

Editor's Introduction

The idea of “dissent” in relation to the United States might seem like an oxymoron. After all, the states are “united”—that is, the United States is known as a country where consensus building is a traditional fact of life, and “the rites of assent,” to use the title of Sacvan Bercovitch’s famous book, have historically been observed by all parties, even if grudgingly. On the other hand, “dissent” in relation to the United States might seem redundant. The name of the nation virtually stands for the land of free enterprise and the home of brave exploiters. In 1929, the American critic Newton Arvin enumerated the country’s “grand types of personality,” which included “the Protestant sectarian, determined to worship his own God even in the wilderness,” “the sectional patriot and the secessionist,” “the go-getter, the tax-dodger, [and] the bootlegger,” as well as “the claim-jumper, the Mormon, [and] the founder of communities.” He concluded that these citizens were all “united . . . in paying the penalty for disunion—in becoming partial and lopsided personalities, men and women of one dimension, august or vulgar cranks” (*Hawthorne* [Boston: Little, 1929], 203–04). When looked at this way, Americans can be seen as united in the understanding that they are a nation of dissenters.

The judgment that Americans are self-centered individualists may be a bit harsh. However, the recent example of the Occupy Wall Street demonstrators, one of whom was found guilty of felony assault against a police officer, shows the deep divide still extant in the nation of dissenters. If the reader is still not convinced that the United States is a nation where dissent is part of the national story, reading this year’s issue of the *Japanese Journal of American Studies* should be instructive. Here we have articles about a samurai who ran away from home to gain the other shore of the Pacific; a black poet who slipped off the surveillance of anti-Communist Japanese authorities; a US government official who endeavored to document the secretive Japanese emperor Hirohito to determine his degree

of responsibility for World War II (still a gravely divisive question in Japan); a Native American novelist who has put her pen to opposing nuclear development in the United States and around the world; and a mayor of a major US city who took advantage of the urban racial divide to win his post. This is a colorful list of representative Americans, all dissenting in one way or another.

As always, the essays are arranged roughly in chronological order by their topics. Just one note: the last essay, by Chieko Kitagawa Otsuru, was submitted for the previous issue (No. 24) that had the special topic “War.” Due to circumstances for which the author was not responsible, it did not make it into publication for that issue, and so we have included it in this volume a year later. Although written to address a totally different theme, her essay describes disparate groups that may be understood as “dissenting” from official government policy in the United States.

Our current publication starts off with Gavin James Campbell’s “‘We Must Learn Foreign Knowledge’: The Transpacific Education of a Samurai Sailor, 1864–1865,” which describes a restless young samurai who in 1864 clandestinely left Japan (technically still under the shogunate) for America. After a year’s voyage and unaccustomed labor on two American merchant ships, he eventually hove into Boston harbor. Campbell’s essay examines the samurai’s reactions to the shipboard world he had to adapt to as well as how this encounter helped smooth his adjustment to American society more generally. More than just one traveler’s tale, however, this samurai’s sea voyage puts ships and sailors back at the center of early Japan-US contact. After all, the first Americans to tread Japanese soil were shipwrecked mariners who arrived only after naval engineers and navigation experts made transpacific voyaging both possible and profitable. Thus, sailors pioneered the transpacific relationship. The nature of their work and their maritime society meant that they represented a particular variant of America, one that politicians, merchants, and reformers tried to make fit familiar patters but often without success. Sailors lived mobile lives in hybrid transnational spaces. Thus, while one samurai’s courage and curiosity eased his transition from Hakodate to Boston, so, too, did living in the maritime society that first met him on his side of the Pacific.

Etsuko Taketani’s “‘Spies and Spiders’: Langston Hughes and the Transpacific Intelligence Dragnet” retraces the underground (and surface) routes that Langston Hughes—the poet laureate of the Harlem Renaissance—took in navigating, and at times slipping right through, the intelligence dragnets that endeavored to silence dissenters during his 1933

trip to Asia. As Hughes recounted in his memoir *I Wonder as I Wander* (1956), having freshly arrived from Moscow via China to Japan in June 1933, he found himself the focus of Japanese authorities' anti-Communist paranoia, which resulted in his expulsion from the country on suspicion of being a Soviet spy. Taketani compares facts gleaned from archival research with Hughes's own retrospective account of his experience of being harassed by police, which was published during the McCarthy era. Hughes's memoir significantly committed to public memory the secret war on dissent in the 1930s, revealing it as a force that eerily shaped the international Cold War blueprint in Asia.

Haruo Iguchi's "Psychological Warfare during the American Occupation of Japan: The Documentary Film Project of Shu Taguchi and Bonner Fellers, 1949–1951" discusses how Brig. Gen. Bonner Fellers, who was MacArthur's psychological warfare chief, was involved in Japanese film producer Shu Taguchi's project to create a semi-documentary film based on Fellers's 1947 essay "Hirohito's Struggle to Surrender." Iguchi discusses the background and details regarding the attempt to create the film, and observes the reasons behind its failure to come to fruition. In addition to the controversy of portraying a living emperor in a movie, the proposed semi-documentary focused on the most controversial aspect of Japanese history during wartime: the emperor's degree of responsibility for the war. Because of the divisiveness of this issue in Japanese society, the film project was probably doomed to fail. Still, Iguchi argues, the fact that General Headquarters approved the production of the film based on Fellers's article points to the potential usefulness of the movie for understanding psychological warfare as it continued in the Cold War.

In "Leslie Marmon Silko and Nuclear Dissent in the American Southwest," Kyoko Matsunaga reads Silko's first two novels, *Ceremony* (1977) and *Almanac of the Dead* (1991), as literary dissent against the impact of nuclearism in the American Southwest during the Cold War. In *Ceremony*, Silko subverts the detrimental influences of nuclear colonialism by situating the colonial narrative within the Laguna Pueblo tribal narrative. While *Almanac of the Dead* features a more apocalyptic tone shaped by the legacy of the Cold War, Silko continues to contest the destructive forces of colonial hegemony by promoting a transnational indigenous movement.

"Black Power at the Polls: The Harold Washington Campaign of 1983 and the Demise of the Democratic Machine in Chicago" by Yasumasa Fujinaga carries the theme of dissent into the political arena. Since the late

1960s, the election of African American mayors in the largest cities of the United States has usually been characterized by a stark racial divide. Chicago's mayoral election campaign of 1983, which eventually led to the choice of Harold Washington as the city's first African American mayor, was no exception. This essay places Harold Washington's election in the history of the civil rights/black power movement as it punctuated the troubled trajectory of American racial politics in the urban North. It illuminates how Washington's candidacy mobilized the dissident African American electorate in Chicago while at the same time it invoked white voters' deep-rooted racial fears.

As mentioned, Chieko Kitagawa Otsuru's "The US Domestic Front: Politics over Displaced Iraqis" was originally intended for the previous issue of this journal with the topic "War." Wars incur multidimensional consequences, but much attention is often paid to military and financial aspects while the human costs tend to be underappreciated. Otsuru's essay focuses on the fate of Iraqi refugees, especially those who ended up living in American communities, after the US war with Iraq. Although American foreign policy emphasizes its humanitarianism, the dignity of Iraqi refugees was actually placed secondary to perceived threats to national "security" and economic concerns of American society. The neglected social needs were often filled, not by the federal government, but by civil society actors or co-ethnic networks in the host community. She concludes that the human costs for refugees and local communities arising from war should be evaluated in a greater context than just that of warfare on the ground.

Once more, I would like to express our gratitude to Katy Meigs for her continuing assistance as copy editor for the journal. Regrettably, we only have six essays in this issue—we especially miss presidential addresses this year—but that does not diminish the quality of the essays in this issue in any way. Most of the articles published in the *Japanese Journal of American Studies*, including those from back issues, are freely available on the Internet at <http://www.jaas.gr.jp>. We invite responses and criticisms from our readers.

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Editor