

LOOK TOWARD THE MOUNTAIN, EPISODE 6 TRANSCRIPT

ROB BUSCHER: Welcome to *Look Toward the Mountain: Stories from Heart Mountain Incarceration Camp*, a podcast series about life inside the Heart Mountain Japanese American Relocation Center in northwestern Wyoming during World War II. I'm your host, Rob Buscher. This podcast is presented by the Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation and is funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

ROB BUSCHER: The sixth episode titled "Organizing Resistance" will explore how the Japanese American tradition of organizing evolved in camp to become a powerful resistance movement that dominated much of the Heart Mountain experience in its later years.

INTRO THEME

ROB BUSCHER: For much of history, Japanese traditional society was governed by the will of its powerful military warlords. Although in principle the shogun and his vassal daimyo ruled by force, much of daily life within the clearly delineated class system of Japanese society relied on consensus-building and mutual accountability. Similar to European Feudalism, the Japanese Han system created a strict hierarchy that privileged the high-born samurai class over the more populous peasantry who made up nearly 95% of the total population. Despite their low rank, food-producing peasants were considered of higher status than the merchant class, who were perceived to only benefit themselves.

ROB BUSCHER: During the Edo period, peasants were organized into *Gonin-gumi* - groups of five households who were held mutually accountable for their share of village taxes, which were paid from a portion of the food they produced. If their gonin-gumi did not meet their production quota, all the peasants in their group would be punished. Members of each Gonin-gumi also provided other households within their grouping with assistance in times of hardship. This is one example of the communal tendency within Japanese society - in which decisions are generally based on the greater good of the society at large.

ROB BUSCHER: Even after the Han system of Japanese Feudalism was abolished in the Meiji Restoration of 1868, neighborhood associations remained an important aspect of domestic life. Unfortunately communalism could also be leveraged for bad, particularly when collectivist thought became dictated by Japanese military propaganda.

ROB BUSCHER: In 1940 during the leadup to war with the United States as the Japanese Imperial Army sought to consolidate their control over the Japanese civilian population these associations were formally sanctioned as *tonarigumi* - which became responsible for allocating rationed goods, distributing government bonds, fire fighting, and maintaining public health. In the later years of the Pacific War, tonarigumi became increasingly politicized, acting as the eyes and ears of the *Kempeitai* - Japanese military police - who by the end of the war were arresting people who expressed anti-war sentiment.

ROB BUSCHER: In the Japanese American context, this tendency towards communalism proved a great asset to the Issei who immigrated to the United States. Compared to most other immigrant groups, Japanese were among the most productive organizers. Prior to the wartime incarceration, Issei established at least 1,500 community organizations on the West Coast. These included farmers and merchants associations, Buddhist organizations, and groups of people who had immigrated from the same regions of Japan.

ROB BUSCHER: Community organizing helped the Japanese immigrants navigate their way through life in an often-unforgiving society. Many of their white neighbors openly discriminated against them at a time when they were neither permitted to vote nor own land.

ROB BUSCHER: Prior to the war, growing numbers of Nisei had developed an interest in local politics. Although it was inconceivable for a non-white candidate to run for elected office in California or elsewhere in the West coast during that era, the Japanese American community created several citizen advocacy groups in the early decades of the 1900s. Among these were the American Loyalty League of San Francisco, Seattle Progressive Citizens League, and American Born Citizens Club in Santa Barbara.

ROB BUSCHER: In 1929 four of the leading Japanese American organizations merged together to form the Japanese American Citizens League, a civil rights organization that advocated on behalf of the Japanese American community. At the time of its inception, membership was limited to US citizens of Japanese

ancestry, in part to distance themselves from their non-citizen Issei parents in a bid to have their opinions as constituents taken more seriously by elected officials.

ROB BUSCHER: Operating as a national membership organization with dozens of chapters located throughout the country's Japanese American populated West Coast regions, each JAACL chapter elected its officials who would in turn elect the leaders of its national governing body at conventions held biannually from 1930 onwards.

ROB BUSCHER: Outsiders marveled at the number of Japanese Americans clubs and organizations. From a Western perspective that prioritized individualism, these community organizations were misunderstood as signs of weakness and possible disloyalty to the United States.

ROB BUSCHER: Curtis Munson, a Midwestern industrialist was commissioned by President Franklin Roosevelt to study the West Coast Japanese American community prior to the war. Munson offered the following commentary in his 1941 report.

CURTIS MUNSON VOICE OVER: The Japanese is the greatest joiner in the world. To take care of this passion he has furnished himself with ample associations to join.

ROB BUSCHER: After the December 7, 1941, attack on Pearl Harbor, government officials viewed the multitude of Japanese American community organizations as a potential threat.

ROB BUSCHER: California Attorney General Earl Warren openly stoked fears about these organizations and how they might be harboring spies and saboteurs, as indicated by his testimony to the Tolan Committee in February 1942.

EARL WARREN VOICE OVER: The actions of individual Japanese have been in the past very largely controlled by the organizations to which they belong. Although the several organizations in the Japanese communities are concerned with different fields of activity, they are all closely integrated by means of interlocking directorates and officers, honorary advisers, and interlocking membership among the ordinary members.

EARL WARREN VOICE OVER: This organizational machinery, reaching as it does every phase of Japanese life and exercising very real control over the actions and conduct of most of the Japanese in the state, is a type of organization that is ideally adapted to carrying out a plan for mass sabotage. If the leadership of the main Japanese organizations fell into the wrong hands, it is quite conceivable that some, though certainly not all, of the Japanese organizations could be utilized for carrying on a program of sabotage and fifth-column activity.

ROB BUSCHER: Warren's suspicions proved unfounded, as not a single Japanese American was ever charged with sabotage or espionage. Nevertheless, the Japanese American capacity for organizing was levied as yet another charge against the community to justify their wartime incarceration.

ROB BUSCHER: In the aftermath of the December 7th attack on Pearl Harbor, the vast majority of Issei leaders from the many Japanese immigrant organizations were rounded up by the FBI and sent to Department of Justice Camps. JACL leadership were spared this indignity because they were perceived as a useful ally in helping build consensus among the Nisei for cooperation with the government. The January 1942 issue of Pacific Citizen, the JACL's national newspaper contained a message from JACL Executive Director Mike Masaoka that would set the tone for the organization's wartime cooperation.

MIKE MASAOKA VOICE OVER: We must gird our loins, as it were, tighten our belts, and prepare for the hardest fight in our, generation — a fight to maintain our status as exemplary Americans, who, realizing that modern war demands great sacrifices, will not become bitter or lose faith in the heritage which is ours as Americans in spite of what may come; a fight that will not be won in a week, or a month, or even, a year; a fight which will test our mettle and our courage; a fight in which we must not only make heroic sacrifices equal to or greater than those made on the battlefield but also a fight in which we will be subjected to injustices and to possibly suspicions, down-right persecution. Ours is a difficult task and yet, the very tragedy of our position becomes a great challenge: to a win our way through the ordeals ahead in such a commendable manner that we shall win for ourselves and our posterity a pinnacle in American society from which no one can ever dislodge us, or question our loyalty, or doubt our sincerity.

ROB BUSCHER: Because of the collaborationist attitude of Mike Masaoka and other JACL national officers who encouraged Japanese Americans to peacefully

cooperate with the government's plans for incarceration camps, JACL was elevated to become the community's de-facto spokesperson throughout the war years. But this would also seed much resentment towards the JACL leadership from fellow incarcerated in camp who saw their collaboration as a betrayal of the community they were meant to serve.

ROB BUSCHER: Editor of the Heart Mountain Sentinel Bill Hosokawa served as an official delegate to the Special Emergency National Conference that JACL held in Salt Lake City during November 1942. Among the topics discussed there were the Supreme Court cases of Min Yasui and Fred Korematsu - two Nisei who were being separately tried for their failure to adhere to the curfews imposed on Japanese Americans prior to the evacuation order. Although both defendants ultimately lost their appeals, these important test cases argued the constitutionality of the government's decision to forcibly remove and mass incarcerate Japanese Americans. The JACL's refusal to support either defendant was viewed by many as another betrayal.

ROB BUSCHER: In 1990 the JACL commissioned a self-investigation into its wartime past, prepared by San Francisco attorney and researcher Deborah Lim. The Lim report makes note of a ten point argument for opposition to Yasui's or anyone else's test case that Mike Masaoka presented at the 1942 emergency conference.

MIKE MASAOKA VOICE OVER: 1) cooperation with the war effort; 2) the JACL and its members had pledged total cooperation to the President; 3) cooperation with

Federal officials will cause reciprocal cooperation; 4) our contribution to the war effort is to accept all army regulations and orders; 5) public opinion is opposed to any challenges of the Army and its authority; 6) we might win the case but lose goodwill in the process; 7) any challenge might result in retaliation by the Army; 8) Attorney General Biddle said there was little chance the courts would challenge the military's authority; 9) the ACLU decided against a test case, and they are champions of civil liberties; 10) unfavorable publicity as seen in the headlines from the Yasui case.

ROB BUSCHER: Masaoka ended his argument by saying:

MIKE MASAOKA VOICE OVER: We are not giving up our rights as citizens by cooperating with the government in the evacuation programs.

ROB BUSCHER: Despite the warranted opposition to the JACL's position on wartime incarceration, their cooperation provided additional opportunities for the organization's leadership to advocate for the community in other ways during the war. They were able to leverage the goodwill gained through their cooperation with various government agencies to assist with resettlement into civilian life. Although JACL grew into a well respected member of the civil rights landscape in the postwar era, some community members have never forgiven their wartime transgressions.

ROB BUSCHER: In his book "JACL: In Quest of Justice," Bill Hosokawa summarizes the community's complicated feelings towards JACL comparing it to the popular

Japanese film Rashomon, in which a murder happens in the woods and all three parties present recount the events in a slightly different manner based on their own biased perspectives.

BILL HOSOKAWA VOICE OVER: Thus, it would seem, it is with JACL. Depending on one's perceptions, which may be colored by fulfillment or frustration, baseness or idealism, bias, common rumor or honest disagreement, the Japanese American Citizens League is many things. At the extremes of its image, JACL is either an organization chiefly responsible for the spectacular socio-economic-political success of Japanese Americans, or it is simply a clique made up of pompous, conventionneering elitists. It is an organization with an extraordinary record of accomplishment despite limited membership and resources, or a group of questionable value perennially milking the community for donations to support causes of dubious merit. It is an organization that wisely charted a course of cooperation with the federal government in the tragic Evacuation of WWII, or a group that betrayed American principles and its own constituents by abjectly urging them to cooperate in their own incarceration. What, then, is the real JACL? During its history it may have had a bit of all the characteristics attributed to it by friends and foes.

ROB BUSCHER: JACL would continue to play a major role in the lives of Heart Mountain residents throughout the war years, as Masaoka's plan to prove the loyalty of Japanese Americans included the formation of a segregated all-Japanese American troop regiment which we will revisit later in this episode.

ROB BUSCHER: Pre-war organizing had proven an important lifeline for Japanese Americans seeking business networking, and provided a social safety net for newly arrived immigrants. In the daily lives of the typical Japanese American family, the most important organizations were their places of worship, which offered a safe haven in even the least hospitable regions.

ROB BUSCHER: Religion would also prove an important beacon of hope to many during the incarceration, as incarcerated brought their religious practices with them to camp. Despite their constitutional freedom to practice religion, not all religions were treated with equal respect by the War Relocation Authority. Japanese American Christians were given their own dedicated spaces for worship starting with the first days of the assembly centers. They were encouraged by camp authorities to continue practicing their faith, viewing it as a pathway to “Americanization.”

ROB BUSCHER: Most white Americans viewed Buddhism as a strange, foreign religion. Practiced by a group of immigrants who not only looked different and used a language with a non-Roman alphabet that was illegible to the average American, Buddhism was yet another demarcation of the Japanese immigrant’s inability to assimilate into American society. Buddhism was viewed as a threat to the American way of life which in that era was synonymous with Christianity. Many of the first Japanese Americans rounded up by the FBI in the hours and days after Pearl Harbor were leaders of the Buddhist associations.

ROB BUSCHER: Duncan Ryuken Williams is a Buddhist priest and scholar whose book, *American Sutra*, focuses on the Heart Mountain experience. Williams offers insight into how the Buddhist leaders were targeted by US intelligence agencies even before the war.

DUNCAN WILLIAMS INTERVIEW: Many community leaders in Hawaii, as well as on the mainland were picked up by the FBI and among the community leaders targeted were Buddhist and Shinto priests as a category of person. The intelligence agencies: the Army G2, Office of Naval Intelligence, the O&I, and the FBI had already had Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines under surveillance for years prior to the Pearl Harbor attack.

DUNCAN WILLIAMS INTERVIEW: Files had been created on particular priests and various kinds of lists had been pre-made in case of war with Japan. And so at that time in the intelligence agencies in the late 1930s, they had these reports that analyzed the relative loyalty in case of war with Japan of Buddhist versus Christian leaders as well as people who are affiliated with one or the other religion. These types of reports and investigations and analyses in the intelligence community very much informed who was going to be on these lists.

DUNCAN WILLIAMS INTERVIEW: And so it came to be that on December 7, 1941 even before the smoke cleared at Pearl Harbor, the very first person the FBI arrests in the sweep of community leaders, is someone called Gikkyo Kuchiba he

was the head priest and so called bishop of the Honpa Hongwanji Buddhist temple in Honolulu, Hawaii.

DUNCAN WILLIAMS INTERVIEW: You know, you think, like, maybe they might target consular officials or people who had some kind of close association with one of the Japanese Imperial Army's veterans associations or somewhere where there was some logical connection between the Japanese military government and this sudden attack, but it was a Buddhist priest, the first person that was picked up. This is at 3pm on December 7, prior to the 3:30 issuance of martial law that was the basis on which the presidential warrants that had people in the so-called ABC list A-group picked up. And so that whole process started with priests of many different denominations as they were, or sects of Buddhism were picked up on the Hawaiian Islands and then not long after the roundup begins on the mainland as well.

ROB BUSCHER: Like the 19th century Chinese immigrants before them who were labeled the "Heathen Chinees", the Japanese proclivity to Buddhism was a significant factor in why many in the government had deemed them an unassimilable threat to American society. Williams continues.

DUNCAN WILLIAMS INTERVIEW: This assessment by intelligence agencies and the military about who represented a threat to national security has a much longer history that extends, quite frankly, all the way back to the late 19th century. The Chinese Exclusion Act and the lead up to that where discussions about why the

Chinese were a threat. Why they needed to be banned and excluded from the United States, had everything to do with both race and religion.

DUNCAN WILLIAMS INTERVIEW: The roots of what happened to the Japanese American community go back to that; this understanding that America is fundamentally a white Christian nation and to see people who don't fit that category as not only un-American, but in some cases anti-American, an actual threat to national security.

ROB BUSCHER: Although Buddhists were eventually granted a dedicated space to worship at Heart Mountain, camp authorities often discriminated against the non-Christian prisoners, who comprised nearly two-thirds of the prison population. Prior to being relocated to Heart Mountain, three priests and about 60 Buddhist parishioners in the Pomona assembly center gathered in August 1942 to form a congregation that would continue meeting when they arrived in Wyoming later that month.

ROB BUSCHER: In September 1942, five more priests arrived with the prisoners from Santa Anita. Together they would establish the Heart Mountain Buddhist Federation, composed of many distinct sects that merged into a single non-denominational congregation and who shared the same place of worship. While congregants initially met for a single combined service, eventually different sects began scheduling their own services according to their unique traditions. Nevertheless, cohabitating the temple barracks allowed for a greater

collaboration between the various sects than was previously common before the war.

ROB BUSCHER: Central to Heart Mountain's Buddhist community was a Zen priest named Nyogen Senzaki, who was born in Siberia. Senzaki began practicing in his barrack with a sympathetic Buddhist family at a time when only the Christians were given a dedicated space to worship. Eventually Buddhists from around the camp coalesced around him and his makeshift temple service. Senzaki's practice eventually gained the approval of camp administrators, as Duncan Williams elaborates.

DUNCAN WILLIAMS INTERVIEW: Nyogen Senzaki was a LA based Rinzai Zen Buddhist priest who had a multi ethnic congregation in LA prior to the war. He's a fascinating individual because he wrote about setting up, he called it the Wyoming Zendo or the Wyoming Zen Meditation Hall, which basically was his own Barrack.

DUNCAN WILLIAMS INTERVIEW: He was somebody who had a very active following inside Heart Mountain, but who interpreted his incarceration in a very particular way. He talked about the Wyoming Zendo as having the name "*Wyoming Tozen*" and "*Bukkyo Tozen*" He would use this word that meant that the Buddhist teaching inevitably moves eastward.

DUNCAN WILLIAMS INTERVIEW: It was this idea that existed in Japan, where, you know, Buddhism began in India, it moved eastward and finally, the eighth century

got to Japan. What Senzaki believed was when he moved from Los Angeles to Wyoming, by moving eastward, he was in some sense fulfilling the prophecy of the Buddha, that the teachings of Buddhism would move to the east.

DUNCAN WILLIAMS INTERVIEW: And he set up this Wyoming Zen meditation Hall named after, he called it "*Tozen Zenkutsu*" this idea that he would teach Zen Buddhism that had flowed from India through Japan through LA, all the way now to Heart Mountain Wyoming to fulfill the teachings of the Buddha. So he was a fascinating individual in the sense of how he interpreted his own forced removal, incarceration as not necessarily something negative, but something where as a Buddhist priest who was trying to share the teachings and was actually doing something on a much larger historical stage.

ROB BUSCHER: Prior to the war, Buddhist temple life was dominated by the Issei who sought to preserve their Japanese way of life through congregational worship that fostered closer ties among the community. Although Buddhism is largely an individual practice in Japan, the congregational style of worship was adopted by some of the earliest Japanese Buddhists who immigrated to Hawaii, seeking to replicate the communal worship practiced by Christian churches in missionary-dominated plantation society. By worshipping in a format that mirrored the Christian church provided an added benefit of demystifying Buddhism for those who were open-minded, and further strengthened the Buddhist community or Sangha.

ROB BUSCHER: Japanese American Buddhists on the mainland also adapted this congregational style of worship, as it continues to be practiced today. Before camp, Buddhists led robust social lives, building community with other congregants outside of the temple service through communal potlucks, intramural sports, and coed dances. These activities were brought to a halt when many of the Issei Buddhist association leaders were taken to Department of Justice camps during the initial round up by the FBI.

ROB BUSCHER: Like many other facets of life during wartime incarceration, the Buddhist community would adapt to their new circumstances, finding leadership among the Nisei generation in camp. By November 1942, the Heart Mountain Buddhists created a Young Buddhist Association led by Gyomei Kubose, the only Nisei among the priests there.

DUNCAN WILLIAMS INTERVIEW: Religious institutions played a massive role in helping people to find a sense of community. In Buddhism, they talk about the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha, the three treasures, or the three refuges of the tradition. And one of these refuges in a moment of dislocation is Sangha or community. I think when people found themselves having lost their businesses or farms or their homes, this is a kind of natural instinct to organize a community around the Buddhist Sangha.

DUNCAN WILLIAMS INTERVIEW: One of the reasons why the young Buddhist Association and the Women's Association, the *Fujinkai* played such a big role in

places like Heart Mountain was because many of the Buddhist priests had been caught in the targeting by the FBI. They had been taken to the army and Department of Justice camps and many of the priests were not available to be the regular leaders that they would have been in a Buddhist Sangha in camp.

DUNCAN WILLIAMS INTERVIEW: And so, the handful of Buddhist priests who were in Heart Mountain, of course, provided that kind of leadership, but unsurprisingly, the women - the Fujinkai, as well as the young people - the Nisei kind of stepped up in places like Heart Mountain and all of the other WRA camps to take a much bigger role in terms of Buddhist leadership and organizing the community.

ROB BUSCHER: By the middle of 1943, the Buddhist associations were fully mobilized to celebrate important religious holiday traditions, including a five-day hana matsuri in April and Obon in August. Heart Mountain Buddhists also created some of the most enduring pieces of art made in camp, including the butsudan Buddhist altars of the woodworker Nishiura brothers – Shingo and Gentaro. Some incarcerated, like young Shig Yabu, remembered the Buddhist church for its social possibilities.

SHIG YABU RECORDING FROM DENSHO: And there was another situation where Sam Yamoto, his real name was Masaji. And I said, "Hey, you know," I says, "I think the Buddhist church has the most girls going to it." I said, "Why don't we go to church one Sunday?" "Okay, let's go."

ROB BUSCHER: Although Buddhists were the majority among the Heart Mountain incarcerated, there was also a sizable population of Japanese American Christians in camp, hailing from a variety of denominations. Many of the wartime incarceration's most vocal critics outside the community were members of the faith-based organizations that Japanese American Christians belonged to prior to the war. For some incarcerated, the allyship shown by certain pacifist denominations like the Quakers and Mennonites would inspire them to become Christian converts during and after the war.

ROB BUSCHER: Christians received slightly better treatment from the camp administrators, who could relate to them more easily than the Buddhist prisoners. When the loyalty questionnaire was distributed in 1943, Question 16 asked incarcerated to state their religion. Respondents who answered "Christian" were given +2 points on their loyalty score, while Buddhists were penalized -1 point. Since Shintoism was the state religion of the Japanese Empire, any incarcerated who identified themselves as Shintoist were penalized -2 points and restricted from early leave to resettle outside of camp. The stigma against Shintoism was so deep that it became the only religion forbidden from organized worship in the WRA camps.

ROB BUSCHER: Regardless of the political implications of their religious affiliation, Christian services and the community events organized by the church gave Japanese American Christians solace in their time of need.

ROB BUSCHER: Despite all the uncertainty that incarceratedees had faced in 1942, they found solace in the company of their fellow community members through the many organizations they established in camp. But in the Spring of 1943 the community would find itself divided by arbitrary distinctions set forth by the WRA in its so-called loyalty questionnaire.

ROB BUSCHER: At the behest of JACL Executive Director Mike Masaoka, who believed widespread Nisei military service was the best chance for a favorable resettlement into American society postwar, the Army announced the creation of an all-Japanese American regimental combat team at the beginning of 1943. While many in the community agreed with JACL's position and voluntarily enlisted at recruiting drives held in each WRA camp as soon as they were able to do so, others objected to being asked to serve and possibly die for the same nation that currently imprisoned them behind barbed wire.

ROB BUSCHER: Further controversy erupted when the Army deployed a survey questionnaire to determine whether the potential incarceratedee volunteers presented a security threat, before they could be cleared for combat duty. The WRA then adopted the questionnaire as a way to determine the loyalty of those who wanted to relocate from the camps to other parts of the country.

ROB BUSCHER: At Heart Mountain, the simultaneous appearance of the recruitment campaign and the questionnaire heightened suspicion and resentment toward camp authorities and the WRA. Ironically, the cohesion created through WRA-sanctioned religious organizing and social groups in camp

enabled the incarcerated to collectively organize their resistance to both the loyalty questionnaire and subsequent military draft in 1944.

ROB BUSCHER: The first opposition group was the Heart Mountain Congress of American Citizens, led by Frank Inouye, who had been a senior at UCLA before he was forced into camp. Inouye began meeting with a small group of fellow prisoners to determine how to protest the questionnaire. This core group of organizers would grow into a larger problem for the camp administrators throughout the coming year as the military began to draft Nisei men from the camps into service. Three other Nisei leaders in Inouye's group would also play major roles in the opposition—Kiyoshi Okamoto, Paul Nakadate, and Frank Emi.

ROB BUSCHER: As part of their recruitment campaign, the Army gathered all men of eligible service age to give a presentation about enlistment. After they finished, Inouye presented a manifesto on behalf of the Heart Mountain Congress demanding that the US government restore their rights as American citizens before drafting them. Inouye's group had support from the community council members campwide, and was represented by two people from each block.

ROB BUSCHER: Compared to other WRA camps that saw hundreds of volunteer recruits, the enlistment campaign at Heart Mountain was an abject failure, with fewer than 50 young men volunteering for the Army. Emboldened by Inouye's actions, hundreds of incarcerated then provided negative responses to the two key questions on the loyalty questionnaire. Question 27 asked:

LOYALTY QUESTIONNAIRE VOICE OVER: Are you willing to serve in the armed forces of the United States on combat duty, wherever ordered?

ROB BUSCHER: And 28:

LOYALTY QUESTIONNAIRE VOICE OVER: Will you swear unqualified allegiance to the United States of America and faithfully defend the United States from any or all attack by foreign or domestic forces, and forswear any form of allegiance or obedience to the Japanese emperor, or any other foreign government, power, or organization?

ROB BUSCHER: Many of those who responded negatively to Question 27 did so on a conditional basis, withholding their service until the government restored their constitutional rights. Question 28 caused confusion as it was both poorly worded and misleading. How could a loyal American forswear allegiance to a foreign government they had never supported in the first place? Although many were inclined to answer yes to the first part of this question, the last clause implied they once held allegiance to the emperor of Japan. Many answered negatively on the principle of this fact, others because they were confused by the wording of the question.

ROB BUSCHER: Those who answered no to both questions became known as the No-Nos, branded by the WRA and members of their own Japanese American community as disloyal.

ROB BUSCHER: In Washington, proponents of the incarceration felt vindicated by the large number of No-No respondents and led some members of Congress to

propose drastic measures. Leonard Allen, a Democratic Congressman from Louisiana introduced a bill in February 1944 that would later be ratified as the Renunciation Act. The law enabled American citizens to renounce their US citizenship, as many of the so-called disloyal incarcerated were encouraged to do. ROB BUSCHER: Ultimately more than 5,000 Japanese Americans hailing from all 10 WRA camps would choose to renounce their American citizenship, although the number of incarcerated deported to Japan at the end of the war was reduced to 1,327 as many argued successfully that their renunciation had been given under duress.

ROB BUSCHER: Before the Renunciation Act, WRA chief Dillon Myer implemented his own plan to prevent additional incarcerated from becoming radicalized by the No-Nos. Myer agreed to segregate the so-called disloyal prisoners from Heart Mountain and other camps, sending them to Tule Lake in California, a plan which the JACL also endorsed.

ROB BUSCHER: As a result of the government propaganda narrative around the loyalty questionnaire, many who responded affirmatively to Questions 27 and 28 were afraid of associating with prisoners bound for Tule Lake, worrying that it might reflect negatively on their own loyalty. By segregating the No-No respondents, the WRA inflicted yet another trauma on the Japanese American community, as some families were torn apart and close friendships were strained or broken.

ROB BUSCHER: One of the key organizers of the Heart Mountain Buddhist Federation, Jodo Shu priest Zaishin Mukushina bid his goodbye through a brief note in the *Sentinel*.

ZAISHIN MUKUSHINA VOICE OVER: To all our Heart Mountain friends may we take this means to extend our sincerest appreciation for the generousities and kindnesses shown us during our residence here. We bid you all our fondest farewell as we leave for Tule Lake.

ROB BUSCHER: Mukushina would later resettle at Seabrook Farms in New Jersey where he helped establish the Seabrook Buddhist Temple before permanently settling in Illinois, where he started the Chicago Jodo Shu Buddhist temple. Another Heart Mountain resident segregated to Tule Lake, dentist Takeo Teragawa decided he would renounce his citizenship and return to Japan.

TAKEO TERAGAWA VOICE OVER: May I take this means to bid my friends and neighbors my fondest farewell as I have left for Tule Lake. I also wish to thank you all for the many kindnesses extended to me while residing here.

ROB BUSCHER: Teragawa never made it back to Japan. He died of cancer in Tule Lake.

ROB BUSCHER: Approximately 900 Heart Mountain incarceratedees were segregated to Tule Lake, nearly one-tenth of the total camp population. Among those were individuals requesting repatriation to Japan, No-No respondents, and minor

children and other family members of persons to be segregated. Now for the third time in less than two years this segment of the Heart Mountain population prepared for relocation to yet another prison camp.

ROB BUSCHER: Frank Inouye left Heart Mountain to resettle in Chicago on September 15, 1943, around the same time the first group of segregated incarcerated were sent to Tule Lake.

ROB BUSCHER: With Inouye and the segregated population gone, camp administrators hoped the worst of their troubles were behind them. With only those Japanese Americans deemed loyal remaining at Heart Mountain, the WRA renewed their emphasis on resettling the incarcerated into the broader American society. Young Nisei men and women who had not yet left for college or employment opportunities were encouraged to relocate further eastward. Speaking to Heart Mountain residents after the segregation, Camp Director Guy Robertson remarked on why resettling was imperative.

GUY ROBERTSON VOICE OVER: One of the things I most fear, is that the general public will begin to believe that the loyal young people, in particular, are not sincere. People will begin to say. "If these young people are loyal why do they remain in the center?"

ROB BUSCHER: Although many of the young people did respond by relocating, there still remained a core group of Nisei organizers inside the camp who built upon the spirit of resistance inspired by Inouye's Congress. That resistance was sparked anew in early 1944.

ROB BUSCHER: In January 1944, the War Department announced that all Japanese Americans would now be eligible for the draft. For an incarcerated population who were once labeled as enemy aliens at the start of the war – this elicited the same objections that arose a year earlier to the recruiting campaign. Whereas the Nisei were being asked to volunteer before, with its new policy, the government was essentially forcing a prisoner population into military conscription.

ROB BUSCHER: Although there were incarcerated from all the camps who objected to forced conscription, no other camp witnessed the level of turmoil wrought by the draft at Heart Mountain where a formal draft resistance movement was born.

ROB BUSCHER: Originally from Hawaii, Nisei Kiyoshi Okamoto was fifty-five years old when he was forcibly removed from his California home in 1942. Some of his fellow prisoners at Heart Mountain likened him to a jailhouse lawyer, as he constantly talked about constitutional rights and legal theories as to why the incarceration was unconstitutional. Although he himself was ineligible for conscription because of his age, Okamoto railed against the draft notice to any who would listen.

ROB BUSCHER: Shortly after Frank Inouye left Heart Mountain, Okamoto termed his resistance as the Fair Play Committee of One, his solitary crusade against the government that had imprisoned him. The name stuck as the resistance movement grew and others began to join the Fair Play Committee.

ROB BUSCHER: Camp Director Guy Robertson considered Okamoto to be “an arrogant, non-cooperative crackpot.”

GUY ROBERTSON VOICE OVER: He has endeavored to thwart any effort by WRA to assist the evacuees in peaceful relocation.

ROB BUSCHER: Those who did not understand his cause considered the bachelor Okamoto to be an eccentric. But a growing number of the young Nisei men held at Heart Mountain shared his sentiments. The environment was ripe for dissent, and the resistance against enlistment continued to grow as the first Heart Mountain incarcerated were called for their pre-induction physical exams. Frank Emi, who owned a grocery store in Los Angeles before he was incarcerated, said the draft decision triggered their actions.

FRANK EMI RECORDING FROM DENSHO: The volunteer program was a disappointment, that's why they instituted the draft into the camps. When we heard about this, it was really unbelievable. We didn't think that the government would really apply the draft into the camps on the same basis as the free people on the outside especially after having reclassified us from whatever we were - 1-A or 3-A to 4-C which was an "enemy alien" classification. Naturally when this came up, the Fair Play Committee, which at that time wasn't too active, but when this came up we got very interested because it affected all of us younger people. So we took it up and we started to hold mass meetings in the camp.

ROB BUSCHER: At the center of these efforts was Kiyoshi Okamoto, whom camp

director Guy Robertson now viewed as a threat to the success of the WRA resettlement project.

GUY ROBERTSON VOICE OVER: Camp authorities have Mr. Okamoto under surveillance as we think he is somewhat demented and it is hard to tell what action a person of this kind might take.

ROB BUSCHER: On February 8, only four days after young men of military age at Heart Mountain were ordered to report for their physicals, the group held its first meeting inside one of the mess halls, drawing about sixty men. The following night, hundreds more appeared for their next meeting in a second mess hall.

ROB BUSCHER: One of the unique aspects of the Fair Play Committee and its role in draft resistance was that membership criteria included having responded yes to both Questions 27 and 28 on the loyalty questionnaire. This was a key tenet of their movement, as the men were willing, and in some cases eager to serve their country, but only once their constitutional freedoms had been restored. Men meeting these requirements who wished to join the Committee paid \$2 in dues to pay for its operating expenses, including legal fees for their anticipated court battle.

ROB BUSCHER: Mits Koshiyama was one of the young men who sat in on the first Fair Play Committee meetings. He remembered Okamoto well.

MIT'S KOSHIYAMA RECORDING FROM DENSHO: Well, this Fair Play Committee started in Heart Mountain. It was an organized group. It originally started from a few people, I think. One of them was a Hawaiian, I think this man was a college graduate in Hawaii, and very educated and understanding of the Constitution of the United States. And he went around camp talking about the Constitution. And he called himself the Fair Play Committee of One.

MIT'S KOSHIYAMA RECORDING FROM DENSHO: Then the people listened to him and says, "Hey, this man really knows what he's talkin' about." You know, before that, before he went around talking like that, everybody said well, we have to cooperate, we have to accommodate the government, we have to have a positive image so we'll be accepted, things like that. In other words, we have to kowtow to the racist demands of the government before we'll be accepted as citizens. But this man says, "No, we, we are Americans. The Constitution is supposed to defend us and that I'm talking about the rights we have under the Constitution." A few people joined him, then I think more and more people listened to him and, and joined up and this made the Fair Play Committee. And there were, there were many, many people. Many of 'em were over draft age, too, so...

ROB BUSCHER: Takashi Hoshizaki was just 18 when he attended the first Fair Play Committee meeting. His first thoughts about resisting the draft developed when he was at the Pomona assembly center.

TAKASHI HOSHIZAKI RECORDING FROM DENSHO: It goes back to Pomona, where you began to hear the older Niseis talking about that we should've, we should've

contested the evacuation and so on, and so at that time I said, well, something's wrong. This isn't just straightforward. It looked like something funny was going on, and so as I, time went on and got to learn a little bit more and then the first time hearing about JACL, and so I thought well, this whole thing is not right. The evacuation is not right.

TAKASHI HOSHIZAKI RECORDING FROM DENSHO: And in fact, I had written a letter to my homeroom of Belmont High School and stating, I says, "I think this evacuation thing's wrong," so on and so forth, and remember the teacher writing back, says, "We're very sorry you feel this way about it." I thought, gee, too bad I didn't make a copy of my letter and also kept the letter that they sent back.

TAKASHI HOSHIZAKI RECORDING FROM DENSHO: So even then I began to really have doubts in my mind and began to think, so when this draft thing came out I said this is crazy and... but especially then when they were talking about in, into a segregated [unit]. They wouldn't let the [Nisei] go into the Navy or into the Air Force, so I said no. My bottom line was, says I wouldn't go out from the camp, be drafted from the camp.

ROB BUSCHER: Takashi Hoshizaki was surprised at how many others shared his opinion when he went to the first committee meeting.

TAKASHI HOSHIZAKI RECORDING FROM DENSHO: Well, I was a little shocked when I walked in because it was virtually wall-to-wall people. And people talking,

and some were standing up, I guess maybe describing their stand, but all I remember about that is I finally stood up and I said, "Well, I don't know about that, you guys, but the conditions as they are, I wouldn't be going." And that was about all that I said and sat down. And Mits Koshiyama years later says, "Yeah, I remember. You're the guy."

ROB BUSCHER: Hoshizaki, who just turned 95, is now a board member of the Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation. The committee met multiple times to debate their next course of action, but Frank Emi remembered that after its third meeting its choice was clear.

FRANK EMI RECORDING FROM DENSHO: The third meeting, the third bulletin we issued was the one that became controversial because up to this point we had been informational and some of us decided we should take a stand and come right out and say that we're against this until our rights were clarified and our constitutional rights were restored. Naturally, we had some in the steering committee of the Fair Play Committee that questioned the advisability of going so strong, but finally after much discussion, those that felt that we had to take a strong stand prevailed and we came out with the resolution that, "We hereby refuse to go to the draft if and when we are called," in order to contest the issue.

ROB BUSCHER: In June 1944, the 63 draft resisters were arrested and placed into county jails scattered around Wyoming. Takashi Hoshizaki was sent to the county jail in Cheyenne, where the cells were seldom if ever cleaned. He and his fellow defendants volunteered to clean the jail with rags and brushes given to them by

the guards. It made the conditions tolerable, but the jail was so overcrowded with Japanese American defendants that many prisoners had to sleep on the floor.

ROB BUSCHER: Anticipating the eventuality of litigation, the Fair Play Committee hired Denver-based Samuel Menin as their lawyer. Menin first traveled to Heart Mountain in February to meet with his clients, a full four months before they were arrested to discuss their legal strategy.

ROB BUSCHER: Against a jury, the defendants wouldn't have a chance. It was indisputable that they had resisted the draft and would therefore be found guilty. Instead of facing an all-white Wyoming jury, Menin recommended that the defendants opt for a trial before District Court Judge T. Blake Kennedy. Kennedy was the sole federal judge in the state of Wyoming and thought of as a fair-minded man. Appointed in 1921 by Republican President Warren Harding, Kennedy presided over the Teapot Dome corruption case in which Interior Secretary Albert Fall was convicted of taking bribes in exchange for granting oil leases on federal land. Menin figured that a judge unafraid of tackling government corruption might also rule in favor of men held against their will at Heart Mountain.

ROB BUSCHER: Menin based his defense on the fact that his defendants could not be legally drafted while in prison. He would first need to prove that Heart Mountain was indeed a prison, not a "Relocation Center" as it was euphemistically called.

ROB BUSCHER: As part of his argument Menin recounted a time when Frank Emi and another man tried to walk outside the gate at Heart Mountain and were stopped by the guards, who threatened to shoot if they continued. Menin was optimistic that this would prove that the government was breaking the law by trying to draft people in prison. The group soon learned their optimism had been misplaced, as Takashi Hoshizaki remembers.

TAKASHI HOSHIZAKI RECORDING FROM DENSHO: The judge says, "you Jap boys," and then he said, "Oops," okay, and we were having a non-jury trial and so he says, "Well, that doesn't look good for us," which it wasn't.

ROB BUSCHER: Jack Tono, another defendant, knew then that they would be convicted.

JACK TONO VOICE OVER: Oh, that S-O-B. We just don't have a chance with that guy.

ROB BUSCHER: Tono was right. The judge they thought would be sympathetic to their cause, or at least willing to pass judgement based on the evidence provided, was actually racist, anti-Semitic, and xenophobic - according to writings discovered after Kennedy's death. After a six-day trial, Judge Kennedy found all 63 defendants guilty and sentenced them to three years in federal prison. His ruling from the bench showed little sympathy to the resisters.

JUDGE T. BLAKE KENNEDY VOICE OVER: If they are truly loyal Americans, they should, at least when they have become recognized as such, embrace the opportunity to discharge the duties of citizens by offering themselves in the cause of our national defense.

ROB BUSCHER: The resisters received no solace from the *Sentinel* either, which dubbed them “slackers.”

SENTINEL EDITORIAL VOICE OVER: Had any of the 63 held the interest of all Japanese Americans at heart they would have offered themselves, as have more than 400 other Heart Mountain youths now in the army, and relied upon proper authorities to determine their positions. Both the Korematsu and Endo cases now before the Supreme Court will determine the legality of evacuation, but in the meantime every person of Japanese ancestry carries a personal burden of which he must at all times be conscious.

ROB BUSCHER: While many of the incarcerated at Heart Mountain sympathized with the resisters, some, like Fred Hirasuna, did not.

FRED HIRASUNA RECORDING FROM ABE COLLECTION: I bet, among those 63 people, there are some who really didn't want to go into the draft. They didn't want to go into the war, period. There were others who would rather go to prison rather than go to war. 'Cause in war, you face injury, death, and all the rest that comes with military service. What I'm saying is, that group at Heart Mountain is not uniform in their desire to protect their constitutional rights, you know.

FRED HIRASUNA RECORDING FROM ABE COLLECTION: Because I think this, if they really believe in the constitutional rights, they would not have supported evacuation, which was a violation of our constitutional rights. But they did go into camp. Why did they go into camp? Because they followed the rest of the crowd. And when it comes to the Heart Mountain group itself, I think this, they selected 63 of them, and as I said before, in the 63, I'm willing to bet you anything that 63 did not go because they supported their constitutional rights.

ROB BUSCHER: Judge Kennedy declared all 63 resisters guilty and sentenced them to three years in federal prison. Almost all of them were sent to the federal prison at McNeil Island, Washington, where they remained until 1946 when they were released one year before the end of their sentence.

ROB BUSCHER: In addition to the draft resistance charges that the Fair Play Committee faced, Frank Emi and other leaders of the Fair Play Committee went on to a second trial on October 23 where they faced charges of inciting draft resistance. This trial was especially painful to Emi after the prosecution produced a surprise witness—Jack Nishimoto, Emi's former friend and neighbor in camp.

ROB BUSCHER: Nishimoto testified that he heard Emi tell draftee Dave Kawamoto not to report for his draft physical and that the Fair Play Committee would protect him. Nishimoto also claimed that Emi said he would go back to Japan if he did not prevail in court.

ROB BUSCHER: Emi called that second claim a “bald-faced lie” and in the testimony of Kawamoto’s mother, she refuted Nishimoto’s claim about her son. Emi speculated that the FBI encouraged Nishimoto to falsify his testimony because it had no other evidence to use against him.

ROB BUSCHER: Like the first trial, the outcome of the Fair Play leaders’ trial was never in doubt, although their attorney A. L. Wirin, a veteran ACLU lawyer from Los Angeles fought hard on their behalf. In this case the defendants decided to try their luck with a trial by jury overseen by Judge Eugene Rice. The court proceedings lasted a week, but it only took the jury a few hours of deliberation before they returned with a guilty verdict for all defendants except Jimmie Omura, the editor of the *Rocky Shimpō* newspaper based in Denver.

ROB BUSCHER: Deemed the ringleaders of the conspiracy to incite draft evasion, Frank Emi, Kiyoshi Okamoto, Paul Nakadate, and Sam Horino each received a four-year sentence to be served at the federal prison in Leavenworth, Kansas. Guntaro Kubota, Ben Wakaye, and Min Tamesa were sentenced to two years, and Wakaye’s and Tamesa’s sentences were made concurrent to the three-year sentences they had received in the first trial.

ROB BUSCHER: Only Omura went free, whose only crime was operating a newspaper that published stories that were fair and balanced in their description of the Fair Play Committee. Still, his career as a journalist was essentially ruined. The JACL had him effectively blacklisted from the tight knit community of Japanese American newspapers, and he spent the rest of his working life as a

landscaper. Sadly his fellow defendants also distrusted him, some suspecting him of being an informer as Omura remembered.

JIMMIE OMURA RECORDING FROM ABE COLLECTION: Well, Paul and his wife and I and my wife came down the stairs. And we hadn't walked more than six paces into the lobby when Sam Horino, one of the leaders, suddenly said to me, "You're a spy." I was taken aback, naturally. And then Guntaro Kubota, another leader, chimes in, "You spy." And this astounded me. I didn't know what, how to take all of this. And then I noticed that Frank Emi was writing a check or something by the office counter. And he, just at that moment, he looked up and all he said was, "Yeah," which I take as approval of my being a spy.

JIMMIE OMURA RECORDING FROM ABE COLLECTION: Then Paul Nakadate stood up for me. And after he finished, we couldn't see him but Kiyoshi Okamoto was somewhere in the lobby there and we could hear his voice and he stood up real strong for me. And after his statement, everybody shut up. You know, like the voice from God or something you know. They quieted down, see.

JIMMIE OMURA RECORDING FROM ABE COLLECTION: But I was so angry, you know. And we backed away toward the steps and I said to Paul, "I think I'll go on back up to my room." I was part way up the stairs, and he stopped me and says, "No," he says, "this is our last supper, so stick it out," he says.

JIMMIE OMURA RECORDING FROM ABE COLLECTION: Unwillingly I followed and on the way over I said to my wife, "I've got no appetite for eating." And she says,

"I don't either." And when we got there, we have to go to the very end because that was the only vacant table. When it came time for us to order, my wife says to me, "I think I'll order a hamburger sandwich." And when her time came, why, she ordered a hamburger sandwich.

ROB BUSCHER: Omura could only speculate about the reasons why he was suspected.

JIMMIE OMURA RECORDING FROM ABE COLLECTION: "No member of that group ever told me why. I asked Frank Emi, I never got it clear. The assumption was that they thought that I was there to pick up some information and turn their information in to the United States attorney in order to get a better deal for myself. That's what they thought, they're suspicious of me. Couldn't understand why they would, would be. But then we're jumping ahead to assumptions.

JIMMIE OMURA RECORDING FROM ABE COLLECTION: But at the time, after the thing broke up, we went back to the hotel. And on the way back to the hotel I told my wife, I says, "I'm through with them. Clean cut." So that we didn't associate with them anymore during the trial. One week, you know, I never associated with them, never spoke to them.

JIMMIE OMURA RECORDING FROM ABE COLLECTION: And then as soon as I was acquitted, we took off without saying goodbye or anything, we took off for Denver, because they could stew in their own juice if they thought I was a spy, and I was real teed off, real teed off. I think I was teed off about them for

considerable length of time. I don't remember how long, but for quite a while. Because I, at this time I knew, well, long before that, I knew that the Japanese community had turned against me. And then the Fair Play Committee turned, turning against me, why, you could imagine how a person would feel.

ROB BUSCHER: Soon after the trial, it was revealed that Judge Rice and the prosecuting attorney had been hunting partners previously, which was considered a conflict of interest. The defendants appealed the conviction, and won their appeal in December 1945. They were released in early 1946.

ROB BUSCHER: Although the community's affinity for organizing gave their lives direction and helped many of the incarcerated find solace during the war, open hostility between organizations like the Fair Play Committee and JACL led to internal divisions that would persist in the Japanese American community for decades to come.

ROB BUSCHER: Based on the government's propaganda narrative, which was supported by JACL for much of the postwar era, many Japanese Americans considered the Fair Play Committee and other draft resisters as cowards for not answering their call of duty.

ROB BUSCHER: While these tensions have mostly dissipated, JACL's role in labeling resisters as traitors and cowards is still contentious to those who lived

through the experience. At the 2019 JACL National Convention a resolution was proposed apologizing to the resisters, which was met with fierce opposition from some within the organization. Although the resolution ultimately passed, it elicited a debate that lasted nearly four hours on the convention floor with impassioned arguments from both sides of the issue.

ROB BUSCHER: We will continue exploring this issue in the next episode, which tells the stories of Heart Mountain incarceratedees who chose to voluntarily enlist or otherwise answered the draft call to serve in the all Japanese American 442nd Regimental Combat Team.

ROB BUSCHER: *Look Toward the Mountain* is presented by the Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation and is funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities. Written by Ray Locker and Rob Buscher. Produced and Edited by Rob Buscher. Voice overs sourced by Darrell Kunitomi. Special thanks to Densho: The Japanese American Legacy Project. Many of the oral histories used in this podcast series were provided by Densho. Visit the Heart Mountain website for a full list of credits. Join us for the next episode titled: Doing Their Bit.