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Propaganda Portraits and the Easing of American Anxieties Through WRA Films

Krystle Stricklin



FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF VISUAL ARTS, THEATRE, AND DANCE

PROPAGANDA PORTRAITS AND THE EASING OF AMERICAN ANXIETIES THROUGH
WRA FILMS

By

KRYSTLE STRICKLIN

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The members of the supervisory committee were:

Karen Bearor

Professor Directing Thesis

Adam Jolles

Committee Member

Laura Lee

Committee Member

The Graduate School has verified and approved the above-named committee members, and certifies that the thesis has been approved in accordance with university requirements.

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ABSTRACT

As director of the War Relocation Authority Photographic Section, Tom Wesley Parker (1907-76) produced hours of unedited footage and several completed films, which were integrated into an expansive World War II propaganda program in a period that has become known as the "Golden Age of Propaganda." On March 18, 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt had formed the WRA, a civilian agency that was responsible for the forced relocation and incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II. In addition to overseeing the incarceration camps, part of the WRA's stated mission was to document every step of the removal process by means of printed materials, posters, photographs, and films.

This thesis contends that Parker's films constitute a novel form of cinematic domestic propaganda, a category of visual media thus far underdeveloped in scholarly literature. By synthesizing the discourse of propagandized media with critical film texts, I develop a framework to understand the WRA films' considerable place in the complex narrative of visual rhetoric in America. Furthermore, I reveal how these films demonstrate the WRA's conscious effort to investigate cinema's formal and communicative limits in America's burgeoning industrial society. In particular, I explain how in *Japanese Relocation* (1942) and *A Challenge to Democracy* (1944) Parker synthesized cinematic techniques and rhetorical devices from a myriad of non-fiction film genres, including social documentaries, newsreels, and other government-sponsored wartime films. In doing so, Parker devised a form of filmic practice that simultaneously recalled the history of social documentary films, simulated wartime reportage, and engaged with the anxieties of postwar resettlement.

What is at stake here is not only an acknowledgement of the films' significant position as domestic propaganda, but also their engagement with entrenched notions of nationality. I

conceptualize the WRA films as performing the task of regulating the Japanese American citizen to satisfy existing anxieties about post-war resettlement. Moreover, the WRA films take part in an effort in the mid-twentieth century to institutionalize an array of visual media for propagandistic aims, and, most striking, the WRA films depict a conflict between visual culture and politics that is as relevant today as ever. Thus, this thesis lays the groundwork for a more nuanced formal and conceptual analysis of this genre of nonfiction film.

INTRODUCTION

As director of the War Relocation Authority Photographic Section, Tom Wesley Parker (1907-76) (Figure 1) produced hours of unedited footage and several completed films, which were integrated into an expansive World War II propaganda program in a period that has become known as the Golden Age of propaganda.¹ On March 18, 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt had formed the WRA, a civilian agency that was responsible for the forced relocation and incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II. In addition to overseeing the incarceration camps, part of the WRA's stated mission was to document every step of the removal process by means of printed materials, posters, photographs, and films. This era marks the point at which propaganda reached unparalleled influence in society, as Americans witnessed the profusion of visual media aimed at regulating public opinion. While a sizeable portion of this effort dealt with wartime concerns abroad, alternatively a substantial production of media, including Parker's films, publicized domestic issues on the home front.

Two of Parker's films, *Japanese Relocation* (1942) and *A Challenge to Democracy* (1944), presented to viewers a narrated account of the incarceration process, a glimpse of daily activities inside the camps, and the subsequent efforts to resettle Japanese Americans back into public communities.² In each film, Parker synthesized cinematic techniques and rhetorical

¹ Though divided over issues of function and influence, most propaganda scholars identify World War II as a period when both the Axis and the Allied nations conducted propaganda campaigns of a magnitude never before seen in history. For a concise overview of World War II propaganda see, Anthony Richard Ewart Rhodes, *Propaganda: The Art of Persuasion in World War II*, (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1976), as well as, Kenneth W. Rendell, *With Weapons and Wits: Propaganda and Psychological Warfare in World War II: Heroic Leaders and Heroic Unknown Warriors in Their Finest Hour: the Collection of Kenneth W. Rendell*, (Lexington, Mass: Museum of Our National Heritage, 1992). For an encyclopedic list of propaganda techniques, see Robert Cole, *The Encyclopedia of Propaganda*, (Armonk, NY: Sharpe Reference, 1998).

² Resettlement is term used by the US government to refer to the release of the internees and their transition and reintegration into postwar American life. See, *A Challenge to Democracy*, War Relocation Authority with the Office of War Information and the Office of Strategic Services, nd. Record Group 210: Records of the War Relocation Authority, National Archives at College Park. (18:04) and *Japanese Relocation*, Office of War Information—Bureau of Motion Pictures, 1943, Record Group 208: Records of the Office of War Information, National Archives

devices from a myriad of non-fiction film genres, including social documentaries, educational films, and newsreels. In doing so, he devised a form of filmic practice that simultaneously recalled the history of social documentary films, simulated wartime reportage, and engaged with both the anxieties of postwar resettlement and the desires of an emergent American consumer culture. Thus, the WRA films resist any easy categorization and instead vacillate between genres of propagandized media, non-fiction cinema, and works of reportage.

Although the WRA films receive little attention in both cinema and Japanese American scholarship, their historical and cultural significance cannot be understated. This thesis contends that these films constitute a novel form of cinematic domestic propaganda, a category of visual media thus far underdeveloped in scholarly literature. By synthesizing the discourse of propagandized media with critical film texts, I develop a framework to understand the WRA films' considerable place in the complex history of visual rhetoric in America. Furthermore, I reveal how these films demonstrate the WRA's conscious effort to investigate cinema's formal and communicative limits in America's burgeoning postwar society. Finally, I address the WRA's role in the remaking of Japanese American identity during the resettlement period, and the films' complicated rhetoric of Americanism, nationality, and race.

Defining propaganda has been a problematic issue since the word's inception. Politicians, rhetoricians, and scholars have consistently argued and drawn and redrawn lines around various definitions of what is propaganda and what are its functions.³ In this thesis, I begin by following Garth Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell's definition of the word as: “ a deliberate, systematic

at College Park. (9:28). For a complete record of Parker's films, see the Film Records addendum at the end of this thesis.

³ For two sophisticated discussions see, Jacques Ellul's *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes*, (New York: Knopf, 1965) and Garth Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell's latest edition of *Propaganda & Persuasion*, (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2012).

attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist.”⁴ Per the WRA’s efforts to present the incarceration as a “necessary” part of the war effort, Parker’s films fit under Jowett and O’Donnell’s definition of the word. The “desired intent” of the WRA was first to explain why incarceration was required, as well as democratic, and then ultimately to resettle the Japanese Americans back into society; however, the defensive tone of the films, particularly *A Challenge*, implies a pre-existing critical view of the incarceration, which neither film addresses. Furthermore, the principal rhetoric of the films often hinges on notions of Christian virtue and constitutionality.

As such, existing models of propaganda remain insufficient for understanding the complexities surrounding both *Japanese Relocation* and *A Challenge*. These complexities include the relationship between Parker and his films, the shift in narrative from concentration to resettlement, and the questionable motives for making and showing the films to audiences both inside and outside the camps. This thesis contributes an analysis that moves beyond limited interpretations of propaganda films and incarceration visual communication to provide a more nuanced formal and conceptual analysis of Parker’s films. Additionally, this thesis takes an interdisciplinary approach that contributes to a large body of scholarship on nonfiction film, World War II propaganda, and the Japanese American incarceration by providing an understanding of the social and cultural function of Parker’s films. Significantly, the WRA films take part in an effort in the mid-twentieth century to institutionalize an array of visual media for propagandistic aims, and, most striking, each of the WRA films depicts a conflict between visual culture and politics that is as relevant today as ever.

⁴ Jowett and O’Donnell, *Propaganda & Persuasion*, (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2012), 7.

While it might be argued that these films merely show the adaptation of 1930s social documentary aesthetics to new wartime interests, this thesis demonstrates how they attracted public attention to domestic issues of race, nationality and consumerism, albeit with reference to a recognizable film tradition. In his first film, Parker made use of specific filmic devices, such as the onscreen narrator, an open claim to social "reality," and choreographed snapshots of life as a confined Japanese American. Such devices had characterized social documentary motion pictures of the previous era, as in *The City* (1939), *Valley Town* (1940), and works by Pare Lorentz, including *The River* (1938) and *The Plow that Broke the Plains* (1936).⁵ The WRA, working in accordance with the Office of War Information (OWI), employed films to mobilize public support of domestic policies.⁶ The WRA films' internal gaze on the social issue of incarceration operated against the proliferation of overseas wartime activities, during a period of intense focus on Nazi counterpropaganda.⁷ As such, the films raise questions about the sources and ambitions of government-sponsored messages designed to encourage cooperation with war efforts and modify homefront behavior.

From the wartime imagery of the 1940s, the WRA films emerged with visual power and authority as instrumental tools in the struggle for understanding identity and place in a newly mechanized world. Scenes of incarcerated Japanese Americans presented in the films emulate

⁵ See, Robert L. Snyder, *Pare Lorentz and the Documentary Film*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1968) and Charlie Keil, "American Documentary Finds Its Voice: Persuasion and Expression in *The Plow That Broke the Plains* and *The City*," in *Documenting the Documentary: Close Readings of Documentary Film and Video*, edited by Barry Keith Grant and Jeannette Sloniowski, (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1998): 119-135. For Keil's discussion of early film production practices see, Charlie Keil, *Early American Cinema in Transition: Story, Style, and Filmmaking, 1907-1913*, (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001).

⁶ Other OWI films are generally documentary films relating to the responsibility of the OWI to promote an understanding in the United States and abroad of the progress of the war effort and of the policies, activities, and aims of the government. These films reflect the official point of view on such wartime problems as inflation, rationing, job changes, housing, the need for scrap metal, and women in industry.

⁷ For a discussion of World War II American counterpropaganda see, Clayton D. Laurie, *The Propaganda Warriors: America's Crusade against Nazi Germany*, (Lawrence, KA: University Press of Kansas, 1996).

established representations of Americanness and resettlement desires, yet within each is inscribed a more complex picture of national identity. What is at stake here is not only an acknowledgement of the films' significant position as domestic propaganda films, but also their engagement with entrenched notions of nationality. In particular, I conceptualize the WRA films as performing the task of regulating the Japanese American citizen to satisfy existing anxieties about post-war resettlement.

Historical Background

In 1941 the population of Los Angeles, California, included over 23,000 citizens of Japanese ancestry, more than any other city in the continental United States.⁸ By November of the next year, abandoned shops and empty homes marked the spaces where these individuals once lived. Events of World War II and the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor led to the forced removal and incarceration of approximately 110,000 West Coast Japanese Americans. Politicians and military leaders cited a possible imperial-Japanese attack from the Pacific as the primary reason for dislocating an entire ethnic population from the coastal regions of Washington, Oregon, California, and Arizona. Even prior to Pearl Harbor, cities across the United States experienced a growing tension among local authorities, Japanese American communities, and the larger public. Though the perceived attack would never come, government officials from the West Coast region met and began to plan for the removal of all Japanese American families from their homes.

Today, scholars continue to debate about the exact circumstances and series of events that led up to the mass confinement of loyal American citizens. In the post-war effort to amend for

⁸ For a statistical account of the financial and commercial havoc that the incarceration had on California's economy and the Japanese American population see, Leonard Broom and Ruth Riemer, *Removal and Return: The Socio-Economic Effects of the War on Japanese Americans*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1949), 8-17.

the incarceration, much ink has been shed in an attempt to determine the critical factors that led to such a historic suspension of civil liberties. On February 27, 1942, Idaho Governor Chase Clark told a congressional committee in Seattle that the Japanese would be welcome in Idaho only if they were in "concentration camps under military guard."⁹ A number of Asian American historians, such as Sam Robinson and Louis Fiset, credit Clark with originating the idea of establishing concentration camps for the Japanese Americans instead of allowing them to relocate freely to interior cities.¹⁰

The initial phase of the forced removal occurred in an alarmingly short period. In less than six months, the United States Army designated exclusion zones across the West Coast, which revoked residency to citizens of Japanese descent, executed 108 Evacuation Orders, and forcibly moved approximately 110,000 Japanese Americans into temporary Assembly Centers.¹¹ Then, after several months at the centers, the Army transferred the detainees to more permanent Relocation Centers, where many spent the remainder of the war. Since the Army could not manage the long-term care of the detainees, the Roosevelt administration formed the WRA.¹² From March 18, 1942, to June 26, 1946, the WRA maintained ten relocation camps at remote locations in Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Utah, Wyoming, and Arkansas.

⁹ Brian Niiya, *Japanese American History: An A-to-Z Reference from 1868 to the Present*, (New York: Facts on File, 1993), 55. Four days after Clark's statement, John Dewitt issued Public Proclamation No. 1, which created military zones across portions of the West coast. This document foreshadowed that certain peoples might be excluded from these zones.

¹⁰ See Greg Robinson, *After Camp: Portraits in Midcentury Japanese American Life and Politics*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012) and Louis Fiset, *Camp Harmony: Seattle's Japanese Americans and the Puyallup Assembly Center*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009).

¹¹ Brian Masaru Hayashi, *Democratizing the Enemy: The Japanese American Incarceration*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004), 8.

¹² For an introductory, but informative text on the incarceration see, Alice Yang Murray and Roger Daniels, *What Did the Internment of Japanese Americans During World War II Mean?: Readings*, (Boston, Mass: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2000).

During its four-year existence, the WRA had two influential directors, both of whom had previous leadership positions in the Department of Agriculture but no specific knowledge of Japanese American culture or the full scope of maintaining the camps. For the first three months, Milton S. Eisenhower, brother of later President Dwight D. Eisenhower, served as the WRA's first director.¹³ Eisenhower, who narrated the first of Parker's films, maintained this position until June of 1942, when Dillon S. Myer replaced him as director. Myer occupied this position until 1946, when President Harry S. Truman officially ended the WRA's operation. In a little over four years, the WRA, while managing the incarceration and resettlement, also produced Parker's films, a series of informational publications, and over 17,000 photographs of incarcerated Japanese Americans.¹⁴

In the second year of the WRA's operation, Myer appointed Parker the director of the newly formed WRA Photographic Section (WRAPS). Before this, Parker had spent his youth in the Colorado Mountains, attended Northwestern University for two years, and returned home to work for three years as a photographer for the Works Progress Administration (WPA), followed by four years at the Federal Works Agency in Denver. As the WRA's objective shifted from incarceration to resettlement, Parker joined the Authority, whose offices were located in the

¹³ Lane Ryo Hirabayashi, Kenichiro Shimada, and Hikaru Iwasaki, *Japanese American Resettlement Through the Lens: Hikaru Carl Iwasaki and the WRA's Photographic Section, 1943-1945*, (Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado, 2009), 14.

¹⁴ For a critical account of the WRA's activities see, Eric L. Muller, *American Inquisition: The Hunt for Japanese American Disloyalty in World War II*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007). For printed material produced by the WRA see, United States and Malcolm E. Pitts, *Administrative Highlights of the WRA Program*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. G.P.O., 1946), United States and Edward Holland Spicer, *Impounded People, Japanese-Americans in the Relocation Centers*, (Washington: U.S. Govt. print off, 1946), United States, *Bibliography on War Relocation Authority: Japanese and Japanese Americans*, (Washington, D.C.: War Relocation Authority, 1942), United States, *Nisei in Uniform*, (Washington: U.S. G.P.O., 1944), United States, *Relocation of Japanese-Americans*, (Washington, D.C.: War Relocation Authority, 1943), United States, *The Evacuated People: A Quantitative Description*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. G.P.O., 1946), United States, *The Relocation Program*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. G.P.O., 1946), and United States, *The Wartime Handling of Evacuee Property*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. G.P.O., 1946).

historic Midlands Savings Bank.¹⁵ Over the next two years, Parker worked with fellow photographers Francis L. Stewart and Hikaru Iwasaki, and darkroom specialist Charles E. Mace, capturing images of Japanese American life both in and out of the centers (Figure 2).¹⁶ Parker took many still photographs; however his films best embody the WRA's mission and the two phases of its operations.

The long-range goal of the WRA included relocation of detainees into interior cities, but to achieve this goal the WRA administrators had to contend with anti-Japanese politicians, such as Governor Clark, and community groups that were resistant to the addition of relocation camps in their neighboring towns.¹⁷ Undoubtedly anti-Japanese officials and community leaders exploited the situation for financial, racial, and political motivations. In addition, during this period wartime propaganda posters and stories of the Japanese "enemy" appeared as the most discriminatory and violent tools for the war effort. In contrast, well-known photographers, such as Dorothea Lange, Russell Lee, and Ansel Adams, denounced the unjust treatment of loyal Japanese American citizens and produced photographs aimed at social reform. As a result, contrasting literature and images of the incarceration flooded American newspapers, theaters, and radio programs, ranging from overtly racist cartoons, such as Paramount Pictures' *Japoteurs* (1942), which bolstered the erroneous notion of Japanese American spies, to Adams' documentary photo book *Born Free and Equal: The Story of Loyal Japanese-Americans*

¹⁵ Hirabayashi, *Resettlement Through the Lens*, 16.

¹⁶ Among the WRA Photographic Section staff, Mace is the only member credited with Parker in the films. Mace's name appears in the opening credits of *A Challenge to Democracy* with Tom Parker's name and under the heading "Photography."

¹⁷ Some of the more notorious anti-Japanese groups included the California Joint Immigration Committee, the California Grange, the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, the American Legion, the Native Sons and Native Daughters of the Golden West, and the Hearst newspapers. Politicians who spoke openly against the Japanese Americans were Attorney General Earl Warren of California Representative Martin Dies of Texas, and most of the West Coast congressional representatives in DC. See, Albert Turner, *The Origins of the WRA*, diss. (1967).

(1944).¹⁸ As evidenced in the narrative of Parker's films, this incoherent picture left both the public and the incarcerated citizens anxious about the future and the role that the Japanese-Americans would play in the postwar resettlement.

State of the Literature

The Japanese American incarceration is the single most written about historical event in Asian American scholarship, yet scholars have only cursorily looked at the WRA's production of films and visual materials. In recent years, scholars have focused on the discriminatory rhetoric of the incarceration and how the use of language regarding this event draws from a conflict-ridden history of euphemistic stratagems and the politics of forgetting. Within emerging scholarship there is a continuing effort to provide an accurate lexicon for recounting this substantial past. As such, the first problem to address with the WRA films is their creation and appearance, amid the conflicting rhetorical background of wartime imagery. My thesis addresses this issue obliquely by adhering to the most current scholarly vocabulary, such as the use of "incarceration" in place of "internment," which was a word used historically to diminish the criminal nature of the confinement.

These rhetorical debates characterize another vein of scholarship that aims to understand the WRA's filmic output as simple propaganda. For example, film scholar Richard Meran Barsam in his text, *Nonfiction Film: A Critical History* (1992 ed.), refers to *Japanese Relocation* as "insidious" and "simplistic," relegating the film to a crude documentary-styled attempt to valorize the government's actions.¹⁹ In an effort to rewrite the lexicon, the WRA takes on the

¹⁸ For the latest reprint of Adams' photo essay see, Ansel Adams and Wynne Benti, *Born Free and Equal: The Story of Loyal Japanese Americans, Manzanar Relocation Center, Inyo County, California: Photographs from the Library of Congress Collection*, (Bishop, CA: Spotted Dog Press, 2002).

¹⁹ Richard Meran Barsam, *Nonfiction Film: A Critical History*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 220-221.

role of propitiator and visual custodian of the incarceration. As such, deviations away from understanding the films as simple propaganda would only hinder scholarly efforts to reclaim the language of incarceration. In my study I work within the larger space of this rhetorical scholarship, but also I take a critical turn away from this interpretation to look at how the films move beyond simple notions of propaganda and exemplify diverse cinematic genres. In other words, the WRA films appeared neither as simple propaganda nor as straight documentary films, but rather as an amalgamated form of cinema that was designed to record, educate, and persuade.

As mentioned above, Japanese American scholars and the public have waged contentious debates over both historical and contemporary terminology surrounding the incarceration. In tandem with these debates, historian Roger Daniels in his book *Prisoners Without Trial: Japanese Americans in World War II* (1993) argues that the incarceration can no longer be viewed as an isolated moment of historical injustice.²⁰ Instead, it should be seen as one link strung into a long and complex chain of racial prejudice in America toward people of Asian descent.²¹ In his most recent book, *After Camp: Portraits in Midcentury Japanese American Life and Politics* (2012), historian Greg Robinson unravels this chain of racial rhetoric and notes that during the postwar period Japanese Americans struggled to remake their lives in a rapidly modernizing world. Daniels and Robinson, leading scholars in Asian American studies, provide a critical foundation for my study of the incarceration and resettlement. Where they focus on

²⁰ See, Roger Daniels and Eric Foner, *Prisoners Without Trial: Japanese Americans in World War II*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993).

²¹ Also see Roger Daniels, "Words do Matter: A Note on Inappropriate Terminology and the Incarceration of the Japanese Americans" in Louis Fiset and Gail M. Nomura, eds., *Nikkei in the Pacific Northwest: Japanese Americans and Japanese Canadians in the Twentieth Century* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), 190-214; Deborah Schiffrin, "Language and Public Memorial: 'America's Concentration Camps,'" *Discourse and Society* 12, No. 4 (2001): 505-534.

revealing how textual rhetoric was manipulated for political agendas, I will advance this view to include the visual rhetoric of the WRA films.

The current scholarship on the photographic and filmic output of the WRA stems from research done by Asian American history scholars, and not art historians. To date, historian Lane Ryo Hirabayashi has written the only scholarly book focused on the WRA's Photographic Section, Parker, and the films. In *Japanese American Resettlement Through the Lens* (2009) Hirabayashi presents a collection of WRA images taken by Hikaru Iwasaki, the only WRA photographer still alive at the time of the book's production.²² Hirabayashi provides an intimate look at the WRA's visual program through the memories of Iwasaki's time spent working with Parker. In addition to Hirabayashi's book, the single best work on WRA photography is Jasmine Alinder's *Moving Images: Photography and the Japanese American Incarceration* (2010).²³ In her book Alinder reexamines the diverse photographic projects concerned with documenting the incarceration, the ways in which museums during the period exhibited these images, and how a later generation of Japanese American photographers negotiated the traumatic past. While this provides an encompassing history of incarceration photography, Alinder ignores the impact of the actual "moving images" (the films) and their close relationship to the photographic output of the WRA.

The degree to which the population had access to the WRA films defined the extent of their participation in the country's visual rhetoric. In terms of viewership, the current scholarship has failed to address the two distinct audiences of these films, which this study is the first to

²² My own correspondence with Professor Hirabayashi has proven vital to my understanding of the WRA's filmic output and Parker's role in the production and dissemination of the films.

²³ See, Jasmine Alinder, *Moving Images: Photography and the Japanese American Incarceration*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009). For her discussion of the WRA, 12, 17, 23-25, 48, 81.

address. Now it seems easy to read the films as features intended for a single audience – the larger American public. However, my research indicates that the WRA photographs and films were also viewed within the confines of the camps. The films are not unique in this regard, as Ansel Adams’ famous images of Manzanar were displayed in two separate exhibits inside the camp in 1944, as well as at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City.²⁴ This study engages the question of how the films spoke to and mediated contemporary American anxieties, both inside and outside the camps. I contend that as a type of cinematic domestic propaganda, the WRA films negotiated between two domestic audiences, and, most provocatively, this double-focused lens reveals internal conflicts between the films.

Beyond formal considerations and issues of viewership, this study addresses the broader problematic nature of propaganda films as tools in the construction of identity. There was a growing interest during the 1930s and 1940s in the usefulness of cinema for political, commercial, and private consumption. From art films and Hollywood theaters to classrooms and military training grounds, films were being used, shown, and viewed in increasingly diverse ways. In other words, government organizations, public industries, and private interest groups all deployed cameras and film projectors to transmit ideas, to sell, to teach, and to make or remake identities. The WRA films represent a small piece of this immense history and the government’s pervasive propaganda efforts during World War II. However, by addressing the distinct nature of film, as both a form of communication and an aesthetic object, I reframe the problematic nature of the WRA’s wartime use of film.

Parker’s films grapple with remembering historical events entangled in a web of public forgetting. Despite the significant range of scholarly literature on the Japanese American

²⁴ Alinder, *Moving Images*, 104, 110.

incarceration, there remains a vast amount of historical and cultural forgetting with reference to the incarceration. Critical studies outside the discipline of history are insufficient in their assessments of the WRA's visual program. In this thesis, I address this gap in scholarship and aim to open up a fresh dialogue about the WRA films that will add to the continuing reconstruction of postwar Japanese American identity and to contemporary discussions about the mediated nature of visual communication.

Précis of Chapters

This thesis is comprised of three major chapters, in which I establish Parker's films as a particular strand of cinematic domestic propaganda, a divergent category of visual media. Each chapter presents a synthesis of propagandized media and critical film texts, which is used to develop a framework to understand the WRA films' complex rhetorical narrative. Furthermore, to reveal how these films demonstrate the WRA's conscious effort to investigate cinema's formal and communicative limits in America's burgeoning industrial society, I outline the relationship between the WRA films and three distinct non-fiction film genres: social documentaries, newsreels, and other government-produced World War II films. Each chapter centers on one of these three genres. To support my argument, I consider commonalities in the cinematic techniques and rhetorical devices used by the WRA with myriad examples from each of the three genres. Further, this thesis addresses three additional, interconnected ideas: the formal visual strategies of the WRA films, their relationship to propaganda rhetoric, and their engagement with modernity and postwar resettlement. Each chapter will deal with specific aesthetic or cinematic patterns, such as portraits in the films that emulate traditional American tropes or the shift in meaning that occurred as the film was viewed by two distinct audiences (inside and outside the

camps). In addition, each chapter addresses the conflicting picture of Japanese American identity that is portrayed in the WRA films.

Chapter one discusses the non-fiction genre of social documentaries and the 1930s discourse on propaganda. In this chapter, I establish a brief historical background to the rise of social documentary films and pre-war visual rhetoric surrounding the Japanese American community. To frame this background, I present a comprehensive formal analysis of Parker's films, which to date has not been done in any scholarship. This analysis includes a careful consideration of the narrative shift between *Japanese Relocation* and *A Challenge to Democracy*, as well as other cinematic devices that Parker learned from the social documentaries of the previous era. To that end, I consider the film scholar William Guynn's assessment of the institution of documentary filmmaking, as well as scholar Charlie Keil's narrative analysis of 1930s social documentaries. Finally, I turn to the issue of pre-war Japanese American identity and the link between the immigrant portraits by FSA photographers such as Dorothea Lange and the pre-war portraits that Parker presents in his films.

In chapter two, I build on the formal analyses of chapter one and relate the films to wartime newsreels, which were popular at the same time of the WRA films. Most wartime propaganda asked people to take action – to buy war bonds, save scrap metal, plant a victory garden. Conversely, incarceration propaganda urged a more passive response. Parker's films implored viewers simply to believe a few key facts: that the Japanese Americans could now be trusted (after the “disloyal” had been identified and removed from the community), that both sides performed patriotic and *necessary* duties, and that everyone, including the passive viewers, could be proud of their actions. In this chapter, I contrast the WRA films, which were carefully narrated and constructed, with contemporaneous newsreel footage that was often fragmented and

unaccompanied by text or thoughtful commentary. Here I illustrate the internal conflict between reportage and propaganda in both the newsreel genre and Parker's films. These stylistic and rhetorical conflicts attest to the understanding of the WRA films as a complex strand of cinematic domestic propaganda and visual media.

In the final chapter, having established Parker's films as a type of cinematic domestic propaganda, I discuss how the films contribute to an understanding of postwar modernity in terms of the easing of American anxieties regarding resettlement. In addition to films and articles about the Japanese Americans, the government exposed the public to various films and cartoons about Japan during the war in an attempt to introduce Americans to Japanese ways of thinking and living. While *A Challenge* recounts the history of the exile and incarceration of the Japanese Americans, it also perpetuates troubling concepts of race and American identity. With this in mind, I consider how certain scenes within *A Challenge*, as well as in Parker's *The Way Ahead* and *For Valor*, address the complicated issues of Americanism, nationality, and the remaking of Japanese American identity during the resettlement period.

CHAPTER ONE

SOCIAL DOCUMENTARIES

During the 1930s, a decade before the WRA tasked Parker to film the incarceration, the government sought to use film as a propaganda tool for divisive New Deal programs. In response to Depression era financial crises and the subsequent rise in poverty, the first term Roosevelt administration developed a succession of domestic programs aimed at economic reform.²⁵ To document these programs, New Deal filmmakers and photographers turned their cameras toward a range of domestic social issues, including the daily lives of impoverished farm families, the production of state-sponsored housing developments, and the creation of public works. The success of these New Deal films led to the establishment of the official U.S. Film Service in 1938, and it also marked the stylistic and purposeful direction in which American documentary filmmaking would take in the following decade.²⁶ To deal with similar domestic issues, government filmmakers of the 1940s derived rhetorical styles and cinematic techniques from New Deal era cinema, though most wartime films, such as Parker's, also adopted the aggrandized militaristic tone of the World War II propaganda program. Thus, an understanding of the WRA films as a particular strand of cinematic domestic propaganda requires a look back at the propagandized films and photographs of New Deal agencies, such as the Resettlement Administration (RA), the Works Progress Administration (WPA), and the Farm Security Administration (FSA).

²⁵ For a history of Roosevelt's New Deal policies see, Albert U. Romasco, *The Politics of Recovery: Roosevelt's New Deal*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983). For an insightful text on Depression-era literature see Stephen Fender's *Nature, Class, and New Deal Literature: The Country Poor in the Great Depression*, (New York: Routledge, 2012). Also see, John Raeburn, *A Staggering Revolution: A Cultural History of Thirties Photography*, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006).

²⁶ See, William Alexander, *Film on the Left: American Documentary Film from 1931 to 1942*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981).

To establish this historical precedent, this chapter introduces the correlation between New Deal visual media and the WRA's *Japanese Relocation* and *A Challenge*. To begin, I establish Parker's considerable history with New Deal agencies and how he adopted the visual rhetoric of the 1930s in his WRA films. Next, I address the problematic nature of the term "documentary," through a critique of film scholar William Guynn's documentary theory. To assess the visual form and rhetoric of Parker's films, I utilize a critical method provided by cinema historian Charlie Keil in an essay titled "American Documentary Finds Its Voice: Persuasion and Expression in *The Plow That Broke the Plains* and *The City*."²⁷ Keil's critical text provides the rhetorical lens needed to emphasize the shift in narrative arrangement and the loss of stylistic unity between *Japanese Relocation* and *A Challenge*. This analysis provides the structural groundwork for my wider inquiry regarding the films' use and reception in wartime and post-war American society.

Parker worked for the WPA from 1935 to 1942 in positions where he learned how to produce still and motion pictures under the bureaucratic umbrella of New Deal propaganda.²⁸ Of all the New Deal agencies, the WPA constituted the largest array of state-sponsored projects and employed a number of photographers and filmmakers to document the agency's public activities. As head of the WPA's Graphics and Photography Unit in Denver, Parker spent three years photographing and filming state-sponsored projects throughout Colorado and then four years as a State Information Officer supervising the preparation and distribution of press, radio, and printed

²⁷ For Keil's discussion of early film production practices see, Charlie Keil, *Early American Cinema in Transition: Story, Style, and Filmmaking, 1907-1913*, (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001); also, Charlie Keil, "American Documentary Finds Its Voice: Persuasion and Expression in *The Plow That Broke the Plains* and *The City*," in *Documenting the Documentary: Close Readings of Documentary Film and Video*, edited by Barry Keith Grant and Jeannette Sloniowski, (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1998), 119-135.

²⁸ Immediately prior to joining the WPA Parker worked for six months at the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) an agency that later became the WPA. National Personnel Records Center, St. Louis, MO: Reference Service Branch, REV. 7-04.

materials. Historian Jason Scott Smith has pointed out that the WPA played an operational role in the bureaucratic organization of the incarceration assembly centers and relocation camps.²⁹ Certainly, Parker's time spent at the WPA and his knowledge of film and photographic production led to his later position with the WRA.

According to a WRA pamphlet titled “Impounded People, Japanese-Americans in the Relocation Centers,” which was printed for both the incarcerated Japanese Americans and the public, the government modeled the relocation centers on migrant labor camps built during the Depression.³⁰ Depression era camps were designed to temporarily house unemployed civilian laborers, who had agreed to enroll in work projects for the state in exchange for food and accommodation. It remains unclear which specific projects Parker filmed or photographed for the WPA; however, it is reasonable to assume that he would have seen one or more of the many photographs of labor camps, which were established during his seven years with the agency. Undoubtedly, Parker drew on his previous WPA film and photography experience when he was assigned to the WRA Photographic Section (WRAPS) in 1942.

In his book, *Administrative Highlights of the WRA Program* (1946), Malcolm E. Pitts stated that, during the initial incarceration phase, part of the WRA’s mission was to document every step of the process for historical record and public relation purposes.³¹ *Japanese Relocation*, a mere ten minutes long, echoed this message in the opening narration. In the first scene, Milton Eisenhower is shown sitting behind a desk, telling the story of how and why the

²⁹ Jason Scott Smith, *Building New Deal Liberalism: The Political Economy of Public Works, 1933-1956*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 222-31.

³⁰ War Relocation Authority and Edward Holland Spicer, “Impounded People, Japanese-Americans in the Relocation Centers,” (Washington: 1946), 3.

³¹ Hirabayashi, 12. Also, Malcolm E. Pitts, *Administrative Highlights of the WRA Program*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. G.P.O., 1946), 1-2.

forced removal took place, and how the Japanese Americans “cheerfully handled the enormous amount of paperwork involved in the migration.” (Figure 3)³² The earliest WRA mission concerned the quick establishment of operational processes and the transfer of responsibility from the Army, which was in charge during the first weeks of the forced removal. Before the creation of the WRAPS, the WRA’s photographic work came out of the Visual Information Section of the Office of Information.³³ Even after the formation of the Photographic Section, Parker and the WRAPS office worked under the auspices of the Office of Information and the films were produced according to the OWI’s Bureau of Motion Pictures. This point is made clear in the opening credits of both WRA films, and it exemplifies the WRA’s consistency with the United States’ larger WWII propaganda program, including the many documentaries produced by varying government agencies.

Due to the problematic nature of the term “documentary,” scholarship on documentary and nonfiction films is vast and often riddled with theoretical inconsistencies. Of note, film scholar William Guynn’s *A Cinema of Nonfiction* (1990) is one of the first substantial book-length studies of nonfiction film.³⁴ Guynn’s text is heavily influenced by the work of French film and cultural theorists, particularly Christian Metz, and he suggests that the documentary film genre, or institution, has formed largely in opposition to the fiction film.³⁵ After a lengthy history of documentary film theory, he discusses order and sequence and aims to discover points of

³² In this paper, all quotes from *Japanese Relocation* and *A Challenge to Democracy* are taken from my personal transcription of the films.

³³ Hirabayashi, 16. Parker returned to work for the Office of Information after the dissolution of the WRA.

³⁴ See, William Howard Guynn, *A Cinema of Nonfiction*, (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1990).

³⁵ Guynn, *A Cinema of Nonfiction*, 45, 73-75, 92-93, 153-54. Guynn makes a clear distinction between what he terms classic narrative cinema, from 1935 to 1955, and classic documentary cinema of the same period, 75. His third chapter focuses on *Listen to Britain*, a 1942 British propaganda film by Humphrey Jennings and Stewart McAllister, 69-138.

similarity and difference between nonfiction and fiction films, to illuminate the textual functions of the documentary.

While Guynn offers an astute analysis of representational cinema, I question an underlying premise of his argument. Throughout, Guynn assumes a monolithic position that documentary film is a homogenous institution and that the relationship between fiction and nonfiction is easily delineated. To suit his theory, Guynn ignores the work of unorthodox filmmakers such as Errol Morris, as well as any reference to global cinema histories.³⁶ Moreover, Parker's narrative style, particularly the portraits of resettled Japanese Americans in *A Challenge*, do not fit into his model of the narrative construction of nonfiction films.

The narrative structure of Parker's films underscores the conflict between nonfiction and fiction inherent in documentaries, and this merits a closer examination. For example, the opening narration in *Japanese Relocation* includes "rolling text," a rhetorical device, which stresses the factual basis of the film. After explaining where the relocation took place, the text affirms, "This is a historical record of the operation as carried out by the United States Army and the War Relocation Authority."³⁷ The textual narrative and rhetorical techniques used in *Japanese Relocation* are key elements that characterize the film a type of cinematic propaganda.

A claim to being a "document" or "record" is certainly in accordance with the development of documentary film in the 1930s, as New Deal filmmakers believed that film could present truthful information to the public in a way that surpassed even still photographs. Pare Lorentz was one such filmmaker who, in the 1930s, saw the potential advantages for

³⁶ For a discussion of Errol Morris see Erik Barnouw's *Documentary: A History of the Non-Fiction Film*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

³⁷ Personal transcripts.

government-sponsored film to stand as an alternative to unreliable commercial media.³⁸

Responding to turn-of-the-century muckraking journalism, Lorentz considered how the democratic nature of the camera lens might offer the public a more reliable venue for information. In 1935 the RA was constituted under Roosevelt's New Deal plan and handled the task of relocating unemployed and impoverished citizens. In an effort to document and promote their activities, the RA appointed Lorentz as its film consultant and charged him with the production of the *Films of Merit* series. The series consisted of five films on varying topics related to the Depression and New Deal public projects, including two films that would become Lorentz' most celebrated works: *The Plow that Broke the Plains* and *The River*.

However, Lorentz's films were not subject to the wartime concerns that characterized Parker's film. Keil's critical rhetorical method, which he applied to Lorentz's *The Plow* and Ralph Steiner and Willard Van Dyke's *The City*, itself based upon a story by Lorentz, charts the negotiation between sound and image in the films.³⁹ Keil's structural approach demonstrated how tone, movement, and narration functions to control the persuasive and expressive quality of the films. In other words, as a film moves from segment to segment, the positive or negative narrative tone either contrasts or agrees with the image on the screen. For example, in *The Plow* Lorentz's alternated positive and negative events on screen with a tonal variation that followed a cause-and-effect pattern. The result is a flowing narrative, whose functionality is reinforced by persuasive visual rhetoric. Keil's deconstruction of *The Plow* provides an ideal comparison to Parker's films, because of the congruent theme in all three films. Keil stated, "*The Plow* invokes history as a means of authorizing its narrative while also asserting the inevitability of the solution

³⁸ Snyder, *Pare Lorentz and the Documentary Film*, 10-13, 117-122. Also see, Pare Lorentz, *FDR's Moviemaker: Memoirs and Scripts*, (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1992), 39-44.

³⁹ Charlie Keil, "American Documentary Finds Its Voice," 119-135.

it proposes.”⁴⁰ This statement might also be used to characterize the WRA and Parker’s approach to both *Japanese Relocation* and *A Challenge to Democracy* and the incarceration.

Based on Keil’s method, my deconstruction of *Japanese Relocation* follows the shift in tone and movement between each segment of the film. Parker used the authoritative voice of Eisenhower to verify the version of history that the film wanted to portray to its viewers. Eisenhower’s story moved through each step of the incarceration process, during which he claimed that the government “tried to do the job as a democracy should, with a real consideration for the people involved.”⁴¹ While he spoke these reassuring words, the camera focused on his figure sitting behind the desk surrounded with symbols of American democracy, such as a flag and eagle, by his side. Eisenhower’s narration asserted the “inevitability of the solution” it proposed by emphasizing the uncertainty of what might have happened in Japanese American communities if an invasion from the Pacific occurred. Eisenhower’s narration continued as the scene shifted from the staged office to film clips of the forced removal and incarceration (Figure 4). During these scenes, Eisenhower stressed the Army’s crucial role in providing Japanese Americans with supplies and helping them transition to the camps. As one scene depicted a busload of dislocated Japanese citizens departing for a relocation center, Eisenhower’s narration pointedly reminded viewers that the Army provided that bus. The paternalistic tone of his narration continued throughout the film and ended with the reassurance, again, that the solution of relocation was unavoidable and necessary.

In *A Challenge*, the visual form and rhetoric retained the same paternalistic tone, although this also corresponded temporally with the WRA’s shift to the second phase of their

⁴⁰ Keil, 125.

⁴¹ Personal transcripts.

operation. After the initial formation of the WRA, the government's plan for the Japanese American internees quickly changed from concentration to resettlement. The hastened pace of this move presented a challenge for the WRAPS staff members, who were still organizing and forming the basis of their operation as it took on this new directive. Thus, for his second film, Parker deviated from the staged office setting and authoritative narrative voice of an identifiable speaker, and, instead, he employed the voice of John Baker, a part-time narrator for hire, who is never seen in the film.⁴² Parker arranged the first half of *A Challenge* together with clips of incarceration life, which resembled many of the photographs that the WRAPS produced, and reiterated the necessary solution of incarceration that was detailed in *Japanese Relocation*. The first half of the film also presented a modest picture of camp life but focused on showing the camp communities as peaceful and well organized. The WRA wanted to highlight the peaceful nature of internees to ease American anxieties about resettlement. Additionally, by not showing details of which relocation center is depicted, the film homogenized the incarceration experience for the viewer.

In *A Challenge*, while Baker is telling the audience that the Japanese Americans were “removed from their homes,” the scene depicted onscreen is of Japanese Americans already arriving at the relocation centers. Parker omitted the beginning of the incarceration's history by selecting not to show images of the initial round up, images like the photographs that Lange took for the Army, or even more controversial images of the confiscation of Japanese American property and personal objects (Figure 5).⁴³ Obviously, the WRA would never condone showing

⁴² Hirabayashi, 20.

⁴³ Also see, Ferenc Szasz and Patrick Nagatani's essay “Constricted Landscapes: The Japanese American Concentration Camps, A Photographic Essay,” *New Mexico Historical Review*, 71 (1996): 157-88.

such images in the film, as it would challenge the overall message of the government's fair handling of the incarceration. Yet, the absence of the forced removal from the film's narrative also illustrates the inherent censorship of specific incarceration aspects by the WRA. This covert censorship is a rhetorical strategy—a visual ellipsis of sorts--that Parker used to control the film's narrative and strengthen the persuasive “message” put forth by the WRA.

Then, in the second half of *A Challenge*, Parker deviated further from the formal arrangement and rhetorical structure of *Japanese Relocation*. In the last segment, he decided to focus on “portraits” of individual relocated internees, whom the WRA presented as successful cases of relocation. For example, in one scene a resettler held up a tray of marshmallows from the factory where he worked and smiled into the camera. In another scene a resettler held up a paycheck, which an Anglo-American employer had handed to him, and also smiled into the camera. Baker's positive narration is continuously heard over the exaggerated depictions of resettled life. The narrative model of each portrait followed a pattern of “what the internee did before forced removal,” “what he did during incarceration,” and “what his job is now that he is relocated.”⁴⁴ At one point in the narration, Baker asked the viewer to “think sensibly” about relocation and accept internees back into their neighborhoods without alarm. As such, these portraits represented another maneuver to ease American anxieties about relocation, not by homogenizing aspects of the experience, but by individualizing the loyal Japanese American citizen. However, the rigid “before, during and after” pattern and the careful selection of successfully relocated internees only preserved the myth that the incarceration was a necessary solution to separate the loyal from the disloyal Japanese Americans.

As the RA was renamed the FSA, the salient connections continued between the two civilian agencies. Milton Eisenhower, before being appointed the first director of the WRA, spent the bulk of his career in the Department of Agriculture, which oversaw the workings of the FSA. Another example, as Jasmine Alinder has pointed out, is the work of photographers Dorothea Lange and Russell Lee, who worked extensively for the FSA and were employed on a short-term project for the WRA. Lange lived on the West Coast at the time of the forced removal and she was first on the scene to photograph the removal.⁴⁵ Today Lange's photographs of the initial removal, such as the empty storefronts (Figure 6), have become iconic images of the incarceration even though the public never saw her images during the war.⁴⁶ With the formation of the WRA, Parker and his photographers were responsible for all government produced images of the incarceration; however, American newsreel camera operator's also traveled to the camps to capture footage of the confined Japanese Americans for their respective production companies.

In the next chapter, I build on the formal analyses established in this chapter and relate the films to newsreels, which were shown in American theaters for the duration of the war. To do this, I contrast the WRA films, which were carefully narrated and constructed, with contemporaneous newsreel footage that was often fragmented and unaccompanied by text or thoughtful commentary. Here I illustrate the conflict between reportage and propaganda in both the newsreel genre and Parker's films. These stylistic and rhetorical divergences attest to the

⁴⁵ Gordon, *Impounded*, 11-13.

⁴⁶ See Dorothea Lange, Linda Gordon, and Gary Y. Okihiro, *Impounded: Dorothea Lange and the Censored Images of Japanese American Incarceration*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006). Early WRA photographic work documented the initial phase of forced removal through short-term assignments given to photographers already working for federal agencies, such as Lange, Russell Lee, and Clement Albers.

understanding of the WRA films as a complex strand of cinematic domestic propaganda and visual media.

CHAPTER TWO

NEWSREELS

In recent years, newsreels, educational films, training videos, and advertising films have become part of a new genre of study in the history of cinema. In particular, newsreel films prevail as a troublesome medium, in part because of their ephemeral status and poorly preserved collections, but also through their capacity to fall into either of two extreme categorizations – as factual reportage or as propagandistic misinformation.⁴⁷ Undeniably, the non-fiction film genre remains ripe with propagandist messages, a fact that cannot be undervalued. However, this description too easily relegates them to simple “manipulative films” with no further aim than to control and influence public opinion. Yet this judgment, while at times useful, does not account for the substantial number of newsreels and other short films that deliver to viewers an amalgam of reportage and persuasive communication. Therefore it is important to question the variation of messages and visual communications that newsreels offered and to understand them not as artless reportage or simple propaganda, but rather as complicated pictorial narratives composed of part fact and part fiction.

This chapter explains how in his films Parker synthesized cinematic techniques and rhetorical devices from newsreels, a prevalent non-fiction film genre, and shows the ways in which newsreels can be understood as a type of cinematic domestic propaganda. Additionally, I present a history of wartime newsreels, beginning with their origins in France, and situate Parker’s films within this tradition. To that end, I build upon the analysis of social documentaries established in chapter one, and I reveal the internal conflict between reportage and propaganda in

⁴⁷ Andre Bazin, *What is Cinema*, trans. Hugh Gray, 2 vols., (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), 1-13; Marnie Hughes-Warrington, *The History on Film Reader*, (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2009).

both the newsreel genre and Parker's films. These stylistic and rhetorical conflicts attest to the understanding of the WRA films as a complex strand of cinematic domestic propaganda and visual media. Accordingly, this approach remains rooted in a rhetorical methodology that aims to reveal the social and cultural function of films. Instead of parsing out the fact from the fiction, I argue that newsreel analyses require a discursive approach that reasons their ability to control and influence public opinion and their status as complicated pictorial narratives.

During the early 1970s, a number of historians and film scholars contributed significant works to the literature on non-fiction film. In his 1971 book *The Documentary Tradition*, Lewis Jacobs, film historian and director, chronicled documentary film's history through the writings of critics and filmmakers in various film journals, magazines and other periodicals.⁴⁸ Jacobs focused his survey on American film and provided an ample range of primary source material, including film reviews, previously unpublished interviews, and criticism; however, his text lacks a critical analysis of his source materials. That same year, filmmaker Alan Rosenthal published *The New Documentary in Action: A Casebook in Film Making*, a volume of twenty-one interviews or "case studies" with American, British, and Canadian filmmakers.⁴⁹ In his interviews, Rosenthal asked filmmakers such as Norman McLaren, Arthur Barron, and D. A. Pennebaker about the day-to-day activities of shooting, producing and distributing their films.⁵⁰ Yet, as with Jacobs' survey of period literature, Rosenthal stopped short of any critical analysis of the case studies that he provided. Moreover, neither author contributed any substantial discussion of newsreels, despite their interest in non-fiction.

⁴⁸ See, Lewis Jacobs, *The Documentary Tradition*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 1971).

⁴⁹ See, Alan Rosenthal, *The New Documentary in Action; A Casebook in Film Making*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971).

⁵⁰ Rosenthal, *The New Documentary*, 52, 67, 89-92.

On the other hand, in his 1972 book *The American Newsreel, 1911-1967*, Raymond Fielding, historian and expert in film technology, provided a thorough history of American newsreels from their appearance in the late nineteenth century to their “demise” in the late 1960s.⁵¹ In his book, Fielding took great care to reveal the newsreel’s colorful and thrilling history with stories of dangerous film assignments and the swindlers who would stage disasters and sensational events to excite a gullible public. However, in Fielding’s account the newsreel never developed fully as an entertainment film form or a source for reliable news reportage. Noting their eventual decline, Fielding relegates newsreels to a category of defunct film forms that are important in the history of cinema, but which outlived their usefulness in an ever-evolving American movie culture.

As such, his judgment of newsreels is inadequate, as well as intolerant to revealing visual and rhetorical conflicts between reportage and propaganda, which I argue are characteristic of persuasive nonfiction film. Much like Barsam’s oversimplification of *Japanese Relocation* and Guynn’s assessment of documentary narratives, Fielding’s history of American newsreels fails to provide a discursive context for examining the newsreel’s social and cultural function. In lieu of Fielding’s “doomed” chronological history, I address the fundamental nature of the newsreel as historical evidence, positing that its value belonged to both entertainment and “serious” journalism.

Notwithstanding their problematic history and categorization, newsreels provide us with incomparable records of the great disasters, tragedies, and political events of the twentieth century. When the realities of World War II became the focus of global audiences, American

⁵¹ See, Raymond Fielding, *The American Newsreel, 1911-1967*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972). Also see, Irvin Faust, *Newsreel*, (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980) and Roger B. N. Smither and Wolfgang Klaue, *Newsreels in Film Archives: A Survey Based on the FIAF Newsreel Symposium*, (Wiltshire, England: Flicks Books, 1996).

moviegoers had been watching newsreels for over thirty years.⁵² Even before America officially entered the war, the production of wartime newsreels preoccupied most major production companies, and newsreel camera operators sought to film all aspects of wartime issues, including the forced removal of the West Coast Japanese Americans. This fact is made clear in a WRA photograph of newsreel cameramen Frank Vail and Joe Rucker, who sat outside the Tule Lake Relocation Center filming the camp's boundary markers (Figure 7).⁵³ Thus, cinema provided the ideal outlet for "reporting" on the activities of the WRA and the incarcerated Japanese Americans.

While the United States certainly mastered the production and use of newsreels, the history of the medium originated in France. Pathé Frères, a French film equipment and production company, first introduced the newsreel in 1908 to be shown in theaters before longer feature films.⁵⁴ According to French film scholar Laurent Véray, from their beginning newsreels were meant to emphasize "the efforts of the French government" and to function as outlets for dispensing information to the public quickly and reliably.⁵⁵ More than Fielding, Véray's estimation allows for an understanding of the newsreel's societal function, yet as the medium developed and spread to global audiences, those functions diversified with technical

⁵² Fielding, *The American Newsreel*, 28-29.

⁵³ Frank Vail was a newsreel cameraman for Pathé, and Joe Rucker for Paramount Studios. Alinder, *Moving Images*, 91. According to Alinder, seeing the conditions in which the Japanese Americans lived, might have been meant to help ease the minds of the many Americans who were concerned about the financial strain these centers placed on the taxpayer's funds. Also, the subject of the incarceration appears numerous times in archival footage, including *News of the Day. Jap Evacuees Camp at Race Track* (1942), "Mass evacuation of enemy aliens continues in West Coast Defense Zones, UCLA: Film and Television Archive, VA12571 M.

⁵⁴ See, Richard Abel, *The Red Rooster Scare: Making Cinema American, 1900-1910*, (Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, 1999), and Abel, *The Ciné Goes to Town: French Cinema, 1896-1914*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

⁵⁵ Laurent Véray, "1914-1918, the first media war of the twentieth century: The example of French newsreels," *Film History: An International Journal* 22:4 (2010): 408-425.

advancements and the integration of new media formats. Pathé continued to produce newsreel films up until the 1970s, when at that time production ceased with the rise of mass television ownership.

In France, as well as in Britain and the United States, newsreels fascinated both elite and middle-class audiences, particularly during periods of war.⁵⁶ In his essay on French newsreels, Véray concludes that, during World War I, newsreels, despite undergoing much censorship and control, engendered a special relationship with audiences based on the inherent ability of a news image to affect audience sentiments.⁵⁷ He goes on to identify World War I as the “first mediated conflict in history,” occurring at a moment in the history of cinema when film was undergoing a process of standardization. As such, collaborations between the military and film industry had significant consequences on the mode of production for non-fiction films and war newsreels. Such consequences included the process of censoring footage, the camera operator’s ability to access battlefield events, and the methods of distributing the images to the public.

In the United States, six major newsreel series ran in theaters from the 1910s to the late 1960s.⁵⁸ During World War II, *The March of Time* series produced by *Time* magazine, *Universal Newsreel* series produced by Universal Studios, and *Pathé News* were three major series that ran in cinemas across the country.⁵⁹ There are few records of early newsreel production in the United States, but by the 1920s it was a thriving industry. At this time, new technologies that allowed for sound films signaled the end of the smaller, independent newsreel producers, as the

⁵⁶ Véray’s analysis of *Pathe-Journal* from 1910 demonstrates that newsreels had an important place in French theaters, which he takes to indicate their popularity with the public. In the United States, during the 1930s and 1940s entire short feature theaters were established in larger cities.

⁵⁷ Veray, 418.

⁵⁸ Fielding, *The American Newsreel*, 212, 249-52.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 21-23.

equipment needed for sound was much more expensive, and smaller companies often were unable to cover the higher production costs. Few series saw as much success as *The March of Time* series that ran from 1935 to 1951 and, during World War II, covered topics ranging from air raids, the Pacific theater, the food crisis in America, and post-war employment.⁶⁰

The calculated distribution of newsreels was often paramount to the success or failure of the film and its capacity to effect audiences. By most accounts, newsreels were issued weekly and with occasional exceptions, reached the screen a few days to a few weeks after the event. If they lacked immediacy, they still enabled the public to feel some of the excitement of the events that they had read about in print a few days beforehand.⁶¹ The cinema schedules of the 1930s and 1940s frequently consisted of one to two feature films, a selection of newsreels, a cartoon, and a few trailers. Each grouping of features, newsreels and trailers came through a major distributor, such as Universal or Pathé, as a single schedule package. Production companies packaged the schedules this way to keep a rival company's newsreel or trailer from being shown with their features.

In 1942, a four-volume War Activities Committee publication, *Movies at War*, listed the ten types of motion pictures created and used by the army and the government – Victory Films, America Speaks Films, Films for Fighting Men, Army Training Films, Orientation Films, Strategy Films, Good Neighbor Films, Newsreels, Morale Films, and United Nations Films.⁶² In each volume, *Japanese Relocation* appears under a list of Victory Films promoted by the OWI. On the opening page of the first volume, the government's film agenda is clearly stated: "The

⁶⁰ See Raymond Fielding, *The March of Time, 1935 – 1951*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978).

⁶¹ Fielding, *The March of Time, 1935 – 1951*, 41-46.

⁶² United States Government, War Activities Committee, *Movies at War*, (New York: War Activities Committee of the Motion Picture Industry, 1942).

War Activities Committee – Motion Picture Industry is the medium through which the entire strength of this militant art industry is mobilized to aid in winning the war and winning the peace.”⁶³ This statement exemplifies the military’s overall mission and its perception of how film would play a role in the fight for freedom. To visualize this idea, the following page depicts an image of a seemingly haphazard pile of film canisters, but upon closer inspection the canisters project a shadow in the shape of a tanker. Text below the image reads: “Ideas and projectiles are both explosives. Film and smokeless powder both come from the same ingredients – nitric acid, sulphuric acid, methyl alcohol, and cotton linters.”⁶⁴ Here the idea is clearly to indicate that films, though part of an “art industry” and source of entertainment, are actually comprised of the same materials as traditional weapons of war. This association of materiality cleverly made room for audiences to view films as weapons, or tools, just as dangerous as hand grenades or tankers.

Since the work of Jacobs, Rosenthal, and Fielding in the 1970s, a new generation of nonfiction film scholars has considered the history of newsreels alongside issues involving the use of melodramatic scenes, the propagation of social and racial hierarchies, and public reception. According to film scholar and cultural historian Sumiko Higashi, World War II newsreels dissolved “the line between fiction and nonfiction” and were “melodramas that represent history as a Manichaeian struggle and constitute realist discourse that reinscribes racial and class hierarchies.”⁶⁵ In her 1998 essay “Melodrama, Realism, and Race: World War II Newsreels and Propaganda Film,” Higashi asserted that both newsreels and feature films shared a common origin in nineteenth century melodramas, which complicated the newsreel's

⁶³ Ibid., 4.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 6.

⁶⁵ Sumiko Higashi, “Melodrama, Realism, and Race: World War II Newsreels and Propaganda Film,” *Cinema Journal* 37, (1998): 38-61. Also see, Sumiko Higashi, *Cecil B. DeMille and American Culture: The Silent Era*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

classification as either fiction or reportage. Further, in acknowledging the role William Randolph Hearst had played during the period associated with yellow journalism in sensationalizing the news, not only were melodrama and nonfiction interlocked, but even the structure of newsreels echoed that of Hearst journalism. In other words, Higashi argued for an understanding of the news film as spectacle, tracing this tradition back to the sensationalist journalism and contemporaneous surveillance tactics of documentary photojournalist Jacob Riis a decade previous.⁶⁶

In her assessment of the melodramatic conventions of newsreels, Higashi analyzed the convergence of melodrama and realism in *Japanese Relocation*. The historical context surrounding Parker's film is well suited to Higashi's study, as she stated that during World War II "the moral fervor of newsreel rhetoric bordered on paranoia and hysteria."⁶⁷ Here, Higashi noted the difference between the narrative reports of *Paramount News* and the persuasive and reasoned speech of Eisenhower in the opening narration of *Japanese Relocation*. However, despite this insight, Higashi neglected to note or analyze the propagandistic nature of the WRA's message or the complex shift in narrative between *Japanese Relocation* and *A Challenge*. Further, her focus on melodramatic tones in *Japanese Relocation* and similar newsreels gives too much credence to the term "melodrama," which often carries with it a pejorative, unsophisticated meaning.

Most recently, film historian Joseph Clark contributed an essay titled "Double Vision: World War II, Racial Uplift and the All-American Newsreel's Pedagogical Address" in *Useful Cinema: Expanding Film Contexts* (2011), an edited volume of essays on how moving images

⁶⁶ Higashi, 38, 42.

⁶⁷ Higashi, 39.

became an ordinary component of American life.⁶⁸ In these essays, “useful cinema” is the term used to describe industrial, educational, training, and advertising films that were shown in alternative venues, such as factories and community halls.⁶⁹ Clark looks at how All-American News, a weekly newsreel dedicated to the activities of Black Americans, deployed a “rhetoric of uplift in the context of wartime race relations” by promoting the values of self-improvement, hard work, and perseverance.⁷⁰ To this end, Clark concluded that while All-American News contested aspects of racial inequality and promoted the improvement of African American lives, it also accommodated segregation and existing racial stereotypes.

In their analyses of newsreels, both Higashi and Clark identify internal conflicts within the newsreel's formal and communicative structure. This paradox, which was also recognized by Jacobs, Rosenthal, and Fielding, highlights the troublesome nature of the genre and reveals why four decades of newsreel scholarship has revolved around this dichotomy. Instead of parsing out the fact from the fiction, newsreel analyses require a discursive approach that reasons their ability to control and influence public opinion and their status as complicated pictorial narratives.

In this vein of methodological inquiry, rhetorical scholar and newsreel historian Nathan Atkinson has pioneered original discussions on rhetorical theories of circulation and nonfiction film as a mode of public address.⁷¹ In his 2012 essay, "Celluloid Circulation: The Dual Temporality of Nonfiction Film and its Publics," Atkinson averted the previous dichotomies

⁶⁸ See, Charles R. Acland and Haidee Wasson, *Useful Cinema: Expanding Film Contexts*, (Duke University Press Books, 2011).

⁶⁹ For an example, see Alison Griffiths essay “‘A Moving Picture of the Heavens’: The Planetarium Space Show as Useful Cinema,” 230-262.

⁷⁰ Clark, “Double Vision,” 264.

⁷¹ Nathan Atkinson, "Celluloid Circulation: The Dual Temporality of Nonfiction Film and its Publics," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs*, 15:4 (2012): 675-684 and Atkinson, “Newsreels as Domestic Propaganda: Visual Rhetoric at the Dawn of the Cold War,” *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 14 (2011): 69-100.

surrounding the newsreel's status as fact or fiction and suggested that, by accounting for their simultaneous condition as "record and performance of an event," scholars can contribute more nuanced accounts of nonfiction films. The premise of Atkinson's methodology stems from an understanding that nonfiction film has never been a neutral medium for the broadcast of information to an unbiased public.

To this end, he proposed to examine the circulation of newsreel footage across several decades, and he defined circulation as the "interaction between individuals and the discourses that address them as a public."⁷² He presents the circulation of discourse as "a condition of possibility" for the creation of a public, with "the character of the discourse influencing the character of the public."⁷³ In other words, civic address, whether through verbal, textual, or visual media, constructs a society that people imagine themselves already occupying as a public.

This idea, characteristic of domestic propaganda, can be understood through Parker's films. At one point in *A Challenge*, Baker's narration affirmed, "The evacuees are not under suspicion. They are not prisoners. They are not internees. They are merely dislocated people. The unwounded casualties of war." In other words, viewers, both confined Japanese Americans and the larger public, are presented with the view that Japanese Americans participate in the war effort, and the American home front, as "unwounded casualties" of war.

Atkinson's assessment of newsreel circulation and its public formation conforms to an understanding of newsreels as a type of domestic propaganda and runs parallel to this discussion of Parker's films. Like Atkinson, instead of parsing out truth from fiction, in this chapter I have provided a discursive approach that reasons newsreels' ability to control and influence public opinion and their status as complicated pictorial narratives. In the next chapter, I turn to issues of

⁷² Atkinson, "Celluloid Circulation," 676.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 676.

postwar modernity and how the films mediated the easement of American anxieties regarding the resettlement program.

CHAPTER 3

WARTIME FILMS

As stated in my introduction, the OWI operated as a liaison between the motion picture industry and the government and helped to organize the production, circulation, and showing of wartime films. The OWI's Overseas Branch coordinated a massive information and propaganda campaign abroad, while the Domestic Branch oversaw the release of war news at home.⁷⁴ Films produced by the Domestic Branch, including its coordinating agencies such as the WRA, were released in theaters, as well as through community organizations, public libraries, church groups, and educational institutions. The OWI and the WRA's use of film dovetailed with a growing interest during the 1930s and 1940s in the usefulness of cinema as a tool for communicating ideas and information.⁷⁵ From art films and Hollywood theaters to classrooms and military training grounds, films were being used, shown and viewed in increasingly diverse ways. In other words, government organizations, public industries, and private interest groups all deployed cameras and film projectors to transmit ideas often in an effort to make or remake citizens' identities.

Having already established Parker's films as a type of cinematic domestic propaganda, I demonstrate in this chapter how the films contribute to an understanding of postwar modernity in terms of the easing of American anxieties regarding resettlement. To do this I examine other government-sponsored propaganda films concerning Japanese citizens and culture, which were contemporaneous with Parker's films, in addition to a discriminatory Superman cartoon titled

⁷⁴ Barsam, *Nonfiction Film: A Critical History*, 219-220. Also see, Jordan Braverman, *To Hasten the Homecoming: How Americans Fought World War II Through the Media*, (Lanham, Md: Madison Books, 1996), K. R. M. Short, *Film & Radio Propaganda in World War II*, (London: Croom Helm, 1983), and Anthony Richard Ewart Rhodes, *Propaganda: The Art of Persuasion in World War II*, (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1976).

⁷⁵ Charles Acland and Haidee Wasson, *Useful Cinema*, Duke University Press, 2011.

Japoteurs (1942). Further, I consider how certain scenes within *A Challenge*, as well as Parker's films *The Way Ahead* (1943) and *For Valor* (ca. 1943), address complicated issues of Americanism, national loyalty, and the remaking of Japanese American identity during the resettlement period.

In a *Collier's Weekly* article published on August 13, 1942, color photographs of Manzanar, an incarceration camp located in California, appeared alongside an article titled "The Problem People."⁷⁶ Written by journalist Jim Marshall, the article detailed the political and social problems of the incarceration of the 110,000 West Coast Japanese and citizens of Japanese ancestry. The article concluded not with a solution but with a guarantee that every citizen could feel proud of American equity in face of difficult wartime necessities. Officially, the "problem" of incarceration fell under the purview of the WRA; however, Marshall's text makes clear that the Japanese Americans presented a political and social complication for all concerned American citizens.

The question of how to address conflicting pictures and narratives of Japanese American identity is at the heart of a significant body of Asian American scholarship.⁷⁷ The bodies of women and children and the conflict between the Issei (first generation) and Nisei (second generation) often figure prominently in these scholarly debates. In this vein of scholarship, women's and gender studies scholar, Elena Tajima Creef, offers significant insight into the

⁷⁶ Jim Marshall, "The Problem People," *Collier's Weekly*, (August 15, 1942): 4-7.

⁷⁷ For some examples see, Traise Yamamoto, *Masking Selves, Making Subjects: Japanese American Women, Identity, and the Body*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), Jere Takahashi, *Nisei/Sansei: Shifting Japanese American Identities and Politics*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997), Louis Fiset and Gail M. Nomura, *Nikkei in the Pacific Northwest: Japanese Americans & Japanese Canadians in the Twentieth Century*, (Seattle: Center for the Study of the Pacific Northwest in association with University of Washington Press, 2005), Gaku Kinoshita, *Us, Hawai'i-Born Japanese: Storied Identities of Japanese American Elderly from a Sugar Plantation Community*, (New York: Routledge, 2006), and Peter X Feng, *Identities in Motion: Asian American Film and Video*, (Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 2002).

historical construction of visible citizenship, in her book *Imaging Japanese America: The Visual Construction of Citizenship, Nation, and the Body* (2004).⁷⁸ In her book, Creff considers the multifaceted communications of alterity that characterize the visual rhetoric of nationhood. Mapping distinctions between others and otherness, she provides an astute postcolonial critique of the marginalized Japanese American body in visual culture. Further, Creff asks to what extent have marginal and oppositional visual practices worked with and against dominant visual rhetorics of citizenship? While her focus is on the visual practices produced by Japanese-American artists and writers and mainstream media representations, I extend her questioning of the rhetoric of citizenship to this discussion of Parker's films.

My discussion of the films as identity-constructing tools corresponds with the notion of how pictures circulate in varying ways and with diverse meanings. W. J. T. Mitchell, a champion of interdisciplinary methodology, asserts that pictures are “imitations of life” and asks us to consider images as living things. In his essay “Migration, Law, and the Image: Beyond the Veil of Ignorance,” published in *The Migrant's Time: Rethinking Art History and Diaspora* (2011), he suggests that a “migration of images” occurs as pictures cross borders, cultures, and cities.⁷⁹ As living things, images follow similar migration patterns as people. However, as Mitchell points out, the image can transverse physical and cultural borders much quicker than people and will have a vaster impact on patterns of recognition and the presentation of a particular culture. Mitchell's notion of how pictures migrate is relevant to my broader inquiries

⁷⁸ See, Elena Tajima Creff, *Imaging Japanese America: The Visual Construction of Citizenship, Nation, and the Body*, (New York: New York University Press, 2004).

⁷⁹ W. J. T. Mitchell, “Migration, Law, and the Image: Beyond the Veil of Ignorance,” in Mathur, Saloni, *The Migrant's Time: Rethinking Art History and Diaspora*, (Williamstown, Mass: Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2011).

regarding the movement of images across and between the barbwire fences of the incarceration camps.

My discussion of rhetoric and identity, though drawn from a much larger debate, focuses on the term “patriotism” as a less contested word from the troubled lexicon of incarceration.⁸⁰ During the period of incarceration, official programs used this word to describe the Japanese Americans’ attitude toward being incarcerated.⁸¹ In films produced by the War Relocation Authority the American public was told that most internees went willingly to the camps as part of their patriotic service to America and the war effort.⁸² This claim was only validated in the public’s eye, as very few Japanese Americans resisted the initial removal. Many were unaware of the duration that they would suffer in the camps, but also many internees have since stated that it was simply against their nature to act out.⁸³ Sentiments of mutual aid and cooperation for the sake of the group were positive Japanese values that the Issei and Nisei Japanese Americans drew from to survive prejudice and discrimination during and even before the war. The government presented to the public a picture of patriotism that was actually a far more complicated image of compliance, fear, and a desire to be valued as equal citizens.

In addition to films and articles about the Japanese Americans, the government exposed the public to various films and cartoons about Japan during the war in an attempt to introduce Americans to “Japanese ways of thinking and living.” Produced by the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), *Japanese Behavior* (ca.1943) (Figure 8) aimed to provide a basic understanding

⁸⁰ As previously mentioned the terms “concentration camp” “evacuation” “enemy-alien,” and “internment” are the most contested words by scholars.

⁸¹ The word is referenced in both of Parker’s films.

⁸² Hirabayashi, *American Resettlement Through the Lens*, 18.

⁸³ Alinder, *Moving Images*, 28-32. Also see, See, “Redress Achieved,” in *Japanese Americans: From Relocation to Redress*, eds. Roger Daniels, Sandra C. Taylor and Harry H. L. Kitano (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991), 219-23.

of the social, economic, political and religious aspects of Japanese culture and how they affect national behavior.⁸⁴ Additionally, the film shows the old, new, and western influences on Japanese culture with scenes of gardens, home life, sports, dance, Shinto religious customs, and agriculture, while also stressing the order, ritual, and ceremonial discipline that encompass all segments of Japanese life. Likewise, *The Geography of Japan* (1945) (Figure 9), produced by the Office of the Chief Signal Officer, and *Natural Resources of Japan* (ca.1942 – 1945), produced by the OSS, describe aspects of Japan's strategic position and advantages. The first film shows maps indicating the size of Japan and Japan's expansion in Asia and in the Pacific area, and the second describes Japan's textile and lumber resources, including how cotton and silk fabrics are woven and how cotton fields and mulberry plantations are cultivated. Unlike Parker's films, which address issues of identity, these films scrutinize Japan's ability to wage modern war.

As previously stated, wartime propaganda posters and stories of the Japanese "enemy" appeared as the most discriminatory and violent tools for the war effort. One such example is a Superman cartoon titled *Japoteurs*, distributed by Paramount Pictures in 1942, which reinforced the racist impressions promoted by the OSS and Signal Office films.⁸⁵ The cartoon depicts the treachery and attempted sabotage of a "stereotypical" Japanese American enemy. In the cartoon, the villain is distinguished by his appearance and speech, which include buck teeth, thick-rimmed glasses, and indecipherable accent (Figure 10). Without the heroic action of Superman, the film implies that Japanese American subversion could severely damage the war effort. As

⁸⁴ National Archives and Records Administration, ARC 40150, LI 226-D-6615. *My Japan* (1945) was another complex and disturbing anti-Japanese propaganda film produced by the Treasury Department to spur the sale of U.S. war bonds.

⁸⁵ See, Allan W. Austin, "Superman Goes to War: Teaching Japanese American Exile and Incarceration with Film," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 30, no 4 (2011): 51-57. Also, Austin, "Projecting Japanese American Exile and Incarceration: Ethnicity, the Enemy, and Mass Incarceration in Film during World War II," 2004-2005 *Film and History CD-ROM Annual*, (Cleveland, Oklahoma: Film and History Center, 2006).

Sumiko Higashi determined, newsreel coverage of the war in the Pacific “bordered on paranoia and hysteria” in presenting the Japanese, but not the Germans, “as evil incarnate.”⁸⁶ Higashi asserts that newsreels made it impossible to distinguish Japanese Americans from Japanese by basing their presentation in the belief that biology and culture made all Japanese Americans simply Japanese and therefore untrustworthy.⁸⁷

While *A Challenge* recounts the history of the exile and incarceration of the Japanese Americans, it also perpetuates troubling concepts of national loyalty and American identity. As Japanese Americans struggled to adjust to rapidly changing circumstances, the WRA hastily moved ahead with a resettlement program that aimed at widespread assimilation. Government propaganda, such as *A Challenge*, underscored the potential opportunities generated by resettlement, since administrators worried about the damaging consequences of camp life. In part, the government decided to move Japanese Americans to eastern cities in an effort to avoid a long-lasting reservation system, much as had what occurred with the Native Americans. Some WRA officials had, in fact, expressed concerns from the beginning about the damage that incarceration could have on American democracy and the Japanese American community. In fact, the WRA started preliminary discussions about resettlement almost immediately after the first Japanese Americans arrived at the centers. In later interviews about his time spent as WRA

⁸⁶ Allan Austin, “Superman Goes to War,” 52. The Manzanar exhibitions showed internees Adams’ interest in promoting their loyalty and served as a kind of album, displaying the faces of the loyal. Adams’ photographs promoted the positive image of Japanese Americans, which contrasted with the wartime portrayal of the Japanese enemy.

⁸⁷ Higashi, 42.

director, Myer stated his fearfulness of unjust constitutional precedents for the future, as well as the emotional effects of camp life on incarcerated Japanese Americans.⁸⁸

Moreover, the government's resettlement policy sought to dissipate the Japanese American community by encouraging resettlers, especially the younger Nisei generation, to migrate for educational and employment opportunities.⁸⁹ In June 1944, President Franklin D. Roosevelt had emphasized "[s]eeking to extend greatly the distribution of [Japanese Americans] in many parts of the United States." He believed that the West Coast would accept some and that the rest of the country would not be hostile if Japanese Americans "were distributed—one or two families to each county as a start."⁹⁰

As such, the principal anxiety that the films address is the public's concern about Japanese Americans being allowed to resettle into the general populace. *A Challenge* addresses this issue through the "happy" portraits of resettled Japanese Americans in Midwestern cities. Another of Parker's films, *The Way Ahead*, follows a similar theme, also showing Japanese-Americans resettled and working at new jobs in Midwest cities. His fourth film, *For Valor*, depicts General Mark Clark decorating Japanese-American soldiers in Italy, highlighting the martial value of the 442nd Regiment, which was comprised entirely of Japanese American soldiers.

In 1943 the message from the White House encouraged a sensible attitude toward resettlement, a message that Parker also demonstrated in his films. A letter about the incarceration titled, "A Challenge to American Sportsmanship," by First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt

⁸⁸ For a in-depth biography of Myer see, Richard Drinnon, *Keeper of Concentration Camps: Dillon S. Myer and American Racism*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

⁸⁹ Robinson, *After Camp*, 115.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 212.

appeared in an issue of *Collier's Weekly* on October 16, 1943.⁹¹ Her letter gave a brief history of the Japanese Americans before Pearl Harbor, the steps that led to their incarceration, and the current issue of resettlement. Charlie Keil's statement about using history as a means of authorizing a narrative is exemplified in the First Lady's letter. Her message does exactly that by enforcing her knowledge of a people who were deemed "foreign" in the public's eye. This letter epitomized the sentiments of Parker's films by promoting the hard work and fairness of the government's actions and by encouraging Americans to accept resettled internees, who had received the "loyal" stamp of approval, back into their communities and neighborhoods. The First Lady commended the Army and the WRA for their democratic efficiency and thanked the resettled Japanese Americans for their continued patience throughout the process. She asked Americans, "Whether you are a taxpayer in California or in Maine, it is to your advantage, if you find one or two Japanese American families settled in your neighborhood, to try to regard them as individuals and not to condemn them before they are given a fair chance to prove themselves in the community."⁹² The sensible attitude that Roosevelt and the WRA promoted was designed to facilitate the quick and effective relocation of internees.

The First Lady's letter supported the hasty push to relocate internees, and she saw an opportunity to absorb the Japanese American communities into American society. A draft showed that the First Lady originally titled her article "To Undo a Mistake is Always Harder than Not to Create One Originally."⁹³ Her title referred to the mistake of allowing immigrants to

⁹¹ Eleanor Roosevelt, "A Challenge to American Sportsmanship," *Collier's Weekly* (October 16, 1943): 21-22. In the unrevised memo Roosevelt wrote, "To undo a mistake is always harder than not to create one originally but we seldom have the foresight. Therefore we have no choice but to try to correct our past mistakes." In *Collier's Weekly* a year later Jan Karski wrote one of the first articles on a Nazi death camp in Poland, see Jan Karski, "Polish Death Camps," *Collier's Weekly*, (October 14, 1944), 18-19.

⁹² Roosevelt, "A Challenge to American Sportsmanship," 22.

⁹³ Hayashi, *Democratizing the Enemy*, 29.

set up their own communities within cities and not dispersing them more thoroughly. This idea represented a long-held belief that the cities' non-European ethnic immigrant communities contributed to unrest and anti-American attitudes in society.⁹⁴ The government meant to correct this mistake by scattering resettled internees in cities across the Midwest and discouraging them from forming separate communities. With the West Coast Japanese American communities completely uprooted, resettlers established new homes in cities approved by the government. Before an internee left the camp, he or she participated in classes and forums on how to behave in their new neighborhoods.⁹⁵ The camp classes encouraged internees to resettle quietly and obtain new jobs without causing difficulty.

Essentially, the WRA solicited newly freed Japanese Americans to play an active role in changing the anti-Japanese sentiment in American society. The quickest way to ease American anxieties regarding resettled internees was for the resettlers to make active efforts to “Americanize” themselves, to resettle in areas away from the West coast, and to disperse themselves in their new communities. Parker's *A Challenge to Democracy* and Mrs. Roosevelt's letter prominently conveyed this idea, but both appeared antithetical to the expressions of communal happiness Parker used to characterize life within the camps. *Japanese Relocation* lacked the peaceful characterization used in *A Challenge*, which highlighted the shift in tone and purpose between the two films.

With the push to relocate, Parker's second film needed to stress the national loyalty of newly freed Japanese Americans. How could these “public enemies” now be trusted to live in

⁹⁴ Greg Robinson, *After Camp: Portraits in Midcentury Japanese American Life and Politics*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 54.

⁹⁵ Miné Okubo, *Citizen 13660*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1946), 208-209.

American communities? One way that Parker addressed this anxiety was through established representations of Americanness. For example, in one scene a Japanese-American woman is shown sewing an American flag evoking the iconic patriotism of a mythic American figure – Betsy Ross. While in another scene, a formerly confined Japanese American is depicted at work in a modernized factory, not producing weapons for war, like so much of the production imagery of this era, but instead producing trays of candy –an innocent stand in for bullets and weaponry. Scenes such as the two just described appear throughout the WRA’s visual production, in both photography and film. Further, the issue of loyalty colored debates both in public opinion and inside the camp. Internees faced the label of disloyal if they refused to answer certain questions regarding their undivided loyalty to the United States.⁹⁶ Internees without citizen status remained fearful of disavowing their home country of Japan, for a country that would not grant them citizenship.

In 1946, a year after the war, Iris Barry, then curator of the Museum of Modern Art Film Library, wrote an article for the *New York Times* titled “Challenge of the Documentary Film.”⁹⁷ Her essay reviews the then fifty-year history of the documentary film, while advocating for its continued use in peacetime society. Barry goes on to question who will be responsible for producing postwar documentaries. She asked readers if the government would still be responsible for utilizing the “sharp factual edge of this tool.”⁹⁸ She concluded with the following statement:

⁹⁶ See, Cherstin M Lyon, *Prisons and Patriots: Japanese American Wartime Citizenship, Civil Disobedience, and Historical Memory*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2012).

⁹⁷ Iris Barry, “Challenge of the Documentary Film,” *New York Times*, (January 6, 1946): 16-18. The article’s subtitle reads: “we need this instrument to supplement our education and extend our horizon.” Also see, Greg Garrett, “It’s Everybody’s War: Racism and World War II Documentary,” *Journal of Popular Film* 22 (1994): 75.

⁹⁸ Barry, 16.

Such films are not propaganda. Such films – made with insight and enthusiasm and an ever-widening range of new techniques – are not boring. They are about people and the things that matter to people, everywhere. If it be true that sometimes the most interesting things about motion pictures are what one thinks about, half-consciously, while watching them, then the most interesting thoughts of our time irresistibly come to documentary audiences. And what potentially are these audiences except mankind itself?

Barry refuted a correlation between propaganda and documentary films, presumably in an effort to promote the “educational” use of cinema. Eisenhower’s narration of *Japanese Relocation* ends: "We are setting a standard for the rest of the world in the treatment of a people who may have loyalties to an enemy nation. We are protecting ourselves without violating the principles of Christian decency." With these final words it seems clear that the intersection of film, propaganda, and identity characterized the visual and rhetorical strategies of Parker’s films.

CONCLUSION

In the early 1980s, President Carter appointed a commission to investigate the camps, and the subsequent findings were published in a document titled “Personal Justice Denied.” As a result, in 1988, President Ronald Reagan signed into federal law the Civil Liberties Act granting restitutions to Japanese Americans who were incarcerated during World War II. As such, Parker’s narrative of the incarceration was not fully countered in film until the late 1970s. While these documentary films provide strong visual counter-narratives to government propaganda films, they are unreliable narratives because they tend to ignore or minimize the extent of resistance, anger, and fragmentation in the camps, as well as the long-term consequences of the internment on the Japanese-American community. Accordingly, the persistence of this narrative reflects Asian Americans' continuing fear that their Asian ancestry will be used again by the government as the basis for differential and negative treatment irrespective of citizenship status; the fear that Asian Americans remain outsider citizens in the United States.

Throughout this thesis I have contended that these films constitute a particular strand of cinematic domestic propaganda, a category of visual media thus far underdeveloped in scholarly literature. In my synthesis of propagandized media and critical film texts, I have developed a framework to understand the WRA films' considerable place in the complex narrative of visual rhetoric in America. Furthermore, I have revealed how these films demonstrate the WRA’s conscious effort to investigate cinema's formal and communicative limits in America’s burgeoning industrial society.

Moreover, I have explained how in *Japanese Relocation* (1942) and *A Challenge to Democracy* (1944) Parker synthesized cinematic techniques and rhetorical devices from a myriad of non-fiction film genres, including social documentaries, educational films, and newsreels. In

doing so, Parker devised a form of filmic practice that recalled the history of social documentary films, simulated wartime reportage, and engaged with both the anxieties of postwar resettlement and the desires of an emergent American consumer culture. In conclusion, I have laid the groundwork for a formal and conceptual analysis of nonfiction films. With an acknowledgement of the films' significant position as domestic propaganda films, their engagement with entrenched notions of nationality, their participation in visual tropes of modernism and modernity, I have conceptualized the WRA films as performing the task of regulating or reshaping the Japanese American citizen to satisfy existing anxieties about post-war resettlement. Furthermore, I have demonstrated how the WRA films take part in an effort in the mid-twentieth century to institutionalize an array of visual media for propagandistic aims, and, most striking, how the WRA films depict a conflict between visual culture and politics that is as relevant today as ever.

It is my belief that history will continue to reveal information about Parker, his films, and their role in constructing the Japanese American wartime image. Understanding and defining racial prejudices, both past and present, is a vital element of all historical discourse. In the fall of 2009 Washington University in St. Louis organized a semester-long series on the ethics and history of ethnic profiling in America. Lectures, workshops, panel discussions, and film screenings all centered on past and present violations of the Fourteenth Amendment, which calls for equal protection, for all citizens, under the law. Adams inserted a copy of this same amendment on the first pages of his photo essay *Born Free and Equal*. The title of Washington University's lecture series was "Ethnic Profiling: A Challenge to Democracy" – a title derived from Parker's film. The historical underpinning to Parker's films and the analysis of positive and negative imagery that I present in this thesis provide a considerable framework for a longer

discussion regarding the visual landscape of Japanese American identity. This systematic evaluation of the impact the social and cultural Parker's films had will close some of the gaps in knowledge left by history. Lastly, reflection on this topic will allow historians to conceive of how the "West Coast Japanese" formed as a coherent and identifiable population group, and how the image of this population continues to shape postwar conceptions of the Japanese America community.

APPENDIX A

FIGURES



Figure 1. Charles Mace. *Portrait of Tom Parker*. Photograph. 1940s.



Figure 2. Charles E. Mace and Hikaru Iwasaki, Colorado. Photograph. 1945.



Figure 3. *Japanese Relocation*. Film Still. 1942.



Figure 4. Police officer with weapons submitted to the LA Police. Photograph. c.1942.



Figure 5. *A Challenge*. Film still. 1944.



Figure 6. Dorothea Lange. photograph. 1942.



Figure 7. Cameramen Frank Vail and Joe Rucker of Paramount Newsreel. Photograph. c. 1944.

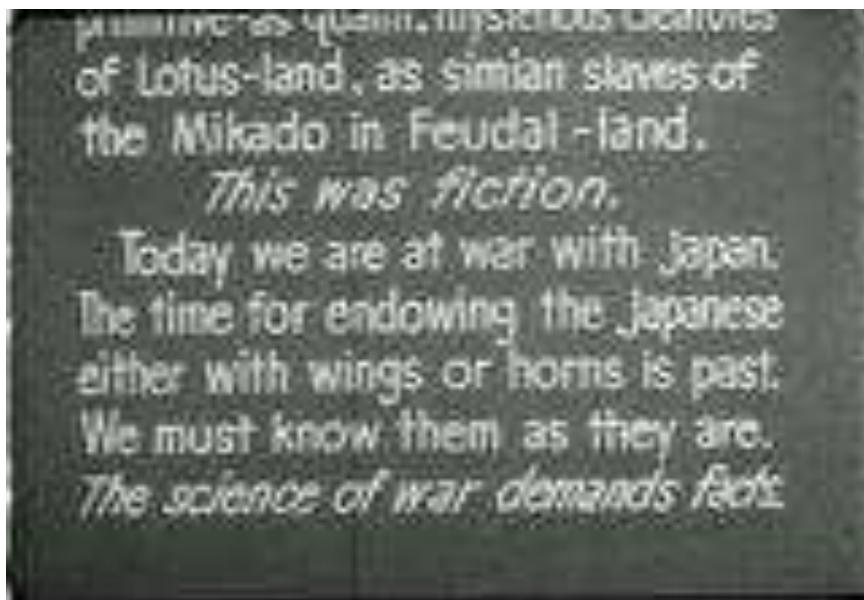


Figure 8. *Japanese Behavior*. Film still. c.1943.



Figure 9. *The Geography of Japan*. Film still. 1945.



Figure 10. *Japoteurs*. Film still. 1942.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Krystle Stricklin is a Master's student in the art history department at Florida State University.

Her area of focus is in twentieth century visual culture, cultural theory, and film and photo

history. She received a BA in Art History from Florida State in 2012.