

The “Exemplary Citizens”

The Mission of the Japanese American Citizens League¹

The prewar and wartime controversial policy and mission of the Japanese American Citizens League (J.A.C.L.) to counter the anti-Japanese phobia – the image of the disloyal Japanese American – is the focus of the present study. The leadership of the J.A.C.L. was convinced that it was a crucial time to confirm the Americanism of citizens of Japanese descent as relations were deteriorating and conflict between the United States and the Empire of Japan was imminent. The portrayal of Japanese Americans as loyal, patriotic, and model citizens was intended to change the previous stereotypes that had dominated the identity and history of the community, the image of the ‘alien,’ the ‘enemy within,’ and the ‘Fifth Column.’ Since the arrival of the Japanese immigrants the Japanese American community had been the target of racial discrimination and prejudice in the United States, as well as anti-Japanese fear and paranoia as a direct consequence of the expansionist foreign policy of Japan. The peak of the anti-Japanese sentiments came after the unprovoked and sudden attack on Pearl Harbor with President Franklin D. Roosevelt signing Executive Order No. 9066¹² on February 19, 1942.

A Brief Introduction of the Japanese American Citizens League

The history of the Japanese American Citizens League can be traced back to the early 1920s with the series of loyalty leagues established on the West Coast. The first rec-

- 1 The present study was made possible through the research scholarship awarded by the Hungarian-American Fulbright Commission and the Roosevelt Institute for American Studies (Middelburg, The Netherlands, 2014). The research was also supported by the Asian American Studies Department, College of Ethnic Studies, San Francisco State University, and the Japanese American National Library (San Francisco, 2016).
- 2 Executive Order No. 9066 authorized the Secretary of War and the appointed Military Commander to designate military areas and to exclude any or all citizens from the prescribed zones on the West Coast. The order approved the mass forced exclusion and incarceration of persons of Japanese ancestry citing military necessity and national defense. The order was broadly defined and did not single out Japanese aliens and American citizens of Japanese descent; yet, it only applied to persons of Japanese parentage on a collective basis. Ten incarceration camps were established on the Continental United States and over 110,000 Japanese Americans – American citizens of Japanese ancestry and Japanese aliens – were incarcerated without any regard to the individual's age, gender, or citizenship. The civilian exclusion orders were eventually revoked on December 17, 1944. The ‘incarcerees’ were allowed to leave the incarceration camps and resettle on the West Coast on January 2, 1945. Exec. Order. No. 9066, 7 Fed. Reg. 1407 (February 25, 1942), <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/5730250> (accessed May 24, 2017).

ordered meeting organized by American citizens of Japanese parentage was held in Seattle with the Progressive Citizens League founded on September 27, 1921.³ The formation of the Seattle Progressive Citizens League is a significant event in light of the fact that the motivation and support for such organization came from the Issei.⁴ The first generation wished for the Nisei⁵ to embrace their Americanism. The *JACL Historical* record described the desire of the Issei as the following, for “the Second Generation to ‘become more deeply conscious of their American citizenship and obligations.’”⁶ It signified a clear support by the Issei to have the second generation aware of its rights, privileges, and obligations as citizens of the United States. Furthermore, the Progressive Citizens League was a principal entity in founding the Japanese American Citizens League, a national Japanese American civil rights organization. The Progressive Citizens League of Seattle was followed by subsequent American loyalty leagues established by the Nisei along the Pacific Coast, predominantly in California and the State of Washington; there is a scarcity of records on the initial period of the earliest citizens groups.

The Seattle group played a key role in not only expanding the number of chapters, but also in founding the J.A.C.L. Clarence Arai and George Ishihara of the Seattle League were supposed to have attended a conference of the American Loyalty Leagues in Fresno, however the conference was cancelled during their trip. The Seattle representatives completed their journey and decided to visit various Japanese communities and helped establish local chapters. As a result of their efforts the Los Angeles, Stockton, and

3 JACL Historical, Box 1, Folder Early History of JACL 1937, Series 1, JACL History Collection, Japanese American National Library, San Francisco (hereafter cited as Early History of JACL 1937).

4 The Issei were the first generation of Japanese Americans – Japanese-born immigrants, aliens, 55 to 65 years old – who were ineligible for citizenship until the McCarran-Walter Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952. The Munson report of 1941 described them as “loyal romantically” to Japan. However, it did not neglect to clarify their deep roots in and strong connection to America. Curtis B. Munson on the loyalty of the Issei: “They have made this their home. They have brought up children here, their wealth accumulated by hard labor is here, and many would have become American citizens had they been allowed to do so” (Curtis B. Munson, *Japanese on the West Coast Report*, November 7, 1941, *President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Office Files, 1933–1945. Part 3: Departmental Correspondence Files*, microfilm, Roosevelt Study Center, Middelburg, Netherlands, Reel 33 [hereafter cited as FDR Departmental Correspondence Files]).

5 The Nisei are second generation Japanese Americans – American citizens of Japanese ancestry, 1 to 30 years old – who were raised and educated in the United States. They embraced their Americanism, and as Curtis B. Munson emphasized in his report, “in spite of discrimination against them and a certain amount of insults accumulated through the years from irresponsible elements, show a pathetic eagerness to be Americans.” The Nisei were generally 90% to 98% loyal to the United States, which they were “pathetically eager” to prove according to the Munson report (Munson, *Japanese on the West Coast Report*, 1941, FDR Departmental Correspondence Files).

6 JACL Historical, Early History of JACL 1937.

Brawley branches were founded in California in 1928.⁷ Clarence Arai and George Ishihara also participated at a meeting in San Francisco, where it was decided that a conference should be held in San Francisco in April of 1929.

The San Francisco conference was held on April 5 and 6, 1929. The importance of the San Francisco citizens league conference is exemplified by the correspondence between the San Francisco and Fresno chapters on March 18, 1929.⁸ The conference was described as a place where the representatives could come together and collaborate, share their thoughts and ideas, and plans for the future of the Japanese American community. The future of the leagues looked promising to the author of the letter, since the movement was gaining momentum. "The movement for the organization of citizens leagues is going on at a rapid rate and in the near future, it is safe to predict that the Federation will be a power to be recognized. We have to work hard till this day arrives."⁹ The Japanese American Citizens League was established in 1929 as a result of the combined effort of the leagues after the various Japanese American citizens groups of the West Coast merged to form the first national organization. Nevertheless, it should not be neglected that the initial push came from the Issei. The Issei encouraged the assimilation and Americanization of their children. Clarence Arai congratulated Saburo Kido in a telegram on October 26, 1929, on the occasion of the Japanese American Citizens Banquet celebrating the foundation of the J.A.C.L.

The telegram read as the following:¹⁰

OUR CONGRATULATIONS AND BEST WISHES MAY THE LEAGUE GROW
AND BE OF SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY STATE AND COUNTRY MORE
POWER TO THE JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENRY

The Seattle League not only instructed Clarence Arai to name the new national organization the Japanese American Citizens League at the San Francisco conference, but also to convene a conference for 1930 in Seattle, Washington.¹¹ The Seattle conference was the first national convention of the newly formed J.A.C.L., it was held between August 29 and September 1, 1930, with eight chapters (Los Angeles Calif., San Jose Calif., Fresno Calif., Stockton Calif., Placer County Calif., Seattle Wash., San Francisco Calif.,

7 JACL Historical, Early History of JACL 1937.

8 The letter was probably written by Saburo Kido, with the initials SK typed on the lower left side of the letter, although the signature is faded. San Francisco to Fresno American Loyalty League, March 18, 1929, Box 1, Folder Correspondence – San Francisco Chapter 1929, Series 1, JACL History Collection, Japanese American National Library, San Francisco (hereafter cited as Correspondence – San Francisco Chapter 1929).

9 San Francisco to Fresno American Loyalty League, 1929, Correspondence – San Francisco Chapter 1929.

10 Clarence Arai to Saburo Kido, October 26, 1929, Box 1, Folder Correspondence – San Francisco Chapter 1929, Series 1, JACL History Collection, Japanese American National Library, San Francisco.

11 JACL Historical, Early History of JACL 1937.

and Portland Ore.) represented by 109 delegates.¹² The delegates agreed to name the new organization the Japanese American Citizens League and also adopted the Constitution that was drafted by Saburo Kido.

The Controversial Wartime Policy and Mission of the J.A.C.L.

In order to better understand the wartime policy and mission of the Japanese American Citizens League we have to consider the relevance of the Japanese American identity and the public image advocated by the leadership with regard to the threat of war with Japan. It was the intent of the League to assume moral leadership of the Japanese American community based on the principles of American value. Under the leadership of Saburo Kido¹³ and Mike Masaoka¹⁴ 1941 proved to be a turning point in the history of the J.A.C.L. and the Japanese American community. Two crucial documents have to be mentioned and analyzed in relation to the mission and policy of the J.A.C.L., *The Japanese American Creed* and the *A Declaration of Policy*. *The Japanese American Creed*¹⁵ was written by Mike Masaoka in 1941 and expressed the philosophy of what it meant to be an American, the loyalty and patriotism of Japanese Americans. The message was read before the United States Congress on May 9, 1941. It stated that American citizens of Japanese ancestry should believe in and be proud of being citizens of the United States. Notwithstanding, Mike Masaoka's message did not mention the Issei and could be interpreted as a way of distancing the second generation from the Japanese aliens in order to strengthen the image of the loyal and patriotic Nisei, to portray Japanese Americans as exemplary/model citizens. This intent is quite contentious if we take into account the role of the Issei in the establishment of the League and that there was no Japanese 'problem' on the West Coast according to the Munson report¹⁶ of 1941.

*The Japanese American Creed:*¹⁷

I am proud that I am an American citizen of Japanese ancestry, for my very background makes me appreciate more fully the wonderful advantages of this nation. I believe in her institutions, ideals, and traditions; I glory in her heritage; I boast of her history; I trust in her future. She has granted me liberties and opportunities such as no individual enjoys in this world today. She

12 JACL Historical, Early History of JACL 1937.

13 Saburo Kido was the President of the J.A.C.L. during the wartime years.

14 Mike Masaoka was the National Secretary and Field Executive of the J.A.C.L. and a prominent member of the leadership during its controversial years.

15 Mike Masaoka, *The Japanese American Creed*, May 9, 1941, Box 1, Folder Nisei Loyalty, 1934, 1938–1942, Series 1, JACL History Collection, Japanese American National Library, San Francisco (hereafter cited as Nisei Loyalty, 1934, 1938–1942).

16 Munson, *Japanese on the West Coast Report*, 1941, FDR Departmental Correspondence Files.

17 Masaoka, *The Japanese American Creed*, 1941, Nisei Loyalty, 1934, 1938–1942.

has given me an education befitting kings. She has entrusted me with the responsibilities of the franchise. She has permitted me to build a home, to earn a livelihood, to worship, think, speak, and act as I please – as a free man equal to every other man.

In *The Japanese American Creed*, which can be interpreted as an ode to what it meant to be an American according to Mike Masaoka, the author does allude to existing discrimination and prejudice that Japanese Americans had to face, although it is stated that such mentality did not represent the majority of Americans. Masaoka emphasizes that discrimination should be discouraged, but by means of the "American way": openly, via the courts of law, education, and by proving to be worthy of equal treatment.¹⁸ This in itself is contradictory, since the League initially did not support the test cases that questioned the constitutionality of the restrictive military orders and the incarceration of persons of Japanese descent. The National Secretary expressed his unyielding belief in the values of "American sportsmanship" and "fair play": "I am firm in my belief that American sportsmanship and attitude of fair play will judge citizenship and patriotism on the basis of action and achievement, and not on the basis of physical characteristics."¹⁹ *The Japanese American Creed* concludes with a pledge of allegiance to defend the United States and to shoulder obligations as a citizen in order to become a "better American." The leadership of the J.A.C.L. was willing to "cheerfully" bear this burden, although they did so unilaterally in the name of the entire community.

The Japanese American Creed's pledge to become a "better American":²⁰

I pledge myself to do honor to her at all times and in all places; to support her constitution; to obey her laws; to respect her flag; to defend her against all enemies, foreign or domestic; to actively assume my duties and obligations as a citizen, cheerfully and without any reservations whatsoever, in the hope that I may become a better American in a greater America.

The manifesto *A Declaration of Policy*²¹ was prepared by the J.A.C.L. and was approved by the National Board in 1942 as the official policy that governed the organization. It was a critical time for the Japanese American community forced to endure anti-Japanese prejudice, the fallout and shock of Pearl Harbor, and the war with Japan. The reason for the *Declaration of Policy* was, as stated in the proclamation, that "the Japanese American Citizens League is devoted to those tasks which are calculated to win for ourselves and our posterity the status outlined by our two national slogans: 'For Better

18 Masaoka, *The Japanese American Creed*, 1941, Nisei Loyalty, 1934, 1938–1942.

19 Masaoka, *The Japanese American Creed*, 1941, Nisei Loyalty, 1934, 1938–1942.

20 Masaoka, *The Japanese American Creed*, 1941, Nisei Loyalty, 1934, 1938–1942.

21 *A Declaration of Policy by the Japanese American Citizens League*, 1942, Box 1, Folder Nisei Loyalty, 1934, 1938–1942, Series 1, JACL History Collection, Japanese American National Library, San Francisco (hereafter cited as Nisei Loyalty, 1934, 1938–1942).

Americans in a Greater America' and 'Security Through Unity'.²² The term 'calculated' does have a negative connotation, invoking doubts over such expression as Justice, Americanism, Citizenship, and Leadership, all for which the J.A.C.L. stood for as claimed in its policy. Moreover, the 'calculative' nature of the League casts a dark shadow over its founding and core principle as a civil rights organization, considering how a proportion of the Japanese community was left behind in the name of public and political acceptance.

The mission statement was represented by the letters of the J.A.C.L. acronym: "J" for Justice, "A" for Americanism, "C" for Citizenship, and "L" for Leadership. The J.A.C.L. represented the ideas formulated as its official standpoint to attain equal treatment and the privileges of citizenship from a legal perspective, furthermore, to be considered "good Americans" and worthy citizens who embodied the American ideals, and over all to become "exemplary citizens."²³ The policy placed emphasis on *The Japanese American Creed* by Mike Masaoka – again neglecting to mention the Issei, placing greater importance on American citizens of Japanese descent – and provided a direct reference to military service as an inherent obligation and duty of citizenship. The declaration not only focused on the Nisei, but also consolidated the status of the J.A.C.L. as the sole national organization to represent and lead the community. It was a bit of an overstatement, since according to *The Japanese-American Directory of 1941* – cited in the Munson report of 1941 – there were roughly 1,563 Japanese associations in the United States.²⁴

The Call for Loyalty and Patriotism by the League

In response to the attack on Pearl Harbor Mike Masaoka, as the National Secretary and Field Executive, sent a letter to the Honorable Culbert L. Olson, the Governor of California, on December 22, 1941. The letter forwarded the unanimous *A Resolution* of the Northern California District Council of the League in which it condemned the attack on the United States by the Japanese Government: "[...] we American citizens of Japanese ancestry, appreciative of our priceless heritage of American traditions and ideals of liberty, fair play, and sportsmanship, do unanimously condemn the infamous and perfidious attack of the Imperial Japanese Government upon our American soil..."²⁵ The Northern California District Council of the J.A.C.L. gathered for a 'special session' in San Francisco on December 21, 1941, with twenty-seven chapters represented at the emergency

22 *A Declaration of Policy by the Japanese American Citizens League*, 1942, Nisei Loyalty, 1934, 1938–1942.

23 *A Declaration of Policy by the Japanese American Citizens League*, 1942, Nisei Loyalty, 1934, 1938–1942.

24 Munson, *Japanese on the West Coast Report*, 1941, FDR Departmental Correspondence Files.

25 Mike Masaoka to Honorable Culbert L. Olson, December 22, 1941, Box 1, Folder States-War-time Legislation Against Japanese Americans 1941, 1943, Series 1, JACL History Collection, Japanese American National Library, San Francisco (hereafter cited as States-War-time Legislation Against Japanese Americans 1941, 1943).

meeting. The resolution was drafted in the name of the Nisei and signaled the commitment of American citizens of Japanese descent to defend the country with their lives against all enemies, since it was their "sacred privilege" as Americans. The J.A.C.L. called on the Nisei to support the national defense of America, declaring "[t]hat we do hereby urge and direct every American citizen of Japanese extraction to volunteer for the military and the civilian defense of our beloved land..."²⁶

When the war broke out the J.A.C.L. was a national organization with over sixty chapters and approximately 20,000 members in over 300 communities.²⁷ The League called on all Americans of Japanese parentage to support the war effort²⁸ of the United States government at all levels, by all means. The Nisei were encouraged to purchase defense bonds and stamps as a form of monetary assistance, also to cooperate with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Navy and Army Intelligence to counter subversive activities. Japanese Americans were advised to support state and local government officials, to volunteer for the Red Cross and other social service agencies, and to conserve and contribute to the production of essential defense materials. The Japanese American community was instructed to do their part in achieving complete victory, "[t]o do everything possible to insure the complete and ultimate victory of freedom's forces over those of greed, hate, and tyranny..."²⁹ Furthermore, the organization offered its services and facilities, and pledged its allegiance to the United States government.

In order to propagate patriotism and as a show of loyalty the Japanese American Citizens League implemented an *Oath of Allegiance*³⁰ in 1942 as a strict prerequisite to membership, it can be considered as a forerunner of the national *Loyalty Questionnaire*³¹

26 Masaoka to Olson, 1941, States-Wartime Legislation Against Japanese Americans 1941, 1943.

27 Saburo Kido, *Japanese American Citizens League Oath of Allegiance*, March, 1942, Box 2, Folder JACL Oath of Identification + Allegiance, 1942, Series 1, JACL History Collection, Japanese American National Library, San Francisco (hereafter cited as JACL Oath of Identification + Allegiance, 1942).

28 Masaoka to Olson, 1941, States-Wartime Legislation Against Japanese Americans 1941, 1943.

29 Masaoka to Olson, 1941, States-Wartime Legislation Against Japanese Americans 1941, 1943.

30 The *Oaths of Allegiance* filled out by Saburo Kido (J.A.C.L. President) and Mike Masaoka (National Secretary and Field Executive) were used as examples for studying the relevance of the document. Kido, *Japanese American Citizens League Oath of Allegiance*, 1942, JACL Oath of Identification + Allegiance, 1942; Mike Masaru Masaoka, *Japanese American Citizens League Oath of Allegiance*, March 20, 1942, Box 2, Folder JACL Oath of Identification + Allegiance, 1942, Series 1, JACL History Collection, Japanese American National Library, San Francisco.

31 The Loyalty Questionnaire was drawn up by the War Department and the War Relocation Authority to determine the loyalty of American citizens of Japanese ancestry (the Nisei) and Japanese aliens (the Issei) – men and women 17 years and older – in early 1943. The survey facilitated the procedure of relocating, releasing, the loyal Japanese from the incarceration camps, segregate the disloyal, and it allowed the War Department to draft and accept Nisei volunteers to serve in the United States Army. *Question 27* asked whether the responder was willing to serve in the United States Armed Forces in combat. *Question 28* was drawn up to determine whether the responder was willing to swear unqualified allegiance to the United

of 1943 by the War Department and the War Relocation Authority (W.R.A.). Only a month had passed since February 19, 1942, when President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order No. 9066. The form was filled out by members of the organization, required to provide personal information such as the individual's name, place of residence, height, weight, distinctive marks, birthplace, and the name of the J.A.C.L. chapter; the document even included the person's photo and fingerprint. The *Oaths of Allegiance* were certified by a public notary who signed and stamped the document. Certain parts of the oath distinctly possessed certain features of an institutional loyalty program, similar to that of the *Loyalty Questionnaire*, focusing on forswearing any other allegiance and defending the Constitution from foreign or domestic forces.

*Japanese American Citizens League Oath of Allegiance:*³²

I, the undersigned, do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I do hereby forswear and repudiate any other allegiance which I knowingly or unknowingly may have held heretofore; and that I take these obligations freely, without any mental reservation whatsoever or purpose of evasion. So help me God.

The 'Sacred Privilege' and the Nisei Servicemen

One of the controversial J.A.C.L. programs worth highlighting is the military service by Nisei volunteers and draftees during World War II. The League encouraged the military service of the second generation Japanese Americans to demonstrate their patriotism and loyalty. It was a way to once and for all end the accusations that Japanese Americans were disloyal. This policy by the League was described as the following in an Inter-Office Correspondence,³³ "Upon inauguration of a special Japanese American combat team,

States and defend her from foreign or domestic forces, and forswear any allegiance or obedience to the Japanese Emperor, or any foreign government. Those who answered No-No or refused to answer the questions did so with the intention of either wanting to repatriate / return to Japan, did not want to be separated from their segregated family members, or took a stand against the infringement of their constitutional rights and liberties. "The 'Loyalty Questionnaire,' 1943," *Densho Encyclopedia*, <http://encyclopedia.densho.org/sources/endorshopd-p72-00004-1/> (accessed June 21, 2017).

32 Kido, *Japanese American Citizens League Oath of Allegiance*, 1942, JACL Oath of Identification + Allegiance, 1942.

33 The J.A.C.L. Inter-Office Correspondence circa 1944 titled *Salt Lake City Widow Has Five Sons in the U.S. Army* introduced the Masaoka family, portrayed as an exemplary Japanese American family. Mrs. Masaoka – a widow after the death of her husband in an automobile accident in 1924 – raised her eight children (six boys and two girls) on her own. All of Mrs. Masaoka's sons, except for the oldest, were in the United States Army. *Salt Lake City Widow Has Five Sons in the U.S. Army*, J.A.C.L. Inter-Office Correspondence, circa 1944, Box 1, Folder Reports – Mike Masaoka 1941, 1944, Series 1, JACL History Collection, Japanese American National Library, San Francisco (hereafter cited as Reports – Mike Masaoka 1941, 1944).

the Japanese American Citizens League through its National Secretary [Mike Masaoka] urged Japanese Americans to volunteer in order to demonstrate the patriotism of all Americans, regardless of race, to crush the common foe."³⁴ Mike Masaoka wired Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson to volunteer for military service; four of his brothers followed his example and volunteered as well.

The National Secretary felt that if Japanese Americans acted courageously on the battlefield they would be able to break down the barrier of hatred that had hindered their life on the Pacific Coast, a clear intent by the League to counter prejudice with courage and patriotism. As Masaoka wrote in a letter dated May 22, 1944: "We feel, and naturally, that since we are soon to risk life and limb for our country, "our people" should be given every possible consideration. While we realize that the combination of war hysteria and professional West Coast agitators will be a difficult barrier to overcome, we are ever hopeful that should we conduct ourselves with valor and credit in battle even these formidable obstacles can be broken down."³⁵

In a previous letter he touched upon the same topic, writing that he and his fellow soldiers would be privileged to prove their loyalty – beyond a doubt – on the battlefield. Nevertheless, he expressed his doubt over their sacrifice, "I am tempted to ask myself whether all our sacrifices will again be in vain, whether it is worth while to risk life and limb for the perpetuation of what some Californians seem to believe is the American way of life."³⁶ He shared the common thoughts/ideas of the 'evacuee' volunteers on the issue, their discussions as they were being shipped overseas to fight for the nation that removed and incarcerated their families. According to Masaoka's letter the volunteers were optimistic and agreed that they were fighting not to preserve the America they knew, but rather for a "greater America" that was to come as a result of their contribution. They also believed that the present-day West Coast hatred directed against Japanese Americans originated more from war hysteria than prejudice.³⁷ The Nisei still possessed a "child-like faith" – as described by Masaoka – in the American value of sportsmanship and fair play. They believed that if they fought with valor against the common enemy they would be recognized as "co-Americans" after the war, accepted even by such nativist organizations as the Native Sons and Daughters.³⁸ The Nisei volunteers needed to become "Japyanks," "'damn' good soldiers," in order to achieve their objectives.³⁹

34 *Salt Lake City Widow Has Five Sons in the U.S. Army*, circa 1944, Reports – Mike Masaoka 1941, 1944.

35 Mike Masaoka wrote the letter to Mr. Lewis aboard a U.S. vessel while being shipped overseas as a member of the 442nd Infantry Regiment bound for an unknown destination. Mike Masaoka to Mr. Lewis, May 22, 1944, Box 1, Folder Reports – Mike Masaoka 1941, 1944, Series 1, JACL History Collection, Japanese American National Library, San Francisco.

36 Mike Masaoka to Mr. Pickett, May 20, 1944, Box 1, Folder Reports – Mike Masaoka 1941, 1944, Series 1, JACL History Collection, Japanese American National Library, San Francisco (hereafter cited as Reports – Mike Masaoka 1941, 1944).

37 Masaoka to Pickett, 1944, Reports – Mike Masaoka 1941, 1944.

38 Masaoka to Pickett, 1944, Reports – Mike Masaoka 1941, 1944.

39 Masaoka to Pickett, 1944, Reports – Mike Masaoka 1941, 1944.

The J.A.C.L. promoted the volunteerism and service of the Nisei after they became eligible for military service and Selective Service was reinstated for Japanese Americans by the War Department. The League was concerned over how the War Department will publicize the achievements of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team (R.C.T.) on the battlefields. It was assumed after the formation of the unit that the accomplishments of the Combat Team would be publicized to depict their Americanism, to show what kind of Americans they were. Mike Masaoka insisted that the J.A.C.L. was interested in the publicity of the 442nd R.C.T. not because of self-publicity, but because of the opportunity to enlighten the public on how the Japanese American servicemen were fighting for America.⁴⁰ However, we should not fail to recall the importance of “acceptance” for the League. The courage, patriotism, and sacrifice of the Nisei GIs was widely publicized because it was seen as a means of gaining acceptance for Japanese Americans and their resettlement, return to the West Coast. Draft resisters were condemned by the J.A.C.L. and the organization placed great emphasis on discouraging young Nisei from following in their footsteps, some were even pressured through such actions. Based on the data provided by the W.R.A. Statistics Section⁴¹ by June of 1945 the number of Nisei conscripts and volunteers reached 6,090 since January 20, 1944. On the other hand, the number of draft resisters arrested was 310, with 144 convicted and 97 cases in progress.

The J.A.C.L. publicized the war effort of the Japanese Americans, one instance is the lecture tour of infantryman Pfc. Thomas Higa – organized and sponsored by the League – which lasted for more than a hundred days from August 15 until December 10, 1944.⁴² Private Higa was on a 121-day-long furlough from the United States Army. Based on Thomas Higa’s itinerary during the speaking tour he attended about sixty engagements in twenty states with his destinations including the Gila River (AZ), Heart Mountain (WY), Manzanar (CA), Minidoka (ID), Poston (AZ), Rohwer (AR), and Topaz Incarceration Camps (UT). The purpose of the tour was to inform Japanese Americans at the incarceration centers, mainly the Issei, on what their sons were doing in the United States Army, to counter the rumors that the Nisei soldiers were used as “cannon fodder,” and to tell the Nisei that the Japanese American soldiers have realized that they can disprove the rumors of disloyalty on the battlefield.⁴³

40 Masaoka to Pickett, 1944, Reports – Mike Masaoka 1941, 1944.

41 Selective Service And Volunteers, Weekly Report No. 41, June 9, 1945, Box 46, Folder Induction of Japanese Americans (Selective Service) 1944–1945, Series 14, JACL History Collection, Japanese American National Library, San Francisco.

42 Itinerary of Pfc. Thomas Higa Speaking Tour, 1944, Box 1, Folder Private Higa’s Lecture Tour 1944, Series 1, JACL History Collection, Japanese American National Library, San Francisco.

43 “Japanese-American Private Tells of Italian Campaigns,” *Ann Arbor News*, November 6, 1944, Box 1, Folder Private Higa’s Lecture Tour 1944, Series 1, JACL History Collection, Japanese American National Library, San Francisco; “Japanese-American, Wounded In Italy, Says Unit Was Treated Like Other GIs,” *The New York Times*, November 10, 1944, Box 1, Folder Private Higa’s Lecture Tour 1944, Series 1, JACL History Collection, Japanese American National Library, San Francisco.

The J.A.C.L. supported the liberalized Selective Service and the draft of Japanese Americans, the right of the Nisei to serve in the United States Army. After the war broke out the Nisei men of draft age were classified as 4-C, 'enemy aliens,' by the War Department on January 5, 1942. They were not allowed to serve in the United States Armed Forces until January of 1943 when the War Department announced its plan to establish a Japanese American combat unit. The 442nd Regimental Combat Team, an all-Japanese segregated unit, was activated a few months later in April. Quotas were assigned for the Japanese living on the Hawaiian Islands and the Continental United States, the number of volunteers was set at 1,500 for the Hawaiian Japanese⁴⁴ and about 10,000 applied; the quota for the mainland Japanese Americans was at 3,000 and only 1,200 volunteered.⁴⁵ We have to keep in mind that by the spring of 1943 the incarceration of the Japanese community on the Continent was in full swing, meaning that the 1,200 mainland Nisei volunteers came from the incarceration camps. The number of volunteers from the Continent was much lower, even with the support of the J.A.C.L., although it is quite understandable taking into account the series of traumatic events that transpired on the Pacific Coast. The Nisei had to wait until January of 1944 to have their draft status restored by the War Department. By and large 33,000 Nisei served in the United States Army during the war. Due to the courage and patriotism of the Nisei servicemen the 442nd Regimental Combat Team⁴⁶ became the most decorated unit in the history of the United States Army, for its size and length of service.

44 The immense difference in the number of Hawaiian and Mainland volunteers can be attributed to numerous factors. The Hawaiian Islands were regarded as a multicultural and ethnic environment – the plantation economy and lifestyle greatly contributed to its diversity –, which cultivated the greater acceptance of the Hawaiian Japanese, the largest ethnic group. Hawaii was characterized by Curtis B. Munson as a "melting pot" due to the significant proportion of dark-skinned inhabitants of the islands. As a direct result of its ethnic and cultural diversity the Japanese residents were only faced with social and economic discrimination and did not experience an "inferiority complex" as the West Coast Japanese. Furthermore, the Hawaiian Japanese were not removed and incarcerated on a collective basis, rather a case by case principle was imposed to determine their loyalty. Curtis B. Munson, Report On Hawaiian Islands, December 8, 1941, Box 1, Folder Roosevelt Lib. Materials, 1941–1942, Series 1, JACL Redress Collection, Japanese American National Library, San Francisco.

45 Clifford Uyeda, "Japanese Hawaiians," *Nikkei Heritage* 4.1 (Winter 1992), 5.

46 The 100th Infantry Battalion – the Hawaiian Nisei unit formed in May of 1942 and attached in June of 1944 to the 442nd Regimental Combat Team – and the 442nd R.C.T. received 18,143 individual decorations (including 9,486 Purple Hearts, 21 Congressional Medal of Honors, 52 Distinguished Service Crosses, 1 Distinguished Service Medal, 560 Silver Stars with 28 Oak Leaf Clusters, and 4,000 Bronze Stars with 1,200 Oak Leaf Clusters), and seven Presidential Unit Citations. The 100th Infantry Battalion/442nd Regimental Combat Team suffered 28.5% casualties during World War II. Clifford I. Uyeda, ed., *Due Process: Americans of Japanese Ancestry and the United States Constitution 1787–1994* (San Francisco: National Japanese American Historical Society, 1995), 70, 72–73.

Conclusion

The overstated concept of Americanism by the League – the extent to which the Nisei should go to prove their loyalty and patriotism – proved to be divisive, since the organization no longer represented all of its fellow Japanese Americans. The League was only open to the Nisei (American citizens) and the Issei (Japanese aliens) were denied membership. Those individuals who did not accept and support the policies of the J.A.C.L. were left defenseless against the violations of their rights and freedoms. Japanese Americans who opposed cooperation with the United States government during their wartime forced mass removal and incarceration, who wanted to test the constitutionality of the restrictive wartime military orders and the incarceration, the No-No resisters, and the Nisei draft resisters were all considered as dissenters by the J.A.C.L. They were not seen as patriots who embraced and embodied true Americanism. They were dissenters who threatened the public and political acceptance of Japanese Americans as loyal and exemplary citizens. The J.A.C.L.'s standpoint on Selective Service and the subsequent segregation⁴⁷ of disloyal persons – 'non-loyal,' 'agitators,' and 'radical' elements based on the *Loyalty Questionnaire* of 1943 – created further heightened tension within the community, and in some cases it resulted in violence. One notable case of reprisal was the attack on J.A.C.L. President Saburo Kido⁴⁸ in Poston Incarceration Center in 1943, the incident forced him and his family to leave the camp for Salt Lake City. As a consequence of its controversial wartime policy the membership⁴⁹ of the J.A.C.L. dropped significantly, from close to 20,000 at the beginning of the war to about 4,000 in 1943; the League hoped to reach over 5,000 in 1944.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude for all the help and guidance that my mentor Prof. Tibor Frank has provided me during my PhD studies and research.

47 The League believed that segregation was the only solution to end the intimidation of loyal Japanese Americans by "pro[-]axis elements" – as Mike Masaoka referred to them in a telegram to W.R.A. Director Dillon S. Myer –, and the fear of violence. Mike Masaoka to Dillon S. Myer, December 21, 1942, Box 4, Folder JACL Telegrams 1942, Series 1, JACL History Collection, Japanese American National Library, San Francisco.

48 Letter to Mike Masaoka, February 7, 1943, Box 1, Folder Poston, Arizona (WRA), Series 1, JACL History Collection, Japanese American National Library, San Francisco.

49 Saburo Kido to Dr. T. T. Hayashi, January 10, 1944, Box 3, Folder Correspondence – Saburo Kido 1944, Series 1, JACL History Collection, Japanese American National Library, San Francisco.