I shy away from describing myself as a professional historian. The reason is quite simple. Unlike most professional historians, I did not become a historian through the conventional process of completing a Ph.D. program in history at an established university. True, at one time, I had aspired to be a historian of modern China, but I quickly divested myself of this idea when I dropped out of Columbia University in 1963 after less than a year in graduate school. My brief exposure to graduate studies persuaded me that a doctoral program was not my cup of tea. Nor did I become a historian by long-term, personal design. My public school education did everything but instill in me an interest in history. Indeed, it is not too far-fetched to say that I was a veritable embodiment of ignorance in all matters relating to history upon my graduation from Berkeley High School in 1954. I came upon my interest in Asian-American history much later in life through force of circumstances within the context of the Civil Rights and anti-Vietnam War movements.

Circumstantial Beginning

Thirty-one years ago, in the spring of 1969 at UCLA, I taught the first class in what we now call Asian American Studies under the title “Orientals in America.” I was invited to teach this class by UCLA student activists who were spearheading the push for Asian American Studies on their campus. They had heard of my political activities in northern California. In the spring of 1968, I had founded the Asian American Political Alliance, a political action group in Berkeley. The students contacted me and asked if I would

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consent to have them submit my name as a potential instructor. I gave them the go ahead, and once I was approved as the instructor, I accepted a part-time, one-quarter lectureship that marked the beginning of my personal involvement with Asian American Studies. Thus my entrance into the academy was different from that of my colleagues. I began my career under these special circumstances without standard academic credentials.

The atmosphere at UCLA was politically charged from the outset. The San Francisco State Third World Strike had erupted in November, 1968, followed by the Berkeley Third World Strike in January, 1969. Both strikes had a profound impact on racial minorities on the campus. Charles E. Young, the youngest chancellor in the history of the University of California system, assumed his post at UCLA on July 1, 1968, and he immediately found himself under great political pressure. Black, Latino, and Asian students were clamoring for the appointment of Third World faculty and classes in Ethnic Studies. Angela Davis, then a young professor in the Philosophy Department and a self-proclaimed member of the American Communist Party, was one of the most popular lecturers on the UCLA campus. Once the Board of Regents learned of her communist background, however, it decided to dismiss her, forcing Young to defend her in the name of academic freedom. In January 1969 a shoot out occurred on the campus between members of the Black Panther Party and US, Ron Karenga’s African nationalist group. Two Black Panthers were killed. Some have charged that this incident was instigated by FBI provocateurs. Whether true or not, a pervasive sense of crisis enveloped the campus.

The UCLA students who invited me had decided on the class outline in advance of my appointment. In this sense, I was the nominal rather than the actual instructor (although I did make a few changes once the class got underway). Approximately 150 students enrolled for the class. The class format mainly featured small sections, led by the student organizers, in which weekly discussions of politics and identity dominated. At the time, many, if not most, of the enrolled students were wrestling with their own identity problems revolving around the question of what it meant to be an Asian in American society. Inasmuch as I had never faced a class in my life, this class became my baptism into teaching.

With scant knowledge of the history of Asians in the United States, I realized that I had to educate myself to prepare for the class. I quickly read the "classics" in Asian American Studies for the first time: Mary Coolidge, *Chinese Immigration* (1909); Bruno

My interest in Japanese-American history was reinforced by the Japanese American Research Project (JARP). Sponsored by the Japanese American Citizens League, JARP had been launched in 1962 as a socio-historical study of Japanese immigrants and their descendants. In 1969 it was still an ongoing research project based on the UCLA campus. One of its research assistants was Yasuo Sakata, a former classmate of mine and a doctoral candidate in the UCLA History Department. In 1962 we had graduated together as history majors from UCLA, I as a young Nisei and he as a foreign student from Japan. From him I learned that JARP had collected a sizable body of primary sources in the Japanese language on Japanese immigration history. I also learned (and much to my dismay I might add) that the collection was in an unorganized state with the material still stored in dusty carton boxes. Yet I didn't have to look at everything in order to arrive at a reasonable judgement as to the worth of the collection. A cursory inspection sufficed to confirm Sakata's view that it indeed contained many primary sources of immense historical value relating to Japanese immigration history.

The Asian American Studies Center at UCLA was established on July 1, 1969. Those of us who were involved in the first class in Asian American Studies had drafted the proposal for the establishment of the Center. I served as the Associate Director in the first year. From its inception, the Center had, among its multiple purposes, the goal of doing research on Asians in American society in the past and present. At the time the Director of JARP had no plans to organize the JARP collection. I consulted with Yasuo Sakata. Because he and I both agreed on its historical value, we decided to undertake the accession work of organizing and annotating the Japanese language material in the collection. So in 1971, with the support of the Asian American Studies Center, we commenced the tedious and dirty work of going through the dusty car-
ton boxes in which the material had been stored. Our labor bore fruit three years later with the publication of *A Buried Past: An Annotated Bibliography of the Japanese American Research Project Collection* (1974).

My work on the bibliography laid the foundation for my research work. A reading of the secondary literature on Japanese-American history convinced me of the accuracy of Roger Daniels' observation, made in 1966, that Asians had been studied only because they had been objects of exclusion. Studies of prewar Japanese-American history almost exclusively concentrated on what had happened to the Issei generation. They focused on the anti-Japanese exclusion movement and the exclusionists, but rarely, if ever, touched upon how the excluded, the Issei, felt, thought, and reacted to being excluded. In general, researchers assumed that Japanese immigrants left no records of their American experience; and even when they assumed otherwise, they failed to look into the records, often using the difficulty of reading the Japanese language as a convenient excuse. What resulted was an askew view of the Issei as mere objects of exclusion. That is why I selected the title *A Buried Past* for our bibliography. In my opinion, Issei history remained an unexhumed past.

The accession work opened my eyes to the existence of Japanese language sources by and about the Issei. The JARP Collection included the microfilm records of the Japanese Foreign Ministry on overseas Japanese immigration and the Japanese exclusion movement; Japanese immigrant newspapers and periodicals; Japanese Association records; numerous general, regional, and local histories as well as histories of religious institutions and other community organizations; biographies, memoirs, and autobiographies; published works of fiction and poetry; rich personal papers of prominent Issei; and photographic albums and other material. Taken together, these Japanese language sources constituted a rich treasure trove never before tapped by past historians.

Today, it is no longer a question of the availability of Japanese language sources. Rather, it is the question of the ability of researchers to use such sources, now even more abundantly available than when we annotated the JARP Collection. In the introduction to the JARP bibliography, I wrote that the interest in the history of racial minorities should entail "the debunking of old distortions and myths, the uncovering of hitherto neglected or unknown facts, and the construction of a new interpretation of that past." I came away from the accession work with the firm convic-
tion that research in the Japanese language sources in the JARP Collection offered the best possibility of accomplishing all three tasks as far as Japanese-American history was concerned. This conviction became the cornerstone of my research work and later efforts to collect additional sources to enhance the JARP Collection.

**Fits and Starts**

In 1969 my knowledge of Japanese was not good enough to do in-depth historical research. I was a typical postwar Nisei who grew up ignorant of the Japanese language. I never attended a Japanese language school, and I only spoke broken Japanese at home. When I graduated from high school, my speaking ability was, at best, at a kindergarten level. It goes without saying that I had absolutely no reading or writing ability. My introduction to Chinese characters took place in Chinese language classes I took in connection with my early aspiration to become a historian of modern China, which ended abruptly when I dropped out of graduate school. Subsequently, I took a job as far removed from East Asian Studies as possible. I became a Youth Parole Worker with the New York State Training School for Boys, a social service agency working with so-called delinquent youth. I worked a year in an institutional setting in Warwick, New York and another year as a parole worker in New York City.

While working as a parole worker, I began to study Japanese in preparation for a trip to Japan. I studied on my own for the most part, but had some help from a few Japanese friends. One couple had come to New York City from Tokyo to do a book on Malcolm X. Unable to understand the colloquial expressions in the speeches and writings of Malcolm X, they sought help from me. In exchange for my assistance, they offered to give me private Japanese lessons. I accepted their offer and studied with them for about six months. In the winter of 1966 I sailed to Yokohama aboard the *Argentina-maru*, an old Osaka Steamship Company vessel that had transported many Japanese immigrants to Latin America. Since I booked steerage passage, I shared quarters with many people, many of whom were Japanese immigrants returning to their homeland after long sojourns in Brazil. For the first time in my life, I found myself in an all-Japanese speaking environment. What little Japanese I had studied until that time proved to be woefully wanting. I still could not adequately communicate my thoughts and feelings in the language. I often felt like an imbecile among my shipmates with whom I shared cramped quarters during the 11-
day trans-Pacific passage. This experience, at once disappointing and exasperating, motivated me to continue learning Japanese during my subsequent three-month stay in Japan.

Upon my return to the States, I worked as a warehouseman until the winter of 1967 when I entered the East Asian Studies M.A. program at the University of California at Berkeley. I enrolled in a few classes in Japanese literature and culture, but most of my classes were in history, especially modern Japanese history. Under the guidance of Professor Yamaguchi Kōsaku, a visiting professor of history from Japan, I did my M.A. thesis on Takayama Chogyū, a Meiji writer and conservative political thinker. While studying toward my M.A. degree, I went out of the way to socialize with native Japanese speakers with the goal of improving my spoken Japanese. I also served as an occasional, unofficial interpreter for members of the Japanese Council Against the A- and H-Bomb (Gensuikin) who came to participate in anti-Vietnam War rallies and activities in the San Francisco Bay Area. The Council was an official organ of the Japanese Socialist Party.

In this way, I improved my Japanese proficiency, but it still was not good enough to do research in Japanese immigration history. I was unable to easily read or fully comprehend Japanese written in late Meiji times, not to mention hand transcriptions of Japanese diplomatic cables and reports. Nor could I read with facility early Japanese immigrant newspapers and periodicals. Fortunately, I had Yasuo Sakata as my mentor. As we worked together on the accession work of organizing and annotating the JARP Collection, he taught me about the characteristics of Meiji-style writing, the meaning of old idiomatic expressions, and the secret of deciphering difficult passages. The accession work was my on-the-job training, so to speak. At it I learned a new grammar, a new vocabulary, and new idioms, all related, directly or indirectly, to Japanese immigration history which prepared me for my future research work. Through these circumstances, I became keenly interested in Japanese-American history, to the extent indeed that I began to entertain the idea of doing research on the topic myself.

The field of Japanese-American Studies was wide open. Except for studies of the prewar Japanese exclusion movement and the wartime internment of Japanese-Americans, there were no historical studies of any merit. During the early 1970s, under the influence of the Civil Rights Movement, most Japanese-Americans were self-absorbed in reassessing their wartime internment experience. While this was perfectly understandable, it had the unintended
effect of promoting a myopic view of Japanese-American history, at least as I saw it at the time. With so much attention paid to the internment years, it was as if Japanese-American history had begun with the Second World War, consigning the half century or more of prewar history to a state of almost complete oblivion. If I decided to do historical research, I promised myself that I would stay clear of the wartime years. I would take advantage of the opportunity afforded by the JARP Collection and study the prewar years, especially the Issei generation during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Research and Related Work

I commenced research in earnest after the publication of our annotated bibliography. I published my first essay, on Issei socialists and anarchists, in 1971 in the second issue of Amerasia Journal. The research and writing for this piece predated my work on the JARP annotation project and originated in my first encounter with the late Karl Yoneda, the long-time Japanese-American leftist. Although I had heard of Karl prior to 1967, I never had had the privilege of meeting him. I met him for the first time in the summer of 1967. Almost immediately after, I read his Japanese book on the history of Japanese workers in the United States. From my reading, I learned, much to my surprise and joy, that there had been Issei socialists and anarchists at the turn of the century in the San Francisco Bay Area. I felt an immediate kinship with them because they, too, had struggled against racism, political oppression, and economic exploitation. I felt an even greater kinship as I learned that one of the anarchists, Ueyama Jitarō, was the father of Dr. Hajime Ueyama. Dr. Ueyama was our family doctor who lived and practiced medicine a block from our home in Berkeley. Despite the fact that I grew up with Dr. Ueyama's son, I had been unaware that his grandfather had been a member of the Social Revolutionary Party, the Issei anarchist organization formed in Oakland in 1906. With my curiosity whetted, I decided to do my piece on the Issei socialists and anarchists. In retrospect, I think I selected this topic because it enabled me to link the Japanese-American past, in a very personal way, to what I was doing politically in Berkeley at the time.

My subsequent writings consisted of essays on other topics in Japanese-American history. In doing the research for them, I used the Japanese language sources in the JARP Collection, sometimes supplementing them with other sources. With no clear book in mind, I moved from one topic to another with each essay standing
on its own. My initial focus was on Issei laborers. I worked on such topics as the Japanese labor contracting system and American railroads and the United Mine Workers of America and Japanese coal miners in Rock Springs, Wyoming. Working as I was in new research terrain, I always faced the challenge of having to start more or less from scratch in writing my essays. For example, when I began research on the landmark 1922 Takao Ozawa naturalization test case, I discovered that no one had bothered to examine the Japanese immigrant background to the case. The extant secondary works only covered the legal issues it raised. So I reconstructed the Japanese immigrant background from my reading of the Japanese immigrant press, Japanese Foreign Ministry cables and reports, and other Japanese language sources. Similarly, when I started asking myself questions about the adverse effects of the California alien land laws, I discovered that very little had been produced on how the Japanese immigrants themselves perceived and reacted to the laws. Some researchers, without examining Japanese language sources, maintained that the laws had no real negative effects. To refute this unfounded claim, I wrote about the effects as evidenced by how Japanese immigrants actually reacted to the enactment and enforcement of the alien land laws. Eventually, I put all of my essays into a coherent narrative in book form as *The Issei: The World of the First-Generation Japanese Immigrants, 1885-1924* (1988).

Alongside my research work, I did other related things. For one, I suggested to Karl Yoneda that he should write an autobiography, believing that it was important for people to read the story of his life of struggle as a trade-unionist, communist, writer, and political activist. Karl hesitated at first because he thought his English was inadequate to the task. Though born in the United States, he had been educated—except for a year in an elementary school in Glendale, California—entirely in Japan. Understandably, Japanese was his first language. Once he agreed to my suggestion, however, he approached the job of writing in English with characteristic dogged determination. Using his index fingers in a hunt-and-peck manner, he knocked out a draft on an old typewriter. I assumed the job of editing. As much as possible, I retained the flavor of his original English, but made deletions and recommended additions wherever I thought they would improve the draft. In 1983, after considerable give-and-take, the Asian American Studies Center published the autobiography under the title *Ganbatte: Sixty-Year Struggle of a Kibei Worker*. Attracting a wide readership, the book sold out in a very short time.
I also worked to expand the JARP Collection. Convinced that some Japanese American families still had personal records of their Issei parents or grandparents, I sought out such families. Many of these families, unable to read Japanese, were not aware of the historical value of what they possessed. The JARP Project officially had ended in 1972. I persuaded families with personal papers to donate them to UCLA through the Asian American Studies Center. Among the most significant ones are the Sakai Yoneo Papers, Karl Yoneda Papers, Abiko Family Papers, Fujita Akira Papers, Togawa Akira Papers, and Fujii Ryōichi Papers, all rich in Japanese language manuscript material. Sakai Yoneo (1900-1978) was an Issei newspaperman affiliated with the *Rafu Shimpō* before the Second World War; Fujita Akira (1920-1988) was a Kibei writer who was a prominent figure in the Nanka Bungei, a postwar literary group in Southern California; Togawa Akira (1903-1980) was an Issei poet and member of the Nanka Bungei as well; and Fujii Ryōichi (1905-1983) was an Issei newspaperman and founder of the *Chicago Shimpō*. The Abiko Family Papers primarily consist of the papers of Abiko Yonako (1880-1944), the Issei wife of Abiko Kyūtarō, founder and publisher of the *Nichibei Shimbun* of San Francisco. I have already identified Karl Yoneda (1906-1999). Besides the foregoing papers, we also acquired the Edison Uno Papers, Charles Kikuchi Papers, and T. Scott Miyagawa Papers, papers of three prominent Nisei.

Both the registries of each of the papers and the papers themselves are available at the Department of Special Collections in the UCLA Charles E. Young Research Library where the entire JARP Collection is deposited. *Fading Footsteps of the Issei: An Annotated Check List of the Manuscript Holdings of the Japanese American Research Project Collection* (1992), compiled by Yasuo Sakata, is an annotated bibliography of the manuscript holdings of the original JARP Collection. *A Buried Past II: A Sequel to the Annotated Bibliography of the Japanese American Research Project Collection* (1999), which I most recently compiled with Eiichiro Azuma, is an annotated bibliography of all the new Japanese language material added to the JARP Collection since 1973, including numerous new studies on Japanese immigration history published in Japan. Combined with the original collection, this new material makes the JARP Collection unrivaled. It is without a doubt the finest collection of primary and secondary sources in the United States in the Japanese language on Japanese immigrants and their descendants.
Finally, I presented many public lectures. From the beginning, the staff of the Asian American Studies Center committed itself to forging ties with the Asian American communities of southern California and making some kind of contributions to them. Accordingly, I taught community classes on Japanese-American history over an eight-year period. These classes were held in the evenings at churches, temples, and other community institutions and were attended, for the most part, by Japanese-Americans. Many were Sansei and Yonsei who were probing into their own family roots and therefore especially eager to learn about the Japanese-American past. Older Nisei attendees often shared their knowledge and life experiences with class members, providing unanticipated but important personal lessons in history from which everyone in the classes benefited. No instructor could have asked for a better group of motivated, engaged, and attentive students.

Japanese Academic Studies

During the last twenty-five years, I have followed closely Japanese researchers and their writings on Japanese-Americans. From about the late 1970s, an interest in overseas Japanese arose in academic and other circles in Japan. This interest was stimulated, in part, by the 1978 commemorative events marking the seventieth anniversary of Japanese immigration to Brazil. In Sao Paulo, the President of Brazil and the Crown Prince of Japan participated in the week-long events carried out with great fanfare. The Japanese news media gave wide coverage to all of the events, the effect of which was to generate a popular interest in Japanese-Brazilians and other Nikkei living outside of Brazil. At the beginning there were only a handful of researchers who studied overseas Japanese, but the number of such people increased dramatically during the 1980s, so much so that, in 1991, the Nihon Imin Gakkai or Japanese Association for Migration Studies was established. From its inception, the membership of this new academic association, now exceeding three hundred members, was comprised of people in the social sciences and humanities conducting research on Japanese emigration abroad, particularly to North America. The official organ of the association, the *Imin Kenkyū Nenpō* ["The Annual Review of Migration Studies"], has been published since 1995.

Throughout the years, I have met many Japanese researchers. My relationship to them has not been always cordial. On the one hand, I have met researchers who have a sincere interest in Nikkei and have produced admirable studies. These persons have
my respect and gratitude. On the other hand, I have come across others whom I have found, to put it bluntly, rather hard to stomach. My first research trip to Japan occurred in 1974. After seeing *A Buried Past* through publication, I decided to go to Tokyo to search for more Japanese language sources. On this my second trip to Japan, I met Ito Kazuo, a well-known Japanese writer on Japanese-American history. In 1969 he had published *Hokubei Hyakunen Zakura*, an edited collection of Issei reminiscences about prewar life and labor in the Pacific Northwest, on which his reputation rested. Ito impressed me as an arrogant, conceited Japanese male. Draping himself in a mantle of authority, he was a self-anointed “expert” on Japanese-American history.

Apart from dislikable personalities, I am critical of Japanese researchers for other reasons. I have long advocated that sources in Japanese-American history should be deposited in public institutions accessible to all bona fide researchers. This belief has served as my guiding principle in my work of expanding the JARP Collection. Hence I have opposed sources going into private hands, especially into Japanese hands for exclusive usage in Japan. After all, the Issei made history in the United States and the records of that history should remain in this country as a part of our historical heritage. Nonetheless, some Japanese researchers have managed to get their hands on sources, sometimes by methods bordering on thievery, and then have carted them off to Japan.

The *Utah Nippō* of Salt Lake City once had valuable source material accumulated since the day it was launched back in 1914. When I paid a call on the newspaper office, I was shocked to find that the office shelves had been picked clean of books and other material. The Nisei daughter of the deceased publisher informed me that Japanese visitors, who visited the office periodically, had taken everything away. In my opinion, these visitors took advantage of the fact that this daughter did not know what the office shelves held because she could not read Japanese. Then there is the case of the personal library of Reverend Tamai Yoshitaka, the longtime Buddhist minister of the Tri-State Buddhist Church of Denver. When he passed away, Nakagaki Masami of Ryoukoku University, an onetime Buddhist minister himself, obtained the library and took it to Kyoto. Today, this library is not accessible to outside researchers. This is why I appealed to the family of Asano Shichinosuke not to donate his personal papers to Japan as soon as I learned that he, too, had passed away. Asano was an Issei newspaperman affiliated with the prewar *Nichibei Shim bun*.
and the postwar Nichibei Jiji. Like the Tamai library, I feared that his personal papers would be irretrievably lost to us if they fell into Japanese hands.

Members of the Japanese Association for Migration Studies are drawn to the study of overseas Japanese primarily because it is a new field offering more research opportunities than older established fields of study. Many members have had no personal contacts with or experience living among overseas Japanese. With little empathy for their subjects, they study the Nikkei as mere "objects" of investigation, at times with paternalistic condescension, sometimes with thinly disguised contempt. Tamura Norio of Tokyo Keizai University is an example. He heads a research group which has studied Japanese immigrant newspapers over the years. He is a founding member of the Japanese Association for Migration Studies and onetime past president. He invited me to join his research team in 1984 after he received a Toyota Foundation grant. The grant required American participation because his research project had been funded as a joint international undertaking. While I was a member, I took part in two symposia. In fact, I organized the second symposium, held in Los Angeles in 1985, with partial support from the Times-Mirror Foundation. I also contributed an essay to an anthology.

In 1987 I withdrew from Tamura's research group. I reached the conclusion that Tamura had little respect for Nikkei people as a whole. On the surface he voices concern for the past and present welfare of Japanese-Americans, but his attitude and behavior invariably belie such sentiments. Like many insular Japanese, Tamura cannot accept and embrace the fact that, by definition, Nikkei are not Japanese. Nor can he acknowledge that we have our own raison d'etre equally as valid as being Japanese. Consequently, he looks down upon us, often in a patronizing manner, at other times in amused contempt, but always with a presumption of superiority. To him, Japanese immigrant newspapers are "objects" of academic research. In this sense, Japanese-Americans are means to an end—research fodder as it were—with the end being the professional advancement of Tamura and the members of his research team. His group has also collected sources in Canada and the United States, but he does not permit outsiders to see or use them, an objectionable practice rooted in Japanese academic insularity.

In some cases, different research approaches make disputes between Japanese researchers and me all but a foregone conclu-
sion. Some Japanese researchers study overseas Japanese emigration as an integral aspect of modern Japanese history and overseas Japanese immigrant communities as extensions of Japanese society. In direct contrast, I anchor Japanese-American history and communities firmly within the boundaries of American history and society. Other Japanese researchers, explicitly or implicitly, study overseas Japanese within the framework of the question, What is a Japanese? This question is rooted in contemporary Japanese society and its obsession with the meaning of "Japanese." Again, in direct contrast, I place Japanese-Americans within the framework of the question, What is an American? Given these and other contrasting approaches, setting aside my stated objections to Japanese researchers, I bear in mind that there are unavoidable disagreements over interpretations of Japanese-American history between Japanese historians in Japan and someone like myself in the United States.

**Present and Future Status**

Looking back over the last three decades, no one can deny that there has been progress in the writing of Asian-American history. We now know much more about our past than we did thirty years ago, validating the adage that historical knowledge is cumulative. And we should not forget that we would not know what we know today had it not been for the emergence and development of Asian American Studies. In recent years, many scholars have made noteworthy contributions to Japanese-American history. Among these scholars, however, only a handful have researched Japanese language sources to produce their studies. To correct the past and present imbalance in writings on Japanese-American history, based as it is almost exclusively on English-language sources, many more monographs using Japanese-language sources are needed.

There is no question that further research into Japanese language sources can enhance our understanding of Japanese-American history. We still lack a study of the small but vocal Japanese-American left in the 1920s and 1930s. The Karl Yoneda Papers, with an almost complete set of leftist publications in Japanese, provide ample sources. We also lack studies of Japanese-Americans in Japan and Asia during the 1930s and 1940s. As an initial foray into this topic, I edited and contributed to "Beyond National Boundaries: The Complexity of Japanese-American History," a special issue of *Amerasia Journal* 23:3 (1997-98). Future studies should examine in much greater detail the role of the Issei and Nisei in the
service of the Japanese government and military before and during the Second World War.

We know virtually nothing about Issei and Kibei literary writings, except for a few anthologies of Issei poetry translated into English. This sad state of affairs is not due to a dearth of sources. The Togawa Akira Papers in the JARP Collection lend themselves to the writing of several doctoral dissertations on this topic. These papers include Togawa's complete writings and his 57-volume diary spanning the years 1921-1978; many albums of Japanese immigrant newspaper clippings on art and literature from 1925 to 1978; the best collection of Issei poetry anthologies and literary writings; and almost complete sets of the Shūkaku, Tessaku, Dotō, Posuton Bungei, Nanka Bungei, and other literary journals. Combined with the Fujita Akira Papers, these sources can be the basis of indepth studies of Issei and Kibei poets and writers. Their writings, now preserved in the JARP Collection, only await a competent literary historian to give them their rightful voice and place in Japanese-American literature and history.

Studies of the wartime internment can also profit from the use of Japanese language sources. In my reading of the existing literature, one thing has always struck me: the conspicuous slighting of the Issei, equally so of those interned in Justice Department internment camps as well as those interned in so-called WRA Relocation Camps. This slighting has taken many different forms. To cite but one example, autobiographical and biographical accounts of internment in Japanese by and about Issei (and Kibei for that matter) have never been incorporated into the wartime internment studies. This glaring omission and others must be corrected by future researchers. To give readers some idea of such accounts, I list some of them below with brief annotations.

Beyond more research into Japanese language sources, we need to broaden our research focus. One possible area of fruitful inquiry is that of interethnic relationships. Japanese immigrants and their descendants interfaced and interacted, not just with white Americans, but with other racial and ethnic minorities as well. Depending on the locale, they lived, and often worked, alongside Chinese, Koreans, Filipinos, Asian Indians, Mexicans, Armenians, Afro-Americans, Jews, and other people. Their relationships to these groups were often competitive and hostile, but sometimes amicable. Past studies of race-relations, commencing with the Race Relations Survey by Robert E. Park in the 1920s, have stressed the centrality of Japanese-white relations, ignoring
the relationships Japanese immigrants and their descendants had with other racial and ethnic minorities. The recent prize-winning essay by Eiichiro Azuma on Japanese-Filipino relations in the San Joaquin River Delta during the 1930s is an excellent example of what can be done on this neglected topic.\(^3\)

The histories of the Issei in Hawai`i and on the mainland warrant reconsideration. So far the two have been treated apart from each other under the assumption that geographical separation led to distinctive histories. This assumption has precluded the examination of connections between the Issei in Hawai`i and their counterparts on the mainland, not to mention shared experiences in their presumed separate histories. I can think of many linkages yet to be explored. In 1928 a sensational racial incident occurred on the islands. Myles Yutaka Fukunaga, a poor, working-class Hawai`i-born Nisei, kidnapped and murdered the ten-year-old son of a prominent white Honolulu banker.\(^4\) According to his confession, racial resentment and revenge played a role in his premeditated crime. Fukunaga's trial and execution had a dramatic impact, not only on the Japanese in Hawai`i, but on the mainland as well. The mainland Japanese immigrant press covered the case closely. Mainland Issei leaders were stunned by what they called this "heinous" crime, and they asked themselves the logical question, could such a crime be repeated on the Pacific Coast? This question was not an idle one, for the first signs of juvenile delinquency and youth gangs had already surfaced on the mainland. The news of the Fukunaga Incident forced the leaders to pay closer attention to the looming problems of the second-generation and rededicate themselves to imparting Japanese moral values to Nisei youngsters to avert a similar happening on the Pacific Coast. Their reactions illustrate how the histories of the Issei in Hawai`i and the mainland are closely interrelated.

Comparison of the Nikkei experience in North and South America should also be considered as a new line of research. Japa-
nese immigration to Latin America began with Mexico in 1897, Peru in 1898, Brazil in 1908, and in later years to other countries. Today, there are significant Nikkei populations in Brazil, Peru, Argentina, Bolivia, Peru, and Mexico. Brazil has the largest population of approximately 1.2 million, far outnumbering the combined Japanese-American population of Hawai‘i and the continental United States. In my view, one broad question should be addressed in any comparative historical research, and that is: What was the historical process through which Japanese immigrants (including Okinawans) became Nikkei in North and South America? Regardless of whether Japanese immigrants left Japan during the Meiji, Taisho, or early Showa periods, they generally shared a common Japanese identity and culture and adhered to a common set of Japanese values. Today, as descendants of Japanese immigrants, we are all no longer Japanese, but we differ considerably as Nisei, Sansei, and Yonsei (and even Gosei in the case of Hawai‘i) living in different countries in the Western Hemisphere. The explanation for the differences lies in the historical process through which Japanese immigrants became Nikkei.

Comparative historical studies will add to our storehouse of knowledge about the Nikkei by highlighting what we in North and South America share in common and what we do not. The International Nikkei Research Project, recently launched by the Japanese American National Museum of Los Angeles, marks a small but significant beginning. Funded by the Nippon Foundation, this three-year project is an initial attempt at comparative research of Nikkei in the Western hemisphere. Comparative historical studies will require research in English, Japanese, Portuguese, and Spanish language sources, no small challenge for future researchers.

**Final Thoughts**

In a recent essay, Arif Dirlik reexamines the purposes and scope of Asian American Studies in the light of the changes brought about by the post-1965 Asian immigration and transnational capital. Rightfully, he places me among the founders of Asian American Studies dedicated to claiming our legitimate place in American history and society. Asian American Studies has undergone many changes in its short thirty-one-year history. I have welcomed most of them, but I find it difficult to go along with the present shift to cultural studies dressed up in so-called postmodern and postcolonial language. Most of us who established the initial programs in Asian American Studies began with the political agenda of cri-
tiquing American society and of promoting and advancing the welfare of Asian-Americans within it. I fail to see how postmodern cultural studies relate to these purposes. Try as I might, I find myself unable to comprehend most of the studies because they are written in such arcane language. I ask myself, if I cannot understand them, how can the vast majority of ordinary educated people who live outside of university circles understand them? It seems to me Asian American Studies is now producing cultural studies decipherable to only a handful of ivory tower academics. In this sense, our field has gone astray.

Although bilingual and bicultural, I identify myself as an American committed to politically changing our country for the better. At the same time, I believe in the oldtime practice of doing narrative history, of telling a story in ordinary language based on substantive research in primary sources. Such are the views of this Asian American historian who entered the historical profession by happenstance and who still insists on practicing the craft in his "old-fashioned" way.

Notes


2. Some Issei and Kibei autobiographies and biographies:

Sasaki Shūichi (Sasabune), Yokuryūsho Seikatsu (Los Angeles: Rafu Shoten, 1950). An Issei newspaperman’s account of internment primarily at Ft. Missoula;


Soga Yasutarō (Keiho), Tessaku Seikatsu (Honolulu: Hawaii Times, 1948). The Nippu Jiji Issei editor’s account of internment at Lordsburg and Santa Fe;


Susuki Sakae, Zuiri Kaiō Gojūnen (Los Angeles: W.M. Hawley, 1959). An autobiography with illustrations by an Issei physician commonly known as Dr. P.M. Suski. Includes his wartime internment at Santa Anita and Heart Mountain;


Yamamoto Asako (pseud.), Ibara Aru Hakudō (n.p.: Privately printed, 1952). A diary of internment at Santa Anita and Gila covering the period from December 7, 1941 to July 31, 1943. The diarist returned to Japan aboard the second exchange ship. Her real name is Aoki Hisa. See above;


4. For this incident, see Miwa Haruie, Tensaiji Fukunaga Yutaka (Honolulu: Matsuzakaya Shoten, 1929); Kihara Ryūkichi, Hawai Nihonjin

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