



**Karen M. Inouye.** *The Long Afterlife of Nikkei Wartime Incarceration.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016. 256 pp. \$55.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8047-9574-6.

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The mass incarceration of the people of Japanese ancestry during World War II has made an immeasurable impact on Japanese American history. The gross injustice and infringement upon civil liberties, carried out by the United States government against its own citizens and residents, forever changed the relationship between the minority group, the local community, and the federal government. Karen M. Inouye's timely work explores long-term effects of Japanese American incarceration, which community members continued to feel many years after the war's end. In fact, as Inouye argues, the long afterlife of the camp is still ongoing, shaping ways in which Americans, including both Nikkei and non-Nikkei, relate, empathize, and belong in a range of cultural and political circumstances. Her insightful look into the historical process that unfolded long after the war is a welcome addition to the scholarship, which has largely focused on many facets of the mass imprisonment and its aftermaths in the years immediately following the war.

As Inouye's frequent references to the "persistence of memory" (p. 4) of Nikkei wartime incarceration make clear, people's emotional lives are important for her analysis. At the same time, she plainly states how her study is not about people's subjectivity per se, but about "moments when ... [memories of] wartime incarceration erupted or

were redirected into concrete action" (p. 9). It is suitable, then, that she selects historical cases in which personal memories have generated publicly visible effects and transformed Americans' understanding of the past concretely. Indeed, after decades of silence and reticence, many Japanese Americans began to speak about their experiences of incarceration with a sense of purpose and responsibility. They wanted their memories to spur a better, more empathic engagement with history by the public; this aspiration is where Inouye's eyes are firmly set.

In her particularly richly documented first two chapters, Inouye explores the intellectual trajectory of the sociologist Tamotsu Shibutani, as well as the political career of the US representative and former secretary of transportation Norman Mineta. As a participant in the Japanese American Evacuation and Resettlement Study, the controversial wartime research on mass incarceration, Shibutani took a long time before beginning to examine his own experiences at the Tule Lake camp in his scholarly work. It was a challenging, and yet fulfilling, task for Shibutani to weave together personal observations that he made as a prisoner, and a coherent, overarching sociological theory applicable to anyone deprived of equal rights and opportunities. Mineta's career, too, reveals his effort to bring equity not only to Japa-

nese Americans but also to other marginalized groups. Through his advocacy for issues such as the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, the protection of Muslim- and Arab-Americans in the aftermath of September 11, 2001, and the reopening of the Heart Mountain camp as a museum in 2011, Mineta became something of a master of using personal experiences as a tool for building political agency and alliance.

In the remaining three chapters, Inouye delves into fascinatingly divergent subjects—Nikkei Canadians’ self-reflection about their wartime experiences and their emergent identity as Japanese Canadians in the 1980s, the beginning in the late 1960s of the pilgrimages to former camp sites by younger Japanese Americans who had not experienced the mass incarceration firsthand, and our contemporary practice of granting retroactive diplomas to Japanese Americans who had been forced to terminate their educational pursuits because of the imprisonment. The chapter on Japanese Canadians considers the process of their group identity formation by highlighting both differences and similarities that they discovered between Canadian and American Nikkei experiences during the war. Inouye characterizes the resultant Nikkei identity in Canada as manifesting “ambivalent transnationality” (p. 111). The following chapter, about the Japanese American pilgrimage to the concentration camps, emphasizes the empathic connections that gave rise to and were fostered by interracial and intergenerational alliances. Black activism was an important impetus for young Nikkei to begin their search for their own voice, while visits to historic sites of injustice opened up opportunities for old and young Japanese Americans to come together. In the final chapter, on the retroactive granting of college degrees, Inouye argues that, although they do not carry any practical values for their recipients, these belated recognitions provide “younger graduates with an opportunity to reflect on ... the injustice suffered by their much older Nikkei classmates” (p. 151). As elsewhere in the book, it is

“empathic agency” (p. 12) that brings together insiders and outsiders of the community and memory and serves as the central force of Inouye’s analysis.

In this well-conceived and carefully researched book, the concept of empathic agency is most intriguing but perhaps also where the study falls somewhat short of its promise. Although the first chapter on Shibutani depicts his career as embodying “a scholarly kind of empathy” (p. 54), a full discussion of empathic agency does not come until halfway through the second chapter. This delay may be because of the more obviously empathic effects that Mineta, the subject of chapter 2, has generated. Nonetheless, it would have broadened the discussion of historical empathy if Inouye had engaged with what “scholarly” empathy might entail more broadly and comparatively. Both politicians and scholars might provoke historical empathy, but the different kinds of influence that they have on public discourse deserves more careful attention. I also found Inouye’s analysis of transnationality among Canadian Nikkei somewhat confined. Although I am persuaded that their perception of the war years has been formed by frequent comparisons to their US counterparts, I also take note of how American Nikkei identity, too, was spurred by transnational comparisons and connections. At the beginning of the communal camp pilgrimage in the 1960s, for instance, the Asian American civil rights movement arose out of a compelling sense of comradeship with people of Vietnam, Cambodia, Okinawa, and China. In light of this historical trajectory, how was Canadian transnationalism unique to the north side of the border? How would that uniqueness expand our transnational approach to histories of nation-states? A discussion along these lines would have not only sharpened the book’s theoretical contribution, but also expanded its reach.

These critiques aside, *The Long Afterlife of Nikkei Wartime Incarceration* makes an impor-

tant contribution to the scholarship about Nikkei history and the study of memory and activism. Inouye's writing and analysis are admirably empathic, making her work readable and engaging. Anyone concerned about civil rights violations by the federal government, which starkly shapes both the past and the present, will likely find this work meaningful and inspiring.

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