

Introduction

Elaine Black Yoneda: *Jewish Immigration, Labor Activism, and Japanese American Exclusion and Incarceration* is a biography of Elaine Black Yoneda (1906–1988), Communist labor activist and daughter of Russian Jewish immigrants, who spent eight months during World War II living in a concentration camp—not in Europe, but in California. Elaine’s path to the Manzanar War Relocation Center wends through a multigenerational history of labor activism commencing in Russia, continuing on the East Coast of the United States, and culminating in California, where Elaine and her family became involved with the racially and ethnically diverse radical community of Los Angeles. It was there that Elaine met the love of her life, Japanese American Communist organizer Karl Yoneda. When Karl and their three-year-old son Tommy were required to go to Manzanar, Elaine insisted on accompanying them.

Sadly, the xenophobic fervor that swept the United States after the bombing of Pearl Harbor has recently emerged yet again in this country, rendering Elaine’s story prescient of current events. The anti-Asian discrimination and violence that proliferated alongside the Covid-19 pandemic is yet another instance in our history of the construction of a racial panic. The early and erroneous ascribing of the spread of the virus to travelers from China only confirmed this society’s all-too-easy willingness to blame a racialized other for its own inability to adequately respond to a crisis. But perhaps the most

poignant and uncanny example that relates to Elaine's story was the recent repurposing of a military base in Oklahoma that had been used to incarcerate Japanese Americans during World War II to detain Latin American children separated from their families at the border.¹ The contemporary relevance of such topics reminds us of our historic and contemporary anti-immigrant rhetoric, laws, and policies. Studying the history of Japanese American exclusion and incarceration is critical for a full understanding of the dangers posed by such actions.

Elaine Black Yoneda focuses on this chapter of Elaine's life, but it also explores in depth the labor activism that occupied Elaine in the 1930s and narrates her overall life story. The book examines the culture and work of the Communist Party of the United States of America (CPUSA) and labor activity on the West Coast that, by virtue of its interracial makeup, differed qualitatively from the better-known history of labor organizing on the East Coast, particularly in New York City. Elaine worked for the International Labor Defense (ILD), an organization sponsored by the CPUSA, which provided legal aid for arrested strikers on the local level and contributed to national civil- and labor-rights causes such as the campaign to free Tom Mooney, who had been falsely accused of planning a bombing at a Preparedness Day Parade in San Francisco in 1916. The ILD also defended the Scottsboro Nine, a group of African American men who were falsely accused of raping two white women in Alabama in 1931. During a period of heightened possibilities for women in the CPUSA, and during a decade of intense labor activity that was matched by equally violent antiunion suppression, Elaine's accomplishments were impressive—she was the only woman on the executive committee of the 1934 General Strike in the San Francisco Bay Area, and she would eventually become the vice president for the Pacific Coast region of the ILD. And while Elaine was able to rise to prominence within the party, she certainly experienced sexism within the organization and in the broader activist community.

Elaine's activism might have continued into the 1940s, but the events after the attack on Pearl Harbor changed the course of her family's life. *Elaine Black Yoneda* delves into the ways that the Yonedas' time at Manzanar defies commonly held ideas about Japanese American exclusion and incarceration. For one, Elaine was part of a small but not insignificant number of non-Japanese Americans, mostly spouses in interracial marriages, in the camps. Second, and what is perhaps most surprising, Elaine and Karl joined others—many of them Japanese Americans—in publicly supporting the U.S. decision to exclude Japanese Americans from the coast. Commu-

nists such as Karl and Elaine felt that the urgent need to fight fascism superseded all other concerns, and they vowed devotion to the Allied cause. In this, they sided with nonradical assimilationist Japanese Americans who were eager to demonstrate their patriotism and, in fact, assisted with the plans for removal. In camp, Elaine and Karl were criticized and harassed for their cooperationist stance and accused of being spies. The accusation had merit—Karl did inform the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the War Relocation Authority of “anti-American” and pro-Axis activities at camp before enlisting in the U.S. Army and leaving camp. Internecine camp politics among the incarcerated reflected divisions that had existed within the Japanese American community before the war and would ultimately result in a violent revolt at Manzanar, after which Elaine and Tommy returned to San Francisco.

After the war, the Yonedas settled for about a decade in Sonoma County, where they joined a community of radical leftist chicken ranchers and settled into a routine of hard agricultural work and moderate local activism. Although somewhat quiet during the repressive McCarthy era, they were active later in the century in the campaigns for reparations and redress for Japanese American incarceration and the work to designate Manzanar a national memorial site. Their efforts brought once again to the fore questions of Elaine and Karl’s cooperationist stance during exclusion and incarceration. Unfortunately, Elaine would not live to see the culmination of the campaign, dying just a few months before the signing of executive apologies and the order for the reparations that she had worked to secure.

Elaine Black Yoneda offers a view from very close to the ground of a woman who was not highly ideological—she herself admitted that she only read Karl Marx and other theorists in a cursory way—but who supported the rank and file every day. Elaine was a high school dropout, but she was a natural public speaker and tenacious advocate who was unafraid to confront authorities. With no formal legal training, she defended others—and herself—in courtrooms and was often asked why she did not go to law school. Elaine had an extreme distaste for seeing people’s rights violated, and that simple fact drew her into activism more than any theoretical or philosophical adherence to class struggle. Oddly, her aversion to the violation of civil rights did not carry over into her reactions to the events resulting from Executive Order 9066 (EO 9066), which led to Japanese American exclusion and incarceration. She would later regret her capitulation, while also averring that it was a confusing time and that she had done what she thought best for her family.

Elaine Black Yoneda is a work of biography that can be situated within what some have called the new biography or feminist biography. Biography as a form fell out of favor with a generation of gender and labor historians as part of a reaction against history as a chronology of individual great men that was not adequately attentive to the masses. But recent theorists of biography claim the value of telling the life stories of marginalized individuals in order to illuminate the ways in which they challenged dominant discourses, occupied roles of their own self-fashioning, and managed all such efforts within their own specific times and places.² Gender historians in particular have relied on biography to reclaim the contributions of women like Elaine Yoneda, whose lives give evidence of the intertwining of the personal and the political and who counter received ideas about how gender might proscribe work, family, and everyday life.³

Critics of biography claim that the biographer artificially seeks to produce a coherent, truthful narrative where one doesn't really exist, that a lucid thesis cannot be devised from one person's life story. New biographers dispute this claim by allowing for the contradictions that sometimes crop up when telling a life story and acknowledging that individuals' lives are not lived in pure coherence.⁴ Biography allows the historian to be attentive to the messiness of real life. Furthermore, focus on an individual life provides "a counterweight to abstract causation and 'conceptual' history, using primary sources and the personal perspective to explore, relativize, confirm or correct existing understandings and interpretations of the past," as Renders, de Haan, and Harmsma write.⁵ Themes do emerge and the recounting of specific experiences exposes the ways that people responded to and found agency within the larger contexts in which they lived.

Elaine Yoneda's life experiences exemplify these aspects of the new biography. The fact that a Jewish woman spent time in a concentration camp on U.S. soil during World War II exposes the profound contradictions of the rhetorics employed to express the necessity of incarcerating Japanese Americans precisely in order to fight a very analogous system of racial classification in Europe. Here, she volunteered to go; there, she would have had no choice. There, she would have been included in a racialized group that the state asserted was a threat to the future of that society; here, her husband and son were thus assigned, while she was not. Indeed, the circumstances that pushed her parents from Russia were due to their need to escape violence based on that very identity while the pull to this country was based on the promise of a society free from such persecution. Here, Elaine clearly enjoyed a sense of privilege—which must be emphasized—by virtue

of the construction of Jewishness as whiteness, and yet that construction was only, at this point in time, a recent phenomenon in U.S. history. Upon their arrival in New York City, her parents, as Russian Jewish working-class immigrants, would have been very much understood to be “not white,” but, as scholar Karen Brodtkin has demonstrated, through distinctly U.S. processes of race-making, this would shift by midcentury.⁶ While Elaine definitely relied on her self-presentation as a well-dressed, confident, and assertive white woman to achieve some of her objectives as an activist, in other ways she was always cognizant of her status as a foreigner. Her parents eschewed religious observance, as she did in turn, and yet her cultural identification with being Jewish is evident throughout her life—in her friendships and shared use of Yiddish with other Jewish activists, in her memories that foreground her mother’s Jewish cooking as central to a sense of home, and later to her connections to Northern California Jewish organizations. For Elaine, as for many second-generation Jewish Americans, the privileges of whiteness commingled with the histories of, as well as first-hand experiences of, discrimination. As Brodtkin describes, Jewish Americans experienced the “racial middleness” of both belonging and marginality.⁷ The mutual attraction between Elaine and Karl was surely due in part to their shared experiences as immigrants and outsiders—a fact that contributed to their colocation in the Boyle Heights neighborhood of Los Angeles and therefore to the circumstances under which they met.⁸

Elaine’s negotiation of her own status as an immigrant; her encounters with anti-Semitism, white supremacy, and anticommunism; and the construction of her husband and child as threats to national security are only revealed through a full accounting of her story, from birth to death. The ways in which Jewish emigration from Russia, labor activism in the United States, and West Coast racism against Japanese Americans come together within one person’s lifetime expose aspects of the U.S. past that would not emerge in a sweeping or synthetic study of any one of these histories. More than a mere timeline of milestones, *Elaine Black Yoneda* is a book that gives texture and nuance to these experiences, exploring the intersecting and at times contradictory political and social forces that shaped Elaine’s life and that of her family.

To accomplish its aims, *Elaine Black Yoneda* draws on the biographic methodologies of feminist scholars whose innovations were to demonstrate the value of being attentive to lacunae, to engage different kinds of looking and reading, and to investigate any piece of archival information—even when seemingly insignificant—as sources that can be richly mined.⁹ Such a

methodology recognizes that it is a privilege to appear in the archives, a privilege not regularly afforded to people of all genders, races, abilities, and socioeconomic backgrounds. The Yonedas did not have the luxury of stable housing or geography—of course, their greatest disruption happened during World War II. In addition, as an interracial couple they faced significant housing discrimination both before and after the war and therefore they moved between rented apartments quite regularly. It is reasonable to assume that valuable archival materials were misplaced or discarded along the way. Historians of marginalized subjects must not assume that a lack of readily available information on a subject reflects the relative importance of their subject, nor that it limits the ability to tell a person's life story.

Gender bias emerges even between the records of Karl and Elaine—though they worked hand in hand for decades, his archive is far more extensive than hers.¹⁰ Elaine's archive is uneven—the Manzanar experience is a focus. Clearly it was a defining event in her life and in U.S. history, and after the war she spent considerable effort on the campaign for redress and reparation. Relative to that, little record exists of her years working for the ILD, except where she appears in stories written by and about her in the ILD publication the *Labor Defender* and on the occasions that she appeared in other newspapers of the day.

Two invaluable primary sources of information on Elaine are the oral histories conducted with her while she was alive. *Elaine Black Yoneda* mines these rich documents to assemble not only factual information such as the chronology of events in Elaine's life but also her point of view and interpretation of her own experiences. Reading both what is in the transcripts and between the lines of the oral histories' pages exemplifies the previously discussed feminist methodological approach that a historian must use when scant additional primary sources are available. Both oral histories were produced within important scholarly institutional frameworks. The first is the 1974 oral history conducted by Arthur Hansen and Betty Mitson for the Japanese Americans Project of California State University at Fullerton's Oral History Program. This project was founded and overseen by Hansen, one of the key historians of Japanese American exclusion and incarceration. This oral history is limited in scope to the topic of Japanese American exclusion and incarceration, which was the aim of the project at the university. Elaine provides detailed descriptions in it of the events that transpired at Manzanar and, as might be expected, occasionally refers back to her life before the war. The second oral history was conducted a few years later by Lucy Kendall for the California Historical Society's Women in California

collection in 1977 and 1978. The collection, held at the California Historical Society and at the Bancroft Library of the University of California, Berkeley is a crucial archive that documents feminist perspectives on California history. Kendall probes Elaine's memory, asking her to examine such topics as her sexual relationships, motherhood, and the status of women in the Communist Party in order to assess Elaine's perspective on her own role in women's history.

Arthur Hansen has also written extensively on the critical importance, as well as the methodological shortcomings, of oral histories of marginalized subjects but also very specifically on those of Japanese Americans who experienced exclusion and incarceration.¹¹ Hansen urges the oral historian to be mindful of race, gender, and ethnicity as they affect the relationship between interviewer and subject. Nevertheless, Hansen asserts the great value of oral histories to practices of history that seek to bring complexity to our understanding of the ways in which individual historic actors experienced events, often quite distinctly from one another. As Hansen writes, oral histories help us to see the "ample scope for subcultural diversity and individual differences (even during a time of extreme crisis when the expectation would be minimal normative deviation)."¹² Embedded in both oral histories are critical perspectives in which the interviewers adeptly circle back to unclear points or direct Elaine to reconsider various questions.

In addition to these two primary sources, two books have greatly informed this study. A previously published biography of Elaine written by Vivian McGuckin Raineri appeared under the title *The Red Angel: The Life and Times of Elaine Black Yoneda, 1906–1988*.¹³ Produced by the Elaine Black Yoneda Memorial Book Committee of the San Francisco Bay Area Labor History Workshop shortly after her death, this earlier biography was, in its author's own words, "originally conceived as a self-published project to say something about Elaine's life and to record the impressions and tributes that her friends, relatives, and co-workers wanted to express."¹⁴ As a result, *The Red Angel* reads as a vanity publication that records, but doesn't question or interpret, Elaine's perspective on events. By contrast, *Elaine Black Yoneda* contextualizes Elaine's memories, drawn from oral history transcripts, letters, and other primary documents, published articles, and *The Red Angel* in relation to broader historical research about those events. Although *The Red Angel* is not a memoir or autobiography, in many ways it reads like one since the purpose of the book was, to put it simply, to present Elaine's point of view. In this way, it is similar in perspective to Karl's published memoir, *Ganbatte: Sixty-Year Struggle of a Kibei Worker*.¹⁵ *Ganbatte*

provides an important resource for information on Elaine, told from the perspective of her husband, and written while she was still alive.

Additional primary sources consulted for this book include articles by and about Elaine published in the labor press during the 1930s and unpublished materials such as letters between Elaine and Karl and other family members, drafts for unpublished articles, photographs and other images and ephemera, transcripts of radio addresses, and more. Elaine's testimony to the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, given in Los Angeles in 1981 during the campaign for redress and reparations, is published in full in *Only What We Could Carry: The Japanese American Internment Experience*, a collection of primary source documents related to the history of Japanese American exclusion and incarceration.¹⁶ Finally, this book draws on my interviews with several historians, most of whom knew Elaine and Karl, as well as my interview with their son, Tommy Yoneda, eighty years old at the time of the interview.¹⁷

The research for this interdisciplinary book further draws on a range of secondary literature to provide historical context and to allow for analysis of events that extends beyond Elaine's point of view. Too broad to fully recount here, the most relevant in content and methodology are studies of interracial and interethnic social and political formations and movements in early twentieth-century U.S. history, particularly in California; the role of women in the CPUSA, primarily in the 1930s; and the study of the exclusion and incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II, as well as the postwar movement for redress and reparation.

While previous scholarship on the histories of immigrants, underrepresented communities, and social labor movements tended to focus on one group or another, more recent scholarship illuminates the importance of intersectional analyses that examine how such groups lived and worked in relation not only to the dominant culture, but alongside one another. Even more specifically, a number of these studies focus on the ways that, on the West Coast of the United States, and particularly in Los Angeles, nondominant groups lived and worked in coalition far more than on the East Coast, where patterns of settlement and labor activism tended to emerge from groups composed of similar affinities. Allison Varzally's book *Making a Non-white America: Californians Coloring outside Ethnic Lines, 1925–1955* not only offers an excellent example of a study that looks at the cross-racial and cross-ethnic engagements of various groups in shared space but also is particularly germane to this book. Varzally's focus is on Los Angeles, largely on the Boyle Heights neighborhood where Elaine was raised once the

family settled in Los Angeles. Varzally studies interracial marriage, heterosexual environments, and even the specific ways that the exclusion and incarceration of Japanese Americans affected families that included Japanese Americans and non-Japanese Americans. Varzally's work has provided significant data for this study of Elaine and moreover provides methodological insights into how one fashions an analysis that seeks to study across racial and ethnic lines. Similarly, Mark Wild's *Street Meeting: Multiethnic Neighborhoods in Early Twentieth-Century Los Angeles* examines how a mix of immigrant, interethnic, and interracial groups found community with one another and in response to the ways that dominant groups used urban development as a tool to carve their own spatial boundaries.¹⁸ Wild's focus within the book on interracial Socialist and Communist labor organizing includes the period when Elaine's parents moved to Los Angeles, became engaged with these groups, and ultimately drew Elaine into the work as well.

Several studies explore the role of women in the CPUSA during the 1930s, the period in which Elaine was most deeply involved. Rosalyn Baxandall's chapter, "The Question Seldom Asked: Women and the CPUSA," is an important and early study that notes both women's contributions and the ways in which they were limited by gender discrimination.¹⁹ Elsa Jane Dixler's doctoral dissertation, "The Woman Question: Women and the American Communist Party, 1929–1941," provides a useful overview of the primary source data, as well as an analysis of just how high into the ranks women were—and were not—allowed to rise.²⁰ The most comprehensive work on women's roles in the party is Kate Weigand's book *Red Feminism: American Communism and the Making of Women's Liberation*. Weigand covers the broad sweep of women's engagement in U.S. Communism, contextualizing the rise of women's roles in the party during the 1930s. As she demonstrates, women's increased roles occurred in tandem with and in relation to the Comintern's purposeful prioritization of racial and gender inequity in labor in the United States, particularly as the Great Depression enabled Americans to once again embrace Communism after the Red Scare of the late 1910s had driven radical politics underground.²¹

The literature on the history of the Japanese American incarceration and exclusion during World War II is far too extensive to fully review here. Scholars have thoroughly documented the events as they unfolded after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, life in the camps themselves, and the subsequent movement for redress and reparations.²² A range of studies have focused on the history of West Coast racism that enabled the military and the federal government, bolstered by economic interests and the media, to violate the

rights of U.S. citizens on a scale that, within U.S. history, can be compared only with the theft of the lands and the rights of Indigenous Peoples.²³

Although, as said, the scholarly literature on this topic is extensive, nevertheless aspects of this history that deserve further exploration remain, for example, a number of topics that appear within Elaine's story, such as the recounting of the Manzanar Revolt and the history of non-Japanese Americans in the camps. This is not to say there is no scholarship on these topics; but that these details are lesser known. Arthur Hansen's writing on the Manzanar Revolt offers important correctives to the ways that the incident has been previously told.²⁴ Representations in the contemporaneous press of a "riot" at Manzanar influenced historians' analyses of these events for many years, until Hansen reframed the eruption of violence at Manzanar in December 1942 as an expression of the resistance to incarceration. To my knowledge, Paul Spickard is the only scholar to publish an article devoted to the policies on interracial families in the camps.²⁵ In addition, the histories of the discord within the Japanese American community between those who "cooperated" with U.S. authorities in plans for exclusion and those who committed acts of resistance in the camps are not widely known.

Numerous biographies and memoirs document a diversity of individuals' experiences of exclusion and incarceration. *Elaine Black Yoneda* might sit on a shelf next to these works in particular to fill in the picture of all the ways that this history affected people's lives and how people responded to exclusion and incarceration. The list would include *From Kona to Yenana: The Political Memoirs of Koji Ariyoshi*; *Enemy Child: The Story of Norman Mineta, a Boy Imprisoned in a Japanese American Internment Camp during World War II*; *Nisei Naysayer: The Memoir of Militant Japanese American Journalist Jimmie Omura*, and any number of other works.²⁶

Although a work of fiction, it is worth mentioning *No-No Boy* by James Okada.²⁷ Written in 1957, the novel centers on a young Japanese American man who was incarcerated in a camp during World War II and subsequently arrested for refusing to sign the loyalty oath administered by the War Relocation Authority, which was required in order to serve in the U.S. Army. After the war, Okada's protagonist faces ostracization in his home community for his choices. The story is based to some extent on his own life: Okada and his family were incarcerated in Idaho during the war. The War Relocation Authority administered the loyalty oath in 1943, after Elaine, Karl, and Tommy had left Manzanar. People in the camps, including Karl and Elaine, had argued from the start of exclusion that the government should discern

loyal Japanese Americans from others.²⁸ The oath was implemented to gauge loyalty as a path to allowing those incarcerated to return home and also in preparation to enroll male camp incarcerated in the U.S. military draft that had been put into place in 1940. A small but significant number of people answered “no” to two questions on the Application for Leave Clearance—these “no-no boys” were imprisoned at Tule Lake Relocation Center.²⁹ *No-No Boy* has had an interesting and circuitous publishing history. Initially rejected by numerous publishers, the book was eventually released in 1957 in a very small print run and was essentially unnoticed throughout Okada’s lifetime, likely owing to the challenges the narrative posed to dominant Japanese American assimilationist discourse. The book was reissued in the late 1970s after Okada’s death and sold well. More recently it has been at the center of a publishing controversy. Penguin Classics, which reissued the book, was challenged for copyright infringement and ultimately withdrew its advertising for the publication.³⁰

No-No Boy highlights an important, though lesser known, aspect of the history of Japanese American incarceration in its history of active resistance. The mainstream Japanese American agenda, put forward by members of the Japanese American Citizens League and others, was to demonstrate patriotism, assimilation, and cooperation. In 1957 fiction may have been the only acceptable form in which to narrate such a story, and, even then, the book’s reception at the time of its initial publication indicates the challenges of presenting this perspective. Since the time of Japanese American exclusion and incarceration, representation of its history within popular culture has lacked complexity and been fraught with ideological underpinnings.

A stark example is the copious photographic record of life in the camps. The photographers commissioned by the Farm Security Administration (FSA) to document the effects of the Great Depression overlapped temporally with Japanese American exclusion and incarceration, and several among them photographed the camps, including Ansel Adams, Clem Albers, Dorothea Lange, and Toyo Miyatake.³¹ Adams and Lange photographed extensively at Manzanar, and in fact one of Lange’s best-known images from the work is a portrait of Karl Yoneda. It’s worth noting that, in the original exhibitions of this portrait, Karl is not identified by name but rather presented as an archetypal “incarceree.” This universalizing tendency, which has been critiqued extensively in scholarship on the work of the FSA photographers, essentially demonstrates the flattening of the broad diversity of people’s experiences of exclusion and incarceration.³²

Somewhat similarly, *Farewell to Manzanar* by Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston and James D. Houston is perhaps the best-known popular memoir not only about Manzanar but also about the Japanese American exclusion and incarceration more broadly.³³ Wakatsuki was only seven years old when she was incarcerated at Manzanar; her account of events is told through the eyes of a small child. Though elements of social and cultural history are added to her memories of the camp, the fact that a young child's recollections of this experience stand as the iconic perspective in our popular collective memory exemplifies the overly general approach to this history. In telling Elaine's life story in a straightforward manner, *Elaine Black Yoneda* seeks to contribute a counternarrative that fleshes out this history with nuance and specificity.

Tracing the popular and scholarly literature on the topic of Japanese exclusion and incarceration, a reader will note that the use of specific language and terms has changed over time. Early on, the usage "Japanese evacuation and internment" was unquestioningly employed by historians. In accordance with the more recent work of scholars of Japanese American history, I choose the terms *exclusion* and *incarceration* to describe the events resulting from EO 9066. Historian Roger Daniels clearly articulates why the older terms of *evacuation* and *internment* are inappropriate. *Internment* is a legal process with its own history and usage in the United States, one that can be "applied to nationals of a country with which the United States [is] at war." The term is therefore incorrect when discussing U.S. citizens.³⁴ Furthermore, the manner in which Japanese Americans were removed to camps was extralegal. *Evacuation* implies relocating people for their own safety, and *internment* does not connote the full force of imprisonment. In addition, I describe members of this population as "Japanese Americans" to emphasize the fact that those who were subject to EO 9066 were *Americans*. Though some, particularly Issei (first-generation Japanese American immigrants), may not have been citizens, that fact owed to racist legislation that barred nonwhites from naturalization processes. They had been living in the United States for decades, and in most cases their children were citizens.

For similar reasons, I have chosen the term "concentration camp," rather than "internment camp," when referring to Manzanar and other camps. *Concentration* is apt because the intention was to group a population of people together in a controllable, proximate location. Currently, the United States is once again concentrating groups of immigrants and migrants near our borders—at the time of this writing, even in the very facilities of former Japanese American concentration camps.³⁵ The government and media use

sensational language to fabricate the view that these immigrants are a threat to national security. The connection to the unjust exclusion and incarceration of Japanese Americans, which the U.S. government has officially identified as a grave mistake, must be emphasized.

Of course, in the context of World War II, “concentration camp” takes on special meaning, in that it connects these camps to those in Europe. The allusion is, on one hand, purposeful—it reveals the hypocrisy of the U.S. government’s and military’s derision of what was happening in Europe during World War II while building concentration camps of their own within the United States. On the other hand, as Elaine and Karl themselves stated, “concentration camps” were not the same as Nazi “death camps,” the latter existing for the express purpose of genocide. Scholars of European history, too, differentiate concentration camps that existed in Europe from death camps—that is, not all concentration camps in Europe and Russia were death camps. Roger Daniels traces the fraught history of the usage of “internment camps” rather than “concentration camps,” demonstrating that it was only after the liberation of Nazi camps in Europe that the U.S. government objected to the use of “concentration camp” to describe the sites of Japanese American incarceration operated by the War Relocation Authority, because that would clearly create an association between the U.S. government and the Third Reich.³⁶ So strong was the refusal to use this term that the Manzanar Committee had to fight hard to allow the use of “concentration camp” on the memorial plaque at the site, as is discussed in Chapter 29. The term “concentration camp” is used throughout this book to honor that effort, in addition to offering linguistic clarity.

A few comments are warranted about the use of words to describe those who supported exclusion and incarceration. In this book, I use *cooperationist* as a broad term to describe those who did not oppose exclusion and incarceration. The reasons for cooperation were varied. Communists and leftists like Elaine and Karl were expressly antifascist; based on this ideology they were cooperative with the U.S. and Allied forces’ fight against the Axis powers. By contrast, members of the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL)—whom many criticize for aiding and abetting the unjust work of the military—were eager to assimilate into U.S. society and believed their cooperation would demonstrate their patriotism. Others may have cooperated simply out of fear or from lack of the means to act otherwise—it is worth remembering here that those Japanese Americans who had the ability and resources to relocate to the Midwest or East Coast of the United States to avoid incarceration and the seizure of their property did so, for example. *Coopera-*

tionist admittedly employs too broad a stroke to capture this diversity; nevertheless, it is useful at times in this narrative to group them in this way.

Similarly, it is simplistic to describe all those who opposed exclusion and incarceration as pro-Axis, pro-Japan, and anti-American. More dangerous still, to do so risks diminishing the importance of those who actively resisted racist and unconstitutional U.S. policies and actions. Unfortunately, though, throughout Elaine's oral histories and Karl's memoirs, both of them simply describe anyone who opposed exclusion and incarceration as pro-Japan. Where such generalizations appear in their quotations, they remain verbatim in this book. To return the nuance and differentiation that belongs to this group, and to acknowledge the important work of resistance, when not making direct quotations, I use the words *resistance* or *rebels*.

Historians choose words deliberately and in so doing situate their analysis within an ideological perspective. The historiographic record of Japanese American exclusion and incarceration is replete with language that obfuscates the great injustices committed against them; I endeavor to be attentive to this and to offer my corrective. At the same time, out of respect for the linguistic choices of the historical actors themselves, I have attempted to balance the choices made by those who spoke the words with the context provided by the histories in which they were spoken.

This book is organized spatially, divided into five parts that correspond to the places in which Elaine's life was situated during particular periods. Geography is an important aspect of Elaine's story, for her life and outlook were shaped not only by the influence her parents brought with them from Russia and New York City but also by the particular features of California's racial and ethnic politics and communities. The first part, set in Russia and New York City, briefly explores Elaine's early life story, including background on her parents and what led them to emigrate from Russia. The biographical information presented in it, particularly about Elaine's parents Molly and Nathan, sets the stage for understanding the potent environment of radical politics of Elaine's youth. Her father and mother arrived in the United States in 1904 and 1905, respectively, and Elaine was then born in 1906. A brother, Al, was born a few years later. The family first came to New York City, settling in Brooklyn. As Socialists fleeing anti-Semitism, Elaine's parents raised her and her brother in a secular home that was focused on labor rights. The chapters reveal the character of labor culture in both Russia and New York City, which contrast with that of California—whereas the two former locations saw mostly single-ethnic unions, California would become known for its interracial and interethnic activism.

Part II traces the family's move to California, first to a few locations near San Diego before finally making Los Angeles their home, where they became involved in the multiracial and multiethnic radical community. At first, Elaine expressed little interest in her parents' politics but eventually experienced a political awakening after witnessing police brutality at a number of labor demonstrations. Elaine was drawn into the work of the ILD. She began at this time to understand the power of her voice through her work with the ILD, and she was quickly recognized by those around her as a powerful speaker and leader. Elaine married, and subsequently left, her first husband, Ed Russell, with whom she gave birth to a daughter, Joyce. Through her labor work, she met Karl Yoneda, who would become her lifelong partner. She and Karl faced much opprobrium for their interracial union, which was founded on their mutual devotion to labor rights.

San Francisco is the setting for Part III. Elaine was promoted within the ILD and moved to San Francisco in 1933, at the start of a wave of intense labor activity throughout the state. This period marks the most active for Elaine's professional life; her rise within the ILD exemplifies the possibilities for women within the CPUSA. The spatial reach of her activity throughout Northern California is explored, as are her friendships with other women activists. Elaine played a key role in the 1934 San Francisco General Strike, perhaps the pinnacle of this intense era of strike culture. Stories of Elaine's various interactions with antiunion employers, judges, and vigilantes paint a vivid picture of the conflicts throughout California during this time and Elaine's resourcefulness in responding to them. Karl followed Elaine to San Francisco, and they moved in together. In 1939 Elaine gave birth to their son, Tommy.

Part IV opens in December 1942 with the bombing of Pearl Harbor. In the immediate aftermath, Elaine and Karl shared the uncertainty of the Japanese American community about what these events would portend. It may be surprising that Elaine and Karl were among those who did not oppose exclusion, claiming that the most urgent matter was opposition to fascism and a victory for the Allies. Karl left for the Manzanar Relocation Center; shortly after, notice was given that Tommy must go as well and Elaine insisted on accompanying them. This section details the family's eight months at Manzanar, exploring daily life in camp, and examines camp politics. There, Elaine and Karl were from the start subjected to threats for their cooperationist stance. Throughout this time, Karl sought permission to enlist in the U.S. Army. He was eventually accepted into the Military Intelligence Service and sent to Burma as a translator and propagandist.

After Karl's departure from the camp, heightened threats of violence were directed at Elaine and Tommy, and they were eventually granted permission to leave. The Manzanar Revolt is recounted and analyzed from a variety of perspectives. While Elaine and Karl saw this event as being perpetrated by profascist thugs, recent scholarship understands the revolt as an expression of resistance to exclusion and incarceration.

The concluding section of the book, Part V, traces the period of Elaine's story after World War II, in San Francisco and Penngrove, Sonoma County, through to the end of Elaine's life. With Karl overseas, Elaine and Tommy returned to San Francisco, where she worked in war industries until the end of the war. Karl was serving in Burma when he learned of the bombing of Hiroshima, the city of his birth and where his mother was living at the time of the devastation. It would be months before he would learn that she had survived. After Karl returned, he and Elaine bought a small chicken ranch in Penngrove, north of San Francisco—at the time the region was often described as the country's "egg basket"—joining a community of radical leftists who'd been raising chickens there since before the war. They found the work to be difficult and unsatisfying, but they were eager to bring some stability to Tommy's life, and so they stayed until he completed high school. In that community, they participated in various labor-related causes but not to the same extent as they had before the war. After Tommy went to college, Elaine and Karl moved back to San Francisco. Elaine worked office jobs within some of the unions she knew from before the war, and they remained there until Elaine died in 1988. After Elaine's death, she was memorialized by many of the people whom she had supported and defended throughout her life, in tributes from the International Longshore and Warehouse Union, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, the Northern California Communist Party, and others.³⁷

Throughout this latter period, Elaine and Karl were active in the campaigns to designate Manzanar a federally recognized memorial site and for redress and reparations to Japanese Americans. In the course of this work, debates resurfaced about their cooperationist stance on exclusion and incarceration and the rightful characterization of those who opposed these U.S. policies and actions. Elaine and Karl did express regret for their acquiescence, but they continued to insist on the wrongfulness of the behavior of those at Manzanar who perpetrated violence there.

Elaine Black Yoneda lived an extraordinary life, spanning most of the years of the twentieth century. Her life story illuminates the experience of immigrant labor activism throughout a period marked by major wars, the

flowering of a radical labor movement followed later by its deep suppression, and worldwide conflict during which a nation that decried genocide abroad did so while acting unconstitutionally toward a racialized group of its own citizens. In the face of all these events, Elaine was a powerful figure, always vocally advocating for what she believed in and tenacious in her devotion to and love of family and friends. Her story productively complicates our idea of what it means to be American, while also offering stark and specific reminders of this nation's history of, and propensity for, xenophobic actions and policies.