Senator Daniel Inouye.**

For example, war veteran and current U.S. senator, Daniel Inouye, recalled the memory of the wartime sacrifices by paralleling his own political campaign with the war. He delivered a speech in the mid-fifties in response to claims that his democratic party was a pawn of the communists, saying:

"I put the notes for my speech into my clenched teeth and tore them in two with my only hand. . . . [his other hand was lost in battle during WWII] 'But I cannot help wondering,' I said, 'whether the people of Hawai'i will not think it strange that the only

weapon in the  
Republican arsenal is to label as  
communists men so  
recently returned from defending  
liberty on the firing  
lines in Italy and France. Let me  
speak for those of us  
who didn't come back - I *know* I  
speak for my  
colleagues on this platform, and  
for good Democratic  
candidates everywhere in these  
Islands - when I say  
we bitterly resent having our  
loyalty and patriotism  
questioned by cynical political  
hacks who lack the  
courage to debate the real issues  
in this campaign"  
(Ogawa 1980:393).

Inouye successfully used the memory of the shedding of the blood of the Japanese-Hawaiians to defend their loyalty and patriotism; their shed-blood was turned into a political tool. Ogawa's statement that "[b]lood had been shed so that the Japanese could unquestionably assume a significant role in the Island economy and social system" (Ogawa 1980:325) is consistent with Kelly and Kaplan's argument that "shed blood can be powerful tools for social movements out to make or unmake political limits" (Kelly and Kaplan 2001:80). The memory of blood-shed needs to be remembered, recalled, deployed and passed on to future generations. The importance of blood-shed to a diasporic community cannot be understated or underestimated.

"[W]e need to be more attentive to  
the ways that blood  
arguments can be used both for  
and against diasporic  
populations - not merely the sons  
of the soil, blood of  
descent arguments, but also, and  
sometimes very

potently, the ways that the rhetoric  
of blood shed,  
stories of blood sacrifices for  
nation can irrigate,  
ennoble, and even sanctify the  
projects of many  
interested claimants" (Kelly and  
Kaplan 2001:81).

Although a certain sense of finality seems to be implied in that statement, the opposite is in fact true. Even if the memories of the victims and martyrs are preserved in rhetoric, the trauma does not simply end there, nor should it if it can be used to enrich, educate and inspire future generations. Although it can be argued that the sacrifices made by the Japanese-Hawaiians became a collective act that hastened the end of their own cycle of trauma, the internment and the inability to volunteer for military service in the same manner meant that the traumatic experiences of the war are links in a still-continuing chain of trauma for Japanese-Americans on the mainland.

Prominent Japanese-American author Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston wrote:

". . . the most effective way  
Japanese-Americans could  
combat the attitudes that put them  
in places like  
Manzanar was to shed their blood  
on the battlefield.  
The all-Nisei 442nd Regimental  
Combat Team was the  
most decorated American unit in  
World War II; it also  
suffered the highest percentage of  
casualties and  
deaths. They were much admired,  
and the JACL  
strategy succeeded. This was  
visible *proof* that these  
110,000 people could be trusted"  
(Houston 2000: 85).

The visibility of the trustworthiness of the Japanese-Americans and Japanese-Hawaiians is evident in President Reagan's speech, delivered when he signed the first Redress Act on August 10, 1988, thereby beginning the process of reparations for the survivors of the internment camps. His words recalled Kelly and Kaplan's argument of the politics of blood-shed that dethrones the belief in the priority of primordiality:

Blood that has soaked into the sands of a beach is all of one color. America stands unique in the world, the only country not founded on race, but on a way – an idea. Not in spite of, but because of our polyglot background, we have had all the strength in the world. That is the American way (Hosokawa 2002:524-525).

Similarly, veteran Ted Tsukiyama wrote an essay entitled *An American – Not a Japanese Living in America* [19] in which he says:

The blood our men shed in the ultimate dedication to country was red – just as red as the blood of any other fallen American hero. And I know that because of those eight hundred white crosses with Japanese names. . . . (Hawaii Nikkei History Editorial Board 2000:339).

### Concluding remarks

It was the decorations on the soldiers for Houston, the blood-drenched beaches for Reagan and the white crosses for Tsukiyama that delivered visible proof of the loyalty of the Japanese-Americans and Japanese-Hawaiians and justification for their right to advance without discrimination in American society. The comprehensive internment of the Japanese-Americans on the mainland and the strategic incarceration of certain Japanese-Hawaiian leaders did not prevent Japanese-Americans from offering their lives as acts of blood-

sacrifice for the good of their community and their country. The internment and the loyalty questionnaire that the mainlanders were forced to endure deterred some from initially volunteering, mostly due to their concern for their families behind barbed wire, but when the draft was reinstated, the majority were happy to oblige. On the other hand, without the impediment of mass internment, the Japanese-Hawaiians were able to offer themselves to the military immediately following the attack on Pearl Harbor. As a result, they were able to fight and rise above any future suspicions that may have been cast upon the loyalty of their community. Thus the sacrifices of Japanese-American soldiers empowered the diaspora by providing stories of martyrdom and their improved position in the post-war years was in no small part a result of the sacrifice of individuals of the wartime generation.

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## Notes

[1] Indeed, King Kalakaua appealed to the Emperor of Japan in the 1880s to encourage emigration to Hawai'i not just as contract labourers but also in order to supplement the languishing Hawaiian population. This meant that by the early 1940s, with a population of nearly 158,000, the Japanese in Hawai'i constituted over 37% of the islands' total population. At 127,000 on the mainland, the Japanese made up less than 1% (National Archives, RG210).

[2] In fact, DeWitt also proposed the internment of those of German and Italian extraction. But as, for example, Joe DiMaggio's father was an Italian immigrant, as was the

mayor of New York and other key political figures, this was never implemented. *Nisei* veteran Min Hara writes of how that decision continues to affect him: "The humiliation of being rounded up and herded into a railhead just because we looked like the enemy was indescribable. Why only us Japanese-Americans and not the Germans and Italians who were also in a war against the United States of America? My anger, shame and frustration from that day hasn't subsided for the injustices we've suffered from our very own government. It has been forty-three years since that day and we still haven't had our day in court for our unjust confinement" (Japanese-American National Museum:65-66).

[3] Original quote from the *Los Angeles Times*, April 14, 1943. Various other West Coast newspapers quoted this particularly infamous statement and he made several other similar statements on record both in the public press and in official documents such as the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (1982:66). See also Nagata (1990:135), Hosokawa (2002:260), and Thomas and Nishimoto (1946:20).

[4] Roosevelt sent a memo to the Secretary of the Navy, Frank Knox, on February 26, 1942 stating: "Like you, I have long felt that most of the Japanese should be removed from Oahu to one of the other islands. This involves much planning, much temporary construction and careful supervision of them when they get to the new location. I do not worry about the constitutional question - first because of my recent order [9066] and, second, because Hawai'i is under martial law. The whole matter is one of immediate and present war emergency" (Ogawa Collection, 3, 244). Thankfully, the Hawaiian Military Governor General Delos C. Emmons was thoroughly convinced of the loyalty of the Japanese in Hawai'i and consistently resisted the cries for their mass internment.

- [5] From an interview with Dennis Ogawa, University of Hawai'i, January 2004.
- [6] The 'Tule Lake Community Analysis Reports, December 1944 to February 1945.'
- [7] In fact, the newspapers were extremely important not only to the establishment of the new Japanese diaspora but also to the next generation, the *Nisei*, who established the JACL's newspaper, *The Pacific Citizen*. During the internment, newspapers again played an important role in maintaining the community within each camp, the largest of which held nearly 19,000 internees.
- [8] "To Volunteer or Not?" (Ogawa 1980: 332-335) was first printed in *Paradise of the Pacific* May 1945, pp 11-12.
- [9] Indeed, at the same time that the WRA sought volunteers from within the internment camps, Roosevelt issued a statement which read: "No loyal citizen of the United States should be denied the democratic right to exercise the responsibilities of his citizenship, regardless of his ancestry. The principle on which this country was founded and by which it has always governed is that Americanism is a matter of the mind and heart. Americanism is not, and never was, a matter of race or ancestry. Every loyal American citizen should be given the opportunity to serve this country wherever his skills will make the greatest contribution - whether it be in the ranks of our armed forces, war production, agriculture, Government service, or other work essential to the war effort" (Uchida 1982:135).
- [10] This observation comes from reading several memoirs, diaries, oral interviews and so on. See Ogawa, 1980; Crost, 1994, Hawaii Nikkei History Editorial Board, 2000 and Tateishi, 1984.
- [11] After conscription was reintroduced on the mainland, several thousand mainlanders also joined the 442nd, many of whom were grateful to be relieved of the unthinkable difficult decision of choosing between family and country.
- [12] There are several poems about the conflicting emotions the *Issei* had about the military service, such as this poem about *Issei* man Masa Nakahara:
- "My son George, his picture  
 was in the paper yesterday:  
 Nisei Interpreters Quiz Jap  
*Prisoner*. The picture was so fuzzy,  
 Hard to tell who was who.  
 They looked like kids to me -  
 like my sister's boys  
 in Japan" (Roripaugh 1999:31).
- [13] Article by John Terry "Summing Up the AJAs at Shelby" originally appeared in a brochure entitled "With Hawaii's AJA Boys at Camp Shelby, Mississippi" as part of the newspaper *Honolulu Star Bulletin*, 1943.
- [14] Especially well-known is the story of Sadao Munemori. As a result of his selfless act of throwing himself on a grenade to save two of his men during a crucial battle in the Apennines, he was posthumously awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. See Crost (1994, 253-256).
- [15] Tanka poem entitled *On the Ship to the Mainland*.
- [16] The quote is taken from the translation of Renan's essay by Ida May Snyder. Paris: Calmann-Levy, 1882, 26-29.
- [17] Matsunaga was one of the first Japanese-Hawaiian senators. His speech was delivered at a Memorial Day address at the Fairmount Cemetery in Denver, Colorado on May 30, 1968 (Hawaii Nikkei History Editorial Board 2000:95-400).

[18] Hawaii Nikkei History Editorial Board (2000:94-103).

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[19] Hawaii Nikkei History Editorial Board (2000:335-339).

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