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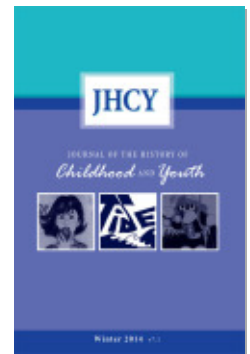
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MALIA McANDREW

JAPANESE AMERICAN BEAUTY PAGEANTS AND MINSTREL SHOWS: THE PERFORMANCE OF GENDER AND RACE BY NISEI YOUTH DURING WORLD WAR II

On March 2, 1945, the *Denson Tribune* reported on a two-night patriotic variety show held inside a cafeteria near Jerome, Arkansas. By the time of this performance, the nation's entanglement in World War II had dragged on for thirty-nine long months, and those on the home front needed to come up with increasingly creative methods of entertaining war-weary Americans. Reports suggest that it was not the theatrical skits, vocal performances, or dancing acts that elicited the greatest applause from those gathered that weekend. Rather, it was a group of twelve young female entertainers named the Vargettes whose routines received the loudest praise, although it seems these stylish young performers actually *did* little other than strut about the dining hall in highly stylized patriotic garb.¹ Most likely named after the Varga Girls, sexually provocative pin-up illustrations of young white females published by *Esquire* magazine during the war, the Vargettes were similarly fetching examples of American beauty in its most patriotic form. Through hand-drawn illustrations, the *Denson Tribune* depicted the group as a set of smiling young beauties who performed with an American flag flying beside them and fireworks going off in the background. Praising the Vargettes for their role in the "patriotic extravaganza," the *Denson Tribune* further proclaimed that the weekend gala only "climaxed" when Bessie Nakashima emerged onto the dance floor dressed as Miss Liberty alongside fellow Vargettes Chizu Kitaoka, Mary Ikeguchi, "the Watanabe sisters," and nine other ingénues who enthusiastically waved red, white, and blue streamers before the crowd. The event, already significant because it linked the display of female bodies with the display of American patriotism, comes into yet keener focus when considering the situation of its young participants, all of whom were residents at a World War II incarceration camp for Japanese Americans.

The December 7, 1941, Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor brought the United States fully into a war it had previously been content to fight from the sidelines. It also marked the start of a more pronounced confrontation with persons of Japanese ancestry on the American home front. On February 19, 1942, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066 caused Japanese Americans living in California, Oregon, and Washington, now deemed "essential military areas," to be detained by their government. Approximately one hundred twenty thousand persons, including more than seventy thousand native-born US citizens, many of them children, were thus forced to abandon their belongings, leave their homes, and live in exile for the remainder of the war. While a small number of Japanese Americans were able to move in with family or friends in other parts of the nation, the vast majority—approximately one hundred ten thousand persons—had nowhere to go. These individuals had little choice but to move into one of several government-run prison facilities, known euphemistically as "internment camps," for the duration of the conflict.²

Held as prisoners without trial, Japanese Americans faced an uncertain future during World War II. For the young, this new condition was all the more unwarranted, given their age and citizenship status. These second-generation Japanese Americans, called Nisei, were US citizens by birth. Unlike their immigrant parents, the Issei, the Nisei spoke English as a native language, had attended American schools, and had enjoyed many of the same adolescent pastimes as their non-Japanese peers. By stripping away the Nisei's constitutional rights, Executive Order 9066 fundamentally questioned their American identity.

Japanese American youth reacted to their displacement and incarceration along a wide spectrum of action and inaction that ranged from open resistance to accommodation. Some rioted, many joined the Army, a few took legal action, and others simply decided to wait the war out.³ This essay examines the strategy employed by those youngsters who sought to bolster their identities as patriotic Americans by displaying that identity on their bodies. To do this, it examines Nisei youth culture as it was presented in incarceration-camp newspapers.⁴ Throughout the war, these publications encouraged young Japanese Americans to assert a fundamentally all-American identity through their dress, demeanor, and physical appearance. Put simply, camp newspapers offered a forum for the racially suspect Nisei to portray their traditions, culture, and bodies as indistinguishable from those of whites in the larger mainstream society. Performing as Miss Liberty before an imprisoned Arkansas audience, Bessie Nakashima modeled herself as the idealized American girl next door: she was beautiful, young, patriotic, and happy. The many queen pageants, fashion shows, and

other beauty-related activities covered by incarceration-camp newspapers point to the pervasiveness of this strategy in the camps.

In addition, incarceration-camp newspapers often portrayed other racial minorities, particularly African Americans, as less patriotic and less “American” than the Nisei. Toward this end, camp newspapers printed black-face cartoon strips, reported on minstrel shows put on by Japanese American high school students, and ran editorials that critiqued elements of black youth culture. On a few occasions, these publications even questioned the place of African Americans in the United States. In this way, incarceration-camp newspapers attempted to reorganize America’s complex racial hierarchy, suggesting that the Nisei posed little threat to the United States, while African Americans—the nation’s historic racial other—should be watched with greater suspicion.

Leading feminist scholars such as Judith Butler and Susan Bordo have argued that bodies constitute social constructions that broadcast who and what a society values. Intrinsically, they argue, the human form *is* the physical embodiment of the individual and societal values, mores, and beliefs that jointly shape the body’s exterior. The study of Japanese American youth culture during World War II gives us a concrete and vivid example of such theoretical concepts at play. In school, Japanese American youngsters were taught that the United States was an egalitarian society in which all citizens enjoyed liberty, freedom, and justice. In reality, the Nisei’s lived experiences gave them access to another side of the American narrative, one in which racial politics frequently trumped individual liberties. By claiming a patriotic identity through beauty pageants, minstrel shows, and other acts of bodily adornment, Nisei youth used their bodies as a means of constructing counterarguments about who *was* and *was not* an American.

YOUTH CULTURE IN PRINT

Although the word “teenager” first appeared in print in 1941, the term described a demographic whose emergence had been decades in the making.⁵ As historian Steven Mintz writes, by the late 1930s the concept of a prolonged adolescence had emerged in the United States. Although teenagers were persons who had grown out of childhood, they were granted a temporary reprieve from adult responsibilities. Delayed maturation arose from many factors. In part, it originated as high school attendance became a more feasible option for many American youth. In addition, entrepreneurs who marketed retail goods directly to the teen market helped its members to self-identify as a distinct consumer group.⁶ Finally, young persons’ own desire for a cultural space apart

from that of both their parents and their younger siblings enabled an extended adolescence to emerge as the norm for American youth.

World War II further delayed the maturation process for many Japanese Americans. While some incarcerated teenagers left behind adolescence as a result of joining the Army or taking up another adult responsibility, for many the war years functioned as a holding period in which few big decisions were made. Indeed, for many incarcerated teenagers, full adulthood might be delayed well into their mid to late twenties because camp life made it too difficult to do things such as purchase a home or take up residence with a new husband or wife. Other factors helped to make remaining in adolescence an appealing option for Japanese American youth. As a result of their mass imprisonment, the Nisei were able to socialize and interact with large numbers of similar-aged Japanese American peers in a cultural world where parental authority had been diminished and nuclear family ties weakened. The camps thus offered a unique, but not unproblematic, space for Japanese American youth culture to expand and flourish during the war.

Discussions about the Nisei's delayed maturation at times made its way into incarceration camp newspapers. "The question of age now looms pointedly for the Nisei, who have attained the average age of twenty-one," wrote the twenty-five-year-old columnist Charles Kikuchi in July 1942. "Should Nisei marry now?" Kikuchi queried his readership—or should young people hold off on making major life decisions until after the war? By asking such questions in his monthly column for the *Tanforan Totalizer*, Kikuchi helped voice Nisei concerns about coming of age in a state of detention. Aged nineteen to thirty, his respondents most often suggested restraint, and cautioned against growing up too fast. "No, because the risk and responsibility are too much to take [on] while in a center," answered Midori Shimanouchi, the youngest respondent to Kikuchi's query. "I am single and will be for the duration." Echoing a similar concern in a more flippant manner, Sam Yanagizawa, a single, twenty-year-old male, retorted, "Now may be the time for girls to get married, but they won't get me! How can we tell if a girl can cook or do housework or what they will look like in a dress?"⁷

Writing directly to their peers, a number of young Nisei regularly contributed columns, feature articles, and cartoons to their camp press. These publications thus provided a public forum for teenagers and young adults to express their thoughts and beliefs to the camp-wide community. However, in addition to giving voice to the growing youth culture, incarceration-camp newspapers also provided a space for its critique. Through editorials, as well as their own articles and columns, older Nisei also used this medium to instruct, counsel, or

scold Nisei adolescents. Camp newspapers thus serve as an important historical record both by and about Japanese American youth culture.

Incarceration-camp newspapers do pose problems as sources, particularly because they were part of the official propaganda machine that the US government used to influence Japanese American thought during the war. Camp administrators, who believed Executive Order 9066 provided them with an opportunity to Americanize a “problem” domestic population, took care to ensure that all aspects of public life inside the camps promoted a pro-American agenda.⁸ As a result, camp newspapers often passed through multiple levels of bureaucratic censorship before going to print.⁹ At the Tanforan Assembly and Detention Center in San Bruno, California, for example, this process included gaining approval from an official Army censor, as well as a series of War Relocation Authority administrators, who at times reviewed copy more than once. This process often frustrated the *Tanforan Totalizer* staff, some of whom had worked as professional journalists before the war.¹⁰ As these exiled correspondents learned, freedom of the press was yet another right lost inside the camps. Even for those newspapers, such as the *Denson Tribune*, that operated with relative autonomy, an implicit “understanding” existed between the Japanese American publication staff and white camp administrators about which topics were off limits.¹¹

Camp newspapers must therefore be read within the context of their production. Taken at face value, they cannot tell us whether the patriotism expressed within their pages was sincere; indeed, at times it was not. They also do not reveal those items removed by the watchful eye of camp censors or preserve opinions self-censored by journalists themselves. As such, they do not represent the diversity of Japanese American thought or show how camp administrators attempted to shape all aspects of detainee life. What the camp newspapers can demonstrate, however, are the particular ways in which Japanese American youth *could* reconstruct an American identity for themselves during World War II.

Which displays of American identity did camp administrators and censors choose to support with government resources and newspaper exposure? What avenues were available to young people who wished to contest mainstream characterizations that linked their bodies with those of the purportedly grotesque Japanese enemy? How did the Nisei deemphasize their race? How did the Nisei argue that their bodies could fit into popular notions of what an American looked like? Answering these questions not only serves to deepen our understanding of Japanese American history but also allows the reader to gain an acute understanding of the boundaries that mainstream American

society has historically used to construct and police its definitions of who an American was and what the ideal American looked liked.

CREATING THE ALL-AMERICAN GIRL THROUGH BEAUTY CULTURE

During the summer of 1943, residents at the Jerome Relocation Center in Arkansas hosted a camp-wide beauty pageant. In the weeks leading up to the event, the *Denson Tribune* helped readers size up the pageant's competition by printing detailed information about each contestant, including her physical attributes and personality traits. These biographical sketches heralded the young entrants as beautiful, kind-hearted, and quintessentially all-American girls. Mary Aoto, for example, was described by the *Denson Tribune* as having a "Coca-Cola smile," while her competitor Kiyō Hiwano was named a "triple V girl" for her "vim, vigor, and vitality," which, the newspaper added, made her into "a walking breakfast-cereal ad."¹² The publication also noted the ways in which each contestant worked to make her community a better place. May Hamade, for example, was referred to as "the dream secretary in Administration Building 1," while nurses' aide Tamako Hiramī was pronounced "an ideal angel of mercy." "Males hate to get well when she is ministering," it added¹³ Because this was a beauty contest, idealized physical attributes were key to each entrant's success. Only those with a "shapely" physique, such as Yoshiko Yasunaga (the contest's tallest entrant, who had already been voted by her peers as the "Best Figured Girl in Denson High"), would be considered fit to wear the crown. Mirroring the aesthetic preferences that mainstream American culture found most appealing, contest rules stipulated that each entrant measure no less than five feet in height, be eighteen to twenty-two years in age, and appear "sylphlike in figure." By describing each contestant with effusive and descriptive praise for meeting these criteria, the *Denson Tribune* thus made an implicit argument about the profundity of female beauty inside the camp. The search for "Denson's Perfect Girl" had, it appears, uncovered not one but many young Nisei who were fitting examples of the all-American dream girl.

The Jerome Relocation Center was not alone in producing such elaborate parades of pulchritude. Modeled after the Miss America pageant held annually in Atlantic City, beauty pageants and queen contests made headlines in several camp newspapers. First crowned in 1924, by World War II the aptly named Miss America had become a widely recognizable symbol of the American dream. Adorned from head to toe in fashionable clothing, cosmetics, jewelry, high heels, and other accouterments of beauty culture, Miss America represented the advancement of the American economy, the depth of its vibrant consumer

culture, its people's high standard of living, and their happy and carefree lifestyle. The American beauty queen was thus not simply a stylish woman; she was a symbol of the abundant lifestyle Americans prided themselves on having obtained, even during a time of war. Across the nation, in small towns and large cities alike, Miss America-style beauty pageants replicated this icon of the American Dream in the context of their own communities. In this way, local beauty queens stood as idyllic symbols of patriotism and national pride.¹⁴ Thus, while beauty pageants have occurred in various American communities throughout US history without the instigation of war as a backdrop, following the attack on Pearl Harbor, wartime hysteria significantly influenced why this form of pageantry took the form it did in Japanese incarceration camps. When Midori Shimizu won the Miss Manzanar beauty contest on July 4, 1942, she was meant to embody the patriotic spirit of her entire community. Indeed, the performances of Shimizu and the thirty-four other "block queens" who participated in that day's ironic Independence Day festival from inside the confines of a prison camp publically reaffirmed that Japanese Americans remained strongly patriotic despite their own state of helpless imprisonment.¹⁵ Additionally, beauty pageants presented young Nisei females as persons whose bodies were culturally indistinguishable from America's most prominent female ideal. Indeed, they forwarded a definition of beauty that was as closely aligned as possible to white standards of what "looked good." In this way, the performance of beauty culture via the pomp and spectacle of a camp-wide beauty pageant can be understood as an attempt by the Nisei to recast their bodies in public culture.

Although their physical appearance had long worked against persons of Japanese heritage living in the United States, as a result of the Pearl Harbor attacks, race now singularly defined the Japanese American experience. On the home front, US military propaganda, government war posters, popular cartoons, cinematic representations, and multiple other forms of visual culture regularly depicted the Japanese as a race of inherently ugly and wretched people. In such depictions, the Pacific enemy's hideous physical exterior was used to symbolize the Japanese people's supposedly villainous inner character.¹⁶ Feeling the effects that this race war was having upon their own lives, many Japanese Americans faced the daunting task of disassociating their bodies from those of the Pacific enemy. Beauty pageants offered an unobtrusive means of doing so. By focusing attention on acculturated aesthetics and the performance of femininity instead of the perceived naturalness of race, beauty pageants attempted to transform "alien" others into quintessentially all-American girls. Thus in contrast to representations of Japanese Americans in the popular media,

camp newspapers put forward the Nisei beauty queen as one hundred percent American in mind, body, and spirit.

It was not just beauty but the performance of American beauty culture that proved crucial in making this distinction. As a result of World War II, ordinary Americans were introduced to diverse populations around the world—many of whom looked, acted, and lived lives very different from Americans'. Within this context, physical difference played an important role in how Americans understood their citizens to be superior to other peoples of the world. In contrast to the idealized bodies of their own beauty queens and pin-up girls, American soldiers often downplayed the looks of women in the Pacific, even those of US allies, when reporting home. For example, when questioned about how American women "stacked up" with those he encountered abroad, Arthur Hammer, a GI from New Jersey, lamented, "I'll go on record stating that there is no comparison between American girls and girls in the Pacific Islands. The New Guinea natives who are reputedly the South Sea Beauties are far from beautiful. Many a GI was [as] disillusioned as I was."¹⁷ Hammer's coworker and fellow veteran, Charles Rudolph, agreed: "I ONLY saw Hula girls and the native women of the islands . . . The girls I saw in the islands have lots of personality, all of which they show—American girls wear clothes."¹⁸ Cultured aesthetics were thus shorthand for jingoistic feelings of American exceptionalism. While women in the Pacific islands were, according to this rhetoric, nakedly unattractive, the bodies of American women were adorned, even during an era of wartime rationing, with the types of material goods that only a strong consumer culture and aggressive commercial markets could produce. Indeed, Americans used US women's access to consumer goods, including lipstick, hair products, nail polish, undergarments, and fashionable clothing—even during a time of war—to demonstrate their high standard of living. Popular contrasts between the naked islander and the glamorized pin-up girl back home therefore pointed up the desirability of the latter in the popular American psyche.

Access to and aptitude in using the tools of beauty culture were thus an important part of how Nisei females laid claim to their position as fully American citizens. Indeed, while general complaints were kept to a minimum in camp newspapers, Japanese American females were allowed to express their desire for more hair salons, fashionable clothing, and other beauty aids. "It's nice of the government to issue us wearing apparel, but we're hoping that they won't be too shapeless and unbecoming," one female contributor to the *Tanforan Totalizer* announced in 1942.¹⁹ Another writer lamented in 1943 that the "permanent waves" women "rushed to get before the evacuation" had lamentably faded due to the camp's lack of adequate beauty goods and facilities. Because

curly hairstyles were in vogue in American culture during the war, hair salons were a necessity for those straight-haired Nisei who wished to fulfill popular American standards of beauty. To remedy their situation, residents of incarceration camps opened their own beauty co-ops during the war. In 1943, for example, Toshio Tomiisige, publicity manager for the Rohwer Cooperative Beauty Enterprise, announced that camp residents could now purchase machine permanents (for \$1.50) and finger waves (for \$.25), as well as facial and scalp treatments, from one of the eight beauty operators working out of the laundry room of "Barrack 42."²⁰ Likewise, popular American styles such as the Polka Curl and Feather Bob were available for purchase at the Denson Co-op Beauty Salon.

More than simply female luxuries, such treatments were envisioned as important tools the Nisei needed to define themselves as Americans. Thus, despite the fact that prisoners endured ramshackle group housing and were allowed to bring only what they could carry into the camps, commentary surrounding glitzy beautification abounded. Imprisoned communities had only meager means at their disposal, but camp newspapers always presented Nisei beauty queens as amply glamorized. When Shigeko Nakano was crowned the "Queen of Rohwer" in 1943, she was reportedly festooned at an elaborate coronation gala, which was covered in the camp newspaper for weeks in advance. As the *Rohwer Outpost* reported, more than 650 persons bought tickets to see members of the Royal Dukes Club, a camp association made up of young male residents, place a silver crown upon Nanko's head and a gold wristwatch on her arm. The Dukes also awarded the pageant's second-place finishers sterling-silver vanity sets and the title of "royal attendants."²¹ As presented in the *Rohwer Outpost*, such women in no way resembled the above GI's depictions of uncivilized or naked Pacific Islanders. Heavily adorned with consumer goods and dolled up to popular American specifications, these Nisei beauty queens served as physical proof of their group's sophisticated tastes, homegrown sensibilities, and access to the riches of the domestic economy. The execution of the art of beauty culture was thus a cultural means of reinserting Japanese Americans into a vision of national prosperity—even if this group's grasp on the American dream was in a precarious state of jeopardy.

In a setting where American identity was held at a premium, camp newspapers trod lightly on any subject that linked residents to Japanese ways of life. Prior to World War II, ethnic beauty pageants served to show how the bicultural Nisei were a blend of both Japanese and Western traditions.²² As such, kimono-clad contestants were an important part of the visual spectacle on display at these events. Yet camp newspapers make no mention of women ever wearing anything but American garb. Other historical records, however, show that

Japanese-inspired clothing, makeup, and hairstyles were indeed still donned in the camps. For example, the vivid color photography of Bill Manbo, a resident at the Heart Mountain camp in northwestern Wyoming, captured powerful images of exquisitely preened young Nisei wearing kimonos at Bon Odori, a Buddhist dance ceremony that takes place during a summertime festival intended to honor one's ancestors.²³ Thus in contrast to the syncretistic identity that such events had historically fostered, camp newspapers minimized expressions of cultural hybridity and muted Japanese expressions of femininity.

Newspaper writers, editors, and camp personnel thus crafted a careful image of proper Japanese American femininity. While beauty contests and fashion shows were touted as patriotic and morale-boosting events, a more sobering side to the glorification of American femininity also existed. In addition to praising Nisei women and girls whose bodies met mainstream American standards of attractiveness, camp papers either ignored or jeered at those whose physical characteristics, grooming, or styles of dress contradicted these norms. Indeed, at times these publications took direct aim at females who were not living up to popular American standards of femininity. For example, women who possessed *daikon ashi*, a Japanese sign of beauty that referred to the thickness and curvature of some female legs, were labeled as homely in camp newspapers. While covering a 1943 beauty pageant, the *Denson Tribune* went as far as to call *daikon ashi* a "physical distortion, which too many Nisei women are victims of."²⁴ Thus, in addition to extolling those who met popular American standards of beauty, camp newspapers policed the bodies of those who were *not* Miss America material.

The often harsh scrutiny to which the bodies of Nisei females were subject appears in both the private and public words of Charles Kikuchi, an avid diarist, letter writer, and incarceration-camp newspaper columnist. Kikuchi was a devotedly pro-American Nisei who lived at the Tanforan Assembly Center in Northern California and the Gila River Relocation Center in Arizona before enlisting in the Army. On April 9, 1942, Kikuchi wrote to his sister Mariko, who was among the first wave of Nisei selected by the government to move out of the segregated camps and relocate in Chicago, where she would live alongside non-Japanese Americans.²⁵ In writing to Mariko, Charles expressed his concern that those Nisei chosen to live outside the camps might not fully appreciate the role they were to play in the politics of community representation. Kikuchi noted to his sister that, as persons living alongside whites, "It is up to people like you who have to prove to other Americans that we are Americans too." Probing Mariko for specific information about the impression female resettlers were making, Kikuchi bluntly asked, "What are the Yabos [a slang term for

both Japanese America women and their breasts] like in Chicago? Do they have buck teeth, horn-rimmed glasses, and dai-kon ashii [*sic*] too?"²⁶ Thus in his characteristically crude style, Kikuchi voiced his concern that the first Nisei to leave the camps might be playing into white stereotypes about the peculiarity of Japanese Americans.

Charles Kikuchi's public remarks were similarly proscriptive. Writing under the pen name "CK," his gossip column for the *Tanforan Totalizer* periodically implored camp females to improve their appearances. On July 25, 1942, for instance, CK chastised one group for their poor execution of the art of beauty culture. According to him, Nisei females were misapplying makeup, hair creams, and fragrances. In addition, he claimed that the group suffered from "surplus avoirdupois," a term he used to suggest that they were unbecomingly overweight. Indeed, CK further shamed the group by writing, "Girls, you shouldn't buy too much candy and ice cream at the canteen. You are getting fat. Maybe it will be all right if you run around the track at 5:30 a.m. like the Shimanouchi sisters."²⁷ Thus, while being a beauty queen might gain a resident a positive write-up in her local incarceration-camp newspaper, a negative spotlight could also be cast upon any young female who did not shape up to predominant white middle-class standards of attractiveness.

Charles Kikuchi was not alone in doling out public reprimands, as middle-class dicta about embodying the all-American girl abound in camp newspapers. Several such evaluations appeared in the "With the Womenfolk" feature of the *Tanforan Totalizer*. While Lillian Ota, the sole female member of the publication's editorial staff, wrote her column specifically for female residents, she often featured male guest contributors who gave female readers their opinions on appropriate cosmetic use (chastising those who wore too much make-up), the display of ladylike behaviors (bemoaning females who smoked cigarettes in public), and general appearance (stating their preference for a "feminine and well-groomed" look, as opposed to that of those females who wore slacks).²⁸ While validation for attaining male approval might have been a self-affirming, and even empowering, experience for some young Nisei adolescents who were trying to find their place in the world during a period of extreme instability, others surely found such attention stressful and unwarranted. Already outcasts because of their race, many other females would surely have found rejection at the hands of their own people an added psychic blow.

In rare instances, residents spoke out against the rampant critique of female bodies in the press. Incensed by the comments of "Nobby," a male high school-aged columnist, "some griped readers" wrote a letter to the editor of the *Tanforan Totalizer* publicly expressing their ire. "Nobby has gone too far in his

column, criticizing other people, especially girls and mess-hall workers," they stated. Taking direct aim at the jokes Nobby had made about the appearance of female residents, they continued their letter by asserting, "A mere fourteen-year[old] child has no right to tell the girls how and what to wear. What business is it of his to comment [on] and insult other people's figures?"²⁹ Female bodies were thus an issue of notable conversation in camp newspapers. In addition to serving as a forum where female residents could demonstrate their similarity to mainstream American definitions of femininity, beauty culture also served as a site where cultural politics endogenous to Japanese American communities played out.

As the scholar Valerie Matsumoto has explained, in some ways the experience of incarceration gave adolescents more options in their social lives, as it shifted power dynamics away from the control of paternalistic nuclear family units. Increased peer-group activity, the relaxation of parental authority, and the availability of paid work for young females meant that Nisei adolescents paradoxically enjoyed new avenues for self-expression in the camps.³⁰ However, as these examples of beauty mongering and body policing demonstrate, the diminished powers that fathers held over daughters did not mean that Nisei females were freed from all forms of patriarchal control over their bodies. As the comments of male contributors to camp newspapers make clear, the pressure to stylize female bodies in accordance with white, middle-class definitions of beauty remained strong inside the camps.

This phenomenon was consistent with national trends. Indeed, as the scholar Joan Jacobs Brumberg has argued, by the early twentieth century American girls had come to form self-identities that valued physical perfection over the development of inner qualities such as moral or spiritual perfection. As the protective powers that families had traditionally exerted over their daughters diminished and the power of national advertising campaigns grew, many American girls became increasingly accustomed to an endless cycle of dieting, exercising, and other "body projects" that linked their self-worth to their ability to embody commercially produced standards of heterosexual attractiveness.³¹ For young Japanese American girls, this pressure was amplified by war and a prison culture that linked ideal female bodies with patriotism and community empowerment. Not only did the girl who found herself "too fat," "too short," or "too flat-chested" sadden herself, camp newspapers suggested, she also let down her community and her nation.

In 1943, a Japanese American soldier told the *Denson Tribune* that although his military training involved hard work, it was all worth it when he socialized at base parties with "pretty and perfumed" residents at the Jerome and

Rohwer camps. He even suggested that his fellow soldiers had been pleasantly surprised when the same girls he had remembered as plain and unbecoming “dollored” themselves up for a dance held at his military-training base. Further encouraging these young Nisei females to keep up their newfound looks, the soldier assured them, “You’re women worth fighting for. If you don’t believe us, ask the hundreds of dripping guys who bumped you around the jam-packed service-club floor.”³² Thus, just as a Japanese American male could, through military service, use his body to protect the United States, the young Nisei female could contribute her all to the war effort by cultivating her beauty and thus “giving the boys something to fight for.” In this way, the body became a symbol of Japanese American political aspirations and a instrument of Nisei self-determination during World War II.

RECASTING THE RACIAL OTHER THROUGH BOY CULTURE AND BLACKFACE

Portraying Japanese American males as patriotic and loyal citizens was in many ways an even more fraught political project than the reciprocal act for Nisei females. During the war, popular discourses about American manliness were symbolized through images of the muscular, white, male body.³³ Conversely, the mainstream press regularly used negative characterizations of the Japanese male body to represent evil and wickedness.³⁴ Attempts to reconstruct the Nisei male body, therefore, had to be undertaken with extreme caution, so as not to compete with notions of white male power. As such, efforts to recast the Nisei male as patriotic and loyal often ended up playing into American stereotypes that had long emasculated Asian American men vis-à-vis their white counterparts.³⁵

These processes began even prior to Roosevelt’s issuance of Executive Order 9066. On February 2, 1942, for example, the *Seattle Times* printed an exchange between the famous American cartoonist Ham Fisher and William Hosokawa, secretary of the Seattle branch of the Japanese American Citizens League, a prominent civil rights organization. In his letter, Hosokawa asked Fisher about the possibility of including a few patriotic Nisei soldiers in his famous *Joe Palooka* cartoon series. Started in 1921 and published in several hundred US newspapers by World War II, Fisher’s comic strip chronicled the exploits of “Joe,” an exceedingly muscular, handsome, and blonde American boxing champion turned GI.³⁶ “We have seen the fine example Joe has set in the way of clean American living and unselfish patriotism,” Hosokawa wrote to Fisher, “and now we feel that Joe can help us with our particular problem.”³⁷ The leader then proposed that it might “be a great step toward national unity if

Joe could meet one or two . . . American-born Japanese in the Army so that the general public will realize that we of this group are doing our part in national defense." In outlining the specific image he had in mind, Hosokawa was careful not to suggest a character that would compete with the white male protagonist. As Hosokawa described:

Joe would find these Japanese Americans slighter of stature than other Americans. They would have straight black hair, and perhaps slightly slanting eyes. But the most outstanding thing about him would be his language, which would be as American as swing . . . He would be interested in all the mischief and fun that his buddies would be. He would be in complete accord with Joe when Joe declared on January 9 that it was like choosing between a skunk, a rattlesnake, or a garbage can to try to determine "who's the scummiest—the Japs, the Nazis, or the Fascists."³⁸

Hosokawa thus encouraged Fisher to present the young Nisei soldier as a sidekick of sorts for the popular American hero. Fisher obliged this request by creating "Togo," a Nisei soldier whom Joe saluted. A smaller version of the white American lead, this fictionalized Japanese American male showed his allegiance to the United States through his speech, dress, and demeanor, as well as his abhorrence for the Japanese.

Nisei cartoonists who created comic strips for their incarceration-camp newspapers took an analogous approach. Like Togo, their protagonists were similarly non-threatening. For example, Chris Ishii, a young animator who had worked for the Disney studio before the war, created the *Lil' Neebo* (Little Nisei Boy) cartoon strip for the *Santa Anita Pacemaker* and the *Granada Pioneer*. Drawn as a skinny, smiling young kid with huge buckteeth and hair pointing in every direction, Neebo coped with camp life playfully and patriotically. He waved soldiers off to war, decked himself out in oversized Pilgrim regalia for Thanksgiving, played sports, and otherwise found himself at the center of camp life with his trusty pet snake, rabbit, and turtle.³⁹ George Akimoto, another detainee in his early twenties, similarly created the *Lil' Dan'l* (short for Little Daniel Boone) cartoon strip for the *Rohwer Outpost*. Akimoto's character wore a raccoon-skin cap, made the outdoors his home, and served as a wholesome role model for camp youth. Reportedly popular among Nisei boys, who attempted to mimic their actions and behavior, *Lil' Neebo* and *Lil' Dan'l* celebrated an idealized American boyhood rife with adventure, imagination, and happiness.⁴⁰ By creating comic-strip protagonists who were male children as opposed to full-grown adult men, Ishii and Akimoto guarded against the production of a Japanese American male role model that might in any way be interpreted as hostile or aggressive.

Outside the camps, Nisei males faced the real threat of violence at the hands of their fellow Americans. As Sergeant Ben Kurokii (who was awarded a Distinguished Flying Cross and participated in over thirty combat missions in the European, African, and Pacific theaters) noted in a 1944 speech, "I don't know for sure if it's safe to walk the streets of my own country."⁴¹ Not surprisingly, camp newspapers urged Nisei males to craft an innocuous, all-American identity. Boys were encouraged to play baseball, join the Boy Scouts, and, as soon as they were old enough, to join the United States military. For those who did not, the politics of respectability became even more important. Thus, as with Japanese American girls, the way in which adolescent males stylized their bodies became an issue of community concern.

In one particularly notable editorial, Ayako Noguchi, a female columnist for the *Denson Tribune*, wrote a scathing critique of male clothing styles she considered offensive and dangerous. In her 1943 article "Behavior and Unconventional Dress of Denver Nisei Zoot Suit Boys Decried," Noguchi related the personal sense of "shock" and "disgust" she felt while traveling through Utah and Colorado. It was there, she reported, that she had seen young Japanese American males dressed in "complete zoot attire" for the first time.⁴² The zoot suit, a clothing trend popularized by working-class African American, Mexican American, and Italian American males in the 1930s and 1940s, engendered explicitly political connotations for its wearer. During a period of war-time rationing, many middle-class white Americans considered the zoot suit (which was usually comprised of an oversized coat, billowing pants, and other intentionally ostentatious accessories) to be excessive and gaudy. Partially in response to this assessment, rebellious African American cliques, such as the group that included young Malcolm Little (later Malcolm X), wore the zoot suit as a deliberate act of defiance.⁴³ Because popular associations linked the zoot suit to male delinquency and minority politics, it was an especially risky clothing choice for Japanese Americans.

Fears of negative racial and class associations greatly informed Noguchi's assessment of proper male attire. It was the "clean-cut" teenager, not the elaborately stylized zoot-suit "thug," that she wished Nisei males to emulate. Indeed, she noted being particularly ashamed after seeing one Japanese American attend a "respectable" social gathering in Salt Lake City dressed in "tight ankle trousers, a black drape coat which covered much of his small chassis, a huge bow-tie, [and] a zoot boot topped with an enormous chapeau." It made Noguchi particularly furious when "even the colored and Mexican" youth she observed were dressed in more "conventional" attire than the "rowdy, cheap, and shiftless" groups of Nisei "hoodlums" wearing the zoot style. According

to Noguchi, donning such “unconventional” forms of dress, particularly in the presence of whites, threatened to further delegitimize the position of Japanese Americans in white persons’ eyes. Indeed, she recalled feeling especially “sick in the stomach” after a “native Coloradoan” queried her as to whether “all of the Nisei fellows dress like that in the camp.” Closing her article with a call to arms, Noguchi insisted that adolescent males, who were now resettling outside of the camps for schooling, military service, and other job opportunities, be “ambassadors of good will for the remainder of the evacuees who eventually intend to leave camp.”⁴⁴

Thus, just as mainstream, middle-class notions of respectability were stressed for Japanese American girls, the advice given to Nisei boys was also highly circumspect. For both Charles Kikuchi, who advised Nisei females, and Ayako Noguchi, who advised Nisei males, the common denominator in their message to young Japanese Americans was to craft a look as palatable as possible to the white eye. The constraints of censorship, however, make it important to note that even those Nisei who advocated a staunchly pro-American appearance in camp newspapers should not be regarded as uncritical proxies for the interests of the US government. Indeed, the anti-zoot-suit columnist Ayako Noguchi did not bow completely to all white cultural traditions in her own personal life. Despite camp administrators’ massive campaigns to Christianize detainees during the war, Noguchi was among the principle organizers of the Young Buddhists Association, a group that helped to keep Japanese worship traditions alive in the camps. The head of one of the largest Nisei organizations of any kind in the country, she thus practiced a religious tradition that many white Americans would have considered as peculiar and un-American as the zoot suit.⁴⁵ Similarly, historian John Howard has written about a group of Nisei writers for the *Rohwer Outpost* who secretly used that newspaper’s production supplies to cut a hole in their prison’s fence, after which time they returned to the newspaper office and wrote an editorial encouraging readers not to take part in similar acts of disruption.⁴⁶ Such examples show that the articles printed in camp newspapers cannot by themselves reveal the full range of attitudes held by the incarcerated, even those persons penning purportedly pro-American propaganda.

What this historical record can show, however, are the ways in which Japanese Americans were allowed to recast their race in the context of a hegemonic system created, controlled, and overseen by whites. Incarceration-camp newspapers thus map the intersection of Japanese interests and white control. Within this world, lambasting the culture of other American racial minorities served as an acceptable means for Japanese Americans to challenge their

degraded position in the United States. Unable to question either white authority or their own incarceration, the writers for incarceration-camp newspapers instead set their sights upon elevating their position vis-à-vis black Americans. Thus, by working within America's multi-tiered racial hierarchy, camp newspapers presented Japanese Americans as model citizens while simultaneously denigrating the bodies and culture of African Americans.

The depictions of African Americans found in camp newspapers were hackneyed and clichéd; these narratives took as their principal inspiration the same representations that whites had historically used to demean the black body. In literature, cinema, music, art, advertising, and virtually every other form of visual media and popular culture, white Americans had long presented black Americans as naturally inferior. These representations portrayed dull-witted African American characters with enormous lips, unkempt hair, and pitch-black skin tones. Black men were often presented as clownish "Sambos," while women were cast as large and unattractive "Mammies" who acted more masculine than their effeminate husbands.⁴⁷ Camp newspapers garishly reproduced these stock characters. The *Denson Tribune*, for instance, published its own blackface cartoon strip. Created by the prisoner Harry Kuwada, the *Pete and Zeke* cartoon series mirrored the buffoonery, foolhardiness, and gender-role reversal characteristic of white representations of African Americans. In an October 19, 1943, cartoon entitled "Dome Defense," for example, Kuwada drew Pete and Zeke with goggling eyes, protruding lips, and extremely dark skin. The title characters also wore oversized bowties and hats that mockingly invoked the zoot-suit style. Suggesting the men's cursory education, Pete asked Zeke a series of questions in crude dialect. These included, "How come you is so black, Zeke?" and "How come you drinks milk?" To which Zeke responds that the "doc sez" he should drink milk to strengthen his bones, further noting that "I gotta have a hard bone head, the way my wife hits me!"⁴⁸ Produced not by whites but by a Japanese American imprisoned in the Deep South, this reproduction of racist stereotypes is striking.

Nisei children and youth were often used as vehicles for the expressions of such racist sentiments and imaginings. On August 2, 1942, for example, the *Santa Anita Pacemaker* announced that the center's "Hi-jinx" girls' club was hosting a "Southern Jamboree." At the event, Nisei youth would perform "Summertime," the lead song from *Porgy and Bess*, George Gershwin's famous folk opera about African American life, which stars an illiterate black "hussy" and a disabled African American beggar living poorly in the slums. Thus even as they slept in former horse stalls at a racetrack turned detention camp, Nisei youngsters recreated racial stereotypes that dehumanized a group with an

even longer history of racial marginalization in the United States than theirs.⁴⁹ In another example of Nisei youth playing out mature forms of bigotry, the dramatic club at Denson High School put on an "All-American Minstrel Show" in May 1944 as a part of its Arkansas "Kampus Karnival" (the spelling of which evoked the initials of America's most prominent white supremacist group, the Ku Klux Klan). At this event, students Amy Sasaki, Edith Shintaku, Tom Sugimoto, and Shiro Takemoto performed in a band they called the Inkspot Quartet—a takeoff on the popular African American jazz quartet The Inkspots. The Nisei group, however, was not playing to please black audiences. Instead, the Inkspot Quartet played John Philip Sousa's *Stars and Stripes Forever*, a score that held deep patriotic sentiment, and John Zamecnik's "Ole South (A Plantation Patrol)," a novelty piece originally composed for nineteenth-century white Mississippi audiences.⁵⁰ At this "Kampus Karnival" and other events like it, some Japanese Americans thus culturally aligned themselves with whites at the expense of black Americans.

As historians have shown, the color line that had historically ordered US society was reinforced not only through economic exploitation, political disenfranchisement, and social segregation but also through cultural means.⁵¹ Minstrel shows were, after all, a cultural expression that whites had used for over a century to mark blacks as odd, comical, and unable to fit into proper white society. Through such performances, white Americans attempted to ascribe to African Americans negative characteristics they believed white Americans did not possess. Racial stereotypes about black Americans therefore played a key role in constructing notions of whiteness itself. The use of this art form by Japanese Americans in the context of their incarceration is thus instructive. Racist imaginings served as a cultural bridge of sorts between white society and Japanese Americans. Through minstrel shows, Nisei detainees and white patrolmen and camp administrators could revel together in laughter shared at the expense of blacks. Indeed, before the closing of the Jerome Relocation Center, its newspaper reported on a blackface minstrel performance held at the camp's high school that was "participated in by Caucasians and non-Caucasians, islanders and mainlanders." An odd going-away party of sorts, the "Caucasians" that participated in this event were most likely the very camp personnel in charge of overseeing the forced detention of the Japanese Americans. Through their shared mimicry of the black body, Japanese Americans thus aligned themselves with their white oppressors, attempting to make themselves more palatable when viewed in comparison to laughable black caricatures.⁵² Just as cosmetics, fashionable clothing, and pageant crowns had been used to "make up" the bodies of Nisei beauty queens, blackface

minstrel shows were used to “make down” the bodies of black Americans. At times performed in tandem, Nisei beauty pageants and minstrel shows thereby implied that Japanese Americans held a position above African Americans in the nation’s racial pecking order.

CONCLUSION

The portrayal of Nisei youth culture in incarceration-camp newspapers was an avowedly political project in which multiple actors fashioned the Nisei body in direct response to the context of wartime imprisonment. For their part, many young detainees stylized their look as much possible in accordance with mainstream aesthetic norms in order to present an image of themselves as fully American citizens and to claim an identity currently withheld from them. Nisei columnists, cartoonists, and other contributors to incarceration-camp newspapers engaged in this pursuit with zest and a keen awareness of the larger political significance of their actions. Through its support of camp newspapers, the US government also took an interest in promoting Nisei-created role models such as Lil’ Neebo and Miss Manzanar. These popular examples of civic engagement no doubt helped to augment community cohesion and in-group social controls, thereby diminishing the possibility of a mutiny at the hands of disaffected young people in the camps. Thus, while it is not surprising that camp newspapers stressed an unabashedly pro-American identity, the ways in which these patriotic imaginings were created, produced, and publicized *are* instructive. Indeed, they show how the categorizations of race and gender were performed by a group of internal “others” in order to reposition themselves within America’s multi-tiered social hierarchy. Far from being “mere child’s play,” seemingly meaningless youthful pastimes were in fact imbued with mature messages and deep political desires.

These words and deeds also offer insights into the question of agency, the extent to which Japanese American youth were empowered by the brand of youth culture promoted in incarceration-camp newspapers. Nisei youth culture simultaneously liberated and limited those who hewed to its standards. To be sure, Nisei youth culture was empowering in that it offered Japanese American youngsters a normative place in which to envision themselves within the American narrative. Indeed, it allowed them to feel that they “fit in” somewhere—an important goal of the adolescent experience by the mid-twentieth century. However, the highly proscriptive nature of Nisei youth culture also constrained: it adopted problematic racial and gender hierarchies that mainstream American society had long used to order and rank the desirability of its citizens. In already hostile times, those whose bodies did not fit into heralded

notions of what “looked good” had few places to turn. Discarded by mainstream society and publically rejected by their peers, these youth would remain doubly trapped by the confines of camp life. An analysis of Japanese American beauty pageants and minstrel shows thus allows us an opportunity to see both the positive and the problematic consequences of using race and gender to define one’s identity.

NOTES

1. *Denson Tribune* (Jerome, AR), March 2, 1945, 8.
2. Most scholars today reject the term “internment camp,” which was used widely during World War II and by historians in the decades following World War II. Today, most have adopted less euphemistic terms—such as “incarceration camp,” “concentration camp,” and “indoctrination camp”—to describe Japanese American living conditions during the war. For the most up-to-date discussion of such terminology see Roger Daniels, “Words Do Matter: A Note on Inappropriate Terminology and the Incarceration of the Japanese Americans,” in *Nikkei in the Pacific Northwest: Japanese Americans & Japanese Canadians in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Louis Fiset and Gail M. Nomura (Seattle: Center for the Study of the Pacific Northwest and University of Washington Press, 2005).
3. For a greater discussion of the range of imprisoned children’s life experiences, see Benson Tong, “Race, Generation and Culture Among Japanese American Children and Adolescents During the Internment Era,” in *Asian American Children: A Historical Handbook and Guide* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2004).
4. Japanese Americans were housed in one of ten “Relocation Centers” run by the US War Relocation Authority for much of World War II. In addition, the US Army also operated two “Assembly Centers” in California, where individuals were briefly detained on their way to one of the more permanent camps. Each of these twelve prisons had a newspaper. This essay focuses on four newspapers—the *Denson Tribune*, the *Rohwer Outpost*, the *Santa Anita Pacemaker*, and the *Tanforan Totalizer*. However, in a few instances it samples more widely from other camps; Jerome and Rohwer were located in the segregated South and as such are ideal places to examine Nisei assessments of black culture. In addition, the two California Assembly Centers were chosen because they represented the voices of the widest array of internees later scattered across the ten permanent camps.
5. Steven Mintz, *Huck’s Raft: A History of American Childhood* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 252.
6. See, for instance, Lisa Jacobson, *Raising Consumers: Children and the Mass Market in the Early Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).
7. “Your Opinion Please,” *Tanforan Totalizer* (Tanforan, CA), July 4, 1942, 7.
8. John Howard, “Gendered Interventions: Americanization and Protestant Evangelism Under Japanese American Incarceration,” *Transforming Anthropology* 14, no. 2 (Oct. 2006): 187–95; David Yoo, *Growing Up Nisei: Race, Generation, and Culture among Japanese Americans of California, 1924–49* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 103.
9. Takeya Mizuno, “Censorship in a Different Name: Press ‘Supervision’ in Wartime Japanese American Camps, 1942–1943,” *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 88, no. 1 (March 2011): 121–41.

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10. Yoo, *Growing Up Nisei*, 98.
11. Howard, "Gendered Interventions," 187–95.
12. *Denson Tribune*, May 14, 1943, 6.
13. *Denson Tribune*, May 14, 1943, 9.
14. For a greater discussion of mainstream beauty culture, see Kathy Peiss, *Hope in a Jar: The Making of America's Beauty Culture* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1998); Melissa A. McEuen, *Making War, Making Women: Femininity and Duty on the American Home Front, 1941–1945* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2011); Maria Elena Buszek, *Pin-up Grrrls: Feminism, Sexuality, Popular Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006);
15. "Queen Contest," *Manzanar Free Press* (Manzanar, CA), July 4, 1942, 1.
16. For a greater discussion of this phenomenon, see John Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986); Robert B. Westbrook, *Why We Fought: Forging American Obligations in World War II* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Books, 2004); Christina S. Jarvis, *The Male Body at War: American Masculinity during World War II* (Dekalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2004).
17. Shirley Levine, "The Maiden Forum," *The Inquirer* (Bayonne, NJ), July 1946, 2.
18. Shirley Levine, "The Maiden Forum," *The Inquirer*, July 1946, 2.
19. *Tanforan Totalizer* 1, no. 6. (June 20, 1942), 5.
20. *Rohwer Outpost* (Rohwer, AR), April 7, 1943.
21. "Coronation Bulletin," *Rohwer Outpost*, February 28, 1943, 1.
22. Ethnic beauty pageants have a long history in the United States. For a deeper analysis of the role that beauty pageants have historically played in Japanese American communities, see Rebecca Chiyoko King-O'Riain, *Pure Beauty: Judging Race in Japanese American Beauty Pageants* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2006); Lon Kurashige, *Japanese American Celebration and Conflict: A History of Ethnic Identity and Festival, 1934–1990* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Christine Yano, *Crowning the Nice Girl: Gender, Ethnicity, and Culture in Hawaii's Cherry Blossom Festival* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006). While World War II dramatically shaped the ways in which this cultural tradition played out within the Japanese American community, wartime hysteria was of course not a prerequisite for the creation of such events. For an analysis of the origins and meaning of ethnic beauty pageants among other groups of Asian Americans, see Judy Tzu-Chun Wu, "'Loveliest Daughter of Our Ancient Cathay!': Representations of Ethnic and Gender Identity in the Miss Chinatown USA Beauty Pageant," in *Beauty and Business: Commerce, Gender, and Culture in Modern America*, ed. Philip Scranton (New York: Routledge, 2001); Nhi T. Lieu, "Remembering 'The Nation' through Pageantry: Femininity and the Politics of Vietnamese Womanhood in the 'Hoa Hau Ao Dai' Contest," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 21, no. 1/2, "Asian American Women" (2000): 127–51.
23. *Colors of Confinement: Rare Kodachrome Photographs of Japanese American Incarceration in World War II*, ed. Eric L. Muller (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).
24. *Denson Tribune*, May 18, 1943, 1.

25. For an excellent examination of Nisei life in Chicago, see Charlotte Brooks, "In the Twilight Zone between Black and White: Japanese American Resettlement and Community in Chicago, 1942–1945," *Journal of American History* 86, no. 4 (Mar. 2000): 1655–87.
26. Charles Kikuchi, *The Kikuchi Diary: Chronicle From an American Concentration Camp: The Tanforan Journals of Charles Kikuchi* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1973), 50–51.
27. *Tanforan Totalizer*, July 25, 1942, 8.
28. "With the Womenfolk," *Tanforan Totalizer*, August 15, 1942, 8.
29. "Letters to the Editor," *Tanforan Totalizer*, August 1, 1942, 6.
30. Valerie Matsumoto, "Japanese American Women during World War II," in *Women's America: Refocusing the Past*, 7th ed., eds. Linda Kerber, Jane Sherron De Hart, and Cornelia Dayton (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 2:445.
31. Joan Jacobs Brumberg, "Introduction," *The Body Project: An Intimate History of American Girls* (New York: Random House, 1997).
32. *Denson Tribune*, August 17, 1943, 3.
33. Jarvis, *The Male Body at War*, 44, 155.
34. Jarvis, *The Male Body at War*, 126; Dower, *War without Mercy*, 5.
35. While the literatures on Japanese American femininity and African American masculinity have grown immensely over the past few decades, few works deal critically with Japanese American masculinity. Those few that do include David Eng, *Racial Castration: Managing Masculinity in Asian America* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001); Mire Koikari, "'Japanese Eyes, American Heart': Politics of Race, Nation and Masculinity in Japanese American Veteran's WWII Narratives," *Men and Masculinities* 12, no. 5 (2010): 547–64; Yen Le Espiritu, "All Men are *Not* Created Equal: Asian Men in US History," *Men's Lives*, 4th ed., eds. Michael S. Kimmel and Michael A. Messner (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1998), 35–43.
36. Coulton Waugh, *The Comics* (Jackson, MS: University of Mississippi Press, 1991).
37. "Nisei Loyal, Joe Palooka Salutes Members in Army," *Seattle Times*, February 2, 1942, 17.
38. "Nisei Loyal," *Seattle Times*, 17.
39. *Santa Anita Pacemaker* (Santa Anita, CA), May 28, 1941, 1.
40. Howard, *Concentration Camps on the Home Front*, 159.
41. *Seattle Times*, May 2, 1944, 3.
42. *Denson Tribune*, June 18, 1943, 5.
43. For a greater discussion of the zoot suit and its meanings for young people of color, see Robin D. G. Kelley, "The Riddle of the Zoot: Malcolm Little and Black Cultural Politics During World War II," in *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class* (New York: Free Press, 1996); Catherine Sue Ramirez, *The Woman in the Zoot Suit: Gender, Nationalism, and the Cultural Politics of Memory* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009).
44. Ayako Noguchi, "Behavior and Unconventional Dress of Denver Nisei Zoot Suit Boys Decried," *Denson Tribune*, June 18, 1943, 5.

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45. Howard, *Concentration Camps on the Home Front*, 164.
46. *Ibid.*, 91.
47. For a greater discussion of the history of such imagery in mainstream American culture, as well as black reactions to such trends, see Henry Louis Gates, "The Trope of a New Negro and the Reconstruction of the Image of the Black," *Representations* 24, "Special Issue: America Reconstructed, 1840–1940" (Autumn 1988): 129–55; Donald Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks: An Interpretive History of Blacks in American Films* (New York: Viking Press, 1973).
48. *Denson Tribune*, October 19, 1943, 2.
49. *Santa Anita Pacemaker*, August 2, 1942.
50. *Denson Tribune*, May 2, 1944.
51. See, for example, Lawrence Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).
52. *Denson Tribune*, May 2, 1944.