

**HOME AWAY FROM HOME:
FEDERAL DOMESTICITY AND DISPLACED FAMILIES, 1933-1945**

by
Michelle Everidge

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History

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by

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My great-grandmother, or Grandmama as I knew her, was Severa Perez Rivera. When my daughter was born I gave her Severa's name as her middle name, an anchor in the middle of her name and, hopefully, her identity some day. The name Severa ties my daughter to my mother's family, to the Texas soil, and to the *severa* (severe) spirit of her great-great grandmother. Grandmama died when I was twenty-six, so she was no distant relative or imaginary force. I knew her stories. She was born in San Antonio and her mother died when she was a teenager, which prompted her to quit school in eighth grade to take care of her brothers and sisters. She regretted quitting school and sought knowledge every day of her life through gardening, cooking, sewing, nursing, real estate, and by creating small inventions to help her with each of those tasks. My favorite invention of hers was a sharpened coffee can-on-broomstick that she used to cut and catch papayas from her trees. I can still see her reaching for them and moving her whole body back and forth as she sawed with the sharp edges of the can. I can hear the satisfying plunk as the papaya landed safely in the can. Severa had a secretary desk in the living room of her home in Brownsville, Texas, the only air-conditioned room in the house. She would open it up when I visited to reveal telegrams, letters, and her meticulous receipt books, telling me stories of her many careers and her children and her life. One story she told stuck with me for years because I didn't quite understand all of the details. I thought about it often – how after her mother died in Michigan, she had to transport her mother's body by train back to Texas. After Grandmama died many years later, I found myself thinking about the story often. On one of those days I did not stop

myself from diving headfirst into a historian's rabbit hole to search for her records and a better understanding of her life.

According to a death certificate I found from the Michigan Department of Health, Angela Perez, "Female, Mexican, Married," died at thirty-two years old from tuberculosis in 1927. On her death certificate, Angela's profession is listed as "housewife," but her employer is the Michigan Sugar Company, where she had been working picking sugar beets for nearly four months. *Wasn't she an agricultural worker and not a housewife?* Her husband, Miguel, was still in San Antonio. *Two young women performed migrant labor together without the rest of their family?* And her daughter, Severa, aged sixteen, was listed as the informant. *Didn't Severa quit school when her mother died and not earlier?* The physician who examined Angela wrote that she probably contracted tuberculosis in San Antonio. *Is that a racist assumption?* After combing through one document, my questions only multiplied. How had my Grandmama accomplished this gargantuan and devastating task alone at sixteen? Why had she changed her story about quitting school? Was she embarrassed about performing migrant labor? This family story and the questions I began asking about the lived experience of her migration inspired this dissertation. What was life like for the millions of people who migrated throughout the country in the twentieth century? *Home Away From Home* is an attempt at uncovering some of those stories.

Numerous organizations and institutions have financially supported my research and writing. I thank the Witte Museum, a Roosevelt Institute Research Grant from the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library, a Short-Term Research Fellowship from the Winterthur Museum, Garden & Library, and the University of Delaware for pivotal support that took me across the country to the temporary sites of the past. Support from UD came in the forms of a Graduate Research Award and Delaware Public Humanities

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Graduate study, even in a supportive institution with collegial faculty and colleagues surrounding you, is difficult and debt making. When I thought I was nearly finished with my dissertation, I made the decision to move my family home and followed Severa's path back to San Antonio, Texas. When I arrived in December 2017, I found my community still intact and welcoming me with open arms. I am grateful for the support I received from the Witte Museum and the extraordinary people there who challenged me to develop my career as a museum leader and cheered me on to finish my dissertation. Marise McDermott has been a stalwart champion, Heather Welder Russo an empowering leader and friend. Friends in San Antonio and across the country have offered love in the form of guest bedrooms, sofas, meals, beers, group texts, and distractions. Thank you to Jacy Cruz and Zack Pennington, Michelle Jimenez-Clem and Brandon Clem, Kim and Paul Tulipana, Kim Biffle, Brady Haynes, Roger and Alexandra Bynum, Michelle Moon, Allyson Frye, Lora Cherry, Alison Perelman and Amaya Capellan, Julia Ioffe, Selena Strader, Julia Alonzo, Ashley Caramanica, Luci Holbrook, Stephanie Kagan, Kristy Gagne, Jaclyn Day, and Meg White.

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always asking me to clarify my arguments and insisting on emotionality and humanity in the text. I had the best copyeditor in the business in my ninety-four-year-old Grandmother, Fran Everidge, who read every page of the draft, sometimes leaving just a pencil checkmark in the margins. Thank you, Grandmother, for your care and attention and for telling me you were proud of me with tears in your eyes. The rest of my family - my wonderful brothers Daniel and Taylor, my new sister Evelyn, my grandparents Tony and Carmen Cuellar, my aunts, uncles and cousins, especially Judy Cuellar Lopez, have given me grace and humor and humility as I trudged toward the finish line. Alton Anderson has done more than his fair share of housework and parenting as I finished this dissertation. Our family is changing now, becoming even more complex, as I've learned families often do. I deeply appreciate your partnership during this season and all you have done to keep things afloat, keep me fed, and give me time to research, write, and work. You have never wavered in your support of my doctorate. And to Inez Severa, my brilliant child with her mother's curiosity and her father's extroverted spirit... this is all for you, my girl.

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ABSTRACT

In the twentieth century, “federal domesticity” emerged as a result of the combined effects of massive internal migration in the United States, a growing federal bureaucracy, and increasing government interest in shaping citizens’ family formations and sexual identities according to racial norms for gendered respectability. Across the 1930s and 1940s, as a global financial crisis segued into a global war, millions of people left their homes. Some were forced out, while others voluntarily sought work and stability in new communities. For many American families, these migrations led directly to government intervention in the intimate zones of domestic life. For the first time, an expansive federal government built and managed temporary shelters and camps to house migrant families throughout the country. Federal officials enacted federal domesticity, a constellation of prescriptions for family life, including heteronormative gender roles, rigid sexual morality, consumerism tied to white, middle-class norms, and a single-family home, on displaced families through architecture, objects, and educational programming. Agents of the federal government – who could be members of the military, camp managers, home economists, and sociologists – sought to remake displaced people into productive American citizens. Employees of the federal government initiated federal domesticity in one-on-one relationships with migrant families and particularly with migrant women. Federal domesticity, however, was not simply a government prescription. Migrant families did not blindly accept the advice they received from these agents of federal programs, but rather negotiated their relationships with and the benefits they received from federal officials.

Chapter 1

FEDERAL DOMESTICITY, AN INTRODUCTION

Family life and the well being of every member of the family are conditioned by the character of its dwelling place.¹

In January 1940, physicians, clergy, and community leaders participated in the White House Conference on Children in a Democracy. The White House held such conferences once every ten years to assess the challenges facing children in the United States and offer recommendations for federal and state programs to meet their needs. For the 1940 Conference, the fourth in the decennial series, the Committee introduced the phrase “in a democracy” to the title and engaged participants in specific discussions about fostering democratic values in children. The “safety” of American democracy, they determined, “depends in large measure upon the welfare of our children.”² Shaping children into democratic citizens was an even weightier prospect when the Final Report for the Conference, with supplemental research and evidence to support the Committee’s findings, was ready for publication on December 17, 1941, nearly two years after the Conference events and mere days after the United States declared war on Japan and Germany. Frances Perkins, the first woman to serve as Secretary of Labor, knew the Conference’s recommendations for social programs would have even more significance in the shadow of war. Officials planned for the document to be distributed widely after

¹ *White House Conference on Children in a Democracy: Final Report* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1942), 66. Hereafter WHC.

² WHC, XV.

the war began (they believed the general reader would find the four-hundred page report “as interesting and stimulating as will the specialist in child health or welfare”), the Committee’s recommendations had begun to spread nationwide with the support of a National Citizens Committee headed by retail magnate Marshall Field. By the time of Report’s publication, the National Citizens Committee had shared recommendations and preliminary reports in twenty-six states and Puerto Rico.

Findings from the Conference reflected prevailing ideas about children and families, foremost of which was that the family was the “threshold of democracy.”³ The report articulated the physical and social needs of a child, but centered the family institution as the most important for “growth, development, and education.” A child’s family would “determine what kind of person the child will be,” and could be “a school for the democratic life.”⁴ The family, conference participants discovered, was the instrument through which a child developed their individuality, practiced how to cooperate in relationships, and learned the values essential to democratic participation. A healthy family life met a child’s needs so fully that they would grow up prepared to start their own families and begin the process again, becoming “desirable” parents and giving “their children the approved kind of family life” for generations to come.⁵ With the power for cultivating democratic citizens ascribed to families, the Conference’s Final Report advised that it was “essential that there be in the Nation a pervading faith in the stability and importance of the family as the fundamental institution of American

³ Ibid., 4.

⁴ Ibid., 26, 65.

⁵ Ibid., 72.

democracy.”⁶ With the importance of the family to the nation articulated, the Conference Final Report described the traits and characteristics of a healthy family to ensure the success of the democracy.

Prescriptions for family composition, behavior, economic activity, and education brought together popular, but often unspoken and certainly unrealistic, ideals for the American family to link a heteronormative middle-class family to good American citizenship. “Every child needs a family,” declared the report, with “preferably two, and the same two,” parents “at least until the child reaches maturity.”⁷ Children born out of wedlock would “never have a completely normal home life, rarely one that is even stable and secure.”⁸ By pathologizing other types of relationships outside the marriage relationship, the report privileged heteronormative marriages as more valuable for citizenship. With the family firmly at the top of a hierarchy of sexual relationships and perhaps the only meaningful sexual relationship with respect to the state, single people were “potential parents” who had not yet contributed to the nation, but would certainly do so in the future.⁹ Siblings and close relationships with extended families were preferable for democratic education:

From the social and educational point of view, there are advantages in a family that includes three, four, or five children, about 2 years apart in age, with a grandmother or a grandfather not far away, if not in the same household, and aunts and uncles and cousins within easy visiting distance. In such a home, with its variety of interests, diversity of outlook and contacts, wealth of

⁶ Ibid., 66.

⁷ Ibid., 63.

⁸ Ibid., 66.

⁹ Ibid.

affection, necessity for adaptation to others, opportunities for effortless learning through mere observation and association, experience in sharing responsibilities and projects, hopes and anxieties, joys and sorrows, a child has favorable conditions for individual development and preparation for life in a democratic society. In a small family much of this automatic education is lacking. It has to be supplied by conscious effort, inside or outside the home. Opportunities for giving responsibility and experience in cooperative living to the growing child have to be devised deliberately.¹⁰

If the family was to be the incubator for democracy, then the relationship between the married couple and their parenting style affected the future of the nation. Good parents had “a happy relationship with each other,” and “a serious assumption of responsibility.” They were “free from transmissible hereditary defects, and from disease or other conditions known to threaten the life or health of mother or child,” meaning that families had enough economic power to have prenatal and pediatric healthcare, access to quality nutrition, and health education. They had received an education and had “sufficient intelligence and knowledge to seek advice as needed and to follow it,” provided an education for their children that precluded their participation in child labor; and were employed, having “sufficient income to provide at least the real necessities of life.” They had “maturity;” They were not too young to be parents, but were not so old that having children meant “exhaustion or too great a gap between the generations.”¹¹

The family dwelling, the central site for family life and therefore the central site for a democratic foundation, was a top priority of the Conference attendees. The single-family home was “unquestionably the best type” of home environment for a democratic

¹⁰ Ibid., 65.

¹¹ Ibid., 63-64, 229.

family.¹² Practically, a single-family home was large enough to provide a degree of privacy for all of the residents, with separate rooms based on age and sex, and small enough to allow for play, quality time together at the dinner table, and opportunities to connect with friends.¹³ A home needed to meet the utilitarian needs of the family by providing protection against weather, pests, bacteria, structural problems, and the dangers of new technologies like fire, gas, and electricity. But small luxuries would help children to play and grow appropriately. Family dwellings therefore ideally contained accessible and up-to-date toilet facilities, a playroom for play and activity during inclement weather, and a fenced yard to keep children within the boundaries of their parents' sight.¹⁴

Migration was a wrench in a system that associated democracy with a specific form of permanent family housing. The White House Conference participants recognized that the American public was a growing population on the move. The report documented that the "increasing mobility of individuals and groups, wider entry of women into occupations outside the home, new kinds of economic pressure, and the great increase in urbanization are some of the forces whose impact has modified American family life."¹⁵ From within the demographic change they experienced, Conference participants recognized what would be evident through census reports a decade later: For the period from 1935 to 1950, almost fifty-eight million people moved away from their resident

¹² Ibid., 67.

¹³ Ibid., 67, 191.

¹⁴ Ibid., 66-67.

¹⁵ Ibid., 27.

counties to a different county.¹⁶ Mobility had long been a hallmark of American culture, and the authors of the Conference's Final Report refused to denigrate it, likely because they knew that Depression and War had increased mobility throughout the country. Conference attendees were nevertheless concerned about the effect of mobility on the American family. Experts in the growing field of sociology had not studied migration trends sufficiently to understand how migration affected the family, but Conference attendees knew that migration often meant periods of unemployment and poor housing. Migration could also lead to decreased support from family and friends, community organizations, schools, and health practitioners.¹⁷ Worse, families that moved often could not participate fully in democracy since adults did not stay long enough in one place to qualify as residents and therefore voters.¹⁸

For all these reasons, the Conference recommendations for fulfilling the needs of children and for developing democratic citizens illustrated the tenets of "federal domesticity." This phrase encompasses a constellation of prescriptions for family life, including heteronormative gender roles, rigid sexual morality, consumerism tied to white, middle-class norms, and a single-family home. Though the federal government never articulated federal domesticity outright, its constituent parts became a form of social control. Federal domesticity captures the ideological and material responses of the federal government to unprecedented geographic mobility in the 1930s and 1940s.

¹⁶ "Migration/Geographic Mobility," United States Census Bureau, <https://www.census.gov/topics/population/migration/library/publications.html>.

¹⁷ WHC, 29.

¹⁸ Ibid., 40.

Federal domesticity emerged in the twentieth century as a result of the combined effects of massive internal migration in the United States, a growing federal bureaucracy, and increasing government interest in shaping citizens' family formations and sexual identities according to racial norms for gendered respectability. Across the 1930s and 1940s, as a global financial crisis segued into a global war, millions of people left their homes. Some were forced out, while others voluntarily sought work and stability in new communities. For many American families, these migrations led directly to government intervention in the intimate zones of domestic life. For the first time, an expansive federal government built and managed temporary shelters and camps to house migrant families throughout the country. These federal responses stitched together cultural, ideological, and material efforts to shape the American family.

By harnessing the architecture, objects, and educational programming in camps for displaced people, agents of the federal government – who could be members of the military, camp managers, home economists, or sociologists – improvised federal domesticity to remake displaced people into productive American citizens. Officials instructed and provided tools to improve migrant families' health and hygiene and remove the visible traces of hardship that families experienced in migration. They built temporary shelters, sometimes in the form of detention facilities, to keep families together and stress the importance of privacy, even as officials violated that privacy day-in and day-out. Camp managers and educators encouraged the displaced people in their care to make and use objects that would transform their shoddy spaces into middle-class homes. They urged them to work with and build communities among other shelter residents by participating in classes and committees where they could learn the value of democracy. Employees of the federal government initiated federal domesticity in one-on-one relationships with migrant families and particularly with migrant women. Federal

domesticity, however, was not simply a government prescription. Migrant families did not blindly accept the advice they received from these agents of federal programs, but rather negotiated their relationships with and the benefits they received from federal officials.

Federal Domesticity in Context

The standards for American home life, which coalesced into the ideal of federal domesticity for destitute migrant families, developed over generations of American experiments in family housing. The idea that improved family dwellings could better society has a long history. Colonial Americans valued private landownership from their arrival in the New World as they brought with them their understanding of wealth and status from ancient European models.¹⁹ Since the eighteenth century, American writers, architects, and commentators have linked the house and the family as symbols of social, cultural, moral, and economic health.²⁰ By the early nineteenth century, “home,” the private domain of women, provided a haven from the cutthroat world of capitalism. Prescriptive literature described the home as the primary site for the development of good morals and good citizenship. The richly symbolic and middle-class family home was “the strongest and best antidote to the temptations and poisons of the commercial world.”²¹ “Domestic environmentalism,” that is, the deterministic notion that the look and

¹⁹ Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 53.

²⁰ Clifford Edward Clark, Jr. *The American Family Home, 1800-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), xi.

²¹ Katherine C. Grier, *Culture and Comfort: Parlor Making and Middle-Class Identity, 1850-1930* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Books, 2010 [1988]), 6.

condition of the home shaped the moral and civic life of the family, took hold in popular culture and women's domestic advice literature.²²

This shifting understanding of the American family home did not just impact the elite, who had, as long as they had furnished royal apartments, associated fine objects with personal qualities. In 1834, health inspectors in New York City determined that moral degradation – the proliferation of sexual promiscuity, disease, drunkenness, and filth – proliferated as a consequence of poor housing.²³ Conversely, poor housing was an indicator that the families living within were not capable of full American citizenship, productivity, or morality. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, advances in the germ theory of disease prompted domestic advice writers to assign a high level of responsibility to individual households and individual homemakers for managing microbes and their associated diseases.²⁴

Despite centuries of popular and voluntary intervention into housing conditions of the poor, direct government intervention into housing did not begin until the Homestead Acts in the mid-nineteenth century. Beginning in 1862, the federal government distributed large tracts of land in the West to homesteaders who were heads of households (typically married men with children) and had not fought against the United States in the Civil War. Homesteaders were required to improve the land by building a permanent home. Land redistribution from Southern plantations to formerly enslaved men and women was also of serious consideration after the Civil War and was

²² Grier, *Culture and Comfort*, 6.

²³ WHC, 317.

²⁴ Nancy Tomes, *The Gospel of Germs: Men, Women, and the Microbe in American Life* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 65.

popularized by General William T. Sherman's Special Field Order No. 15 (1865) and managed by the Freedman's Bureau, the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands.²⁵ Rumors about land redistribution spread wildly in the South among freed people, some of whom purchased and claimed their forty acres only to have the land confiscated later in the same year by President Andrew Johnson.²⁶ These federal land programs and policies led the way for racially specific federal government policies championing and providing access to homeownership.

A pervasive cultural and economic commitment to capitalism shaped the history of the ownership of private property. Homeownership in particular was associated with values like self-sufficiency, productivity and privacy. The federal government first underwrote the purchase of individual houses for migrant and displaced people affected by the Great San Francisco Earthquake in 1906 (See: Appendix B). Through the operations of the Red Cross (then acting through federal charter), the management of the U.S. Army, and partnerships with private social service agencies, the federal government assisted in building "earthquake cottages" for survivors, offering homeownership to some San Francisco residents for the first time. The construction of permanent "earthquake cottages" revealed that the federal government did not understand the reality that many of these new homeowners held jobs that required a degree of mobility ill-suited to residence in an immobile house.²⁷ Later in the twentieth century, the federal government propelled

²⁵ Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper Collins, 1984), 69.

²⁶ Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003).

²⁷ Russell Sage Foundation, *San Francisco Relief Survey* (New York: Survey Associates, 1913), 231-234.

homeownership by undertaking population studies, creating banking measures, building transportation systems, and supporting the private construction industry.²⁸

This study of federal domesticity adds a new dimension to histories of urban space and citizenship in the United States. Those works tend to focus on private home development and mortgage subsidies.²⁹ Urban histories are useful models for my study because they underscore federal, state, and local governments' roles in creating unequal communities. In *American Babylon*, for example, Robert Self demonstrates that political battles over resources in Oakland affected the landscape of the city and the suburbs. "We cannot separate historical actors from their spatial relationships," he argues: "Class and race are lived through the fabric of urban life and space."³⁰ Self uses spatial analysis to understand property as capital and to engage with different levels of political scale – from national to neighborhood – that shape the built environment.

Federal domesticity is a twentieth century phenomenon because action on this scale required a large and sophisticated federal bureaucracy. Despite earlier interventions

²⁸ Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 193-194.

²⁹ A small sample of works that consider private housing and citizenship include: Arnold Hirsch, *The Making of the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*; Elizabeth Blackmar, *Manhattan for Rent, 1750-1850* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989); Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); Becky Nicolaides, *My Blue Heaven: Life and Politics in the Working-Class Suburbs of Los Angeles, 1920- 1965* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Kevin Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Andrew Wiese, *Places of their Own: African American Suburbanization in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

³⁰ Self, *American Babylon*, 17.

into American homes by commentators, designers, voluntary organizations and local public health officials, the enactment of federal domesticity relies on a powerful federal government with the ability to affect individual lives. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's establishment of New Deal agencies, many through the use of executive power, allowed for the development of housing standards, the funding necessary to operate agencies to enforce those standards, and an unprecedented nationwide reach into remote parts of the country.

The federalism of the New Deal championed local control with federal oversight, the consequences of which were often racially discriminatory. Historians of federal housing policies have addressed the vague language of federal housing policy that left too many decisions in the hands of local authorities.³¹ African American families encountered powerful local authorities emboldened to use the principle of "local standards and conditions" to determine eligibility for federal programs, an intentional loophole that left segregation and discrimination unchecked by the federal government.³²

³¹ Arnold R. Hirsch, "Containment on the Home Front: Race and Federal Housing Policy from the New Deal to the Cold War," *Journal of Urban History* (2000): 158. Historians who investigate the impact of local administrators on public housing, especially during and after World War II include: Marilyn S. Johnson, "Urban Arsenals: War Housing and Social Change in Richmond and Oakland, California, 1941-1945," *Pacific Historical Review* 40 (1991): 283-208; Thomas J. Sugrue, "Crabgrass-Roots Politics: Race, Rights and the Reaction Against Liberalism in the Urban North," *Journal of American History* vol. 82, no. 2 (September 1995): 551-578; Thomas J. Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis*; Lionel Kimble, Jr., "I Too Serve America: African American Women War Workers in Chicago, 1940-1945," *Journal of Illinois State History* vol. 93, no. 4 (Winter 2000/2001): 415-434; Andrew Wiese, *Places of their Own*; Matthew J. Countryman, *Up South: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); Todd Michney, "Constrained Communities: Black Cleveland's Experience with World War II Public Housing," *Journal of Social History*, vol. 40, no. 4 (Summer 2007).

³² Gail Radford, *Modern Housing for America: Policy Struggles in the New Deal Era* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings*:

In fact, federal documents often blame local customs for housing discrimination, pointing to federal regulations that prohibit discrimination, but never conceding that federal policies allowed and accommodated it.

Despite the expansive power of the federal bureaucracy, individual actors still had the ability to negotiate their relationship to federal domesticity and to the federal government. While it is tempting to see the government's enactment of federal domesticity as hegemonic and indisputable, the lived experience of the women and families who were the focus of federal domesticity is much more varied. Federal domesticity as a concept benefits from Lisa Levenstein's nuanced work to understand the negotiations women made as they participated in government programs and worked with government employees.³³ In *A Movement Without Marches*, Levenstein details the work African American women in Philadelphia did in order to take care of their families.³⁴ Far from lazy or degenerate – as stereotypes of welfare recipients often suggest – these women doggedly pursued aid and claimed their access to equal economic citizenship despite deeply racist policies, surveillance, changing regulations, and red tape. Though

Social Politics in a Progressive Age (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998); John F. Bauman, Roger Biles, and Kristin M. Szylvian, eds. *From Tenements to the Taylor Homes: In Search of an Urban Housing Policy in Twentieth-Century America* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000); Rhonda Y. Williams, *The Politics of Public Housing: Black Women's Struggle Against Urban Inequality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

³³ The flexibility of the concept also benefits from Tiffany Gill's recommendation to "live in the tension" and give equal weight to the benefits and pressures of federal domesticity on migrant women and families.

³⁴ Lisa Levenstein, *A Movement Without Marches: African American Women and the Politics of Poverty in Postwar Philadelphia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

the women Levenstein writes about worked individually to claim the rights of their citizenship, they acted politically and enacted change “without marches.”

Federal domesticity, too, was practiced and performed through negotiations between migrant women and their families and the government employees who offered programs and objects tinged with idealistic visions of family and home life. Federal domesticity was at once a form of control and opportunity, conformity to predetermined standards and a way to express oneself, powerlessness in the state and a powerful way to claim benefits from the state. For example, internment sites, formidable weapons in the federal government’s arsenal, were also the places of everyday life, family, and community building for those interned. The federal government shaped the behavior of Japanese American families by limiting mobility, choice, space, and information in internment camps. But Japanese American families filled their time, developed institutions, and created everything from food to housewares in order to survive their imprisonment. Understanding the material culture of Japanese American internees, from the objects they owned and used to the sites where they were imprisoned, reveals both the influence of the federal government and the everyday lives of the interned, intertwined now as historical subjects just as they were in the 1940s.

Home Away from Home makes three major historiographic contributions to the historical literatures on gender and sexuality, migration, and material culture. First, I demonstrate that sexual regulation by the state occurred in the material, physical realm in addition to the legal and abstract realm that other scholars have addressed. Historians have previously pointed to interest by the federal government in family composition as a form of social control through policy interventions and by restricting benefits to specific groups. This study and the integration of material culture into policy studies more broadly help to reveal the lived experiences of people whose humanity is often obscured by the

leviathan of the federal government. Second, this project revises a common assumption that hegemonic domesticity emerged in the postwar period as a project of the white, suburban middle classes. Instead, post-World War II domesticity was presaged by and even tested out on migrant women and their families during Depression and war. Finally, this project contributes to the development of material culture studies as an evidentiary body for historical analysis and conversely, to the integration of historical analyses of sexualities, families, migration, and poverty to material culture studies. By interpreting material culture as evidence, *Home Away From Home* attempts to reconstruct the experiences of people who frequently leave few official records and the bodily, sensorial, and emotional implications of policy decisions.

In the last twenty years, historians have revealed the inextricability of private life from the federal government. Historians exploring the intersection of sexuality and the state focus on three major areas: sexual and racial regulation, the stratification of the welfare system, and the political use of the family as a symbol. In each of these areas, local and federal officials reach into the seemingly private world of sexuality in order to regulate or politicize familial relationships, therefore making these relationships public. These histories also reveal the important role that sexuality played in the growth of the federal bureaucracy in the twentieth century.

Margot Canaday's *The Straight State* (2009) prioritizes the state's role in the formation of sexual identity, demonstrating the long history of sexual regulation within the federal government, and detailing the ways sexuality has influenced the creation of a stratified citizenship.³⁵ Canaday examines the ways a growing federal bureaucracy came

³⁵ Canaday's work breaks with previous scholarship by examining federal regulation of homosexuality rather than local efforts to police gay and lesbian relationships and acts, including: John D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago

to define, police, and regulate homosexuality through programs targeting immigration, military service, and welfare benefits.³⁶ Canaday argues that as bureaucrats began to qualify citizenship according to physical traits, gendered behaviors, and sexual acts, they created policies and legislation to define certain characteristics as deviant. The power of the state grew as administrators and bureaucrats implemented programs that excluded a sexually defined category of people from full citizenship. As a result, Canaday argues, the state constituted homosexual and heterosexual identities, excluded homosexuals from the benefits of citizenship, and reserved full citizenship rights for white heterosexuals.

My dissertation also builds upon the work of other scholars who have investigated the intersecting gendered, sexual, and racial norms used by the federal government to regulate entry into the United States.³⁷ In *Entry Denied: Controlling Sexuality at the Border* (2002), Eithne Luibhéid demonstrates attempts by the federal government

Press, 1983), George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), Peter Boag, *Same-Sex Affairs: Constructing and Controlling Homosexuality in the Pacific Northwest* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003). Previous work on sexual regulation in the federal government focused on the midcentury Lavender Scare, including David K. Johnson, *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

³⁶ Regina Kunzel offers an alternate reading of the relationship between the state and sexuality and illustrates a more fluid understanding of sexuality due to the popular understanding of prisons as “a world apart,” outside the boundaries of normal life. Regina Kunzel, *Criminal Intimacy: Prison and the Uneven History of Modern American Sexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

³⁷ See also: Erika Lee, *At America's Gates: Chinese Immigration during the Exclusion Era, 1882-1943* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003); Alexandra Stern, *Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005).

through immigration control systems to exclude or expel women whose sexuality did not seem to conform to American standards. Particularly interesting in Luibhéid's analysis is the inscription of sexual deviance on the bodies of women through officials' racialized understandings of sexuality. Immigration officials trying to discern whether a Chinese woman was a prostitute, for example, might consider her bound feet, physical appearance and particularly her sexual attractiveness, demeanor, and clothing in order to make a determination about whether the woman was likely a prostitute or a "real" wife.³⁸ A Chinese woman's physical presentation of self linked exotic and projected sexual traits to sexual promiscuity and ultimately to her status as a sex worker. Sexual, gendered, racial, and class-based assumptions combine in these inspections of women's bodies and behaviors just as they do in my study of family composition and behavior. Federal officials marshaled stereotypes and their own understanding of deviance and appropriateness in order to ascribe traits of American citizenship on displaced people.

The federal government regulated sexuality by defining norms for use at the border and in the family-making process of adoption. Ellen Herman's *Kinship by Design: A History of Adoption in the Modern United States* (2008) explains the methods used by the federal government to shape family life. For Herman, the federal government sought to promote order and reduce risk in the adoption process through "kinship by design," which encompassed the modernizing processes of regulation, interpretation, standardization, and naturalization.³⁹ She argues that the federal government became a therapeutic state by utilizing these scientific design elements to control and correct family

³⁸ Luibhéid, 49-50.

³⁹ Ellen Herman, *Kinship by Design: A History of Adoption in the Modern United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

composition in order to help its citizens. These same modernizing forces are at play in federal temporary housing sites; identical rows of barracks and procedures for “processing” migrants attest to the standardizing process at work. Moreover, the mission of temporary housing sites was to reform and stabilize migrant families so that they could return to “normal” American life, a goal that federal officials likely perceived as a part of their therapeutic mission.

Notions of sexually proper and gender-appropriate family life played an important role in the creation of federal government policies and political debates in the twentieth century. My study of temporary housing is indebted to studies of other attempts by state agencies to articulate the parameters of licit family behaviors. One of the first studies to connect family ideals to politics is Elizabeth H. Pleck’s *Domestic Tyranny: The Making of Social Policy Against Family Violence from Colonial Times to the Present* (1987). Pleck argues that the Family Ideal, a belief in family as private, stable, autonomous, and consisting of a two-parent household with minor children, prevented the entry of public officials into the home.⁴⁰ Intervention through public policy was an intrusion into the privacy of the home. In domestic violence cases, social reformers weighed two conflicting goals: the protection of the victim and the preservation of the family.⁴¹ The goal of “protection” and family reform thus hearkens back to complicated histories of humanitarianism coupled with social control.

Second, historians of welfare policies expose the stratification of the welfare system through the regulation of sexual and familial relationships, gender norms, and

⁴⁰ Elizabeth H. Pleck, *Domestic Tyranny: The Making of Social Policy Against Family Violence from Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 7.

⁴¹ Pleck, 202.

racial preferences. Feminist historians who explore welfare assert that the federal norms used to determine eligibility for welfare benefits create normative categories of licit and illicit sexuality and appropriate family composition. That the federal government privileged certain sexual norms – those of a white, heterosexual, male breadwinner and his family – is Linda Gordon’s concern in her *Pitied But Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare, 1890-1935* (1994).⁴² The federal government wrote sexual norms into the construction of welfare policies by subsidizing the family wage and resisting aid for single mothers.⁴³ “Aid to unemployed men,” Gordon argues, “aimed to preserve the male breadwinner status and to keep wives and children at home. Aid to single mothers aimed to prevent its recipients from being too comfortable on their own.”⁴⁴ Gordon’s conception of a stratified welfare system prompted a generation of studies of the division of citizenship benefits based on racial and gender difference.⁴⁵

Third, historians have demonstrated the public and political nature of American families by exploring the ways that the government mobilized a persistent mythology of

⁴² Linda Gordon, *Pitied But Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare, 1890-1935* (New York: The Free Press, 1994).

⁴³ Sonya Michel’s history of childcare follows in this vein by revealing that a lack of adequate childcare for working mothers discriminates against women and creates a gender-stratified labor system. Sonya Michel, *Children’s Interests / Mothers’ Rights: The Shaping of America’s Child Care Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

⁴⁴ Gordon, *Pitied But Not Entitled*, 7.

⁴⁵ Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: How Race and Gender Shaped American Citizenship and Labor* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002); Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers’ Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Knopf, 2003); Alice Kessler-Harris, *In Pursuit of Equity: Women, Men, and the Quest for Economic Citizenship in 20th-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Meg Jacobs, *Pocketbook Politics: Economic Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).

the nuclear, heterosexual family, especially from World War II to the present. By connecting politics and family life, historians broaden the histories of both by dismantling the public/private binary. Exposing the public links of private life allows for a more complex reading of American political history. Elaine Tyler May's *Homeward Bound* investigates the use of the family as a political tool during the Cold War and the impact of the containment ethos on domesticity and "traditional" gender roles.⁴⁶ The international politics of the Cold War pervaded American home life both through the symbolic appropriation of the family by politicians and by fostering a family-centered domestic ideology that valued security, consumerism, pronatalism, and "traditional" gender roles. Robert O. Self's *All in the Family: The Realignment of American Democracy Since the 1960s* shows how the mythology of the family fueled partisan politics. Self posits that family values, a national mythology that was not representative of how people actually lived, were the centerpiece to the rise of the conservative Right and shifted the political order of the last three decades.⁴⁷ Views on gender, sexuality, and the role of the family played a key role in the shifting orientation of the federal government from liberal to conservative, from expanding to contracting citizenship rights and federal regulations. In Self's analysis, politicians linked a narrative of sexual privacy to a neoliberal ethos to argue that the government should not intervene in "natural" family life or the "natural" movement of the market. As Self and other scholars make

⁴⁶ Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 2008 [1988]).

⁴⁷ Robert O. Self, *All in the Family: The Realignment of American Democracy Since the 1960s* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2013). See also: Natasha Zaretsky, *No Direction Home: The American Family and the Fear of National Decline, 1968-1980* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

clear, however, the family, though it may evoke privacy and autonomy, is bound up with regulation, political action, and the ordering of the state.

Home Away From Home builds from this scholarship on gender, the family, and the American state but revises a common argument that hegemonic domesticity formed in the postwar period as a consequence of the Cold War, a culture of consumption, and a conservative realignment of gender and sexual norms after the looseness of war.

Historian Elaine Tyler May locates the family morality of postwar suburbia in the containment ethos of the Cold War. May asserts: “Americans turned to the family as a bastion of safety in an insecure world, while experts, leaders, and politicians promoted codes of conduct and enacted public policies that would bolster the American home.”⁴⁸

Home Away from Home suggests that the codes of conduct and public policies espoused by experts and leaders normalized a “traditional” American family well before the end of World War II. Given the transitional nature of American life during war mobilization, it is not surprising that federal officials encouraged stability and structure through material ends. Whereas an ideal domesticity in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries drew from prescriptive literature, housing reformers, and religious and cultural values, in the mid-twentieth century, the state constructed these ideals.

Migration problematizes the regulatory reach of the state and the permanence of a single-family home. As Nayan Shah argues in *Stranger Intimacy*, people on the move do not meet the standards for “invented normative” families or live in the idealized, permanent homes that the state privileges in its delivery of resources.⁴⁹ This is

⁴⁸ May, *Homeward Bound*, 9.

⁴⁹ Nayan Shah, *Stranger Intimacy: Contesting Race, Sexuality, and the Law in the North American West* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 4-6.

indisputably true and evidenced in the work of Shah and Canaday who both demonstrate the exclusion of queer and racialized bodies, socialities and domesticities from federal benefits. *Home Away From Home* complicates the power relationship between migrants and the state by revealing a massive outlay of billions of dollars and concentrated efforts to force migrant families into unachievable ideals. This project uses material culture analysis to show that family norms were not merely symbolic or abstract ways that the federal government rejected non-normative groups from full participation in citizenship, but were the basis for the construction of real structures, programs and practices for migrant families. Where Shah and Canaday point to exclusion, this project looks at the ways the federal government remade, attempted to remake, and professed success in their remaking of migrant families.

Material culture analysis of the objects and spaces that the federal government created to settle displaced families reveals a process of social control as well as positive responses from migrant families who acquiesced to federal officials in order to improve their material lives. Material culture is an important mode of analysis for the history of migrant and displaced people because it helps to bring spaces and objects to the forefront and to humanize the people who experienced displacement and occupied federal temporary shelters. In the flood of onion-skin paperwork produced by the FDR Administration, the lived experience of people can get lost. By focusing on material experience, whether in extant objects or in textual descriptions, this project uncovers migrant families voicing their relief in receiving federal benefits and their acceptance and even excitement at the prospect of changing the lives of their families. At the same time, one of the challenges of using extant sites to understand migration is that focusing on the spaces of the federal government similarly decenters the voices and experiences of displaced families. Federal authorities shaped the material life of migrants. Documentary

sources written and preserved by the federal government rarely offer names and individual stories of displaced people, instead lumping people together in impersonal tallies and classifications. Even though a growing bureaucratic state in the twentieth century created and compiled thousands of textual and visual records, these records tend to condense individual lives in favor of statistics and generalities, which is partially a product of information gathering trends in this era and partially due to the perceived humanity of these subjects.⁵⁰

Architectural, art, and material culture historians focused on housing typically examine the single-family home to understand the ways that domestic space reflects and informs American culture and identity.⁵¹ Traditional scholarship on domesticity and

⁵⁰ Sarah Igo, *The Averaged American: Surveys, Citizens, and the Making of a Mass Public* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008).

⁵¹ Gwendolyn Wright, *Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1983); Gwendolyn Wright, *Moralism and the Model Home: Domestic Architecture and Cultural Conflict in Chicago, 1873-1913* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985); Clifford Edward Clark, Jr. *The American Family Home, 1800-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986); Elisabeth Donaghy Garrett, *At Home: The American Family, 1750-1870* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1990); Richard L. Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993); Jessica H Foy and Thomas Schlereth, eds., *American Home Life, 1880-1930: A Social History of Spaces and Services* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1994); Kenneth L. Ames, *Death in the Dining Room and Other Tales of Victorian Culture* (Philadelphia PA: Temple University Press, 1995); Katherine C. Grier, *Culture & Comfort: Parlor Making and Middle-Class Identity, 1850-1930* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997); Alice T. Friedman, *Women and the Making of the Modern House: A Social and Architectural History* (New York: Abrams, 1998); Sandy Isenstadt, *The Modern American House: Spaciousness and Middle-Class Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Jeanne E. Arnold, et. al., *Life at Home in the Twenty-First Century: 32 Families Open Their Doors* (Los Angeles: The Cotsen Institute of Archaeology Press, 2012); Dianne Suzette Harris, *Little White Houses: How the Postwar Home Constructed Race in America* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2013).

American home life focuses on elite and middle-class Americans in part because of the origins of the field in art historical and antiquarian examinations of elite spaces and objects, which continued due to the survival of elite objects in collections and museums. Historians expanded their focus to include the middle class in the 1980s and 1990s. Work on middle class domesticity points to the important role middle class Americans' consumption and housing practices played in the creation of the built environment in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Far fewer scholars, however, examine working class life or consider mobility in their examination of domestic space.⁵²

Too few material culture studies of housing discuss the role of the federal, state, and local government in constructing domestic space. Historians using a material culture approach recognize the impact of federal subsidy in mortgage assistance, transportation networks, and the introduction of technology into the home, but there is not a substantial literature that centers government action in shaping the materiality of housing.⁵³ It is

⁵² Notable exceptions include: Margaret Crawford, *Building the Workingman's Paradise: The Design of American Company Towns* (New York: Verso, 1995); Alison K. Hoagland, *Mine Towns: Buildings for Workers in Michigan's Copper Country* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010); Wendy Gamber, *The Boarding House in Nineteenth Century America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007); Paul Erling Groth, *Living Downtown: The History of Residential Hotels in the United States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); J.B. Jackson, *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986); Allan D. Wallis, *Wheel Estate: The Rise and Decline of Mobile Homes* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997); Andrew Hurley, *Diners, Bowling Alleys, and Trailer Parks: Chasing the American Dream in the Postwar Consumer Culture* (New York: Basic Books, 2002).

⁵³ Notable works include Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*; Donald Albrecht ed. *World War II and the American Dream: How Wartime Building Changed a Nation* (Cambridge and London: MIT Press for the National Building Museum, 1994); and David E. Nye, *Electrifying America: Social Meanings of a New Technology* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1990).

possible that the lack of notable scholarship that combines a material culture analysis of housing with the history of the federal government stems from a wider gap in material culture studies that investigate twentieth century political history. To be sure, art historians have investigated public monuments, the memorial landscape, and political iconography in posters, photography, and visual culture. This scholarship, however, lacks a deep engagement with policy, law, and economics.

Material culture analysis offers a host of benefits for historians as they uncover stories of the past, but interpreting material culture as evidence is not easily accomplished without extensive training to recognize objects and contextualize their meanings. Object- and site- based analysis is the primary methodological similarity among practitioners of material culture studies in a variety of academic disciplines. The object lesson approach draws on natural history and anthropological methodologies in the nineteenth century and, more specifically, from the study of material culture developed in the 1970s and 1980s. It begins with formal analysis of an object or space ascertained through “close-looking,” or focused observation.⁵⁴ Close looking is a research and pedagogical tool in art history and material culture studies akin to close reading of a text.⁵⁵ The historian begins with observation of an object or space by holding and manipulating it in their hands or by

⁵⁴ See, for example: Charles F. Montgomery, “Some Remarks on the Practice and Science of Connoisseurship,” in Thomas J. Schlereth, ed., *Material Culture Studies in America* (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1992 [1961]), 143-52; E. McClung Fleming, “Artifact Study: A Proposed Model,” *Winterthur Portfolio*; Jules David Prown, “Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method,” *Winterthur Portfolio*, vol. 17, no. 1 (Spring 1982): 1-19.

⁵⁵ For more on close reading and the origination of the methodology often attributed to Louis Agassiz, see: Sarah Anne Carter, *Object Lessons: How Nineteenth-Century Americans Learned to Make Sense of the Material World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

being physically present in the space to take in the full visual, auditory, olfactory, kinesthetic, and (rarely) gustatory experience. Close looking allows the historian to see details in the object that prompt further questions and analysis. Why does an object look or feel this way? What do the markings or lack of markings on it indicate? Why is it shaped this way? How heavy is it? By considering an object's function, material, style, and condition, or likewise a space's dimensions, location, topography, and built environment, one can begin to ask social and cultural questions about the material evidence. From close looking, the historian then formulates questions about the object's design, creation, production, consumption, and use to shape their research.

But how does one conduct an object lesson if there is no thing left to study? Housing for displaced people constructed by the federal government has typically been temporary. In many cases, these sites have been destroyed precisely to mask the historical record and remove evidence of the injustices committed there.⁵⁶ There are few extant examples across the country that I examined for this project. The federal migrant labor camp at Arvin in Kern County, California, known as the Weedpatch Camp in John Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*, is still in use as a migrant camp today and some New Deal structures are still in place. Manzanar was reclaimed in 1969 by a group of advocates who had previously been imprisoned there. Since 1992, the National Park Service has managed and interpreted the Manzanar National Historic Site. Several of the dormitories in Washington, D.C. became college dormitories after the war and have since become designer apartment buildings. Fort Ontario in Oswego, New York still stands as a State Historic Property, but it is interpreted as a nineteenth century military base. Some spaces, like the dormitories and houses described in Chapter 3, were designed with permanence

⁵⁶ I thank Laura Helton for this conclusion.

in mind, but even in the unlikely event that housing for displaced people is standing and preserved, the context of its setting is long gone to history. At Manzanar, for example, only five of more than eight hundred buildings have been rebuilt as interpreted spaces.

Historians of African American experiences offer a compelling strategy in the art of subversive reading. Frequently, African American historical actors, like migrant and displaced people, are absent in official records. Historians subvert the official record by looking specifically at what is left unsaid. Negative evidence, traces, and fragments are layered with other forms of evidence – material culture, genealogy, fiction, and oral histories – in order to reconstruct lived experiences. A subversive interpretation of material culture, then, might seek absences in the material record – missing pieces, lost objects, empty spaces – to be plumbed for meaning.⁵⁷ By triangulating evidence from extant objects and sites, historic photography, and textual or documentary records, and layering them together, the historian can begin to reconstruct the material life of displaced people who might have left little behind or whose stories might have been intentionally obscured.

Analyzing artifacts that are missing that should be there and artifacts that are there that should have been lost subverts the fragmentary federal archive and enriches the histories of displaced people. Like any other body of evidence, the material culture of displacement is mediated by the powers that imposed it, the artists that captured it, and

⁵⁷ My understanding of the art of subversive reading and its practice by historians of the African American experience draws from Tiffany Gill. I use the term interpretation rather than reading for material culture analysis following Pauline K. Eversmann, Rosemary T. Krill, Edwina Michael, Beth A. Twiss-Garrity, and Tracey Rae Beck, “Material Culture as Text: Review and Reform of the Literacy Model for Interpretation,” in Ann Smart Martin and J. Ritchie Garrison, eds., *American Material Culture: The Shape of the Field* (Winterthur, DE: Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum; Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1997), 135-167.

the very survival of objects that people made and used. Nonetheless, the material experience of displacement is an essential component to augmenting the historical record that so often relies on official sources. Displaced families in the United States lived and worked with relatively little power compared to the state that housed them. Only an authority like the federal government could create, manage, and remove the most populous town in the area in a period of three years like they did at Manzanar. The small traces that remain of Japanese American prisoners, such as the fruit trees left standing in the desert after the internment camps closed, demonstrate that despite the exercise of federal power, the oppressive environment, and the intentional and circumstantial losses of history, migrants subject to federal domesticity did not lose their humanity or discard their hopeful attempts to make meaning from their surroundings.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 2 explores the camps that the federal government created to house families fleeing the ecological and economic disaster of the Dust Bowl. In the 1930s, families from Dust Bowl states fled to find work and reestablish themselves in the farm fields of California. Families traveled together across the state and lived in squalid, makeshift camps.⁵⁸ In 1935, the federal government opened the first migratory labor camp to protect and “rehabilitate” migrant families and to remove the blight of the makeshift camps along the California highways. The camps were not simply places to house migrant families, but instead laboratories for a new program of federal domesticity. Camps featured educational and community-based programming with the intention of “Americanizing” the predominantly white, American citizens living there. Chief among

the programs were home economics courses for migrant mothers that stressed material accumulation despite families' continued mobility and the state of the labor market. Quite incongruously, federal officials poured resources into teaching migrant mothers how to create decorative objects to adorn their imagined homes rather than addressing the structural problems that caused the migrancy of whole families.

Chapter 3 addresses sexual regulation in housing policy for federal workers during World War II. Approximately nine million Americans lived in defense housing when they moved to new areas to work in war industries. Among them were a small percentage of single, African American women working in Washington, D.C. Housing standards for single women engaged in the war effort reflected a widespread presumption among the agents of federal domesticity that all adult women were potential mothers and should be protected as such. As single women moved to industrial centers to work in war industries, the federal government built dormitories to house them; African American women were the last to receive federal housing benefits. The architecture and design of the dormitories emphasized the protection of women workers through privacy, wholesome recreation, and racial and sexual segregation. Even though single women workers did men's jobs in increasingly integrated workplaces, the federal government expected them to comport themselves as future wives and mothers. Federal officials regulated sexual morality by imposing family morality on single women and using defense housing standards to privilege federal domesticity, disqualifying those who deviated from the rigid standards. This chapter examines federal housing policy during World War II and looks specifically at dormitories for single, black women in Washington, D.C.

For some Japanese American women and families imprisoned by the state during World War II, interior decoration became a way to take control over their space and

assert their power. Chapter 4 shows that through interior decoration, internees made claims to individual dignity, federal benefits, and private space. While some women in internment camps found ways to express themselves, others found forms of control. Acknowledging the importance of domestic interiors for the preservation of the family and as an Americanizing force, federal officials developed a home economics course at Manzanar High School that resulted in the construction of a model barrack apartment. The model apartment demonstrated “traditional” American housing standards and did not take Japanese American culture or the reality of imprisonment into consideration. Young women designed and constructed a space that was entirely imaginary; War Relocation Center policies made it impossible to create an apartment like the model they constructed in an internment camp. The barracks apartment also bore little resemblance to the independent consumer culture of young Nisei women. Rather than exercising choice and power, as many interned young women did in their own spaces, the model barrack apartment was an exercise in standardization, conformity, and supposed “American family life.”

If the federal domesticity on display in Japanese internment camps seemed unable to imagine a Japanese *American* family, other displaced persons soon discovered that the federal government was eager to hold them up as models of sexual morality and appropriate forms of consumption. In 1944, FDR authorized the entry of one thousand European Jews and persecuted minorities as “guests of the state” and established a refugee camp in upstate New York. Chapter 5 examines the undefined immigration status of refugees at the Fort Ontario Emergency Refugee Camp. These residents of a military-base-turned-shelter publicly performed their eligibility for citizenship for American audiences, enacting their roles as model Judeo-Christian “guests” during public ceremonies and programs and in a Congressional Hearing held on-site. On these

occasions, the refugees performed and, importantly, were described as performing federal domesticity in order to appear as potential citizens of the United States. Federal officials in the Emergency Refugee Shelter saw the refugees as white, middle-class and able to learn and accept democracy since they had fled authoritarianism in Europe. Officials coached them in public demonstrations of Americanness, steeped in whiteness, in order to convince the American public and Congressional leaders that the refugee families deserved a chance at American citizenship.

The epilogue contextualizes the Trump Administration's family separation policy and child detention sites that govern family life for asylum seekers at the southern border of the United States. Has the established program of federal domesticity that deployed a longstanding connection between heteronormative, white, middle-class families and a single-family failed in the present day? Whereas in the 1930s federal officials in migrant camps taught white women who were already American citizens in need of redemption how to create lace doilies to decorate their shelter homes, in 2019, brown children in immigration detention were not even provided toothbrushes. These contemporary migrant families fall outside the limits of federal domesticity, which seeks to reform displaced people into stable American citizens. It is not that a program of federal domesticity failed per se. In fact, many of the tenets of federal domesticity have been written into law. The devastating conditions these children and families are living in today reflect that these asylees are ineligible for a process that was designed to settle displaced families in permanent American communities as citizens.

Other displaced groups have also fallen outside the parameters of federal domesticity. African American migrants who moved north during the Great Migration did not receive federal benefits or assistance in making their moves, which often separated families and required extreme economic sacrifice. Braceros, the Mexican men

commissioned for agricultural and industrial work by the federal government from the 1940s through the 1960s, were never offered federal housing nor were they permitted to travel with their families. Federal domesticity, which was applied forcefully by the federal government for citizens and potential citizens and navigated carefully by displaced people in the twentieth century, had no power in the face of racism and xenophobia then as today.

Chapter 2

HOME ECONOMICS FOR HOMELESS FAMILIES IN THE FEDERAL MIGRATORY LABOR CAMP PROGRAM

In her January 1941 monthly report, Ruby McGee, the home management supervisor of the migratory labor camp in Indio, California, described the satisfaction she felt after a series of successful sewing classes. Another home management supervisor visiting from the Brawley camp about 75 miles south of Indio had recently held a demonstration about mattress making. After the demonstration, McGee used the instructions and tools provided by the visiting expert to lead the migrant women in the creation of their own mattresses. While they sewed together, the migrant women engaged in conversation about parenting and homemaking. They shared answers and advice with each other and only stopped to ask McGee if they had a question no one else could answer. McGee was elated. Here were her clients making time to improve the lives of their families after a day in the fields or caring for their children; here were her clients learning from her and from each other. The mattresses would provide an as-of-yet impossible degree of comfort for the women and their families while they were staying in the temporary camp, but they could also be moved to the next camp, or better, to their future permanent home.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Ruby McGee, Excerpts from Home Management Supervisors' Monthly Reports, February 18, 1941, Box 43, General Correspondence, 1935-1945, RG 96: Records of the Farmers Home Administration, National Archives and Records Administration – San Francisco (hereafter RG 96: FHA, NARA-SF).

Unlike informal sewing circles that women have long held with their friends and neighbors, sewing in federal migrant camps was an organized course of instruction. Ruby McGee and the other women who led migrant families in home economics training were college-educated, professional women employed by the federal government. Through their work, they often developed close, personal relationships with the women under their instruction. Whatever the emotional or social qualities of their interactions with their students, as representatives of the federal government, women like Ruby McGee furthered the aims of the state. When they submitted quantitative and qualitative data to the regional office in San Francisco, higher-ranking officials excerpted their reports for educational purposes with circulated them with the imprimatur of the United States Department of Agriculture, Farm Security Administration. The regional office compiled statistics for the mattress project statewide: migrant women made 242 mattresses in January 1941, and 1,350 migrant families had benefitted from the mattress project to date. According to the regional office, the ten home supervisors working in the migratory labor camps in the region succeeded in improving the domestic lives of the families who made mattresses using materials and know-how provided by the federal government.

Five years before McGee started teaching migrant women to construct mattresses, the first federal migratory camps opened in California. The federal government intended for the camps to provide home economics training as a step in the “rehabilitation” of migrant families. The federal camps provided temporary, safe, living environments for migrants while also incorporating educational and community programs with migrants’ permanent settlement in mind.⁶⁰ The goals of federal migrant labor camps extended well

⁶⁰ This argument is underscored in Veronica Martinez-Matsuda, “Making the Modern Migrant: Work, Community, and Struggle in the Federal Migratory Labor Camp Program, 1935-1947,” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, 2009).

beyond temporary relief to the permanent rehabilitation of migrant families into stable, self-sufficient farm families who could participate fully in American politics and economics and train their children to do the same. For federal officials, a good American citizen met an idealized standard for family life and home environment. Federal officials attempted to shape migrant families, and migrant mothers in particular, to fit the standards of federal domesticity, including behavior befitting a middle-class housewife with a single-family home to match.

The reality of migrant labor, including the short time spent in one location, low wages, and the need to carry one's possessions in the family car, conflicted with federal officials' goals of rehabilitating migrant families through federal domesticity. Migrant families posed a new challenge to home economists who were trained to teach middle-class families about rational consumption.⁶¹ In the federal migrant camp system, families stayed for a few months before moving on to the next camp. They could not raise crops, travel with an entire household of furnishings or afford, on meager wages, to consume excessively. Instead, home economists shifted their focus and taught household production of small, moveable goods, educating women how to transform scrap materials into housewares to make their temporary shelter homes comfortable and refined. Accumulation took precedence over consumption. The more things a family possessed, officials reasoned, the more stable they appeared. A family that had the trappings of a middle-class home, albeit made from orange crates and flour sacks, performed the domesticity of a respectable family.

⁶¹ Home economists used their training to protect women from the marketplace and encourage them as citizen consumers. Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumer's Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003), 28.

Federal domesticity was not a top-down process but a negotiation between migrant mothers and the federal government. The federal officials that enforced federal domesticity in migrant labor camps were often camp managers and professional home economists who trained migrant mothers in small group or one-on-one sessions (Figure 1). When Congress reported on the so-called abuses by the Farm Security Administration in 1944, they remarked on the intrusive and “intimate” questions the federal government asked farm families and held particular ire for questions about family planning.⁶² But migrant women warmly accepted the effects of federal domesticity. Some had been displaced from established family farms and longed to return to the lives they previously led. Others actively sought the skills to produce food and home goods for their families to improve their family’s health and make their daily lives easier. They developed relationships with home economists and took an active role in making a comfortable home in their tents and shelters. They took pride in their creations, entering quilts in local contests and winning prizes for their work.

Federal officials simultaneously believed that the agricultural industry required migrant labor and that introducing a modern standard of living would incentivize a family toward stability and away from rootless wandering. Federal officials incorporated home economics training with the goal of rehabilitating migrant families as white, gender conforming, and economically independent. Home economics taught by federal officials, including professional home economists, sociologists, nurses, and camp administrators, would provide the homemaker with the practical skills necessary to thrive on a family farm even though family farms were quickly becoming unsustainable investments. A

⁶² U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Agriculture, “Report of the Select Committee of the House Committee on Agriculture to Investigate the Activities of the Farm Security Administration,” 78th Congress, 2nd session, 1944, 6.

“good home,” they believed, encouraged domestic and familial stability that would stem the urge toward migrancy and the social ills federal officials associated with it.

According to federal officials, training in home economics and home management raised the morale and the living standards of migrant agricultural laborers and connected them with their American citizenship, many for the first time. Before living in FSA camps, migrant laborers were “a class of peons, uncouth, uncared for, semi-starved, cowed, and without ambition to fight for their very existence.” By raising the standard of living for agricultural migrants, federal officials awakened a new sense of national pride: “‘At this camp I is a free ‘merican cit’zn’; - ‘ se we kin nevr agit are wimen folks ter agin life in filf’; ‘sum one is anticin us alast and it had ter bee Uncle Sam.’”⁶³ For federal officials, home economics training was a real way for migrant families to improve the health of their families, live with dignity, and feel welcome as participants in American political economy.

The goal of turning migrant families into “good citizens” was gendered. Implicit in home economics training for migrant women was the assertion that an ideal family should comprise a male breadwinner and female homemaker whose children went to school instead of work. All members of migrant families – men, women and children – often worked in the farm fields of California and contributed to the family income. However, migrant women who performed wage labor alongside their husbands were not eligible for the same form of “good citizenship” that economic self-sufficiency inured.⁶⁴

⁶³ Arthur A. Lundin, “Observations made during stay at the Arvin Migratory Labor camp July 10 to July 17, 1936,” July 26, 1936, Box 5, Coded Administrative Camp Files, 1933-1945, RG 96: FHA, NARA – SF.

⁶⁴ For more on the exclusion of women from economic citizenship, see: Alice Kessler-Harris, *In Pursuit of Equity: Women, Men, and the Quest for Economic Citizenship in 20th-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

Life in the migrant camps would turn migrant men into self-respecting citizens by giving them safe shelter for their families away from the roads and squalid camps and without providing monetary support that would diminish their patriarchal roles. Camps were to be planned in locations where there was ample need for labor, which meant that men residing in them could spend their time working for wages from established farms and perhaps save money for a permanent home rather than constantly seeking new jobs. Committees in the camps would teach men about the responsibilities of their citizenship through lessons in democracy and give them an opportunity to perform democracy by leading and compromising in small group settings. Ownership and pride in these committees, a semi-permanent shelter, and federal assistance might even allow men to stay in one place long enough to register to vote. Conversely, home economics training would remake migrant mothers into confident homemakers who could care for the health and material well being of their families. By making a comfortable home and caring for her husband and children, migrant mothers would not achieve their own, independent economic citizenship, but they would nurture the economic citizenship of their family members, which was their specific duty as women and citizens.

The Migrant Problem

The federal migrant labor camps were to be a humanitarian solution to a devastating population and labor problem. Migrant laborers came to the farm fields of California from throughout the country, but a crisis in the number of migrants crossing the California border occurred when families fled Dust Bowl stricken communities as refugees from “the brown terror of drought.”⁶⁵ Between 1935 and 1939, an estimated

⁶⁵ Paul S. Taylor, *Adrift on the Land*, The Public Affairs Committee, Inc., 1940, 2.

350,000 people migrated into California.⁶⁶ In the face of increased migration from families fleeing Oklahoma, Texas, and Arkansas, state and federal officials established camps for migrant farm workers and their families (Figure 2).

Agricultural conditions in California necessitated the use of temporary farm laborers to pick fruit during short harvest seasons. An increase in crops – attributed to changes in irrigation that improved the crop yield – required an increased amount of temporary workers.⁶⁷ A mass of laborers would arrive in a community, harvest fruit and cotton by hand, and move on to the next area of the state and the next crop. The need for hand laborers in a short amount of time increased the number of low-wage and temporary farmhands in the state to over fifty percent of the farm labor force and polarized the agricultural economy leading to strikes between labor and capital. Still, the promise of wages and work to be done pulled tenant and small farmers from the Great Plains and Southwest at the same time that the Dust Bowl pushed them westward.

Most Dust Bowl migrants were white, but they met with discriminatory treatment from “native” Californians because of their poverty, regional dialects, religious beliefs, and association with migrant farm work traditionally done by non-whites. Migrants from Dust Bowl states simultaneously represented an ethnic Other, whose backwardness made them susceptible to deplorable conditions, and fallen white Americans, who could be redeemed. Okies, as Californians called them derogatorily, did not assimilate into California towns when they arrived in chain migrations, often following the route family

⁶⁶ Taylor, *Adrift on the Land*, 3.

⁶⁷ W.F. Baxter, “Migratory Labor Camps,” reproduced from *Quartermaster Review* (July-August 1937), carton 15, Paul Schuster Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, California (hereafter Bancroft).

members took, in the 1930s.⁶⁸ Californians viewed Dust Bowl migrants as poor white trash: uneducated, uncivilized, and lazy.⁶⁹ As historian Nancy Isenberg explains, the “relentless” class system in the United States “evolved out of recurring agrarian notions regarding the character and potential of the land, the value of labor, and critical concepts of breeding. Embarrassing lower-class populations have... been seen on the North American continent as waste people.”⁷⁰ Whether the poor white trash were a separate racial or ethnic group does not seem to have been resolved in the period. New Dealers often wrote and spoke of the rehabilitation potential of the migrants, while conservative critics of the federal government’s liberal policies contended that some of the tenants and migrants being served by the federal government through the Farm Security Administration would never meet the American standard of living on a family farm because of their own deficiencies.⁷¹

Federal officials offered migrant families courses in home economics to improve their material well being in order to meet the standards of federal domesticity, which officials considered courses in Americanization. “Americanization work is done with all, even Americans,” Harry Drobish told a conference of sociologists and housing reformers.

⁶⁸ James N. Gregory, *American Exodus: The Dust Bowl Migration and Okie Culture in California* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

⁶⁹ James Gregory does not see Dust Bowl migrants as an ethnic group. He argues that harsh treatment by native Californians and limited economic opportunities caused Dust Bowl migrants to form insular communities and develop a subculture of “plain folk Americanism” based on toughness, populism, evangelical religion, language, and music. Gregory, *American Exodus*.

⁷⁰ Nancy Isenberg, *White Trash: The 400-Year Untold History of Class in America* (Viking: New York, 2016), 5.

⁷¹ House Committee on Agriculture, Report to Investigate the FSA, 16-18.

Drobish was an agricultural economist working with California's State Emergency Relief Administration (SERA) and later managed the migratory labor camp program from the Resettlement Administration's (RA) regional office in California. "When you realize that in parts of our country people live the way they do as is revealed in the camp," he argued, "I think we have a lot to do with Americanization of some of our people that are really, Americans, as truly 100% Americans as some of us."⁷² Drobish's insistence on Americanization demonstrates the perceived foreignness of Dust Bowl migrants even though they were native-born for generations. Historically, Americanization campaigns had referred to the acculturation of immigrants through educational programs led by employers, public schools, religious organizations, and social reformers. Through education in the English language, American history, cultural practices, and democracy, immigrants in Americanization programs could assimilate and become engaged citizens.⁷³ That Drobish intended Dust Bowl migrants to Americanize suggests that they did not perform their American citizenship, or their whiteness, in satisfactory ways when they migrated.

These perceived differences contributed to regular assertions by government officials about migrants' national origins and Americanness. Officials were quick to respond to concerns that "a majority of the present mobile group are dispossessed land holders and farmers," eighty-five percent of whom "[emanated] from truly American

⁷² Transcript: Conference on Housing of Migratory Agricultural Laborers, November 18, 1935, 7, carton 15, Paul Schuster Taylor Papers, Bancroft.

⁷³ Jeffrey E. Mirel, *Patriotic Pluralism: Americanization Education and European Immigrants* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010).

villages and [descended] from sturdy American stock.”⁷⁴ When a nearby neighbor raised concerns about the type of people that inhabited federal camps, Eric Thomsen, the

Assistant Regional Director of the camp program, responded:

They do the things and think the thoughts which are characteristic of any number of common folk living in small country towns... They are usually sober, hard-working, self-respecting and deeply religious; but equally frequently under-nourished, under-privileged, untutored and very poor in this world's goods.

Thomsen recognized through working with migrant families that they were not as different as they appeared. He reassured the neighbor that it was only by “the barest economic accident” that he too was not hungry and unemployed like the migrant families living there.⁷⁵

The need for officials to address the Americanness of migrant farmers reveals public concern over the distribution of federal aid to immigrants and non-whites. Before the arrival of the Dust Bowl migrants, Mexican and Mexican American laborers performed a majority of the seasonal farm labor in California. In the 1920s and early 1930s, however, the number of Mexican migrant workers in California decreased due to large-scale repatriation efforts by local authorities. Over four hundred thousand Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the Southwest were repatriated to Mexico during the Great Depression through force, coercion, and in some cases, their own volition.⁷⁶ Real demographic decline from repatriation, an increase in the population of Dust Bowl

⁷⁴ W.F. Baxter, “Migratory Labor Camps,” reproduced from *Quartermaster Review* (July-August 1937), carton 15, Paul Schuster Taylor Papers, Bancroft.

⁷⁵ Eric H. Thomsen to Mrs. R.D. Porter, August 14, 1936, Box 1, Coded Administrative Camp Files, 1933-1945, RG 96: FHA, NARA-SF.

⁷⁶ W.F. Baxter, “Migratory Labor Camps;” Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 72.

migrants, and the loss of job opportunities to white newcomers decreased the number of Mexican and Mexican American migrant workers competing for jobs. The emphasis on the Americanness of migrants eligible for federal migratory labor camps then is an assurance to the tax-paying public that Mexicans did not receive relief.

At the same time that officials assured the Americanness of migrant laborers, they decried the conditions in which the laborers lived as un-American to garner support for the migrant labor camp program. While the Mexican families who previously performed migrant labor were “accustomed to a low standard of living,” that white families lived in conditions “too suggestive of China and other backward countries” was “intolerable,” representatives of the RA contended.⁷⁷ George Clements, a member of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, criticized the RA for trying to improve the standard of living for Dust Bowl migrants. Agricultural labor, in his mind, was a Mexican enterprise. Mexicans were perfectly comfortable with a lower standard of living and a low wage because they were “a simple people,” a race “coming up,” and appreciative of the work.⁷⁸ Clements drew on a form of Social Darwinism that linked a biological understanding of race (which encompassed culture, nationality, and class) to social and moral behavior. Clements had adopted Herbert Spencer’s concept of a hierarchy of civilizations, which

⁷⁷ Omer Mills, “Housing and the Migrant,” Delivered before the Institute of Government, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, June 13, 1939, carton 5, Ralph W. Hollenberg Collection, Bancroft; “Statement of Regional Office of Rehabilitation Administration on Possible Establishment of Migrant Camps,” California Conference on Housing of Migratory Agricultural Laborers, November 18, 1935, carton 15, Paul Schuster Taylor Papers, Bancroft.

⁷⁸ George Clements to H.E. Drobish, February 27, 1936, carton 14, Paul Schuster Taylor Papers, Bancroft.

ranked cultures on evolutionary steps from savagery to civilization.⁷⁹ The Mexican standard of living, far inferior to his, was merely primitive. If the Dust Bowl migrant chose to labor like a Mexican, then he should accept the same standard.

When migrant families arrived in California, they found little support in locating jobs and places to live and frequently developed their own makeshift communities away from established cities and towns. The assumptions held by “native” Californians about the new migrants’ ethnicity, the condition of their bodies after the hardship of displacement, and the deleterious effects of poverty led to the exclusion of migrants from existing communities. Some larger private growers could provide sanitary dwellings, but most small farmers could not afford to supply sufficient housing facilities for migrant workers.⁸⁰ Migrant families made shelters from “old tents, gunny sacks, dry-goods boxes, and scrap tin” and huddled together in ditch banks, creating lean-to shelters from the earthen sides of irrigation ditches.⁸¹ In these squatters’ camps, however, there was little sanitation, no running water, and no electricity. The squalid conditions of the makeshift camps, often visible from major California highways, drew the attention of scholars and state and federal officials. Words failed the officials who “could scarcely believe their own eyes” as they recorded the physical condition of migrants who resided in makeshift camps.⁸²

⁷⁹On the American adoption of Social Darwinism through Spencer see: Lee D. Baker, *From Savage to Negro: Anthropology and the Construction of Race, 1896-1954* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

⁸⁰ Farm Security Administration, “Migrant Farm Labor: The Problem and Ways of Meeting It,” Carton 1, Ralph W. Hollenberg Collection, Bancroft.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

Particularly troubling to outside observers was that Dust Bowl migrants were whole families traveling together and not lone male laborers. In the early twentieth century, single men working as migrant laborers in California were sheltered in bunkhouses on private property. Single men who did not meet normative standards for health, hygiene and social behavior could be dismissed as personally deficient, amoral, sexually degenerate, and undeserving of humanitarian aid.⁸³ The federal government referred to transient single men who took to the rails and the roads in the wake of the Depression as “non-family people,” a description that intertwined a lack of family stability, homelessness, and inability or disinterest in participating in a capitalist economy.⁸⁴ That the victims of the current migrant crisis were white, heteronormative families, previously assumed to be the solution for civilizing fallen men, shocked outside observers:

All their worldly possessions are piled on their car and covered with old canvas – ragged bedding, bedsprings sometimes, a small iron camp stove, a lantern, a washtub. Children, aunts, grandmothers, and a dog or two are jammed into the car, stretching its capacity incredibly... Their food supply is extremely limited, their clothing is in tatters, and their shoes are worn. Many are in a state of complete destitution.⁸⁵

The material culture of Dust Bowl migrants contributed to the look of destitution. With the tattered remnants of their previous households in tow, households presumed to have been wholesome family farms, white migrant families signaled the pressing need for their

⁸³ Nayan Shah refers to non-normative living environments and the corresponding social and sexual behavior that occurs in migrant camps, temporary sites and ethnic enclaves as “queer domesticity.” Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco’s Chinatown* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 13-15.

⁸⁴ Canaday, *The Straight State*, 91.

⁸⁵ Paul S. Taylor, “Migration of Drought Refugees to California,” n.d. [1935], carton 15, Paul Schuster Taylor Papers, Bancroft.

rehabilitation. Migrant families in makeshift camps did not just appear to be in dire straits. They suffered chronic and untreated medical problems and malnutrition. Tuberculosis, typhoid, and other diseases spread quickly in camps with no electricity or running water.⁸⁶ To the horror of visiting observers, vice prevailed. In one camp, a “colony” of 35 prostitutes lived together in one block and made their “dens” near family residences, adding insult to injurious living conditions.⁸⁷

Reports on makeshift camps came from sociologists and other researchers who conducted fieldwork to understand the nature of migrant life and draw attention to the crisis. Paul S. Taylor, Ph.D., was a progressive economist from the University of California at Berkeley. Taylor began studying Mexican migration and agriculture in California in the early 1920s. He learned Spanish, took photographs, and employed a friendly, ethnographic approach to understand his subjects with the goal of improving their lives.⁸⁸ In 1935, Taylor took leave from Berkeley to direct the Division of Rural Rehabilitation in the California state government and hired a team to travel with him and document labor and living conditions of agricultural workers. One member of his team would become his second wife and lifelong partner in social reform by the end of the year: photographer Dorothea Lange.⁸⁹ Lange’s haunting photographs of makeshift camps are masterworks of documentary and social realist photography, powerful tools for

⁸⁶ “Report of Tour in Brawley,” April 29, 1935, carton 15, Paul Schuster Taylor Papers, Bancroft.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Linda Gordon, *Dorothea Lange: A Life Beyond Limits* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2009), 142-145.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 159.

visualizing conditions that many could not imagine (Figure 3). Her landscape of a ditchbank camp from her first excursions in 1935 reveals a haphazard visual scene with a lone figure in the center of the image with his head down, seemingly forced downward by a sea of detritus and boxes surrounding him. Makeshift shelters of all types, from small lean-tos to larger cabin-like structures, dot the landscape at uneven distances, made from dissimilar materials.

Taylor and Lange produced several reports on migrant agricultural workers in California in an attempt to convince the federal government to fund temporary camps and alleviate the immediate suffering of the migrant families. Despite the compelling case made by Taylor's data and Lange's photography, their work documenting the migrant housing crisis did not convince federal officials to fund a project to provide temporary shelter. Only after Taylor brought the California regional director of the State Emergency Relief Administration (SERA) to the sites himself, to witness and experience the deprivations endured by migrant families, did the director authorize a twenty thousand dollar project to build two experimental camps for migrant families.⁹⁰

As SERA officials planned the migrant camp project, they knew that a few experimental campsites would not solve all the problems of housing migrant families in the state. SERA intended the migrant camps to be demonstrations for private farmers and ranchers to establish improved dwellings for migrants on their own land once they saw the social benefits of better living conditions and provide a private return on public investment.⁹¹ They debated the potential benefits of the camps. Two camps in the entire

⁹⁰ Ibid., 171.

⁹¹ "Statement in Support of Project to Establish Camps for Migrants in California," August 22, 1935, carton 15, Paul Schuster Taylor Papers, Bancroft.

state would only improve the living conditions and sanitation for a small fraction of the migratory labor force and demonstrate successful rehabilitation to a few private farmers. Those migrant families that did benefit from the improved living conditions in the new camps would not stay long since they would have to leave again when their work drew them to other farms and regions. SERA officials were concerned that migrant families would spend time in established camps and then would leave them for makeshift camps in other areas of the state, returning migrant families to squalor in a different region. They reasoned that it was better for families to travel from good camp to good camp than from bad camp to bad camp. Advocates for the camps reassured opposing factions within SERA that even though the camps would provide drastically improved conditions for migrant families, they would not attract new migrant families or entice new families to take to the road.

Through SERA, the state of California began building two demonstration camps at Marysville and Arvin when investment by the federal government brought new life to the project. On April 30, 1935, Franklin D. Roosevelt created the Resettlement Administration (RA) by Executive Order. Designed to rehabilitate both farms and farm families, the RA worked in four divisions: Land Utilization, Rural Resettlement, Suburban Resettlement, and Rural Rehabilitation. The Rural Resettlement Division established a regional office in California and took control of the state's plans to develop migratory labor camps. By August 1935, the RA had adopted one completed migratory labor camp at Marysville and one camp in progress at Arvin. In October 1935, a tour of the first two camps by Rexford Tugwell, an economist and Director of the RA, resulted in a ten million dollar infusion for the temporary camp project and an expansion of the plan

to build several more camps throughout the state.⁹² Governance of the migratory labor camps fell under two overlapping New Deal agencies. In 1936, the RA became a part of the Department of Agriculture, and in 1937, the Farm Security Administration (FSA) took over operations.⁹³ As with many New Deal bureaucratic shifts, the underlying structure and mission of the departments did not change when the administration of it transferred to a different agency. By 1940, the federal government had built fourteen permanent camps in California and Arizona and three mobile camps that could travel with migrant families.⁹⁴

From the beginning of the federal camp program, officials mused about the future for migrant families, hoping they would one day establish permanent residences with the resources they gained through federal support. Family farms held enormous symbolic power for officials and migrant families despite economic and agricultural research and first-hand knowledge of changes in mechanization and the need for seasonal labor. After his 1935 tour of the makeshift communities at Brawley, Paul Taylor argued that a permanent home would solve any number of humanitarian and labor problems:

⁹² Gordon, *Dorothea Lange*, 171.

⁹³ Farm Security Administration, "History of the Farm Security Administration," March 27, 1939, Carton 1, Ralph W. Hollenberg Collection, Bancroft.

⁹⁴ Historians have not come to a consensus about the number of camps that were actually built and used in California. The number of camps in the Coded Administrative Camp Files in the collection of the National Archives in San Francisco, California is fourteen, a number confirmed by Greg Hise, *Magnetic Los Angeles: Planning the Twentieth-Century Metropolis* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 87. Gordon offers fifteen camps after Walter J. Stein, *California and the Dust Bowl Migration* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1973), 151-158. Other historians report as few as 10 and as many as 16. Gordon, *Dorothea Lange*, 470.

A place to call home tends to build happy homes of settled families. It enables the aspiring family to use its industry and thrift to a purpose. It makes possible an expression of beauty and individuality. It creates a spirit of independence instead of subserviency in which children may grow. It eliminates subversive plots and destroys the breeding grounds of anti-social cults.⁹⁵

Adequate housing and the training to make it a home, therefore, were the first steps toward alleviating strife between capital and labor, improving public health, and encouraging the development of an economically independent male citizenry. When the second camp opened in December 1935, representatives from the RA confirmed that they envisioned that the camps would be:

Reservoirs from which distressed farm people can be filtered upward and selectively re-established on part-time farms, as tenants, and even assisted back to the ranks of farm owners... camps will constitute the first rung in a reconstructed agricultural ladder, which they can ascend in traditional American fashion according to their abilities.⁹⁶

The RA's "reconstructed agricultural ladder" toward farm ownership employed several strategies for stabilizing migrant farm workers and their families through housing. In migratory camps, the architecture of the shelters and layout of the camps, educational programs in home economics, democratic committees, and new housewares made by women to beautify their shelter homes were ways to meet migrant families' domestic lack. In 1937, Eric Thomsen, Regional Director in California, pointed to the very use of the term "migratory" in the name of the camp program in a letter to a camp manager. Thomsen noted: "too many people have assumed that we intended that our families should continue to remain migratory." Instead, FSA officials "hope[d] that the camps

⁹⁵ Report of Tour in Brawley.

⁹⁶ Statement of Regional Office of Rehabilitation Administration on Possible Establishment of Migrant Camps.

may serve to stabilize these families and reduce the necessity for migrating.”⁹⁷ Rather than altering or stabilizing the agriculture industry in California or accepting the seasonal nature of agricultural work, officials in the RA and later the FSA believed that the camp environment, its programs, and its rehabilitative potential would reduce a family’s desire to move.⁹⁸

Life in the Camps

Life in the camps for migrant families was shaped by their eligibility for entry and therefore the housing benefits, camp programming, physical rehabilitation, and social rehabilitation promised within.⁹⁹ Initially, migrant families were dubious about the government’s interest in their lives and did not immediately enter the completed camps. The federal government was not yet a trusted resource for humanitarian aid. Many families feared surveillance and federal intervention would lead to limited freedoms and increased debts. Camp manager Thomas Collins, who would become the source for much of John Steinbeck’s research for *The Grapes of Wrath* and to whom the book is dedicated, arrived at the first camp built by SERA in Marysville, California in August 1935. There he found “a small city, a city without order, a city of neglected souls,” with 756 people using pit privies (holes in the ground used as toilets) and water from a broken hand pump.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Eric H. Thomsen to Robert Hardie, February 11, 1937, Box 1, RG 96: FHA, NARA-SF.

⁹⁸ FSA, “Migrant Farm Labor: The Problem and Ways of Meeting It.”

⁹⁹ Hise identifies physical planning and social control as central to the mission of the migratory labor camps. Hise, *Magnetic Los Angeles*, 87.

¹⁰⁰ Thomas Collins, “The Human Side in the Operation of a Migrants Camp,” October 12, 1935, 1, carton 15, Paul Schuster Taylor Papers, Bancroft.

Families who camped at the site questioned Collins' motives. To gain their trust, Collins began his renovations by building a playground for children. A prolific reporter, Collins described the wild eyes of the children as they examined, but did not dare explore, the new playground. Wondering why the children hesitated, he approached the worried parents who believed there must be some price associated with the new playground. After asking Collins a series of questions, parents felt bold enough to ask about the rumors they had heard about the federal camp program. Once they confirmed that there would indeed be hot baths and laundries in the camp, a woman remarked: "Gee, we's being noticed at last – we can be human bein's once agin."¹⁰¹

Despite that woman's enthusiasm, many residents of the camp saw Collins's arrival as a threat. The next day, Collins reported that one hundred fewer people were camped there. From interviews with other families, he learned that those not engaged in migratory work had quickly departed when they learned the camp was to be supervised. Collins met with the same hesitation from migrant families when he opened the camp at Arvin in December 1935. Families at Arvin worried about their freedom to decide how best to manage their children and households. They worried that their children would be vaccinated without their consent, that they would be unable to come and go as they pleased, that a sheriff would monitor their activities, or that the camp would be too expensive.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Collins frequently used dialect in reports when characterizing the speech of the migrants. While he was often sympathetic to the plight of the workers and families in his camps, he clearly differentiated them from other California residents and government employees by caricaturing their speech patterns. By making migrants seem simple and uneducated, Collins played into stereotypes of poor, white trash developed over the course of English colonization of the Americas. Collins, "The Human Side," 1.

¹⁰² Thomas Collins, Arvin Weekly Report, December 28, 1936, Box 5, Coded Administrative Camp Files, 1933-1945, RG 96: FHA, NARA-SF

Camp regulations were not as harsh or intrusive as migrant families anticipated, but the rules emphasized sanitation and order as a paternalistic form of education in federal domesticity. To keep the camps orderly, managers asked that migrant families occupy their assigned lots, small patches of land in organized rows, and keep them clean. They used rules to educate migrant families on hygiene by asking families to “take care” of equipment, turn off water, use toilets and baths “properly,” and use garbage cans to control their waste. Managers asserted authority regarding the flow of information by asking that migrant families consult them for any advice or information, report sickness, and notify them in advance of departing. They monitored migrant behavior by not allowing “intoxicating liquors or narcotics” into the camp and requiring “peaceful” interactions that reflected those of “a good neighbor.”¹⁰³ In order to enter the camp, the head of the family had to agree to the regulations, pay the price of ten cents per day per lot, commit to two hours of labor for the camp per person per week, and show proof that they were registered employment seekers in agricultural labor.

Outside visitors to camps – who often came to assess living conditions, to research possible solutions for worker housing on their own property, and to offer their opinions - mentioned the large number of children they saw. Some of those visitors inquired about whether the residents used birth control methods.¹⁰⁴ On another occasion, camp manager Thomas Collins mocked his residents in a section of his report called “migrant wisdom.” He described, in dialect, that camp families viewed the arrival of new babies as a blessing and not the product of a sexual relationship, which was a criticism of

¹⁰³ Camp Permit, Box 1, Coded Administrative Camp Files, 1933-1945, RG 96: FHA, NARA - SF.

¹⁰⁴ Thomas Collins, Arvin Weekly Report, n.d., Box 1, Coded Administrative Camp Files, 1933-1945, RG 96: FHA, NARA-SF.

their religious practice, sexual health knowledge, and broader education. Collins wrote: “Gawd is good to us farm lab’rs. When we aint got wuk and every’ thing luks blue he sends us a new baby ter keep us happy.”¹⁰⁵ For all of the concern about migrant families and their birth control methods in federal camps, migrant families tended to be only slightly larger than the average American household of the 1930s. Migrant families typically comprised five to six persons whereas the median family size in 1930 was four people per household.¹⁰⁶

Camp managers did not restrict housing based on the number of people in a family or the relationship status of group members. In some cases, extended family members lived together in tents in order to reduce the cost of the family’s stay in the migrant camp since the cost per day was based on the use of a tent platform and not the number of people occupying it. For this reason, one investigation found as many as twelve people sleeping in one tent. In that family, an adult daughter and son-in-law lived together with her parents. Synthetic families of single men or women were welcome in the camp until 1937, when new regulations restricted their entry.¹⁰⁷

Camp managers practiced de facto segregation, but federal migratory camp policy established by the FSA and its predecessor agencies did not official exclude or segregate migrant families based on race. The federal camp program was one of the first federal

¹⁰⁵ Thomas Collins, Weekly Report, February 28, 1936, Box 23, Coded Administrative Camp Files, 1933-1945, RG 96: FHA, NARA – SF.

¹⁰⁶ Frank Hobbs and Nicole Stoops, U.S. Census Bureau, *Census 2000 Special Reports, Demographic Trends in the 20th Century* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2002), 137.

¹⁰⁷ Joe E. Schoales, “Inspection of the Arvin Migratory Labor Camp,” February 24, 1937, Box 1, Coded Administrative Camp Files, 1933-1945, RG 96: FHA, NARA-SF.

agencies to provide housing outside the United States armed services. Although migrant tent camps adopted standardized approaches to planning and design based largely on temporary military installations, they did not have the same longstanding regulations for racial segregation as the military, in which racial segregation would persist until the 1960s. In one exchange with his regional director, camp manager Tom Collins described his idea to segregate the migrant labor camp without making segregation an official policy. His plan was prompted by a complaint from a nearby neighbor who wrote to the California regional office to report that the Arvin camp denied entry to three African American men. Eric Thomsen at the regional office questioned Collins about the incident and worried that the “Southern prejudice” against African Americans had been transplanted along with the migrants into the California camps.¹⁰⁸ Collins replied that the camp was full when the men arrived; they had not been denied entry because of their race, but due to limited space alone. He had a legitimate reason to deny entry to the three men Thomsen questioned him about, but conscious of or perhaps blaming the racist attitudes of his camp residents, he was also prepared should families of other races arrive. Collins planned to fill two of the three units in the camp – each consisting of tent blocks and their own bath and toilet facilities – with white families. He would leave the last unit empty in case any African American, Mexican, or Filipino families arrived. Collins reminded Thomsen that African Americans in California were well organized and opposed to segregation in tax-supported camps.¹⁰⁹ Thomsen responded to Collins without

¹⁰⁸ Eric H. Thomsen to Tom Collins, October 9, 1936, Box 3, Coded Administrative Camp Files, 1933-1945, RG 96: FHA, NARA-SF.

¹⁰⁹ In 1893, the California State Assembly passed a statute barring segregation in public accommodations. Three years later, the Supreme Court ruling in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) upheld racial segregation A.K. Sandoval-Strausz, “Travelers, Strangers, and Jim

an admonition or request for Collins to change his plan. As long as Collins' system of shuffling residents was not an official policy, it could remain the preferred practice.¹¹⁰

Racial composition of the federal camps reflects, in part, the willingness of nearby farmers to employ migrant workers of different races, a practice that varied by region and by individual farmer. In some cases, farmers preferred to hire Filipino, Mexican, and African American workers because they believed they had an innate skill for picking particular crops based on their experience with previous hires and their own racial biases. Most migrant families in federal camps in California were white. Non-white migrant and tenant farm workers who had been working in these areas long before the Dust Bowl migrants arrived tended to live on the private farms or in nearby towns. Mexican agricultural workers, for example, lived in a village of their own in Shafter, California outside of Bakersfield. The community began as a squatters' camp and had slowly become a clean neighborhood of adobe buildings and board shacks. Because migratory Mexicans who worked on Shafter's farms stayed in the permanently established neighborhood during harvest season, they did not enter the available federal migratory camp in the same community.¹¹¹

The predominant whiteness of the California federal camps can be estimated by the lack of racial data in the camp records. Camp managers in the California region did not report the races of the families in their camps in their weekly tallies, but did

Crow: Law, Public Accommodations, and Civil Rights in America," *Law and History Review*, vol. 23, no. 1 (Spring 2005), 78.

¹¹⁰ Thomas Collins to Eric Thomsen, October 12, 1936, Box 3, Coded Administrative Camp Files, 1933-1945, RG 96: FHA, NARA-SF.

¹¹¹ Thomas Collins to Eric Thomsen, April 2, 1937, Box 3, Coded Administrative Camp Files, 1933-1945, RG 96: FHA, NARA-SF.

occasionally mention migrant workers of other races in their narrative reports. Camps located in Arizona reported that they served Mexican and African American families regularly. Filipino and Mexican families seem to have joined the camp population at Arvin intermittently. A photo essay from *Pic* magazine mentions thirty African American families at the Indio camp. The accompanying photographs show black and white children playing, eating, and napping together in the camp nursery.¹¹² Since racial integration in the camps appears to have been newsworthy, it is revealing that such news was not frequently reported.

Migrant families' whiteness conferred a willingness and ability to be rehabilitated and signaled to federal officials that their migrancy and poverty were temporary conditions. Federal officials believed that creating physical order in the camps was the first step in rehabilitating these families. The earliest camps were designed to provide the "minimum necessities of health and decency."¹¹³ Federal officials built very little infrastructure in the first camps, intending them to be truly temporary spaces. In December 1935, the permanent buildings at the Arvin camp included spaces for the staff: a warehouse, which was used as a camp office and community center, a manager's house, and a garage. There was a first aid building, which was used as a nursery and playroom and three sanitary units each serving thirty-two tent spaces. Sanitary units, which comprised laundry, shower, and toilet facilities, stood on cement floors and featured both hot and cold running water. The sanitary facilities were divided into two sections, one for

¹¹² "Humanity U.S.A.," *Pic* (February 16, [1941?]), carton 3, Ralph W. Hollenberg Collection, Bancroft.

¹¹³ Herbert H. Mensing, "Inspection of the Arvin Migratory Labor Camp," November 20, 1935, Box 1, Coded Administrative Camp Files, 1933-1945, RG 96: FHA, NARA-SF.

men, and one for women. Electricity powered the common buildings in the camp and there was a party phone line for resident use.

Physical improvements in the camps reflected the development of standards for federal domesticity driven by the notion that rehabilitating white families required material decency. Since the lots assigned to families were merely designated spaces in the earth in the first month of camp at Arvin, a family without a tent could be turned away since the government did not provide tents or other comforts. A lot could accommodate a tent and space for the family car, the purchase and maintenance of which would have been a substantial expense in the family budget, but one necessary for migrant labor. After a month, the residents of the camp at Arvin built wooden plank floors in each of the lots on which to pitch their tents (Figure 4).¹¹⁴ The addition of wooden platforms was not lost on outside visitors. Broadus Mitchell, a professor of economics and sociology at Occidental College in California, wrote to President Roosevelt to express his satisfaction with the migratory camps. “The difference between having a plank floor for one’s tent,” he began, “and having a dirt floor is the difference between decency and degradation.”¹¹⁵ Mitchell urged Roosevelt to continue the program by asserting that the migrants were “as Anglo-Saxon as King Alfred” and that none of his race has endured worse conditions. The camps, Mitchell concluded, appeared cheap to maintain and were the best-spent money by the federal government. Coded in Mitchell’s praise of the federal migratory camp is the notion that the migrant families the federal government served were deserving of aid, both because of their Americanness (or whiteness) and because of their

¹¹⁴ Thomas Collins, Weekly Report, January 25, 1936, Box 5, Coded Administrative Camp Files, 1933-1945, RG 96: FHA, NARA-SF.

¹¹⁵ Broadus Mitchell to Franklin D. Roosevelt, March 29, 1940, Box 43, General Correspondence, 1935-1945, RG 96: FHA, NARA-SF.

economic productivity. These were not unmoored tramps begging for a handout, but white American families working for the farmers that supplied essential crops for the American public.

Additional comments from outside observers emphasized that one-room housing was inadequate for decent families. By 1938, later camps had experimented with adding infrastructure including one-room aluminum shelters on concrete platforms.¹¹⁶ In their one-room dwellings – whether tent or aluminum shelter – the family slept, cooked, ate, and relaxed together. Segregation of family members by sex or by age group was not possible in such a space, and it disturbed onlookers' sense of privacy.¹¹⁷ For migrant families, however, privacy had long been abandoned in favor of survival.

Once families entered the camps, the top priority for federal officials was to improve the condition of migrant bodies, giving them the appearance of white, stable American citizens. For the families who abandoned squatters' camps and entered federal migratory camps, hygiene was the first noticeable improvement in the quality of their lives. Many new residents headed straight for the showers. One day early in the Arvin camp's existence, residents brought a young boy to Tom Collins' attention. The boy had been in the men's sanitary unit for a long time and, while nobody would begrudge a new resident a bath, the child seemed to have taken three hot baths in a row. His family, like the others who had recently arrived, had not bathed in between six and eight months.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ Greg Hise, "From Roadside Camps to Garden Homes: Housing and Community Planning for California's Migrant Work Force, 1935-1941," in Elizabeth Collins Cromley and Carter L. Hudgins, eds., *Gender, Class, and Shelter: Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture V* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995), 248.

¹¹⁷ "Housing for Migratory Agricultural Workers," *Public Welfare News*, Carton 3, Ralph W. Hollenberg Collection, Bancroft.

¹¹⁸ Mensing, Inspection.

Hot, clean water was difficult to come by during their time on the road and in dusty makeshift camps. Collins reported that despite this boy's many hot baths, he did not seem to be getting any cleaner. It was then that the camp manager realized the boy had not been using soap and sent over his mother to gently assist and explain.¹¹⁹ Although the boy delighted in his first baths in months, he did not have the knowledge or tools to get clean.

Once the bodies of migrants were rehabilitated through hygiene, federal officials focused on their social rehabilitation to help these fallen white families recover after their experience of poverty and dislocation. Collins' impulse to build the playground first to attract children to the camp signaled a broader commitment to wholesome socialization and recreation in the camp program, especially for children. Most camps included a baseball diamond, children's playground, and a large, open community platform for dances and meetings. In camps designed later, the community platform would take the shape of a covered community building at the physical center for the camp, a spatial cue that demonstrated their importance to the programming. Boys learned competitive sports like boxing, wrestling, and baseball. Community dances were common on Friday nights featuring music performed by camp residents. By the mid-1930s, the YMCA and other groups had established the use of recreation as a tool for the rehabilitation of physical and moral weakness. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, leaders from religious and political groups championed the character-building possibilities of outdoor recreation and taught sports in Americanization programs. The development of a healthy body through exercise and sports could steer boys especially away from vice and toward an

¹¹⁹ Thomas Collins, Weekly Report, December 28, 1935, Box 5, Coded Administrative Camp Files, 1933-1945, RG 96: FHA, NARA-SF.

individualistic, self-reliant “muscular Christianity.”¹²⁰ Federal officials translated these long-established practices to camps to develop the same traits in migrant children and their families.

Social rehabilitation also meant lessons in civic responsibility and American citizenship, which were integral to the education program in the camps. As part of the experimental nature of community life in the migratory labor camp programs, camp managers created volunteer committees to aid in camp governance while offering opportunities to practice democracy. The first of these began at the camp at Marysville under the supervision of Collins. Men in the camp voted for representatives to the Camp Committee, the direct link between campers and the management of the facility. The Camp Committee met regularly to oversee all “problems of discipline, law and order, disputes among individuals and groups, and all questions of a controversial nature.”¹²¹ Men in the Camp Committee wrote camp rules and ensured that residents followed them. Subcommittees were also established for specific areas of camp life. The Recreation Committee took care of playgrounds, baseball, activities, equipment, and dances. Mothers in the Child Welfare Committee worked closely with the camp nurse to supervise the nursery, learned first aid activities and hygiene, and planned proper lunches for their children. The Women’s Committee invited all women residents to be members and encouraged new residents to the camp to use the nursery, playground, and recreational facilities. They conducted sewing projects in the community center. The Women’s Committee was also known as the “Good Neighbor Committee” and they

¹²⁰ Clifford Putney, *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).

¹²¹ Thomas Collins, “Kern Migrants Camp Committees,” n.d., Box 1, Coded Administrative Camp Files, 1933-1945, RG 96: FHA, NARA-SF.

assisted new campers with orientation, helped source supplies, and took care of the camp's sick and destitute.

Camp committees were intended to awaken migrant workers to the ideals of democracy. The successful experiments in self-governance at Marysville and Arvin spread through the migratory labor camp system as a model for effective rehabilitation. From experiments in 1936, the federal government codified the organization of community councils in migratory labor camps so that by May 1940, the FSA distributed guidelines for the system widely. Community councils would become a signature of the federal migratory labor camp program. Committees established in the migratory camp program would continue to be deployed in federal temporary shelters, including in internment and refugee camps. These exercises in leadership and self-government, federal official believed, would help displaced families take ownership of their rehabilitation by encouraging democratic thinking.

Federal officials intended migrant families to lead their own rehabilitation by learning “new and better standards” from professionals and experts working for or in partnership with the federal government and then teaching other residents.¹²² The Child Welfare Committee at Arvin brought together three adult women residents, a representative from each unit, as well as the camp nurse and visiting physicians to deliver first aid and spread lessons in hygiene and nutrition. Many of the mothers who entered the camp had not received instruction in the practices and benefits of personal hygiene and had not seen a doctor in years. Some techniques for care were foreign to their experience of scraping by like routine hand-washing and bodily cleanliness, vaccinations,

¹²² “Organization of a Community Council,” enclosure sent from J.O. Walker to L.I. Hewes, Jr., May 22, 1940, Box 43, General Correspondence, 1935-1945, RG 96: FHA, NARA-SF.

and dressing wounds. Professionals educated the three resident women and then encouraged them to share their knowledge with other members of the community. Through this process of learning and teaching, women would have a stake in their own education and obscure the influence of outside experts, who were distrusted or perceived as intrusive and judgmental.¹²³ Remembering to prepare healthful lunches for their children to take to school each day had not been an important daily practice for migrant mothers when their children accompanied them into the fields instead of going to school. Nutritious diets rich in fresh fruits and vegetables could not be stretched as well as salted meats and boiled potatoes.

Teaching Home Economics

By the 1930s, home economics training had been established as a pathway to good citizenship. When the migratory labor camps opened, home economics was a thoroughly professionalized field with a central role in the federal bureaucracy. Federal officials predicted that migrant women without permanent homes would benefit from home economics training to shape them into productive American citizens. These courses and activities, they determined, would teach women to raise their family's standard of living that would eventually stabilize their families and make them less vulnerable to migrancy. Home economics instructors in federal migrant labor camps introduced women to consumer culture and taught them to make small housewares even though they did not have a permanent house. These courses positioned migrant women, who had been working in agriculture alongside their husbands, as homemakers who accumulated material possessions as training for their permanent home and middle-class family.

¹²³ Thomas Collins, Weekly Report, February 29, 1936, Box 6, Coded Administrative Camp Files, 1933-1945, RG 96: FHA, NARA-SF.

Home economics as a professional field emerged at the turn of the twentieth century with roots in the domestic sciences of the nineteenth century. The new field built on concepts proffered by domestic scientists to improve the lives of homemakers through material changes to the organization and management of the home. Home economics differed from its predecessor by adjusting to changes in the household brought on by technologies and a growing culture of consumption. Home economists still sought to improve the lives of homemakers, but they focused more consistently on lessons of consumption rather than on household production. In the 1920s, the federal government made home economics a part of its operations by establishing the Bureau of Home Economics within the Department of Agriculture. Home economists employed by the federal government studied and tested agricultural and commercial products in state-of-the-art laboratories and shared their findings with universities, extension programs, professional associations, and consumers. By the 1930s, home economics was a well-developed course of study that trained homemakers in all aspects of household management with an emphasis on “rational consumption [as] the basis for good citizenship.”¹²⁴

Migrant women received instruction in home economics from a variety of sources in federal migratory labor camps. Their instructors and the type of instruction they received changed over time. After 1938, the federal government hired professional home economists, college-educated women who worked closely with migrant women in individual and small group settings. Prior to that, from 1935 to 1938, the camp manager took the lead on home economics education by inviting outside speakers and women’s

¹²⁴ Carolyn M. Goldstein, *Creating Consumers: Home Economists in Twentieth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 71, 133.

club leaders to speak and providing printed material on home economics to camp residents. The camp manager would distribute colorful booklets supplied by insurance companies that covered basic nutrition and health information about common diseases and injuries.¹²⁵ New residents might also receive a cookbook and information from the Children's Bureau about child health and wellness.¹²⁶ Without calling the educational program for women and families home economics specifically, camp managers taught resident families how to raise their standard of living through home management and production. "The campers," Arthur Lundin observed, "are learning how to budget their household expenses, how to dry fruit to take care of themselves when there is no work, how to properly care for their children, prenatal care, how to sew, and other equally fundamental skills which raise the standard of living of the family."¹²⁷ For Lundin and the federal officials he reported to, women learning these home economics skills were succeeding in stabilizing their families and overcoming their migrant status.

Gendered stereotypes about a woman's role in the family shaped the educational and community programming for women in migrant labor camps without consideration for their farm labor and contribution to the family budget. There is no record of camp managers discouraging women from working in agricultural labor as they did for

¹²⁵ Door-to-door insurance salesmen distributed the brightly colored and informative documents to housewives, who would keep the documents in their kitchens, using the recipes and guidelines for their housework and unconsciously absorbing the brand identity of the insurance agencies that provided them. Insurance companies must have delivered a bulk of booklets for migrant families staying in temporary shelters in order to begin developing their brand recognition for when they would be able to spend money on insurance. My understanding of these booklets and their long history in the United States comes from the Winterthur Museum, Garden & Library.

¹²⁶ Mensing, Inspection.

¹²⁷ Lundin, Observations.

children, but instruction in home economics made up a substantial percentage of the camp's education and recreation activities for women and resulted in a focus on homemaking instead of agricultural labor. Within four months of the Arvin camp's opening, Thomas Collins established a Women's Committee and designed an educational program of thirty lessons. Half of the proposed lessons focused on health and hygiene including basic first aid and sanitation with one lesson designed to "relieve campers' minds of many false fears and superstitions regarding health." Five of the thirty lessons were planned to help the women adjust to life in the camp by encouraging communication with camp managers and assuring them of the benefits of camp life. The remaining proposed lessons included courses in childcare, cooking, budgeting, reading, sewing, and music performance.¹²⁸ Collins was a proponent of the camp committee model so it is likely that he collaborated with women in the camp to develop the domestic programming schedule and took seriously their requests for specific lessons. In his view, however, women had "no outside interests and are pretty well tied down with their home details" making them the "hardest problem of the camp."¹²⁹ By offering educational classes related to the home, Collins hoped he could keep migrant women active community members by appealing to what he believed were their innate domestic interests.¹³⁰ As he filled their days with classes, Collins also guided women away from agricultural labor and helped reconstruct the family economy in line with the breadwinner-homemaker model.

¹²⁸ Thomas Collins, Weekly Report, March 21, 1936, Kern Migratory Labor Camp, container 1, Irving Wood Papers, Bancroft.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

The stability of the camp environment likely prompted women in migrant families to express their domestic interests and abilities in ways they were not able to do during migration or when they lived in makeshift camps. For many, the small plot they rented in the camps was the greatest amount of personal space they had seen for months or years. Women would arrange their tents and later their aluminum shelters as if they were small homes, with kitchen space, sleeping quarters, and storage. In a small space of their own, women relished the opportunity to clean and decorate, to care for their children instead of picking crops in the fields, and to start to build a better life.

Lessons in home economics were not merely feminine dalliances, but also empowered migrant women to participate in public life. Federal officials remarked on migrant women's interest in sewing as proof that educational programming in home economics was a successful endeavor, but they failed to consider the reason behind their excitement. "Every afternoon the sewing room is taxed to capacity," Arthur Lundin wrote in his observations of the Arvin camp, "and at times there have been so many desiring to sew that many women must be content to do their sewing in the tents."¹³¹ Lundin described donations of clothing arriving in camp by the box-full and women racing each other to the sewing room to pick out the best pieces. They would trade their own creations of diapers or nightgowns for the donated dresses and then work in the sewing room to alter their clothing to fit. Many of the women in camp did not come to camp with sewing abilities, but were eager to learn and make new clothing for their families.¹³²

¹³¹ Lundin, Observations.

¹³² More than a decade prior to the institution of migrant labor camps, Robert S. And Helen Merrell Lynd reported their findings in *Middletown*, an investigation of modern life in a typical town in America. The Lynds found that in 1925, four out of five working class women only did basic mending for their families, while nine out of ten wives from the business class did no sewing at all. Since the women of the migrant families were

Donated dresses altered to fit would have been luxurious, the newest clothes women in migrant families would have had in a long time.¹³³ As professional home economists would later learn, sewing new clothing for themselves and their children empowered migrant women to engage in community life. Migrant women frequently kept their children away from public schools and did not engage in community activities because they did not have appropriate clothing and shoes and were ashamed of their appearance. New clothing enabled migrant women to attend committee meetings, join community activities, and to send their children to school for the first time.¹³⁴

Federal officials provided opportunities and tools for migrant women to produce and purchase goods for permanent homes they did not have in order to encourage their participation in a capitalist economy, which was tied to family stability and good American citizenship. For bureaucrats hoping to reform migrant families, property ownership, material acquisition, and instruction in how to keep a home signified settlement and stability. In this case, federal officials provided resources in order to reform migrant women into consumers, which would lead to a conventional home and ultimately a standardized, middle-class family. Material accumulation for migrant families was not only a symbolic settling down, but a physical one too. It was harder to keep an entire family on the move when one's property could not fit on the back of a

likely close to the age of the rebellious teenagers depicted in the Lynd's study, it is quite probable that these women never learned to sew with any efficiency and instead relied on ready-made clothing and goods. Robert S. Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd, *Middletown: A Study in American Culture* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1956 [1929], 165.

¹³³ Lundin, Observations.

¹³⁴ Lucile W. Reynolds, "Home Economists in the Rehabilitation Program, *Journal of Home Economics*, vol. 29, no. 4, (April 1937), 219.

truck. Bureaucrats hoped that buying a new tent or icebox might give migrant families a sense of pride and encourage them to lay down more permanent roots. Observers noticed “several families that entered camp with nothing but a car and a bed now have a new tent and furniture. The new property owners are full of pride over their possessions and have ambitions of getting more. The drive for betterment is now coming from within the individual himself.”¹³⁵ For camp managers and federal officials, pride in the consumption of household goods and clothing would lead to aspirations for a better life; they set up property ownership as the path to the middle class. Despite the experimental and communal aspects of life in migrant labor camps, the strategy behind home economics education was entirely based in capitalism, an important distinction for liberal New Dealers as they defended the growing role of the federal government.

As the FSA grew and the migratory labor camp program expanded to more and more camps, a professional corps of home economists took over instructional responsibilities from camp managers. “It was easy to realize,” Ethelyn O. Greaves, Ph.D. later wrote, “that an immediate home management problem was essential and needed.”¹³⁶ Greaves would later become the Dean of Home Economics at Utah State University and co-author texts in microbiology with her husband. Regional officers of the FSA in California took Dr. Greaves’ recommendations seriously and tasked professional home economists, known as home management supervisors, with improving the living conditions of families in migrant camps. Home management supervisors were professional women with college degrees in home economics and significant experience

¹³⁵ Lundin, Observations.

¹³⁶ Ethelyn O. Greaves, “The Home Management Program in FSA Migratory Camps,” 1942-43, carton 2, Ralph W. Hollenberg Collection, Bancroft.

in social welfare agencies prior to being hired by the FSA.¹³⁷ Greaves praised home management supervisors for their professionalism and training and did so with good reason. The women were relentless in their studies. They passed journal and magazine articles back and forth, maintained a library collection, attended workshops and seminars throughout the country, and developed new skills and knowledge from each other, from their families, and from other professional women.¹³⁸ Greaves likely deduced that touting the expertise of her home supervisor corps would assure federal officials that this team of young women would manage their assigned families with their scientific training rather than with their womanly empathy.

Even with their extensive training, home supervisors were not immune to stereotypes of migrant families and their own personal biases against them. Some home economists thought Dust Bowl migrants were unworthy of federal aid and worked with them begrudgingly, while others preferred to work with the white, Christian migrants rather than the “usual migratory cotton picker.” Chastain Thomas, a home supervisor that had been working with other rural families before moving into migrant camps, wrote of the trouble one of her previous clients experienced when seeking aid. The client had never been on relief and had never been able to receive any federal assistance when trying to establish his own home. The family was ill, starving, and in need of new clothing. At her wits end, Thomas pronounced: “There is something wrong when all of

¹³⁷ Marjorie M. Heseltine, “Qualifications for Home Economists in Welfare Agencies,” *Bulletin of the American Home Economics Association*, series 22, no. 3 (February 1940), 9.

¹³⁸ Greaves, *The Home Management Program*.

these migrants and such get aid and a *worthwhile family* is turned down every place.”¹³⁹ As Thomas grappled with feeling as though the migrants were unworthy of federal aid, home supervisor Marjorie Springer preferred working with migrant families to the Mexican, Filipino or African American migrants who had previously dominated migratory farming. Springer remarked that migrant families’ “homes” were clean and simple and lacking in household goods they could not afford. They were practical people who counted running water as the “greatest luxury they have ever had.” Framed sentiments and Bibles in their shelter homes led Springer to conclude that Oklahoma migrants were religious: pious and humble in the face of great need. Springer concluded that some of the migrant families she met would one day be “substantial farmers,” which meant they would produce enough food for subsistence and sale and would maintain a permanent farm household.¹⁴⁰

When professional home supervisors began working with migrant families in federal camps, they took inspiration from the “home management plan,” a cornerstone of rural home economics, and taught migrant homemakers to make goods for the home with the goal of improving the quality of their lives. Prior to their work with migrant families, home economists collaborated with homemakers who were tenants or owners on family farms to develop personalized home management plans that integrated household production into general lessons in consumer education. Although home management plans acknowledged the strained cash budgets and productive capability of farms, they were intended to gradually raise a rural family’s standard of living to that of a middle-

¹³⁹ Excerpts from Home Supervisors’ Weekly Reports, July 25, 1938, Box 43, General Correspondence, 1935-1945, RG 96: FHA, NARA-SF. Emphasis added.

¹⁴⁰ Excerpts from Home Supervisors’ Weekly Reports, April 15, 1938, Box 43, General Correspondence, 1935-1945, RG 96: FHA, NARA-SF.

class suburban or urban family, reduce the amount of household production, and increase the family's participation in consumer culture. The home economist was "faced on the one hand by the standards of living which she knows to be adequate or at least tolerable and on the other by the cold fact that the plan however carefully drawn cannot promise the cash necessary."¹⁴¹ Home management plans combined budgeting and planning for the interior of the home, the garden, and the family farm and considered available acreage, seasonality, and food preservation. Home supervisors sought to "help the home maker discover her own relationship to the economic and social problems of her farm home and of her family" and become "the business partner of her husband."¹⁴² The home supervisor educated rural homemakers on methods of production, from planning crop schedules to making clothing, mattresses and meals.¹⁴³ If a rural homemaker could maintain the home management plan that she created with the home economist, her family would slowly move toward improved living conditions and increased economic and social status.¹⁴⁴

In the federal migratory camp program, home management supervisors were tasked with helping migrant women make their temporary shelters homelike, prepare for lean seasons, and develop skills for permanent home management in the future. They sought to improve living conditions by increasing family income through savings and

¹⁴¹ Connie J. Bonslagel, "Home Economics in the Resettlement Program," quoted in Erna E. Proctor, "Re-evaluation of the Contribution of Home Economics to Health and Other Social Welfare Work: Rural Health and Welfare," 5.

¹⁴² Proctor, 5.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 6.

budgeting; by providing general education in childcare, home management, nutrition, and hygiene; and by creating household goods and clothing.¹⁴⁵ Home management supervisors held demonstrations, directed the activities of the camp nursery and hired its staff, worked closely with the camp nurse to provide health information, and they made connections in the outside community. Viola Hayes reached out to the local school in Arvin to develop a course in home economics for sixth, seventh and eighth grade girls in the camps. Hayes and the school officials agreed that girls in this age group should have home economics training since they were likely to marry at a young age and they would not complete their education beyond grade school.¹⁴⁶ Despite the goals of the federal camp program to create competent housewives, home management supervisors were realistic about the future most of the women in their care faced and also prepared young women for future roles as domestic servants. Women and girls in the camps enthusiastically attended most of the classes and activities offered by the home management supervisors. Between January and March of 1940, home management supervisors offered 102 meetings in seven camps and counted 2,555 women as attendees.¹⁴⁷

Migrant women learned to save money by making their own food and home goods. The Yuba City home supervisors, Francis Gibson, had trouble enticing migrant women to attend her healthy food demonstrations. To attract them to her course, she

¹⁴⁵ Greaves, "The Home Management Program."

¹⁴⁶ Excerpts from Home Management Supervisors' Monthly Reports, January 9, 1941, Box 43, General Correspondence, 1935-1945, RG 96: FHA, NARA-SF

¹⁴⁷ Hulda Van Steeter, Home Management Supervisors Report, March 1940, carton 3, Ralph W. Hollenberg Collection, Bancroft.

broadcasted on the loudspeaker throughout the day that there would be door prizes for attendees. Gibson taught the women at the demonstrations to make soup from their surplus, cooked cabbage and spinach, and raw salads to increase their vegetable consumption. She gave each attendee warm bread to sample and offered door prizes of raw vegetables, toothbrushes, toothpaste, soap, washcloths, towels, needles and thread, and handkerchiefs. Attendance in Gibson's demonstrations climbed in every subsequent week.¹⁴⁸

Home management supervisors led migrant homemakers in the accumulation of private property by teaching them to create furniture for their shelter homes and future permanent homes. Evelyn Jacobs taught women in the Yuba City camp to create furniture from scrap lumber. They gathered orange crates, plywood, and other scraps from throughout the area as raw materials. Together they learned to build wardrobes, dressers, baby cribs, tables and chairs. A fresh coat of paint or stain concealed the modest materials and gave the furniture a finished and more expensive look. Without having to make a purchase, women in Yuba City could decorate their shelter homes and leave camp with new possessions.¹⁴⁹ An extant image of furniture designs from a different camp reveals that furniture produced by migrant homemakers were not slapdash creations, but carefully crafted and reminiscent of modern, fashionable styles (Figure 5). The simple furniture features curved edges that take a degree of skill to complete and look similar to popular, high-end furniture made by designers like Gilbert Rohde.

¹⁴⁸ Excerpts from Home Management Supervisors' Monthly Reports, n.d. [1941?], NARA-SF.

¹⁴⁹ Excerpts from Home Management Supervisors' Monthly Reports, January 9, 1941,

Home economics training educated migrant women in a form of domesticity that was incongruent with the type of dwellings they inhabited. The crafts they produced were not intended to improve their shelter homes, but to be an aspirational practice of middle-class etiquette for their rehabilitated lives. In November 1939, women who lived in metal shelters of 140 square feet met together every Tuesday afternoon for five hours to make textiles for the home. They made a variety of textile crafts, including rugs, shopping bags, luncheon cloths (informal tablecloths), and guest towels.¹⁵⁰ Shelter residents did not have the space to welcome guests or host luncheons. The informal tablecloths they made in migrant camps would likely cover their homemade furniture and their guest towels might be used in communal showers. But decorative textiles were also easy to transport. Whereas migrant women may not be able to purchase new appliances and carry them in their cars as they moved to the next camp, a small package of textiles could travel with them and remake their next temporary space or their permanent home.

The decision to create middle-class material culture was more complex than federal officials insisting on middle-class standards for poor women. The migrant women who attended these classes expressed their own desires for luxury goods and special skills. In December 1940, Sophia Valdivia, the home management supervisor in Arizona reported that migrant women in her low-cost food demonstrations asked to learn to make Christmas candy. Although Valdivia did not believe that a candy demonstration was the best idea for a course on nutritious food and careful food budgeting, the women “ha[d] their ideas...” and Valdivia was “trying to cooperate with them.”¹⁵¹ Christmas candy must have seemed like a strange request for Valdivia, who felt that she was starting from

¹⁵⁰ *Tow-Sack Tattler*, November 4, 1939.

¹⁵¹ Excerpts from Home Management Supervisors’ Weekly Reports, January 9, 1941,

scratch with nutrition and food preparation techniques. But migrant homemakers knew to make the most of new educational experiences to better their homes and their lives.

Migrant mothers held cultural values about caring for their homes and their children that were very similar to those of middle-class mothers. Surely, these women dreamed about a permanent family home and fine things of their own. The types of crafts they made with the help of home supervisors suggest an urge for respectability even if the materials they selected were humble. For Christmas, Home Management Supervisors helped women in the migrant camps create menus and prepare celebratory, but economical, dishes. Women in the camps made over three hundred cloth dolls and sewed new quilts as gifts.¹⁵² One Homemaker's Club made drapery for the sewing room windows using burlap sacks that they dyed forest green and finished with fringe and colored yarn.¹⁵³ Women worked together to create a layette – a set of clothing and blankets for a newborn baby – for a new mother in one camp. They pulled together scraps of material and collected flour sacks to wash and bleach to make soft cotton gifts for the new arrival.¹⁵⁴ The club was so pleased with the results of the layette that they planned to extend the project for all of the camp's new mothers.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² Narrative Report, Region IX Migratory Labor Camp Program, December 1939, carton 3, Ralph W. Hollenberg Collection, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

¹⁵³ Hulda Van Steeter, Home Management Migratory Labor Program Report, March 1940, carton 3, Ralph W. Hollenberg Collection, Bancroft.

¹⁵⁴ Flour and feed sacks were often used as a substitute for cotton cloth in the United States from the 1930s through the 1950s. Flour companies encouraged the reuse of the cloth by incorporating printed designs as a marketing tool. In the 1950s, women competed in national dressmaking competitions using flour sacks as materials.

¹⁵⁵ Hulda Van Steeter, Home Management Migratory Labor Program Report, April 1940, carton 3, Ralph W. Hollenberg Collection, Bancroft.

Mrs. Martin Edwards of the Visalia Camp in California embodied the progress toward middle-class values that FSA administrators hoped for when they began teaching migrant women to sew. Mrs. Edwards found herself with free time despite caring for seven of her eight children in the migratory labor camp. Edwards was “a mite of a person whose face [was] still drawn and pale from an illness,” but she devoted her time to making eight dresses, one in honor of each of her children, for the Red Cross. “The government has been good to us,” Edwards explained, “and I wanted to help someone myself.” The Home Management Supervisor who oversaw Edwards’ contribution to the Red Cross and perhaps helped her with her sewing skills only wished that the beneficiaries of Mrs. Edwards’ charity and hard work knew that their dresses were made by a woman who overcame such odds with such grace and generosity.¹⁵⁶

Homemaker’s Clubs encouraged women in middle-class sociability as well as material possessions. Once a month, women invited their husbands, a prospective member of the Homemaker’s Club, and that woman’s husband to a social night. There the groups played bingo and other games to win prizes made and acquired by the homemakers. The prizes – a mattress, bottled fruit, cakes, pies, and orange box dressing table, a luncheon set, a pieced quilt top – were simple luxuries that demonstrated their skills and tempted prospective members to join.¹⁵⁷ Three migratory camps hosted social nights in the first month after founding Homemaker’s Clubs in 1940; over one hundred people attended each one.

¹⁵⁶ Memo: Consumer, Recreation, and Community Sanitation Group Case Histories, United States Department of Agriculture, Farm Security Administration, Region IX, n.d., carton 3, Ralph W. Hollenberg Collection, Bancroft.

¹⁵⁷ Hulda Van Steeter, Home Management Migratory Labor Program Report, March 1940, carton 3, Ralph W. Hollenberg Collection, Bancroft.

While it is likely that home management supervisors and the women in Homemaker's Clubs shared many assumptions about middle-class domesticity, their combined interest in a refined home seems out of context in a migratory camp. For families who had long suffered with no medical care and arrived in camps in various states of distress, the use of time and resources for middle-class crafts may seem frivolous. Homemaker's Clubs publicized their meeting times in the camp community newsletter sometimes alongside warnings from the local Health Department about maintaining basic bodily cleanliness. The juxtaposition of these directives for migrant women – join the Homemaker's Club or remember to bathe - highlights the conflicting values and responsibilities that migrant women had for themselves and that were held to by others. Women gathered to make layettes, but they did not have basic medical knowledge about newborn care or nutrition. Home management supervisors needed to rectify these gaps in knowledge for migrant mothers to gain confidence in their parenting abilities and keep their children healthy.

The home management supervisors became close to the women they served and began to realize that additional health information, especially about the parent-child relationship, would be vital to home economics education. When proposing the addition of such a course of study in April 1940, Ethelyn Greaves made clear to her directors at the regional office that a challenge of the program would be the temporary nature of the camp. Some families would not spend enough time in the camp to learn about their children's needs at each developmental stage. There was so much first aid and home-based medicine to learn. Few Americans could see a regular family doctor during the Depression and many resorted to caring for themselves. Since "the welfare of the human

race depended on the art of mothering” during this period, health and basic medicine was essential knowledge for migrant homemakers.¹⁵⁸

Health education, especially with respect to sexual and reproductive health, had long been an important part of the migratory camp educational program. Observers in the early demonstration sites noticed the increased attention mothers paid to the health and nutrition of their children after they arrived in camp, likely because the information and support was finally available to them. Weight and food charts hung in the camp manager’s office to study, and a visiting doctor and nurse traveled to the camps regularly. In 1936, the Arvin camp held a monthly Well-Baby clinic for children. Every mother attended and brought her children “scrubbed to a fare-ye-well.” Arthur Lundin attributed the improved health and weight gain of the children to regular doctor’s visits, booklets distributed upon arrival, and improved home environments achieved through better home making.¹⁵⁹

In May 1942, the FSA rolled out a new Health Education program for the migratory camps in California. The program had been in development for almost a full year after test visits to each migrant camp by Ruth Coe, Assistant Supervisor of Community Services for the California Region and a trained nurse. Coe traveled to eight migratory camps in California over a four-month period and delivered 125 classes in order to design the course of instruction for the Health Education Program. The goal of the program was to provide migrant families with basic health education based on the life

¹⁵⁸ Philip L. Frana, “Medicine and the Family in the 1930s,” in Hamilton Cravens, ed., *Great Depression: People and Perspectives* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2009), 74.

¹⁵⁹ Lundin, *Observations*.

cycle.¹⁶⁰ Coe coordinated with camp committee members, the Red Cross, and county health departments to strategize about the educational and medical needs of the migrant families. Coe planned for home management supervisors to work with camp nurses to deliver the program.

Instruction by the home management supervisor linked home economics to health education and meant that home management supervisors could make use of their relationships with migrant women to encourage them to attend the courses. Home management supervisors coupled courses in maternity and childcare with demonstrations to guide migrant families. They paired pregnancy courses with the construction of maternity dresses and baby layettes, infant nutrition with lessons in how to cook and puree fruit and vegetables for baby food, and childcare with directions to build baby cribs from lettuce crates. They knew the specific health concerns of the women they served and they used material culture and education to solve those problems and rehabilitate migrant families into stable, middle-class families.

Nurseries in migrant camps highlighted for migrant mothers that children should be in school or cared for by trained professionals rather than working in the fields with them. Camp committee members and federal officials convinced mothers that they needed safe and reliable childcare and prompted the creation of nurseries run by trained Work Projects Administration (WPA) and National Youth Agency (NYA) workers.¹⁶¹ Just as they had with the baby layette, residents pitched in to appoint the nurseries with cloth dolls and small quilts. The Homemaker's Club in one camp reached out to an ill

¹⁶⁰Coe showed a series of films geared toward adult audiences, including: Pre-natal Care, Infant Care, Cancer, Venereal Diseases, Tuberculosis, Food and Growth, How Teeth Grow, Posture, Reproduction of Mammals, First Aid, and more.

¹⁶¹ Narrative Report, January 1940, carton 3, Ralph W. Hollenberg Collection, Bancroft.

resident that could only perform light work to make toys for the nursery. Mr. Hester made wooden wagons and wheelbarrows from empty prune boxes and painted them in bright colors for the children.¹⁶² Toy making for the nurseries was not a perfunctory idea about how to amuse children, but rather a studied and measured response to ideas about child welfare. Home management supervisors compiled a booklet of forty ways to create hand-made toys for children to distribute to other home management supervisors around the country. They suggested pairing the booklet with a Children's Bureau film about the developmental benefits of play for children.¹⁶³ Lessons on childcare and the developmental needs of children led migrant mothers to accept nursery assistance and reconceptualize the way they perceived children in their families from working and contributing to the family budget to having educational needs that were not met when children were working.

Federal officials in the FSA sought to improve the lives of migrant families by teaching them the value of a healthy home environment and the methods of achieving it. The federal officials believed that effective homemaking would strengthen a family and lead its members toward stable citizenship and away from the perils of migrancy, perils that included premarital sex and unintended pregnancy. In November 1941, Ruth Coe wrote about her progress developing the health program, but she could not help but offer insights into the parent-child relationships she witnessed across the camps. To her dismay, she saw "only one idea in the disciplining of their children and that is a 'whoop'in.'" Coe reasoned: "many of our so-called problem children are not problem

¹⁶² Narrative Report, March 1940, carton 3, Ralph W. Hollenberg Collection, Bancroft.

¹⁶³ Jack Bryan to Regional Information Specialists, "Forty Tips for Homemade Toys and Games," November 26, 1941, Box 43, General Correspondence, 1933-1945, RG 96: FHA, NARA-SF.

children at all, but are the children of ‘problem parents.’”¹⁶⁴ Coe was similarly frustrated after her classes for adolescents. At the Shafter camp and many others, she was greeted with “a great amount of tittering and giggling.” Worse, in her opinion, was the sexual experience of many adolescents:

Their chief question is “how can you keep a girl from having a baby?” These kids are smart and way ahead of themselves. They know nothing about the correct terminology of words. I am forced to use the words “balls” and “bag” for “testicle” and “scrotum”. They don’t know what “sex relations” are but they all know the meaning of “a four letter word beginning with ‘F’ and use it freely. There is no doubt in my mind that a large number of girls and boys from thirteen up are indulging and enjoying sexual intercourse in camps. The cotton patches adjoining the camps seem to be the “spot.”

When Coe discussed the sexual activity of their children with the parents in the camps they claimed that they did not have as much sexual experience by their 20s as their adolescents had now. Parents explained that the new camp environment—rather than their parenting style or the conditions they lived in previously - caused this behavior. In Oklahoma, they opined, families lived on small isolated farms and did not have as much contact with other children as they did now in migrant camps. “They get into more trouble” in the camps, their parents insisted.¹⁶⁵ Ironically, the camp setting provided the perfect place for adolescents to sneak around together. Adolescents used the freedom and sociability provided by the camps in ways unintended by federal officials.

Migrant women were not averse to the environmentalist training they received in federal migrant labor camps. On the contrary, women participated happily in the home

¹⁶⁴ Ruth Coe to Harvey Coverley, “Health Education Classes,” November 22, 1941, Box 43, General Correspondence, 1933-1945, RG 96: FHA, NARA-SF.

¹⁶⁵ Ruth Coe to Harvey Coverley, September 27, 1941, Box 43, General Correspondence, 1933-1945, RG 96: FHA, NARA-SF.

economics training. Participation and attendance numbers can provide one clue to the reception of home economics training. When participation numbers dipped for crafts, sewing, and Homemaker's Club meetings, camp managers and home management supervisors knew it was because women had returned to working in the fields during agricultural busy seasons and not because they had lost interest. Women took pride in the housewares they learned to make and the health and hygienic improvements of their families. They wore their creations, gave them as gifts, and exhibited their work in local stores for sale. When they sold their wares, many women used the proceeds to reinvest in sewing supplies during the off-season when there was little cash flow from farm work to further their projects.¹⁶⁶

By their own measures, federal officials succeeded in their attempts to stabilize migrant families by appealing to homemakers. Migrant families were no longer the troublesome migrants that blighted the California workforce, but housed and in training in federal camps or, in some cases, permanent residents who could both produce and consume. The FSA intended for the home economics education migrants received to encourage homemakers to produce more of their necessities at home and introduce them to consumer culture. While migrant families could not tend vegetable or flower gardens while confined to their small lots, they could and did make quilts and mattresses.¹⁶⁷

Migrant families also moved on. Camp newsletters introduced new families and bid farewell to departing families in every issue. Reprints of rules, schedules, and invitations were common content in newsletters since new families received them each week.

¹⁶⁶ Narrative Report, January 1940, carton 3, Ralph W. Hollenberg Collection, Bancroft.

¹⁶⁷ F.N. Mortenson, "A Progress Study of 347 Families Occupying the Labor Homes and Cooperative Farms on 16 Projects of the Farm Security Administration in Region IX, 1940," August 1941, carton 3, Ralph W. Hollenberg Collection, Bancroft.

Federal officials affirmed their good work with migrant families when they praised them as citizens. One observer remarked that migrants were “of basically sound timber” and “high morality” suggesting that they merely needed Americanization to transform their lives from starvation to “dependable and respected citizenship.”¹⁶⁸ Before their arrival in camp, migrant families were an unsolved social and labor problem. Once rehabilitated, they “now hold up their heads. They go among the citizens of the county, clean of body and cleanly dressed. They are humans once again. The camp is their home and of it they are justly proud.”¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁸ Lundin, Observations.

¹⁶⁹ Thomas Collins, Weekly Report, February 29, 1936, Box 6, Box 5, Coded Administrative Camp Files, 1933-1945, RG 96: FHA, NARA – SF.

Chapter 3

“GIRLS’ TOWN”: SEXUAL MORALITY FOR SINGLE WOMEN DURING WWII

Miss Clara Camille Carroll clutched her lapels, ready to remove her coat and make herself at home in her new room (Figure 6). Before she could finish the motion, though, her eyes darted across the room, surveying its contents. Brand new furniture, modernistic and fashionable, filled the small space. It was a tight fit between the bed and the dresser. Each piece of furniture butted-up against the next, but the blonde wood finish and diminutive scale of the single bed and tables helped the room feel light. The space was spare but clean. Bed linens and curtains framing the windows were crisp and showed no signs of wear. She would be the first to live in this room in the Lucy D. Slowe residence, a dormitory for single, African American women in Washington, D.C. On that day in 1943, Carroll had recently arrived from Cleveland, Ohio to work at the War Department. Roger Smith, a veteran photographer in the Office of War Information (OWI), captured more than Carroll’s expression upon seeing her new room. Smith knew that Carroll could represent an everywoman. She was a beautiful: attractive, middle-class, well dressed, with an air of respectability. Carroll could represent the single women who moved from their hometowns to find war work in other parts of the country. She could represent African Americans who started new jobs they had never before been offered. Carroll was the perfect exemplar of the success of the federal government’s defense housing projects. In this image, she would help demonstrate just how comfortable a federal dormitory, a federal job, and a move far away from home could be.

When women like Carroll moved across the country during World War II, they contributed to the development of the raced and gendered standards for federal domesticity as the government officials attempted to house them. Mobilization for World War II was a seismic demographic shift in the history of the United States. Over twelve million Americans enlisted in the service. Fifteen million Americans like Carroll moved away from their resident counties by the end of the war.¹⁷⁰ Rural Southerners moved to Northern city centers to work in defense industries. Women and African Americans learned new skills in new jobs. Cities boomed, and the population center of the United States moved farther and farther west.

Mobilization for war exposed a dire housing emergency as new residents poured into defense communities to be greeted by a nationwide housing shortage that began during the Depression. In crowded war production centers, existing houses and hotel rooms were quickly rented to an estimated half of the population that needed housing. The solution for the remaining need was a federal project to build defense housing, sometimes called war housing, for employees engaged in the war effort and their families. Federal subsidies and programs aided private builders, who worked feverishly and with limited construction materials to build new housing for more than half of the remaining 1.9 million. By the end of the war, the federal government had built more than 851,000 dwellings, including nearly 600,000 single-family homes, 171,000 dormitory rooms, and 82,000 stopgap units, which included trailers. Approximately nine million people lived in war housing throughout the United States. The cost of such an endeavor

¹⁷⁰ Kenneth Paul O'Brien and Lynn Hudson Parsons, eds., *The Home-Front War: World War II and American Society* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995), 5.

was more than two billion dollars authorized by Congress and almost five and a half billion in private spending.¹⁷¹

Defense housing became one of the means by which federal officials sought to regulate the morality and family life of a population in flux through federal domesticity. Instead of adjusting housing standards to meet an increasingly mobile, young, and independent workforce, the United States government strengthened its commitment to the American family and the single-family home. Public housing officials explicitly defined what constituted a family, writing standards of federal domesticity into federal housing policy. In so doing, government officials privileged the family within the liberal state and asserted the role of government in private life. Even though the federal government built housing for families and unmarried people, family morality undergirded construction plans and regulations within housing communities. Government housing policies defined a family as including: members of all one race, a heterosexual married couple, children, a male breadwinner, and a female housewife. Deviation from these norms through divorce, childlessness, interracial marriage, same-sex coupling, extended families, or the presence of lodgers, could mean that a family or defense worker would not qualify for emergency housing provided by the government and would have to seek out private, expensive, or substandard options. The authority of government sanction, and indeed creation, of this family morality complicates Clifford Edward Clark, Jr.'s argument that plan books and housing magazines propelled these notions.¹⁷² Family morality was not merely popularized and commercialized for the middle class, but was written into government

¹⁷¹ National Housing Agency, *Public Housing: The Work of the Federal Public Housing Authority* (Washington, D.C.: Federal Public Housing Authority, 1946), 5-8.

¹⁷² Clark, *The American Family Home*, 242.

policy and made material in architecture that housed the millions of Americans who served their country through war work.

These federal standards affected unmarried people as well. Federal domesticity and the family morality that shaped housing regulations subjected single men and women who mobilized for war to rigid sexual, gendered, and racialized norms. Standards for single dormitories emphasized the protection of women workers through privacy, wholesome recreation, and sexual and racial segregation. Even though single women workers did the jobs of men in increasingly integrated workplaces, federal guidelines pushed single women to comport themselves as future wives and mothers.

The federal government's efforts did not quash instability or sexual experimentation. In congested areas, public health officials combated a rising rate of venereal disease among U.S. servicemen. Vice administrators warned of loose women and of "patriotutes" who sold their sexual services in new, messy communities.¹⁷³ Campaigns to control venereal disease included efforts to suppress prostitution. Government propaganda and public media vilified women's sexuality while also encouraging sexual sacrifice and obligation.¹⁷⁴ Out of their parents' homes and away from the prying eyes of neighbors, young women explored their sexuality through a vibrant dating culture, sex work and sexual exchanges, and extramarital sex, among other

¹⁷³ See: Allan M. Brandt, *No Magic Bullet: A Social History of Venereal Disease in the United States Since 1880* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); Janann Sherman, "'The Vice Admiral': Margaret Chase Smith and the Investigation of Congested Areas in Wartime," in O'Brien and Parsons, *The Home-Front War* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995); Marilyn E. Hegarty, *Victory Girls, Khacki-Wackies, and Patriotutes: The Regulation of Female Sexuality during World War II* (New York: NYU Press, 2007).

¹⁷⁴ Hegarty, *Victory Girls, Khacki-Wackies, and Patriotutes*, 8, 13.

possibilities.¹⁷⁵ The war brought young people together in places where they had opportunities to explore their same-sex desires and develop romantic and community relationships.¹⁷⁶

The federal focus on families and their ideal dwelling, the single-family home, can be seen as a corrective to the looseness of congested areas. For policy-makers in the federal government, “a happy family [was] the best background for an efficient workman.”¹⁷⁷ Officials believed that the sacrifice endured by millions of Americans during wartime made them deserving of a high standard of housing and community. Prior to the war, the single-family home was sacrosanct and the federal government’s top priority with respect to defense housing. But the exigencies of war meant a nationwide shift from permanent family homes to defense housing solutions that were designed to be temporary. As federal officials sought a level of stability that previously only accompanied middle-class permanent residences and communities, they also increased their investment in temporary dwellings to meet the logistical challenges of wartime construction.

African American women like Carroll benefited from federal housing efforts only late in the war effort as a direct result of the federal government deference to “local customs,” an accommodation to racist segregation. With federal government sanction,

¹⁷⁵ Amanda H. Littauer, *Bad Girls: Young Women, Sex, and Rebellion before the Sixties* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 34.

¹⁷⁶ John D’Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012 [1988]), 289.

¹⁷⁷ National Defense Advisory Commission, Press Release No. 296, December 9, 1940 quoted in Sarah Jo Peterson, *Planning the Home Front: Building Bombers and Communities at Willow Run* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 88.

local authorities and not federal officials, determined the amount of housing their community needed and had the power to select the occupants based on their interpretation of community standards. As a result, practically across the country, officials developed permanent, single-family housing for white war workers long before meeting the needs of African American war workers. By the end of 1944, only fourteen percent of the war housing under federal management was designated for “Negro” occupancy. The National Housing Agency defended this percentage by arguing that there were many other units of federal defense housing in development for African American war workers, but that populations varied significantly by region.¹⁷⁸ As such, much of the planned housing for African Americans developed late in the war was not complete before war’s end and never provided the relief that war workers needed.

The race-making effects of federal domesticity are made clear by the government’s investment in “the family” and their private homes during World War II, which always meant the white, middle-class family. Commentators emphasized the way that housing was more important than the bricks and mortar of the building. “Good living quarters,” declared Gladys Miller, interior designer for defense housing projects, “create better morale.”¹⁷⁹ Severed from the ties of their homes and extended families, migrant war workers needed something permanent and stable to look forward to after their wartime sacrifice was over. Perhaps the stability of a home and family was a way of promoting the possibilities for life after hardship. The family was the foundation of America’s “arsenal of democracy,” a source of support, a proving ground for its citizens,

¹⁷⁸ NHA, *Public Housing*, 12.

¹⁷⁹ “Permanence in Workers’ Areas Seen by Miss Gladys Miller, Consultant,” *New York Times*, December 1, 1941, 16.

a deserved form of personal satisfaction at the end of a long day of work, and a reason to fight. If the families in question met the hidden eligibility requirements for federal domesticity – if they seemed willing and able to be redeemed to the white middle-class – then federal programs made housing options available. If, however, war workers did not meet those criteria because of their race and inability to be redeemed as white, federal officials felt secure in neglecting their duties to house those government employees.

Before the War: Inheritances and Planning

Defense housing programs inherited their standards from New Deal public housing programs, which had only recently taken shape before bureaucrats redirected the departments to focus on defense housing. The federal government had not been in the business of providing public housing for very long before the start of the defense emergency. On September 1, 1937, the United States Housing Act established the U.S. Housing Authority (USHA).¹⁸⁰ The USHA would lead regional and local housing directors in the construction of federal public housing. Under the direction of Nathan Straus, the USHA would provide oversight and standards for housing design, bidding, construction, and tenant evaluation procedures. Straus was a consummate New Dealer, a reporter and media owner who was also a State Congressman in New York working with FDR before his presidency. In his earliest public announcements, Straus revealed that he had taken the role of Administrator for the USHA because President Roosevelt had “entrusted” him with “the leadership in the battle to raze the slums... the thing [he] most

¹⁸⁰ The USHA was established within the Department of the Interior in 1937 and remained under their purview until 1939, when Reorganization Plan No. 1 transferred administration of the USHA to the Federal Works Agency (FWA). Executive Order 9070 renamed and reorganized the USHA as the National Housing Authority (NHA) in February 1942.

want[ed] to do in life.”¹⁸¹ The United States Housing Act required that local authorities make decisions regarding the location and construction of subsidized housing and that they remove an equal number of slum housing units for every public housing project constructed. The USHA immediately got to work. From 1937 to 1941, Straus and his team designed thirty-five procedural bulletins about the development of public housing on topics ranging from sub-soil investigation to staff training for use at the local level.

Beyond blueprints and construction plans, however, these programs encoded clear ideals about the relationships among housing, gender, and sexuality. The sexual morality espoused by the federal government manifests first in the 1937 housing law itself:

It is the policy of the United States to promote the general welfare of the Nation by employing its funds and credit... to remedy the unsafe and unsanitary housing conditions and the acute shortage of decent, safe, and sanitary dwellings for families of lower income...¹⁸²

The 1937 law was explicitly designed to meet the housing needs of “families” rather than people, citizens or even residents. This language, though subtle, indicates that federal housing law would be bound by a set of assumptions about gendered relationships and sexual values that federal officials assumed to be a part of a family. The descriptions of the types of dwellings the agency would create – decent, safe, and sanitary – had, by 1937, been coded into housing reform for generations to mean single-family homes for middle-class families.¹⁸³

¹⁸¹ United States Housing Authority, Release No. 2, January 25, 1939, Box 1, Record Group 196: Records of the Public Housing Administration, NARA-DC (hereafter RG 196: PHA).

¹⁸² *United States Housing Act of 1937*, 42 U.S.C. 1437 (1937).

¹⁸³ Although “decent, safe, and sanitary” are twentieth century terms that reflect the germ theory of disease, “healthy” housing was articulated as the impetus for elite families

Since the United States Housing Act of 1937 was intended to serve families in the United States, bureaucrats therefore needed to standardize the definition of “family” in their documents. The USHA restricted admission into federal public housing to a “natural family or to a cohesive family group” whose adult members, either working or dependent, were “clearly established as an inherent part of the family.” A natural family did not include two distinct families, lodgers or transient guests, or a synthetic household of adults. A person living alone could constitute a family if they were elderly, disabled, displaced, or the remaining member of an absent tenant family, but other single people could not qualify for housing with two or more bedrooms. The minimum number of occupants allowed in federal public housing was two, but even with two members, local officials had the authority to determine the eligibility of families without children. Federal standards explained how a local office should create a method to quantify income limits, current living conditions, and family make-up. If a family did not meet the expected local traits and qualifications, that family’s application would be deferred.¹⁸⁴

These written standards for public housing had direct, material consequences as federal officials allocated housing units depending on the type of family unit. Through these guidelines, the federal government not only specified which types of families could be housed, but directed – or attempted to direct - the living arrangements of its renters.¹⁸⁵

fleeing the lower classes and their presumed diseases on the New York City wharves as early as the 1790s. “Healthy” housing connoted single-family homes without tenants or boarders and away from industry, poverty, racial integration, and sexual service. See: Blackmar, *Manhattan for Rent*.

¹⁸⁴ United States Housing Authority, “Bulletin No. 31: Suggested Procedures for Initial Tenant Selection and Renting,” December 17, 1939, Box 1, RG 196: PHA, NARA-DC.

¹⁸⁵ United States Housing Authority, “Bulletin No. 22,” Box 1, RG 196: PHA, NARA-DC.

The USHA standardized the number of rooms needed for different family compositions. They advised that local offices take care in unit selection based on the reality of occupancy for the family on a case-by-case basis. Federal officials preferred that children of the opposite sex not share a room, but they accepted sharing among same-sex siblings. The federal housing office reminded local authorities that children under two years old ultimately grew out of their cribs in the parent's or parents' bedroom, and urged them to consider a private room for the child's future needs. Use of the family room as a site of "normal family group life" was also an important consideration. The USHA did not want families in public housing sleeping in public rooms or walking through sleeping rooms. Federal officials were empowered to make decision about housing based on both family composition and presumed family behavior in the house.

These standards of privacy and decorum took what was fairly standard for middle-class and wealthier families and made it baseline for low-income people. Separating children by sex and the use of single rooms for each member of the household, including nurseries for infants, was common in middle class American homes as early as the 1830s.¹⁸⁶ What is notable, then, is the articulation of middle class standards and behaviors for low-income families, whose previous living arrangements were completely different from the large Victorian homes where these ideals originated. To be approved for federal public housing, a family had to show a pressing need based on their present, "slum-like" living conditions. The conditions that families experienced were worlds away from the domestic ideals of the mid-nineteenth century. Often, whole families would have to share small rooms and small beds. They did not know the privacy that large mansions provided.

¹⁸⁶ Clark, *The American Family Home*, 40.

The USHA's work on slum clearance and public housing continued during 1939 when officials in the federal government began to take seriously the declarations of war in Europe. Sociologists, housing professionals, and economists began to compile data about the housing shortage in the United States caused by the slow-down in construction and underemployment during the Depression. While the housing shortage predated the war, experts warned that if the United States become involved in the war in Europe, the existing housing crisis would become untenable.¹⁸⁷ These scholars looked to European examples to shape their advice. As they reported, mobilization for war in Europe had already caused population shifts and a greater need for housing in industrial war production areas. They knew the same population shifts and need for industrial workers in the United States would exacerbate an already dire housing situation.

The defense housing program began after the fall of France in early June 1940 and well before the Lend-Lease Act (1941), which codified the United States' commitment to providing armaments and supplies for European allies. The USHA's guidelines for tenant selection in public housing had only been finalized and promoted to local officials for six months before Straus released a different set of guidelines on June 29, 1940 that expanded the USHA in order to house industrial workers in production areas. The new guidelines called for the creation of USHA-Aided Defense Housing Projects in light of an amendment to the United States Housing Act of 1937, passed only a day before.¹⁸⁸ This adjustment to the Housing Act allowed the USHA to expand its

¹⁸⁷ Boris Shiskin and Warren J. Vinton, "War Developments and Housing," October 6, 1939, Box 118, John M. Carmody Papers, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York.

¹⁸⁸ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, "Major Legislation on Housing and Urban Development Enacted Since 1932," http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?Id=Legs_Chron_August_2013.pdf.

program and to house defense workers, that is, those that worked in manufacturing plants and facilities that built war materiel, and their families.

Officials began to switch priorities from low-income to defense housing as soon as the bureaucracy was in place. The National Defense Housing Act, “The Lanham Act” of 1940, the cornerstone legislation of defense housing, passed through Congress after the USHA’s priorities changed. The Lanham Act authorized the use of federal funds to support public housing for workers in the defense industries, thereby providing a source of funding for a ramped-up housing program. The language of the Lanham Act stretched the family-only policies of the USHA by directing the agency to develop housing “for persons engaged in national defense activities and their families, and quarters for single persons so engaged.”¹⁸⁹ Though it was then possible for the USHA to house unmarried or single people, federal officials continued to use the established definition of families for their local counterparts.

The switch from public housing to defense housing required few policy changes. A June 1940 bulletin detailed changes to existing policy about income limitations and a halt to the equivalent elimination requirement, which required slum clearance. The first bulletin contained no changes to the definition of “family” or to rules governing family composition. A more thorough memorandum at the end of December 1940 confirmed that the agency would not change its definition for the purposes of tenant selection.¹⁹⁰ As

¹⁸⁹ *Defense Housing and Community Facilities and Services Act of 1940* (commonly “The Lanham Act”), 42 U.S.C. §§ 1501-1594 (1940).

¹⁹⁰ United States Housing Authority, “Management Policies to be Established for USHA-Aided Defense Housing Projects under Public 671,” December 27, 1940, Box 1, RG 196: PHA, NARA-DC.

long as the principal wage earner for the family was employed in a defense industry job, their position in federally managed public housing was secure.

USHA officials intended the definition of “family” as an eligibility requirement in order to ensure privacy and permanence in federally funded housing projects. In December 1940, Assistant Administrator and project manager of the USHA W.P. Seaver clarified the federal interest in privacy and permanence in his bulletin to regional directors regarding the eligibility of families with foster children. Seaver explained “the present definition of a ‘family’ does not specifically cover such situations, [but] it is not considered sound policy to deny the benefits of public housing to such families.”¹⁹¹ Seaver specifically noted that foster children should not be considered lodgers or transient guests. In this explanation of foster children, Seaver articulated that the definition of family was established by the USHA to “preserve the privacy essential to wholesome family life.” Seaver also suggested that the eligibility of families with foster children take into consideration the permanence of the foster arrangement and the “home-like character of the project dwelling.”¹⁹²

The issue of permanence, embodied by an interest in housing “permanent” families, was a major concern as the federal government began the physical construction of defense dwellings. In 1939, initial plans for low-income public housing required that homes be built for an anticipated lifespan of twenty years. In 1940, when the first USHA-aided housing projects for defense workers were being planned, the agency announced that dwellings would also be made with permanency in mind. The New Dealers who

¹⁹¹ United States Housing Authority, “Tenant Selection - Eligibility of Families with Foster Children,” December 31, 1940, Box 1, RG 196: PHA, NARA-DC.

¹⁹² Ibid.

worked at the USHA were committed to developing federal public housing and were concerned that the speed necessary for building houses for the defense emergency and calls for temporary dwellings would sideline the mission of housing low-income families after the end of the war. From within the USHA, Nathan Straus commented that the defense housing projects were “being built so as to be useful long after the present emergency passes; to become a vital part of the public low-rent housing programs of the communities in which they are located.” For Straus, the USHA was ready “to vastly extend its work so as to keep men and factories busy and to provide a cleaner, more healthful, richer life for American families now forced to exist in slums.” Straus planned to produce defense housing quickly, but his real interest was in housing low-income families and ensuring that defense-housing spending would not go to waste after the emergency ended.¹⁹³ Straus did not consider that communities did not want to invite the types of residents that public housing typically attracted. What would the damage to their communities be once the admirable defense workers moved out and the deplorable poor moved in?

Public sentiment was mixed on the issue of permanent versus temporary defense housing in their local communities. The debate about permanency ignited the interests of existing residents who saw their home values and the moral character of their communities at stake. Some insisted that established communities with permanent dwellings would lead to stability and solve a larger need for housing, while others sought experimental methods by using demountable or prefabricated housing that would disappear with the workers at the end of the emergency.

¹⁹³“Public Housing to Be at Peak in ’41,” *New York Times*, January 5, 1941, RE1.

The nation's housing crisis during World War II mirrored the housing problems of World War I in that a national housing shortage preceded the United States' entry into the First World War just as in the lead-up to World War II. When the United States entered World War I in April 1917, manufacturing jobs in war industries increased quickly and investment in housing, often designed as permanent housing, fell far behind the need. The results were conditions "so intolerable" that men gave up their high paying war-industry jobs and struck out again in search of better accommodations. In the summer of 1917, the federal government declared the housing problem a "war emergency" because it impeded production in war industries. To solve the problem of housing workers in isolated munitions factories (isolated because of safety concerns), the federal government built housing and facilities for "providing some approximation of community life" along with the plant itself. These facilities were more expensive than expected, but they were built with ease. In areas where war industries were connected to existing communities, which represented a vast majority of sites, the federal government stalled. On July 25, 1918, a full year after the declaration of a "war emergency" in housing that required government intervention, the United States Housing Corporation began to acquire land to start construction. When the armistice was signed on November 11, 1918, the Housing Corporation had begun 83 projects, 60 of which were in construction.¹⁹⁴ Since the Congressional appropriation specified that the funds were to be used only for the war emergency, the Housing Corporation ceased its building program. Where permanent houses under construction were far enough along that it would be more expensive to halt construction, construction companies completed the houses, which were

¹⁹⁴ Department of Labor, *Report of the United States Housing Corporation, Volume II: Houses, Site-Planning, Utilities* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1919), 17-18.

then sold or rented. Where construction was not far enough along or where projects were temporary in nature, construction was cancelled and sometimes sites were abandoned.¹⁹⁵

Housing officials tasked with understanding the failures of defense housing during World War I found that permanent single-family housing was not a favorable investment for builders who could instead build apartments and tenements. In their study, the housing officials discovered that, although the “characteristically American impulse toward the making of a permanent home for the family in a place of its very own,” was still strong, many working families did not have the means to own their homes because of their employment prospects.¹⁹⁶ Once defense jobs for the war were no longer needed, families followed available jobs to new locations. Temporary housing arrangements, therefore, were preferable to permanent housing in these areas and for these laborers.

While the government came to the conclusion that temporary housing was preferable, individual communities had differing experiences. *New York Times* reporter Lee E. Cooper reminded readers of the “mistakes and problems which arose in housing activity in this country during the World War days” when “hasty planning, temporary construction and poor choice of location in many of the World War communities” led to “‘ghost’ neighborhoods” at the war’s end.¹⁹⁷ Cooper and others wanted well-constructed, permanent dwellings that could contribute to their communities once the defense emergency was over.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Lee E. Cooper, “Apartments Planned Facing Central Park; Permanency Is Urged for Defense Housing,” *New York Times*, November 8, 1940, 42.

Haunted by the remnants of unfinished housing and the memories of the workers who came during and left after the first World War, administrators in the town of Bridgeport, Connecticut were particularly vocal about their plan to prevent defense workers from becoming permanent citizens in their community.¹⁹⁸ Harold C. Poole, the city's housing director, developed a plan in January 1941 to give bonuses to workmen who would be willing to relocate temporarily during the defense emergency and not to move their whole families. Instead of accommodating all of the new workmen in purpose-built facilities, Poole surveyed the community for vacant rooms in family houses and determined that he found accommodations for three thousand workers. It was Poole's hope that the workingmen would "go back to their old homes" and that the city would "not have to maintain the schools and services" after the defense emergency was over.¹⁹⁹ By March, Bridgeport's local aluminum manufactory estimated that they needed an additional twelve thousand workers by the end of the year. In addition to Poole's plan to house new workers in existing rooms, the city sought temporary solutions in trailer camps and demountable houses. Bridgeport would not accept permanent emergency housing, but instead would be saddled with the problems facing temporary, stopgap-housing solutions.²⁰⁰

Other communities advocated for improvements in roads rather than new housing in order to facilitate rural workers taking urban defense jobs. Better roads from the hinterlands might encourage distant, but still local (and presumably white) people to take

¹⁹⁸ "Defense Housing Fought By Expert," *New York Times*, December 4, 1940, 22.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ "Bridgeport Seeks to Solve Problem Of Defense Housing for Workers," *New York Times*, March 9, 1941, RE1.

defense jobs and would limit the ills of permanent displacement or new, unpredictable residents.²⁰¹ Planners that called for commuting to defense jobs from homes further afield did not yet know that the upcoming entry into the war would severely limit transportation through rubber, oil, and gasoline rationing. Once the government established rations, commuting even short distances to work would become a major concern in defense areas and would lead to further urban congestion.

The origins of federal public housing as a project of slum clearance and the memory of half-finished World War I housing led many communities to construe all federal public housing projects as slums during World War II. New housing projects were often too distant from the existing local community to serve as a real part of it, but were not large enough on their own to become new communities.²⁰² In order to combat the stereotypes of poverty and appearance of slum-like conditions, the USHA constructed schools, cafeterias, shopping centers, infirmaries, playgrounds and recreational facilities. Officials at the agency closely monitored sanitation to present an image of normalcy. Defense areas that looked and felt like stable, family communities curtailed complaints from residents and from the war migrants that had to live there.

The federal government could not move fast enough to build housing in defense areas. A number of agencies overlapped and fought for resources. To manage the federal agencies building houses throughout the country, Roosevelt signed an Executive Order in January 1941 creating the Division of Defense Housing Coordination under the Office for Emergency Management. This office was tasked with centralizing the activities of the

²⁰¹ “Planners to Study Defense Housing,” *New York Times*, April 14, 1941, 19.

²⁰² Albert Mayer, “Housing for Defense – And After,” *New York Times*, September 21, 1941, SM14.

many existing agencies building war housing within the federal government and liaising with private industry to construct houses. A Defense Housing Coordinator within the Executive Branch would be free to solve housing problems immediately without seeking other approvals. In a statement of the Office's goals, C.F. Palmer, the Defense Housing Coordinator Roosevelt appointed, noted that "the basic policy of the defense housing program is this – no defense activity shall be retarded because of lack of housing and no American worker shall be forced to live in substandard conditions while carrying on duties vital to the defense of his country."²⁰³ Palmer's assertion suggested that speed and quality of housing would be the primary concerns of the federal agency in ensuring a national defense housing program. The entry of the United States into the war after the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 only increased the need for housing. The speed and scope of total war brought increases in war production, demands on materials that limited the availability of housing, and people on the move. Since private corporations could not afford to invest in permanent homes that would be built solely for wartime use and have to be sold afterward, the federal government assumed most of the responsibility for housing its war workers.²⁰⁴

Wartime Shifts in Housing Solutions

In February 1942, Roosevelt signed an executive order to consolidate sixteen government agencies that had been working on housing defense workers during the housing crisis under the supervision of C.F. Palmer. The new National Housing Agency

²⁰³ Division of Defense Housing Coordination, "Homes for Defense: A Statement of Function," (Washington, D.C.: Office for Emergency Management, Executive Office of the President, 1942), 8.

²⁰⁴ NHA, *Public Housing*, 7.

(NHA) would have three constituent units: the Public Housing Authority (PHA), which would oversee all housing constructed with public money and would absorb the USHA; the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), which would continue to promote private building by insuring mortgages; and the Federal Home Loan Bank Administration (FLA), which would take on the duties of the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC).²⁰⁵ The three divisions each had separate responsibilities for defense homes (PHA), permanent homes (FHA), and banking, loans, and insurance (FLA). This complex organization was nevertheless a simplification of prior federal involvement in public housing for defense, which had previously been divided among eight agencies.²⁰⁶

At the helm of the new National Housing Agency was John B. Blandford, Jr. Blandford was to ensure that infighting among government agencies about funding and maintaining federal public housing ceased, that housing for the war effort be built efficiently, and that the dwellings the government produced be useful in the post-war period.²⁰⁷ Blandford was a well-known bureaucrat, having served in the Federal Bureau of the Budget, the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), and in a variety of municipal positions. Not everyone greeted his appointment with relief. The editors of *The Architectural Forum* were particularly concerned about Blandford's decision-making and the impact it might have on local builders:

²⁰⁵ "This Month in Building These Things Made News," *The Architectural Forum*, March 1942, 137.

²⁰⁶ The eight agencies were: the Federal Works Agency (FWA), United States Housing Authority (USHA), Public Buildings Administration (PBA), Division of Defense Housing, Mutual Ownership Defense Housing Division, the War Department, Navy Department, and the Farm Security Administration (FSA).

²⁰⁷ "Housing Gets A One-Man Top," *The Architectural Forum*, March 1942, 141.

His will be the decision whether local authorities or Washington authorities will dominate. His will be the decision whether private enterprise is really given a chance to function. His will be the decision whether “local customs” according to congressional dictum mean no improvement in housing standards. His will be the decision whether decent site planning is worth trying for. His will be the decision whether red tape (still not under priority) or common sense will prevail. His will be the decision whether research and experiment get lip service or action. His will be the decision whether political appointees or competent technicians staff the agencies, and no less important, the projects. His will be the decision whether the war housing program should be expanded, as obviously it should, or contracted. And greatest of all, his will be the decision whether speed comes in only when quality goes out.

These concerns reflected the interests of builders, who felt that the requirements of the Lanham Act, the lack of available materials, and a federal system of housing development that required approvals from local, state and national officials restricted their ability to meet the needs of war housing. *The Architectural Forum*’s editors and advertisers advocated for progressive changes, including radical new forms of architecture to meet the housing need.

The immediate shifts in the efficiency and priorities of the NHA were not lost on outside observers. “Their chaotic attempts would be amusing, if we were not at war,” a letter to the editor of *The Architectural Forum* read. Writing from Atlantic City, H.M. Turon knew that the “hasty planning and shoddy construction” would not benefit existing communities where this defense housing was located. Turon compared the migratory war worker to soldiers leaving for war or to the journeyman who left his permanent residence in search of work. He suggested a shift to temporary housing only: “Give the migratory worker shelter in the form of barracks, bunk houses, igloos, dormitories or anything that will keep them in good health, comfortable, rested, fit for the next day’s work. Give them temporary shelter without any salvage value, same as shot and shell or other war

ordnance necessary to win this war.”²⁰⁸ Increasingly, war housing was seen as the solution to a temporary problem and not the solution to a general housing crisis in the United States.

Advocates for temporary dwellings wanted housing to be viewed as a “war tool.”²⁰⁹ Housing could not solve the problems of every stakeholder and should be functional rather than aspirational. The new NHA shifted the priority of war housing away from permanent housing to temporary dwellings in June 1942. The shift to structures built “for the duration” would allow building to be done quicker and with fewer materials that were necessary for the war effort. The shift toward temporary dormitories and stopgap measures, such as trailer communities, led to a decrease in quality of defense housing.²¹⁰ With Administrator Blandford’s priorities in place, permanent construction decreased in importance over the next year. In 1943, permanent housing only increased over the prior year by eight percent, whereas the number of temporary units grew by ninety-one percent, and demountable units grew by forty-nine percent.²¹¹ The dramatic increase meant that temporary units, which began as a small percentage of the total defense housing stock, surpassed permanent dwellings by nearly double within the course of one year. Ultimately, more than half of the defense housing built by the federal government was of a temporary nature due to the speed necessary for production and wartime shortages in building materials.²¹² Builders believed that the

²⁰⁸ H.M. Turon, Letter to the Editors, *The Architectural Forum*, April 1942, 18.

²⁰⁹ “War Housing,” *The Architectural Forum*, May 1942, 261.

²¹⁰ Bauman, et. al., *From Tenements to the Trailer Homes*, 130-131.

²¹¹ “War Housing Built for Temporary Use,” *New York Times*, May 2, 1943, RE4.

²¹² NHA, *Public Housing*, 9.

administration had finally seen the light and was separating “the social aspects of the housing campaign from the immediate exigencies of the critically short housing situation,” by abandoning its plans to have defense housing meet long-term needs. The architects, construction company heads, and planners who read *The Architectural Forum* believed that those who knew that the housing shortage was acute and needed short-term solutions had finally supplanted plans to socialize housing for future public housing needs.

Prefabrication was one possibility for short-term solutions. Builders had experimented with prefabrication and new materials for generations. Kit homes, which companies like Sears and Aladdin shipped to consumers with all of the materials necessary to build a complete single-family home, became popular in the early twentieth century.²¹³ Whereas prefabricated houses in the early twentieth century could not be moved after their initial construction, changes in materials and construction techniques meant that prefabricated houses in the 1940s offered demountability: they could be moved to the communities in which they were needed, demounted, and moved again. These houses would be adaptable to the site’s streets, sewers, plumbing, and electrical work, but, like the earlier kit homes, followed popular and traditional house designs. Because officials wanted to recoup some of their expenses after the war, they preferred that demountable houses be resold and so their designs were often free-standing, single-family homes rather than experimental designs. The federal government followed “the line of least local resistance,” and did not push flat roofs or modern designs. Builders excited about the possibilities of prefabrication found it a challenge to produce a large

²¹³ Clark, *The American Family Home*, 181-183.

number of traditional houses fast enough for one neighborhood or community due to wartime shortages and production times.²¹⁴

The seeming incongruity between federal domesticity, which valued privacy, permanence, and stability, and an increase in temporary dwellings meant that there was widespread concern from federal officials about the potential for trailer housing to meet the standards of existing communities. In 1942, the NHA approved trailers as a stopgap measure to house migrant defense workers before their “duration” dwellings – standard quarters to be used until the end of the war – could be completed.²¹⁵ One government report suggested that trailers might be attractive options for single women and childless couples, who would need furnished accommodations.²¹⁶ Trailers were only to be used as stopgap shelters for the NHA because of their small amount of living space (regulated since 1937) and the lack of private sanitary, bathing, or laundry facilities. Trailer communities and private trailer camps required the intervention of federal government construction dollars to deliver sanitary facilities. Even then, most existing communities of permanent homes and apartment buildings, according to Blandford, did not want trailer camps in their area.

Still, commercial interests were keen on the use of trailers. Members of the manufacturing associations who built trailers and trailer parts sought congressional support for more trailer camps in more cities. The NHA fielded requests for trailer use in

²¹⁴ “Prefabrication Gets Its Chance,” *The Architectural Forum*, February 1942, 81-83.

²¹⁵ John B. Blandford, Jr. To Senator Downey, September 30, 1948, Record Group 207: Records of the National Housing Agency, NARA-DC (hereafter RG 207: NHA).

²¹⁶ National Housing Agency, “Second Annual Report: January 1, 1943-December 31, 1943,” 15, RG 207: NHA, NARA-DC.

agricultural labor, on oilfields, and for seasonal employees. Trailer advocates sent reports illustrating the healthy lives that trailer-dwellers led and their stable family situations. The *New York Times* published a sociological study by a Professor Donald Cowgill at Drury College in Missouri. The study indicated: “automobile trailer homes do not represent a menace to America’s traditional manner of living but have had beneficial effects upon family stability, morals, and health.” Cowgill revealed that the groups of people who were likely to live in trailer homes were carpenters, construction workers, and oilfield hands. To prove that trailer camps were upstanding, Cowgill pointed to the presence of retirees and high marriage rates among trailer-dwellers.²¹⁷ Builders and lobbyists who represented them invoked the perceived stability and permanence that sexual morality offered to make the case for temporary dwellings.

The OWI, the propaganda arm of the federal government, counteracted protests from existing communities with imagery of wholesome, single white women using trailers as dormitories (Figure 7). In an image from a TVA worksite, well-dressed white women converse and relax in a neighborhood of pristine trailers. The trailer homes in neat rows suggest that trailer homes are orderly. White curtains on the small door to the trailer at the left of the image and a closing screen door make the trailers appear more like small suburban homes than stopgap industrial housing. Despite the appearance of cleanliness and order, however, trailer communities like the one in Tennessee were not welcome in existing communities. In fact, the origin of the phrase “trailer trash” comes from 1943 and is likely about a defense housing community. In the Oxford English Dictionary origin story, one woman who lived in a trailer community with her husband lamented her living situation since members of the existing community shunned her and

²¹⁷ “Benefits Noted in Trailer Life,” *New York Times*, July 6, 1941, RE2.

her family as “trailer trash” even though they were upstanding middle-class citizens in their hometowns. The harsh opinion of the community was enough to keep this woman from attending church in the area.²¹⁸

Local housing agencies that once defined “family” as without a lodger or boarder relied on families to open their homes to “war guests.” Edward Weinfeld, the State Housing Commissioner for New York, began a “war guest” campaign in Syracuse to open private homes to lodgers in summer 1942. He trusted that those who had “never rented a room or taken a boarder” would “consider it their patriotic duty to do so now.”²¹⁹ Even through his desperation to find spare rooms for wartime workers, Weinfeld managed to draw a distinction between those families who took on boarders before the war effort to increase their family income and those that only chose to take on boarders because it was their patriotic duty. For Weinfeld and housing administrators, lodgers, which were not respectable before the war, were necessary during the conflict and housing emergency. By September, the NHA created the Homes Utilization Division, which was tasked with finding available rooms for defense workers in existing houses and buildings. The new division’s duties would be to register vacant rooms, inspect them, and provide them to fitting applicants. In addition to searching in private houses, the Homes Utilization Division could also explore vacant commercial spaces, like stores, theaters, and meeting halls.²²⁰ “Billeting, like sex, is still spoken of in hushed tones,” *The*

²¹⁸ *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 1943 cited in “trailer trash, n.” *OED Online*, Oxford University Press.

²¹⁹ James C. Hagerty, “State Asks Rooms for War Workers,” *New York Times*, June 9, 1942, 44.

²²⁰ “This Month in Building News,” *The Architectural Forum*, October 1942, 188.

Architectural Forum reported that fall in the midst of policy shifts toward room rentals from the Homes Utilization Division.²²¹ A patriotic appeal to homeowners, as Weinfeld adopted in Syracuse, made opening one's home to a stranger a wartime obligation and not an improper violation of family privacy.

The difficulty of calculating the housing need by predicting the family status of in-migrants led to a change in the definition of family at the federal level. A 1943 bulletin referenced recent changes whereby two-person or childless families were removed from eligibility for family housing.²²² Since the NHA no longer considered childless couples families, they were no longer eligible for single-family homes.

The federal government maintained an interest in regulating sexual morality through housing even after the housing crisis deepened during the war. Construction of single-family homes was too expensive and too time consuming for federal officials to meet enormous housing needs. At the end of the war, the NHA reported that the total number of war housing built or under contract included a majority (272,881) of temporary family dwellings, followed by (193,795) permanent family dwellings. The number of family dwellings (598,529) dwarfed the dormitory accommodations at seventy percent of the total number produced. Dormitories made up twenty percent of the housing units (170,803) and stop-gap shelters (81,865) made up almost ten percent.²²³ As the federal government finally turned to temporary and makeshift solutions, they also altered regulations and guidelines for behavior in order to assert some form of control over the bodies of migrant war workers.

²²¹ "This Month in Building News," *The Architectural Forum*, November 1942, 34.

²²² "Bedroom Accommodations in Family Units," March 18, 1943, Subject File of the War Housing Program, May 1, 1943-December 31, 1946, RG 207: NHA, NARA-DC.

²²³ NHA, *Public Housing*, 8.

Dormitories for Single Women

When the building industry learned that an estimated six million women would be recruited to work in war factories to replace the men drafted into the armed service, they questioned how industrial architecture, “an environment intended primarily for men,” would meet the needs of the “housewives, displaced clerical workers, salesgirls, schoolgirls, glamour girls, and thousands who have never worked before.”²²⁴ Heating and ventilation, they suggested, would have to be adjusted in industrial plants since men liked to work in cool spaces whereas women preferred it warmer in part due to their physiologies and in part due to the types of clothing they wore. These assumptions about women’s environmental preferences do not seem to be based on survey data of any women industrial workers. Rather, planners and government officials constructed the myth that women and men required different spaces to meet their physiological, moral, and social needs.

For builders, planners, and their counterparts in social service and the government, the perceived bodily and behavioral differences between men and women necessitated different design solutions. In July 1943, the administrators of a dormitory assigned to single men in Rapid City needed to allocate half of the completed seventy-six rooms to single women rather than men. Since men were already in residence, federal officers advised that dividing partitions be installed in the common areas to separate the shared toilet facilities from the living rooms used for visiting and recreation. Men, apparently, had no need for such privacy, but women required a partition between the spaces and a separation of function of the rooms. Since the building was already equipped with two separate entrances, officials designated one for men and another for

²²⁴ “The Month in Building,” *The Architectural Forum*, May 1942, 6.

women. If two separate stairwells had not been present, another entrance would have been constructed in order to keep men and women's entrances apart.²²⁵

Last minute changes in dormitory designs demonstrate the miscalculations the NHA made when estimating the sexes of single workers that would need dormitory accommodations. Officials originally thought they would persuade married men to move to production centers without their families and that these men would require dormitory arrangements. By the end of 1942, however, the OWI discouraged women from migrating to defense sites alone and asked them to convince their husbands not to move their families. The OWI pointed specifically to housing, sanitation, and transportation in congested areas like Norfolk, Baltimore, Hartford, Portland, Detroit, and Seattle, which were "bursting at the seams."²²⁶ Despite the OWI's pleas, single women continued to move and were the largest demographic to move into war work and defense housing in 1944.

Miscalculations about the sex of war workers would not have had an effect on the housing of them if not for the guiding notion that men and women needed different things from their domestic spaces. In dormitories, it was thought, single men would eat in restaurants and need limited shared public space.²²⁷ While the NHA assumed that it was much more difficult to house unattached women than men, they did not realize that

²²⁵ J.L. Murphy to National Housing Agency, July 23, 1943, Box 6, War Housing Program, RG 207: NHA, NARA-DC; Clemons W. Roark, Assistant Regional Representative to J. Bion Philipson, Program Supervisor, July 17, 1943, Box 6, War Housing Program, RG 207: NHA, NARA-DC

²²⁶ "War Work Migration Discouraged by OWI," *New York Times*, December 11, 1942, 28.

²²⁷ National Housing Agency, "Statement of Occupancy in War Housing," December 31, 1944, Box 6, War Housing Program, RG 207: NHA, NARA-DC

proper facilities and the location of the dormitory itself were more important to single women than to single men or families.²²⁸ In some cases, local officials offered two-person family units in dormitories to single women workers. Regional directors asked the federal office to approve the policy, noting that single women enjoyed living together in apartment-type dwellings because they believed housekeeping and meal preparation was more economical than living in dormitories that did not have those facilities. By allowing for tenant preference, officials would attract more women workers. Regional directors encouraged federal officials to continue to design housing facilities with family units in mind, since they were more flexible than single dwellings. Single women could easily room together and preferred the amenities of a family residence, whereas families and married couples could not be split into single dormitory rooms.²²⁹ Federal officials could not imagine single men living in houses built for families or living in two-person rooms as single women often did. This divergent understanding of how single men and women should live reflects entrenched ideas about sexual morality. Single women could live together as roommates without the specter of sexual impropriety, but single men would be better housed in bunks and dormitories without kitchens or trappings of domesticity that could hint at deviant sexual relationships. Again, these policies and practices were based on anecdotal examples and the hardwired norms of federal domesticity and not on any survey or poll data.

²²⁸ Coleman Woodbury, Assistant Administrator to Alexander Crosby, Executive Director of the National Public Housing Conference, Inc., May 6, 1943, Box 6, War Housing Program, RG 207: NHA, NARA-DC.

²²⁹ Letter from L. Bion Philipson to Coleman Woodbury, July 2, 1943, Box 6, War Housing Program, RG 207: NHA, NARA-DC.

The war workers who required new housing when the United States entered World War II filled a variety of jobs outside of the defense industries. Miss Clara Carroll, like many other women her age, began her work as a secretary in a government department organizing the paperwork of the war. Carroll was lucky to have office space in the Capitol. Departments across the federal government were moving to theaters, stables, community centers, and tent villages to accommodate the rush of new employees. In a photograph taken of her at work by Roger Smith, stacks of paperwork are piled haphazardly around her, but Carroll is the epitome of calm (Figure 8). She positions her hands over the home keys of her typewriter, her back straight, and her gaze fixed on her work, just as she must have learned through her stenography classes. What we cannot know from the photograph is whether Carroll faced discrimination in the office environment she shared with white men and women. In Aura Wharton-Beck's study of African American government girls, she found that the women she interviewed for her study faced microaggressions, outright discrimination, and structural inequalities in their roles at the War Production Board, the Treasury Department, and the Pentagon.²³⁰ One respondent to her study remembers a wall of file cabinets that was erected between her and her colleagues in an effort to protect white women from being offended by her black face.²³¹ Perhaps the row of innocuous-looking filing cabinets behind Carroll is purposefully shielding the white women behind her.

²³⁰ Aura Wharton-Beck, "African American Government Girls: Unspoken Narratives of Potential, Perseverance and Power," (Ed.D. dissertation, University of St. Thomas, Minnesota, 2015).

²³¹ Ibid., 120; Eileen Boris, "'You Wouldn't Want One of 'Em Dancing with Your Wife': Racialized Bodies on the Job in World War II," *American Quarterly*, vol. 50, no. 1 (March 1998), 97.

In both white and blue-collar jobs, the federal government was more likely to offer employment opportunities to black women than companies in the private sector.²³² Most of these jobs were in Washington, D.C., where federal employers and supervisors had to adhere to Executive Order 8802 and the President's Committee on Fair Employment Practice (FEPC), and not in field offices, where local traditions of racism could persist. Still, it was not easy to live and work in a segregated and sometimes outright aggressive city. The National Council of Negro Women, led by Mary McLeod Bethune, understood that stable employment during the war could propel a large-scale movement of African American families out of poverty after war's end. The group launched a "Keep Your Job" campaign that urged black women to conform to white middle-class dress, behavior, and attitudes as an accommodationist survival technique to muscle through these temporary struggles and reap long-term benefits.²³³

The emergency housing crisis of World War II only intensified the existing housing dilemmas facing African Americans in Clara Carroll's adopted home of Washington, D.C. The African American middle class was larger in Washington, D.C. than in any other city in the nation by 1900.²³⁴ By 1920, the black population of the District was larger than any other city in the country.²³⁵ Despite these large communities,

²³² Karen Tucker Anderson, "Last Hired, First Fired: Black Women Workers during World War II," *The Journal of American History*, vol. 69, no. 1 (June 1982), 90.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 94.

²³⁴ Betty Bird, "Building Community: Housing for Middle-class African Americans in Washington, D.C., and Prince George's County, Maryland, 1900-1955," in Richard Longstreth, ed., *Housing Washington: Two Centuries of Residential Development and Planning in the National Capitol Area* (Chicago: Center for American Places at Columbia College, 2010), 62.

²³⁵ Spencer R. Crew, "Melding the Old and the New: The Modern African American Community, 1930-1960," in Francine Curro Cary, ed., *Washington Odyssey: A*

Washington, D.C. remained segregated (Figure 9). Segregation in Washington, D.C. followed a longstanding history of racial discrimination that began with the movement of free blacks into the District in the early nineteenth century, the resettlement of freed people from the South after emancipation, and because local interests were not represented on a Congressional level.²³⁶ Because Congress maintained control over local laws in the District, they reflected racial biases from other areas of the country. D.C.'s historic black neighborhoods to the northwest, southeast and across the Anacostia River were well-established, featuring black-owned businesses and churches established in the early nineteenth century. These neighborhoods were segregated by race, but not by class. Both middle-class and low-income residents lived in the same neighborhoods with low-income families frequently living in the alleys between city blocks.²³⁷ Alleys in D.C. had been developed so that landowners could access their animals, stables, and other outbuildings. Alley dwellings in the twentieth century were simple houses constructed in these backyards of larger lots and facing toward the interior, and often hidden, alley. These dwellings for black and white residents of D.C. were frequently makeshift, substandard and overcrowded. Even by the 1940s, most residents in alley dwellings did not have electricity or modern sanitation.²³⁸

Multicultural History of the Nation's Capital (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Books, 1996), 208.

²³⁶ Lois E. Horton, "The Days of Jubilee: Black Migration during the Civil War and Reconstruction," in Francine Curro Cary, ed., *Washington Odyssey: A Multicultural History of the Nation's Capital* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Books, 1996), 66-71.

²³⁷ Crew, "Melding the Old and the New," 211.

²³⁸ Cindy Gueli, *Lipstick Brigade: The Untold True Story of Washington's World War II Government Girls* (Washington, D.C.: Tahoga History Press, 2015), 124.

Alley dwellings were a public nuisance for housing officials and were to be razed as a part of the nationwide slum clearance project beginning in the 1930s. In 1934, the Alley Dwelling Act authorized officials to tear down alley dwellings and move residents to new public housing. This New Deal program had just begun to function when mass migration into the city prompted the search for new low-income solutions to house the influx of migrants. Rather than continue slum clearance and the removal of alley dwelling sites, hamstrung officials considered alley dwellings as an appropriate solution for new war migrants. Officials planned to tear down alley dwellings near federal office buildings and create inexpensive housing units for government workers. In at least one case, they pushed African American residents of the alleys out of their homes to make way for dormitories for white defense workers.²³⁹

Tensions between African American migrants to Washington and long-term residents of the District existed as early as Reconstruction, when thousands of young women made their way to the city from the South. Many of these young black women found security and jobs through extended family networks and worked in domestic service. But much of the established black community considered migrants from the South to be encroaching on their employment opportunities and increasing the cost of housing.²⁴⁰ Migrants to the District during World War II met with the same hardships, especially as they attempted to find affordable housing. Whereas new residents of the

²³⁹ Howard Gillette, Jr., *Between Justice and Beauty: Race, Planning, and the Failure of Urban Policy in Washington, D.C.* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 140.

²⁴⁰ Elizabeth Clark-Lewis, "'For a Real Better Life': Voices of African American Women Migrants, 1900-1930," in Francine Curro Cary, ed., *Washington Odyssey: A Multicultural History of the Nation's Capital* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Books, 1996), 97.

District did not have the social network or family connections to find easy housing, long-time residents of the District had their own challenges. When the federal government began building dormitories to house war workers, they placed restrictions on the length of time one could have lived in D.C. and still be eligible to live in the dormitories. Longtime residents of D.C. therefore could not move up and out of their housing by moving into new dormitories, reducing the potential for social movement.

Black and white government workers arrived in the capitol by the thousands, leading to shortages in housing and office space. According to *The Architectural Forum*, the letters “D” and “C” in Washington, D.C. stood for “damn crowded.”²⁴¹ An estimated sixty-five thousand people moved to Washington by 1941 explicitly for war work, bringing the total number of government workers in that year to one hundred, sixty-seven thousand people. Living space was at a premium. Some war workers shared bedrooms with eight strangers; some shared baths with twenty.²⁴² It was common to rent only the bed, a “hot bed,” and to rent it only for a certain number of hours so that the next person coming off their shift could sleep during their time off, leaving the bed warm from the heat of their bodies. Housing construction for new government workers in Washington had been stifled when an oversight in the Lanham Act extension did not authorize funds for Washington, D.C. A new bill that corrected this oversight authorized the use of fifty million dollars for housing and public works in Washington, but the local community had

²⁴¹ “This Month in Building These Things Made News,” *The Architectural Forum*, March 1942, 140.

²⁴² “Defense Problems Come Home To Roost,” *The Architectural Forum*, August 1941, 129.

to wait for it to pass before funds became available.²⁴³ Once funding was secured, Washington, D.C. was among the cities with the highest number of war housing units built at 28,800 and besting war production centers like San Diego, Los Angeles, Newport, and Detroit. Washington was third in public war housing behind only the San Francisco Bay area, which had nearly triple that number of housing units, and the Portland, Oregon metropolitan area, which had nearly double as many.²⁴⁴

Clara Carroll found a home in the Lucy D. Slowe Hall for African American women on Washington's Northeast side. Slowe Hall and its companion men's dormitory just down the street, the George W. Carver Hall, were built as a part of a large dormitory project in Washington along with ten other dormitories for white men and women. Carroll paid \$7 per week for her single room, a moderate price for Washington, where rents in dormitories ranged from \$16.50 per month for low-income women to \$89.50 per month for a nicer apartment with four (white) roommates.²⁴⁵ Carroll's dormitory was segregated from the white women who worked in government offices. Even though the dormitories had the same amenities – beauty parlors, cafeterias, infirmaries – white women had access to five times as many federal dormitories, and the dormitories for black women were always the last to be built. In 1943, only four federal dormitories –

²⁴³ “This Month in Building These Things Made News,” *The Architectural Forum*, March 1942, 140.

²⁴⁴ NHA, *Public Housing*, 8.

²⁴⁵ “175,000 War Workers to Get New Housing in Washington,” *New York Times*, May 16, 1943, RE1; Holly K. Chamberlain, “Permanence in a Time of War: Three Defense Homes Corporation Projects in the Washington Metropolitan Area,” in Richard Longstreth, ed., *Housing Washington: Two Centuries of Residential Development and Planning in the National Capitol Area* (Chicago: Center for American Places at Columbia College, 2010), 183.

Lucy D. Slowe, Midway, Guam and Wake Residence Halls - were available for African American women.²⁴⁶

The housing shortage in Washington was so pronounced that jokes and stories circulated about the resulting cutthroat housing market. Even prior to the wartime boom, the housing market in D.C. was one of the most expensive in the country.²⁴⁷ In one story, a young woman walked along the Potomac when she encountered another young woman flailing in the water, asking for help. The bystander shouted to her: “Where do you live?” The drowning woman shouted her address back while gasping for breath. The bystander let the girl sink in the water and ran to her address to inquire about her room. When she arrived, she found that she had arrived minutes too late. The room had already been rented to the girl who pushed the other into the river.²⁴⁸

Washington’s crowded housing market had been overrun with single women working for the government. An estimated seventy percent of the migrant war-workers who came to D.C. were single, and nearly ninety percent were women. In spring 1943, construction was underway for twelve residence halls to house 175,000 war workers. The cost of the project was to be \$7,213,000.²⁴⁹ War workers in just this twelve dormitory project would be equivalent to the wartime populations of Nashville, TN, Des Moines, IA, or Fort Worth, TX.²⁵⁰ However, women more often occupied boarding houses,

²⁴⁶ Wharton-Beck, 117.

²⁴⁷ Sally Reston, “Girls’ Town – Washington,” *New York Times* (November 23, 1941), SM8.

²⁴⁸ Ray Mackland, “Washington Hospitality?????” *Life*, September 27, 1943, 12.

²⁴⁹ “First ‘Government Girls,’ 200 of Them, to Occupy U.S.-Built Dormitories in Washington Today,” *New York Times* (March 1, 1943), 16.

cramped apartments, single rooms, and “hot beds” than new dormitories, no matter their race. Residences were designed to be close to the government offices of their residents so that women could walk to work without clogging the District’s already heavy traffic. The dormitory project intended to construct “maximum comfort at minimum cost” for the government girls they housed, but many of the dormitories would have been luxurious for women who had survived the Depression, shared crowded spaces in D.C., or migrated from rural areas.²⁵¹ The first of six units at Arlington Farms, Virginia opened in late February 1943. This space was available to approximately eight thousand single white women ranging in age from sixteen to sixty-seven.²⁵²

Even without families of their own, single men and women who worked in war industries found their private lives determined by the federal government’s housing standards and interest in maintaining a rigid sexual morality. *Recreation and Housing for Women War Workers: A Handbook on Standards* is the result of the Women’s Bureau’s concern with “the building up and safeguarding of satisfactory living standards for women in communities with defense impacts.”²⁵³ At the center of the handbook is the assumption that women’s needs are different from men’s needs. Mary Anderson, head of the Women’s Bureau, spearheaded the effort. Anderson’s recommendations include

²⁵⁰ “175,000 War Workers to Get New Housing in Washington,” *New York Times*, May 16, 1943, RE1.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² “First ‘Government Girls,’ 200 of Them, to Occupy U.S.-Built Dormitories in Washington Today,” *New York Times* (March 1, 1943), 16.

²⁵³ Mary V. Anderson, *Recreation and Housing for Women War Workers: A Handbook on Standards* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1942), 2.

options for places to eat and cooking, opportunities for community involvement and co-recreation, and adequate child care facilities for around-the-clock shifts.

The Women's Bureau's recommendations combined a new independent womanhood with the comforts and standards of home life. Most important for Anderson were the standards for housing since women could find leisure opportunities on their own, but could not construct or rebuild their dormitories:

Housing is more than shelter. It should mean satisfactory living conditions for women workers, guaranteeing them safety and security and conforming to standards of decency, cleanliness, health, adequacy, comfort, and convenience.²⁵⁴

Anderson pointed to the frequency with which men migrated with their families; she hoped that women would not be made to feel as if they were a problem group or isolated in their requests for specific housing requirements. Guidelines for the interior space of dormitories called for privacy – single rooms with no more than one roommate, locking doors and wardrobes for personal items, and private bathroom facilities with limits for the number of people per washbasin or toilet. In addition to physical qualities of rooms, the guidelines the Women's Bureau set for dormitories incorporated items that would contribute to a homey surrounding, staff that would be supportive and even matronly, and the ability to make one's own choices.

Personalization was one way for women to stake their claim in a dormitory designed with men in mind. In a *New York Times* article about women aviators near Utica, New York, Lucy Greenbaum expressed her horror that former stenographers performed aircraft maintenance with greasy fingers. And not only were the jobs greasy, the women's dormitories, originally planned for boys, were also appalling. In these

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 21.

rooms – “a grease-monkey’s dream” – bunk beds were arranged in rows. “[I]t was only a matter of minutes before maple bureaus were piled high with toy pandas, photographs of men in uniform and bottles of perfume.” The objects on their dressers at once proclaimed their chastity in the form of children’s toys, interest in sex in the form of men’s photographs, and their allure in the form of perfume. In Greenbaum’s portrait, we can imagine a young girl irritated that she got grease on her jumpsuit, but happy to head home at the end of the day to dream about her sweetheart.²⁵⁵

The interior decoration of dormitory spaces served single women by providing furnishings and not requiring the purchase or move of furniture, but the stylistic choices conformed to prescriptions of traditional femininity. The NHA hired Gladys Miller as a consultant for the interior decoration of federal housing projects. Miller created two prototype bedrooms with the stylistic principles she envisioned for the eight by ten foot rooms in which Washington women would live. Both designs featured light wood furniture to make the rooms look larger, blackout curtains for sleeping while working odd shifts, and a suite of basic furniture, including a bed, chair and ottoman, dresser, small table, mirror, cosmetic closet, clothes closet; as well as a throw rug, floor lamp, and textiles like curtains and a bedspread.²⁵⁶ A shortage of electrical wiring meant that Miller limited the lighting in the room to one lamp. She offered that the women occupying the rooms should decide whether they wanted a radio or an additional lamp to fill the second outlet. Miller’s rooms were decorated in a “frilly feminine” style or a “tailored” style, and

²⁵⁵ Lucy Greenbaum, “Girls Learn Plane Mechanics at Aviation Center Near Utica,” *New York Times*, October 4, 1942, D4.

²⁵⁶ Nona Baldwin, “Blackout Curtains Put in Rooms for Government Girls,” *New York Times*, July 13, 1942, 11; Nona Baldwin, “Rooms for 20,000 More Women Soon Needed in Washington,” *New York Times*, July 12, 1942, D4.

visitors to the prototype bedrooms were asked to select their favorite look. In Miller's rooms and in the Meridian Hill hotel for women, both of which were spaces intended for white women, the interior decoration was designed to evoke middle-class respectability and comfort. If a woman could afford the rent and meet the guidelines for entry, she could have some respite from the Washington housing crisis and the vestiges of urban poverty all around her.

Photographic and journalistic accounts of "government girls" and women workers emphasized their attractiveness and sexual availability. At Scott's Hotel, a private, upscale residence hall for single, white women in Washington, D.C., the interior design of the space offered glimpses at the sexual availability of the women living there. In the lobby of the residence hall were a series of parlors dubbed "beau's parlors." Women could entertain their dates in one of three small rooms named after famous lovers. As the couple drew the curtains shut for privacy, they would find that the curtains would not close all the way, a design solution to protect a woman's propriety, both real and imagined. When *Life* visited Scott's Hotel in 1942 as a part of the magazine's "Life Goes to a Party" series, they focused on the romance of the hotel with staged photographs of couples matching the theme of the "beau's parlors," including: Dante and Beatrice, John Alden and Priscilla, Romeo and Juliet, Elsa and Lohengrin, and Anthony and Cleopatra.²⁵⁷ In the final image, a couple walks hand-in-hand out of a dark beau's parlor labeled "You and Me," meant to imply that the couple ensconced there was a couple as romantic and important as the other five historical and literary couples (Figure 10). In the photograph, a man in a military uniform wipes his mouth with a handkerchief, signaling

²⁵⁷"Life Visits Scotts Hotel for Women in Washington, D.C.," *Life*, August 10, 1942, 78-81.

to *Life* readers the conclusion of the sexual encounter from which they emerge. The woman strides confidently ahead of him, a look of pride or satisfaction on her face as she leads him outside of the beau's parlor and seemingly outside of the dormitory for the night.

The white Government Girls of Washington, D.C. were touted as the pinnacle of wartime glamour. *Good Housekeeping* profiled the young women "from every state of the union" and showcased "the clothes they like!"²⁵⁸ With pages and pages of specific clothing: colors, fabrics and cuts, *Good Housekeeping* gave women across the United States a glimpse into the fashionable lives of the single women who formed the an imagined Washington elite, even though they were working for hourly wages. Despite the exaggeration by national magazines, women working in D.C. would be considered accomplished in their hometowns. Some were college graduates, they had diverse hobbies, and they maintained their beauty and charm despite long hours in the federal work pool. "They are vitally concerned with self-improvement and are busily engaged in taking night courses to prove it," *Good Housekeeping* explained. "They work, and they like it; but they all want to marry and have children. Without exception, they love sports and dancing, juke boxes and bracelets, and they adore clothes – smooth American clothes."²⁵⁹ *Good Housekeeping* reassured their readers that women working in Washington, D.C. had fashionable lives now, but that their priorities included returning home to raise families and support their economically independent husbands.

Standards for sexual morality among single women were complex and, at times, contradictory. Media depictions of government girls as sexually available and glamorous

²⁵⁸ Martha Stout, "Uncle Sam's Girls," *Good Housekeeping*, January 1942, 44.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 47.

was one way to emphasize their single marital status and the probability that heteronormative marriage would follow, however, federal and social service officials also emphasized the protection of single women through standards of wholesome recreation. Photographs and media stories depicting government girls engaged in classes, wholesome games and same-sex activities assuaged readers and likely the girls' parents back in their hometowns that young women were not getting involved in the sexual promiscuity and danger of congested communities. Clara Carroll is photographed playing cards with other women in her all-female dormitory (Figure 11). The "Scotties" living at the Scotts Hotel had access to a sunbathing deck for the "popular sport" of tanning, in addition to "shuffleboard, wienie roasts, movies, dances every Friday night, and a dating bureau for lonesome girls."²⁶⁰ They attended weekly classes on etiquette, learning tips on respectable posture, behavior and sexual relationships. *Life* reported that Scotties were told not to cuddle with their employers or flirt with the office boys.²⁶¹

Recreation was thought to improve health and morale as much "as a comfortable bed and the conviction of victory."²⁶² Isolation from home and family could be cured by the latest Hollywood movie and games with friends.²⁶³ War workers would be content at work, despite unpredictable hours, crowding, misogyny and racism they experienced, if

²⁶⁰ "Life Visits Scotts Hotel," 78-79.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 80-81.

²⁶² Nona Baldwin, "Blackout Curtains Put in Rooms for Government Girls," *New York Times*, July 13, 1942, D4.

²⁶³ Frederick L. Ackerman, "Duration Dormitories: Notes on the Technical Problem," *The Architectural Record*, August 1942, 35.

they had “facilities providing for personal and recreational needs.”²⁶⁴ Some government departments helped connect new employees to community activities in order to protect them from the sexualized dangers of nightlife, prompting one reporter to refer to Washington D.C. as “Uncle Sam’s Seminary for Girls.”²⁶⁵ Paternalistic officials and social service groups hoped recreation would “make these important feminine aides in the victory effort stay at home because they want to” and develop their federal domesticity and citizenship through democratic groups organized in dormitories and community groups.²⁶⁶

Religious groups aided in the development of the concept of the moral benefits of wholesome recreation. The United Service Organization (USO), a confederation of the Salvation Army, YMCA, YWCA, National Catholic Community Services, National Travelers Aid Association, and National Jewish Welfare Board, participated in the development of the Women’s Bureau guidelines. The USO contended that opportunities for recreation were particularly important during wartime to aid in relaxation during periods of uncertainty and stress. But the designs of the USO program reflect the prevailing notions of sexual morality in the founding religious agencies. The USO operated clubs throughout the country to offer wholesome recreational activities to sailors and soldiers who remained in the United States. Young women volunteered to work as hostesses and to provide the comforts of a middle class home and community to men far

²⁶⁴ “First Women Workers Occupy U.S. Housing Here,” *The Washington Post*, March 14, 1943, R1.

²⁶⁵ Luther Huston, “Uncle Sam’s Seminary for Girls,” *New York Times*, December 6, 1942, SM15.

²⁶⁶ “First Women Workers Occupy U.S. Housing Here,” *The Washington Post*, March 14, 1943, R1.

away from their homes. Older, married women performed the roles of mother and housewife whereas younger women volunteers were handpicked as appropriate sexual partners and companions.²⁶⁷ Both the USO-directed recreation guidelines and USO facilities throughout the country offered a moral alternative to dance halls, jazz clubs and bars for single women as protection from the sexual possibilities that crowded cities offered.

Recreation activities for single women, like housing, healthcare and transportation, were segregated by race. African American women could become hostesses at some USO clubs to serve African American sailors and soldiers and could attend segregated activities at the YMCA and YWCA, but these were rare clubs and rare occurrences. In Washington, black women's movements in the city were confined by segregation to the historic black neighborhoods, especially in the northwest. Around U Street, single black women dined and danced to the latest popular music and jazz. While they could not enjoy late nights in white downtown, any time major acts like Frank Sinatra or Nat King Cole played the black theaters, they did share space with white men and women who flocked to see the stars.

When single black women moved to Washington to work in the federal government, they staked their claim in the capitol through employment, housing and in public space. Their needs and complaints, communicated through clubs, associations, and most efficiently by Mary McLeod Bethune to Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt directly, prompted more federal housing and opportunities in the District for black women.²⁶⁸ In

²⁶⁷ Meghan K. Winchell, *Good Girls, Good Food, Good Fun: The Story of USO Hostesses during World War II* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008).

²⁶⁸ Extant letters show Bethune forwarding requests from local builders and movie theaters to Mrs. Roosevelt.

the early 1940s, Bethune was the vice president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored Persons (NAACP) and directed the Negro Affairs division of the National Youth Administration. Bethune was a well-respected and highly accomplished organizer having led the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs in the 1920s and founded the National Council of Negro Women in the 1930s. She offered advice to the president as a member of his so-called "black cabinet" and corresponded frequently with Eleanor Roosevelt about everything from national civil rights causes to personal recommendations for black business owners and contractors to be hired by the federal government. Bethune and the First Lady toured the Lucy Diggs Slow Hall once it was completed and were photographed by Roger Smith, the same photographer who captured Clara Carroll as she arrived in Washington. To honor Bethune, the residents of the dormitory, where Clara Carroll and almost 350 other government girls lived, threw a musical tea to celebrate her. Each floor of the building joined a team to decorate a table in the expansive lobby. The winning table featuring a bust of Bethune made by a talented sculptress living in the building.²⁶⁹ The young women there revered Bethune's leadership and likely understood that they would inherit the civic responsibilities of their dormitory namesake, Lucy D. Slowe, and the visiting luminary among them.

Consequences and Legacies

Housing officials spent a great deal of time and ink trying to plan for the postwar period, which they sometimes called pre-victory planning. The importance of sexual morality in housing policy is clearest in "Local Consequences of 12.6 Million Houses A

²⁶⁹ "Musical Tea Given to Honor Miss Bethune," *Washington Post*, July 1943.

Year,” a planning document released by the NHA in December 1944. Housing officials believed that by planning for 12.6 million houses, half replacement and half new construction, family life would improve. Results of the 12.6 million houses would lead to a stabilized family unit, decreased migration, and an increase in the birth rate.²⁷⁰ For the NHA, the American family had destabilized during the war years and defense mobilizations. Housing was a solution to combat a rising divorce rate, decreasing population growth, rootlessness, disruptive citizens, social ills, disease, crime, and delinquency. In short, housing would “help to provide the basis for a stable and wholesome family life.”²⁷¹

Victory over Japan prompted the NHA to release new eligibility standards for the existing Lanham Act housing stock. Instead of disposing temporary housing as planned, family dwellings would welcome distressed families of veterans and servicemen, including their spouses and widows. When the NHA accommodated those families, they would offer surplus housing to dislocated families, and finally to any other families needing housing before the properties were dispersed.²⁷² Existing dormitories could house single servicemen or their widows and single employees. Admission was no longer granted for trailer camps, temporary dormitories, and stopgap solutions and existing occupants would be asked to vacate. In practice, the housing need diverged from plans. By October 1945, trailers and dormitories had been removed from defense housing areas

²⁷⁰ National Housing Agency, “Local Consequences of 12.6 Million Houses a Year,” December 1, 1944, Box 6, War Housing Program, RG 207: NHA, NARA-DC.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² “Revised Policies for Programming and Management of Publicly-Financed War Housing Projects Resulting from the Defeat of Japan,” August 21, 1945, Box 1, War Housing Program, RG 207: NHA, NARA-DC.

and sent to colleges and universities throughout the United States for returning veterans using their GI Bill benefits to return to college.²⁷³

The existing housing stock developed during the war was disposed overseas to help the allies, rented to returning veterans, or sold to colleges and other institutions. In Washington, D.C., Arlington Farms was razed to make way for more acres of the Arlington National Cemetery. The Lucy D. Slowe Hall, Carver Hall, and the Meridian Hill Hotel were sold to Howard University, a historically black college in the historically black northwest side of Washington, D.C. In 2017, Howard announced that the dormitory buildings that once housed upperclassmen would be converted into apartments in order to raise funds for the university through the University's real estate holdings.²⁷⁴ Built inexpensively in ten months by the federal government, these buildings, formerly segregated by race and sex, have become modern, luxury apartments in the crowded city.²⁷⁵

By encouraging racial segregation, privacy, permanence, and heteronormativity in housing, the American government reified a specific definition of family as American and traditional. Their efforts had lasting effects. The 1939 definition of family developed by the USHA and NHA persisted into the postwar period. As Elaine Tyler May explains:

With very few exceptions, Americans of color had no such access.
Nor did single women or men, because suburban homes were built

²⁷³ Burton O. Young, "Programming Under Title V of the Lanham Act," October 2, 1945, Box 5, War Housing Program, RG 207: NHA, NARA-DC.

²⁷⁴ Jeff Clabaugh, "Howard University dorms to become apartments," WTOP News, September 2, 2017, <https://wtop.com/dc/2017/09/howard-u-dorms-become-apartments/slide/1/>.

²⁷⁵ Michelle Lerner, "Luxury apartments emerge from DC's former Meridian Hill Hotel," *Washington Post*, April 16, 2019.

for families. Those who divorced faced a powerful stigma that cast their personal virtue and even their status as mature adults into question. Childless couples were excluded from the child-centered culture of the suburbs and were regarded with either pity or scorn, depending on whether their childlessness resulted from chance or choice.²⁷⁶

Not coincidentally, the qualifications for families in the postwar suburbs were the same as those written into defense housing standards in the New Deal era. This definition of family was not forming in the postwar period. By the 1950s, it was an American tradition.

²⁷⁶ May, *Homeward Bound*, 15.

Chapter 4

“A BARRACK BECOMES A HOME”: INTERIOR DECORATION IN AMERICA’S CONCENTRATION CAMPS

In May 1945, six months before all of the incarcerated Japanese Americans left Manzanar, Beatrice H. White, the home economics instructor at Manzanar High School in the War Relocation Center, published a mimeographed document bound with a staple with tipped-in black and white photographs of her crowning achievement in her years there.²⁷⁷ “A Barrack Becomes a Home” was the final report authored by White for her course in home economics at Manzanar High School that resulted in the creation of a model barrack apartment (Figure 12). The model apartment was a cooperative project in the homemaking and woodshop classes and unique among the War Relocation Centers. The structural changes to the barrack, new furniture, and homey details they installed gave students training in construction and consumption. The completed 480-square foot model apartment then became the setting for subsequent courses in home economics for the young women who helped create it.

This chapter reveals the surprising importance of interior design and decoration in War Relocation Centers, also known as internment camps, during World War II. The federal government deployed architecture, objects, and educational programming to shape the behavior of detained families. Nisei, or second generation Japanese Americans, navigated the imposition of federal domesticity by engaging in interior decoration.

²⁷⁷Beatrice H. White, “A Barrack Becomes A Home,” May 1, 1945, Japanese American Evacuation and Resettlement Records, Bancroft (hereafter JERS).

Teenage and young adult Nisei women, who were one of the largest demographic groups in War Relocation Centers, first took control over their domestic interiors because they had few other sites where they could assert individual power. Interior decoration and craft production enabled the creation of a world apart from the crowded public conditions at Manzanar and the remedy for deplorable living conditions. Through interior decoration, internees made claims to individual dignity, federal benefits, and private space.

Acknowledging the importance of domestic interiors for the preservation of the family and as an Americanizing force, federal officials developed a home economics course that resulted in the construction of a model barrack apartment. This course educated young women on ways to domesticate their spaces of mass incarceration and demonstrated “traditional” American housing standards that did not take individual students or their Japanese heritage into consideration. Where Americanization was enforced through educational programs at the camps, Japanese American resistance to their subjugation and stripped personhood occurred simultaneously in their manipulation of their temporary housing.

Yet this very claim to the rehabilitative potential of domestic interiors laid bare the ironies of internment of Japanese American citizens, not one of whom ever was found to have plotted against the United States. On the one hand, the Japanese American people who were forced to occupy internment camps during World War II struggled to make their crude accommodations bearable by making them feel more home-like. Japanese Americans dealt with the deplorable conditions of the camps to the best of their abilities as soon as they arrived; many families modified their temporary dwellings at Assembly Centers before arriving at permanent Relocation Centers. The Block Managers, internees responsible for each residential block of the Poston, Arizona camp, warned of the psychological effects of poor housing:

Men and women lose their spirits, become depressed and discouraged, when their home life is unpleasant. One of the first steps toward transforming men and women into good citizens who will contribute to the welfare of the community is to give them pleasant surroundings.²⁷⁸

On the other hand, it was the very conditions of internment that created the misery from which a more pleasing camp interior was supposed to provide relief. The design of domestic interiors in War Relocation Centers contributed to family discord. The absence of household utilities and privacy altered typical patterns of family life. Families could not behave in the same ways they had prior to incarceration, which caused a rift between Americanized Nisei and their older Issei parents. No matter how hard they worked to transform their spaces, barracks were not home. They did not meet federal standards for houses used in the period and they did not meet the standards Japanese Americans had before they were imprisoned.

The circumstances of internment took the premise of federal domesticity in unexpected and even bizarre directions. Despite knowing that the Japanese Americans incarcerated in War Relocation Centers had not chosen their domestic surroundings, federal officials still attempted to reform their taste. Government-sponsored Americanization programs taught Japanese Americans to reform their housing standards both during and after their incarceration, even though the internees did not have a choice in selecting their wartime living conditions. Education in interior decoration was a form of Americanization meant to shape identity and loyalty through objects. The styles and forms that federally employed reformers endorsed hearkened back to American revival styles and bore no resemblance to traditional Japanese design nor to the contemporary

²⁷⁸ Block Managers to Mr. Wade Head, "Housing," September 29, 1942, in Richard Nishimoto, "21. Food and housing," JERS.

fashions enjoyed by modern young women. Federal domesticity in internment camps contributed to what historian Mae Ngai calls the “conflation of culture and loyalty.”²⁷⁹ It was through the education in and performance of federal domesticity that Japanese Americans could show their willingness, and indeed ability, to acculturate.

The Internment of Japanese Americans at Manzanar

The young women and men who took Family Life courses and built the model barrack apartment to demonstrate their Americanness at Manzanar High School did so as a result of their exclusion. The U.S. Army began construction on the Manzanar War Relocation Center with the help of Japanese American volunteers in March 1942, just three short months after the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.²⁸⁰ Immediately after the declaration of war by the United States Congress, the War Department surveyed the security of the Pacific Coast of the United States and determined that both native and non-native Japanese constituted an “enemy race” and that they should be removed from sensitive military areas.²⁸¹ Beginning with Executive Order 9066, signed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt on February 19, 1942, the federal government created legal frameworks to designate military areas and “exclude” or forcibly remove those deemed a threat to national security, including all persons of Japanese ancestry. The War Department considered the evacuation of people of Japanese descent to be a military necessity because they could not determine which Japanese Americans and Japanese

²⁷⁹ Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 177.

²⁸⁰ National Park Service, “Japanese Americans at Manzanar,” February 28, 2015, <https://www.nps.gov/manz/learn/historyculture/japanese-americans-at-manzanar.htm>.

²⁸¹ *Final Report: Japanese Evacuation from the West Coast, 1942* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1943), 34.

immigrants were loyal or disloyal to the United States and could be enemy combatants ready to aid in sabotage. As evacuation began, Executive Order 9102 established the War Relocation Authority (WRA) to be responsible for detention of the evacuees. The stated aims of the WRA were to: provide incarcerated Japanese Americans with an “equitable substitute” for their previous lives, reestablish them as productive members of society, and to re-assimilate them into the “normal currents of American life.”²⁸²

The speed at which the evacuation and relocation occurred meant that permanent “Relocation Centers” were actively under construction as families evacuated. The U.S. Army rushed to set up temporary spaces, known as “Assembly Centers,” on fifteen fairgrounds and racetracks across the Western Zone. The War Department, which oversaw the evacuation, made minimal design changes to these spaces, choosing instead to accommodate families in existing horse stables and muddy fairgrounds. Once Relocation Centers were close to completion, a train or bus transferred families to one of ten sites in California, Arizona, Utah, Colorado, Idaho, Wyoming, and Arkansas.

The federal government needed to locate the camps on large, undeveloped swaths of land that it already owned or could acquire easily; as a result, the locations for the War Relocation Centers were unforgiving and remote (Figure 13).²⁸³ The harsh, desert environment of Manzanar was no exception. Located 117 miles northwest of Death Valley in California’s Owens Valley, Manzanar at its height would have been the most populous city in surrounding Inyo County.²⁸⁴ The Sierra Nevada Mountains rose to the

²⁸² Ibid., 50.

²⁸³ Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, *Personal Justice Denied* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1982), 156.

²⁸⁴ Richard L. Forstall, ed., *Population of States and Counties of the United States: 1790-1990* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1996), 20.

west with Mt. Whitney soaring above the landscape. To the north, south, and east were expanses of yellow desert. Temperatures in the summer topped 110 degrees and frequently fell below freezing during the winter. With no ground cover or trees to hold the sandy soil, winds frequently whipped up dust storms. Barbed wire and eight guard towers marked the circumference of the square mile site. Armed guards patrolled the perimeter on the lookout for escapees. Manzanar's location ten miles north of the small town of Lone Pine, however, ensured that an escapee would face a more formidable foe in the landscape than the armed guards. It was so hot that during the first summer there, the residents of Manzanar devoured thirteen tons of watermelon in a matter of four days.²⁸⁵

Administrators specifically designed Manzanar so that the layout would aid in controlling the population (Figure 14). The WRA organized Manzanar using a grid of thirty-six residential blocks with large firebreaks, open spaces designed to stop the destruction of a fire, located every two blocks. Each block was made up of fourteen barracks, which were initially divided into four equal-sized apartments each (Figure 15). Up to three hundred people lived in each residential block managed by a resident block manager, who reported to the administration. In addition to the barracks, the block consisted of a mess hall, oil tank, recreation hall, ironing room, laundry room, women's latrine, and men's latrine. The distance between the farthest barrack and the mess hall was approximately five hundred feet of unpaved desert sand. The feeling of being both crowded and isolated must have been jarring for the evacuees taken to Manzanar, who could see nothing but lines of tarpaper barracks in the foreground and nothing but mountains and desert in the background.

²⁸⁵ Togo Tanaka, "Documentary Report, no. 17," July 2, 1942, JERS.

WRA officials would assign families their apartments in residential blocks based on the number of people in the family. The average family at Manzanar had between four and five members, while other families, housed in these standardized spaces, had as many as eleven members or as few as two.²⁸⁶ Married couples without children, families with one child, and families with fewer than four members would have to share apartments with another small family.²⁸⁷ Built quickly by the WRA, the barracks that housed the internees were made with wood frames and covered on the outside by strips of black tar paper. The interior walls and ceiling of the barracks had not been finished when internees arrived. There were no walls to designate separate rooms in the undefined interior and, in some cases, no walls to separate one apartment from another. The apartments were furnished with army-issue cots for each person, a stove, and a single light bulb that hung from the ceiling in the center of the room.²⁸⁸ There was no running water; toilets and sinks were in shared latrines; and cooking and eating was to be done in communal mess halls. To accommodate families in barrack apartments that were all of a standard size and shape, the administration installed moving partitions in the two-room barracks, creating two single-room spaces.²⁸⁹ Housing officials began installing partitions a month after opening, beginning with one block and moving on to the next. After the installation of the partitions, families shared a one-room apartment that ranged in size from eight by twenty

²⁸⁶ Togo Tanaka, "Documentary Report, Number 13," June 25, 1942, JERS.

²⁸⁷ White, "A Barrack Becomes A Home."

²⁸⁸ *Personal Justice Denied*, 160.

²⁸⁹ Lucy W. Adams, "Notice to Block Managers," Box 48, Manzanar War Relocation Center Records, UCLA Department of Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles (hereafter UCLA).

feet to twenty-eight by twenty feet based on the size of the family. The governing rule was that each person would receive one beam of space, or approximately eighty square feet per person.²⁹⁰

Ironically, the model barrack apartment made by home economics students did not meet the needs of a real Manzanar family. The separate sleeping area with only one bed, a dressing table, and a chest for clothing would not have been possible within the housing requirements of the concentration camp. Families with fewer than four members, let alone a single person, would not have access to this much apartment space. The model apartment ignored a real need for a lesson in inventive space management by including only one bed. Students placed a second cot in the living room to serve as a divan, or sofa, and one other person could have slept there, but that arrangement still would not have met the housing requirements for family size. The second person would not benefit from the privacy of the sleeping quarters the students hoped to highlight in their design.²⁹¹ The impracticality of the model apartment to replace or inspire barrack apartments on site indicates that White likely meant this exercise in consumption and homemaking to shape the environments of young women after their incarceration. The barrack apartment did not meet the needs of an average family in Manzanar, did not comply with federal housing regulations, and could not be replicated by the families living there.

Unlike other displaced families in this period, Japanese Americans in internment camps did not arrive in government-designed camps having experienced squalor and privation. Of the Japanese people forced to relocate to concentration camps, seventy percent were American citizens, a fact that federal government officials knew prior to

²⁹⁰ Togo Tanaka, "Documentary Report, no. 75," October 15, 1942, JERS.

their evacuation and imprisonment.²⁹² Nisei, as they were described in internal documents, were “far more [middle-class] American than Japanese in speech, dress, manner, and attitude.”²⁹³ Nisei were upwardly mobile; they had been living in cities and pursuing businesses and professional careers. Their parents in the first generation, known as Issei, had “risen from the ranks of common labor to highly responsible positions as farm managers and supervisors, or as owners of shops, businesses, restaurants, and similar establishments.”²⁹⁴ The Japanese Americans interred by the federal government were likely agricultural and retail workers in the middle and lower-middle classes; they were not dependents on the federal government.

Federal officials acknowledged that it was because of a long history of social and economic discrimination by whites that American Japanese lived in tightly knit ethnic communities and did not assimilate into a wider American society. Importantly, the WRA determined that their “failed” assimilation was not due to their racial inferiority or their personal deficiencies.²⁹⁵ This discrimination by whites was one of the ways the WRA justified the exclusion of Japanese Americans since federal officials could not predict whether the discrimination American Japanese experienced in the United States would test their loyalty to the country in the event of an attack by Japan. By evaluating the American Japanese as unpredictable, however, federal officials played into racial

²⁹² It is the fact that Japanese Americans were U.S. citizens and not enemy combatants that drives historians to rethink the use of the term “internment.”

²⁹³ “Background for the Relocation Program,” Box 48, Manzanar War Relocation Center Records, UCLA.

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

stereotypes of the Japanese as sneaky, mysterious, and deceptive. Federal officials also feared violence among other ethnic groups in the United States after the attack on Pearl Harbor and viewed exclusion as a way to mitigate that potential violence and increase “public morale.”²⁹⁶

Many Japanese American families experienced a drastic paring down of their personal property as they brought what they could into an uncertain future. Unlike the destitute white migrant workers who entered government shelters in California in the 1930s, Japanese American families had to purge the material comforts of their middle class lives. “We could only carry what we could carry,” Fumiko Hayashida remembered about her forced migration to the Manzanar War Relocation Center. Hayashida’s suitcase was “full of diapers and children’s clothes” as she entered the concentration camp in 1942.²⁹⁷ Families bound for War Relocation Centers could not predict the fate of their personal property as they boarded trains and busses to remote locations. By the time they packed a suitcase, Japanese American families had already made decisions to divest their farms, their stores, and their homes for pennies on the dollar. Many lost their life’s savings and hope for their financial future. Some families sold everything they could, some placed items in storage or left them in the care of neighbors, others simply abandoned their lots. Fusako “Fuzzy” Mizutani explained that people in Los Angeles had been telephoning any number with a Japanese name in the phone book and asking them if they had anything to sell. Fuzzy’s family sold their new furniture for one-third of what

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ Park Brochure, Manzanar National Historic Site, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior.

they expected and considered themselves lucky for receiving any money for it at all.²⁹⁸

As household furnishings and property from Japanese American families flooded California's major cities, an eager market took advantage of the necessary haste with which people had to sell their possessions. Japanese Americans filled suitcases with everyday necessities rather than the objects needed to re-make a comfortable home. Without knowing what to expect in their new surroundings, evacuees carried the basics. The objects that Japanese American families felt compelled to carry into internment camps were primarily utilitarian with a few sentimental items they decided not to leave behind.

Some internees were less prepared for the realities of Manzanar than others. A young woman reported to the *Manzanar Free Press* that she was poised for adventure when she arrived from Los Angeles. Wearing "a big summer hat, open-toed French-heeled sandals" and a "costume a-la-L.A.," this woman's expectations collided with the harshness of the Manzanar environment on the first day. The unpaved walkways at Manzanar were covered in deep layers of sand that made walking difficult, especially in such impractical sandals. The strong winds might have knocked her wide hat off of her head in a matter of minutes after her arrival. "It would have hurt," she confessed, "to know that my thoughts as well as my clothes were ridiculous."²⁹⁹

Claiming Space

Early complaints by Manzanar residents resulted in changes to housing. In this way, Japanese Americans who requested materials and installed them in their barrack

²⁹⁸ Ralph P. Merritt, "Final Report: Manzanar Relocation Center," vol. 1, March 9, 1946.

²⁹⁹ "Hanging My Hat in Manzanar," *Manzanar Free Press*, September 10, 1943.

spaces were able to claim at least one form of benefits from the federal government. Families complained about a lack of privacy, overcrowding, the need for accommodations for elderly and sick family members, and shoddy construction. Their primary concern was that strangers or other families shared their space. Eight people were assigned to each apartment, so families with fewer members had to share apartments with another small family.³⁰⁰ This caused problems among the residents because the average family composition in Manzanar was between four and five members, but some families, who also had to be housed in these standardized spaces, had as many as eleven members and as few as two.³⁰¹ This policy affected small families especially, married couples without children, families with one child, and other families with fewer than four members, who would not receive their own apartment. Over one hundred families applied for new living quarters in the first week following the opening of Manzanar.³⁰² Unhappy families initially began moving from one barrack apartment to another. In early July 1942, the Housing Department halted the practice of moving families from one barrack apartment to another and began making changes to shuffle the barrack apartments block-by-block to reduce overpopulation.³⁰³ They began to make slight improvements to keep out harsh elements. A month after Manzanar opened, housing officials began installing partitions between apartments for family privacy and

³⁰⁰ White, "A Barrack Becomes a Home."

³⁰¹ Togo Tanaka, "Documentary Report, no. 13," June 25, 1942, JERS.

³⁰² Togo Tanaka, "Documentary Reports, nos. 1-90," JERS.

³⁰³ "Housing Improvements to Go Full Speed Ahead," *Manzanar Free Press*, vol. 1, no. 33, July 7, 1942.

laying twenty-seven acres of linoleum floors in the barracks.³⁰⁴ The crew managed to install linoleum floors at a speed of a block a day. Complaints also prompted the administration of Manzanar to launch a project to line the barrack walls with plasterboard to keep out the sand and elements and give the inside of the barracks a finished, more home-like feel.³⁰⁵ For internees, the completion of these tasks felt like the “fulfillment of the Administration’s promise”; by complaining and forcing administrators to act, internees claimed power in the relationship between local administrator and inmate.³⁰⁶

The WRA did not prioritize privacy for married or unmarried Japanese Americans living in Relocation Centers, a decided contrast to the way federal agencies designed housing for single women doing war work or even housing accommodations for migrant workers. The barracks lacked kitchens, bathrooms, and running water. Residents often had to walk long distances to wait in line to use showers and toilets. Officials at Manzanar knew that the use of public latrines affected morale because it diminished personal privacy. “Contrary to propaganda stories,” they reported, the “Japanese as a people are as particular about their privacy in bathing and toileting as any other group of American people.” Parents complained to officials that their children were “learning too much” in these impersonal spaces and being exposed to naked, adult bodies in ways they never would have been in their life before incarceration.³⁰⁷ The lack of response by federal officials to this claim of middle-class privacy and sexual morality could suggest

³⁰⁴ Togo Tanaka, “Documentary Report, no. 20,” July 8, 1942, JERS.

³⁰⁵ Togo Tanaka, “Documentary Report, no. 22,” July 10, 1942, JERS.

³⁰⁶ Togo Tanaka, “Documentary Report, no. 30,” July 20, 1942, JERS.

³⁰⁷ Genevieve W. Carter, “Child Care and Youth Problems in a Relocation Center,” *Journal of Consulting Psychology*, vol. VIII, no. 4 (July-August 1944): 219-225, 219.

that federal officials did not apply the same standards of sexual morality to Japanese Americans as they did to African American or white migrants during wartime.

In response, Japanese Americans increased their privacy by implementing their own design solutions. In the interim period, before partitions were installed in the barracks, some families strung sheets and other textiles between apartments in order to define their space and simulate privacy between their family and the next. Just like the barracks, the latrines did not have defined spaces. Although latrine buildings were segregated by sex, they did not have internal partitions between showers or toilets. Men and women showered and used the toilet without personal privacy, side-by-side, the bodies of strangers uncomfortably close together or even touching. Based on existing iron remnants of toilet base flanges on the concrete slab of a women's latrine at Manzanar, the toilets were no more than a foot apart at the base. In her memoir *Farewell to Manzanar*, Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston emphasizes the tight space in the latrine. She describes women in the camp sharing makeshift partitions made of cardboard soapboxes to separate the toilets for privacy.³⁰⁸ Wakatsuki Houston's memoir validates that women interned at Manzanar asserted control over the punishing landscape. They constructed objects to provide the privacy the federal government did not, they shared these cardboard partitions as part of a community, and they ultimately used their collective power to lobby the administration to install permanent partitions.

A barrack apartment did not meet the federal government's own standards for housing. The U.S. Housing Authority (USHA) required that all dwellings include a separate sleeping area, a living room where people did not sleep, kitchen facilities, and a

³⁰⁸ Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston and James D. Houston, *Farewell to Manzanar* (New York: Ember/Random House, 2012 [1973]), 32.

bathroom with running water, a private toilet, and a bathtub.³⁰⁹ A barrack apartment included none of these elements. Siblings slept side-by-side with their parents in a large one-room apartment that they also used as a living room during the day. Mothers had to walk from their barrack apartment to the laundry room, all the while managing her children, in order to clean soiled diapers.³¹⁰ Everyone waited in lines for the toilets, the showers, and the mess hall.

The federal government did not follow best practices or its own research with respect to privacy for the psychological health of the family. A 1939 study by the American Public Health Association found that privacy, “normal” family life, “normal” community life, the ease of completing household tasks, the maintenance of cleanliness, the possibilities for aesthetic satisfaction, and the meeting of social standards constituted “fundamental psychological needs” that adequate housing provided.³¹¹ The 1940 White House Conference on Children in a Democracy asserted that children who lived in one-room dwellings with their parents were “the worst housed, partly because of the psychological and emotional effects of living with their parents within the confines of one room, with no possibility of privacy.”³¹² The standards for federal domesticity reinforced the notion that privacy in a single-family home was not only preferred but the only acceptable form of family life. The fact that the federal government did not meet the

³⁰⁹ U.S. Housing Authority, *Summary of Standards and Requirements for USHA-Aided Projects* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1940).

³¹⁰ *Personal Justice Denied*, 159.

³¹¹ National Association of Housing Officials, “Practical Standards for Modern Housing,” March 1939, Box 118, John M. Carmody Papers, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library, Hyde Park, NY.

³¹² WHC, 327.

standards for migrant housing that other federal studies of permanent housing set forth is an indication that government standards somehow did not apply to the people imprisoned in War Relocation Centers. The racial identity of Japanese American internees allowed for deviation from federal housing standards, likely because their citizenship was considered questionable. Furthermore, federal officials participated in constructing Japanese racial identity as foreign by limiting access to the benefits of federal domesticity just as they imposed strict gender standards.

Young men and women housed in internment camps like Manzanar were not accustomed to sharing space with their parents. In a floor plan from her barrack apartment in the Poston concentration camp in Arizona, Fumiko Fukuda illustrated how her father and four sisters maintained boundaries in their five hundred square foot barrack apartment (Figure 16). While four of the five Fukuda girls could push their beds together to maximize the square footage in the room and leave space for a sitting area, Fumiko's father had his own section of the room surrounded by draperies. As the only male member of the family, the girls' father was separated for their privacy and his own. Their father seems to have spent more than sleeping time in his section of the apartment. His space contains his own chair and rug and a set of shelves for his belongings. His shrine for traditional religious practice, likely not shared by his daughters, takes up the corner of the apartment away from the public space. Based on Fumiko's drawing, it appears that her father's area was not a small space for his exile, but rather a space that allowed him more privacy, more personal space, and more furnishings than each of the girls possessed.³¹³

³¹³ [Map of Barrack Apartment], Fukuda and Whitney Family Papers, Japanese American National Museum, Los Angeles.

Interior decoration became a way for Japanese Americans to assert control over their spaces. They claimed power over place by addressing their own needs and beautifying their surroundings through art and craft. In so doing, they created spaces of survival out of a hostile environment.³¹⁴ Internees crafted household goods for their apartments to make them feel more like home. Upon arrival in Manzanar, the army provided a single cot for each member of the family, a single light bulb hanging from the ceiling, and an oil burning stove for heat. As Beatrice White wrote in her justification for the model apartment: “For the students of the Manzanar Secondary School the word ‘home’ implied an empty barrack room.”³¹⁵ Internees immediately began to remake their barracks into homes as soon as they arrived. They made household goods from scrap wood, including trays, decorative carvings, and lamps. They made and arranged paper flowers, painted the barren landscape, sketched cartoons of their daily life, and sewed decorative textiles to enhance their barrack space.³¹⁶

Families appointed their barrack apartments with furniture made by interred professional craftsmen and with furniture they constructed from found materials. Experienced furniture makers had opportunities to build furniture in established workshops at Manzanar, where they could produce furniture for sale to families and for use in administrative departments. These professional craftsmen assisted some of the residents in the construction of makeshift furniture for their barracks. Among the

³¹⁴ Jane E. Dusselier, *Artifacts of Loss: Crafting Survival in Japanese American Concentration Camps* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2008).

³¹⁵ White, “A Barrack Becomes a Home.”

³¹⁶ Allen H. Eaton, *Beauty Behind Barbed Wire: The Arts of the Japanese in Our War Relocation Camps* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1952).

Japanese, furniture making was traditionally a craft performed by men. In the camps, it became a project completed by everyone, regardless of gender.³¹⁷ The same woman who arrived from Los Angeles dressed for a summer adventure “pushed and pulled,” and “nailed and tacked” to make a dressing table out of apple boxes, a stool from a nail keg barrel, a tea table from plasterboard, a bookcase from bricks and boards, and desks out of milk cans, stones, and plasterboard.³¹⁸ Despite the pride that many internees took in their makeshift furniture, most of it did not survive; it was demolished alongside the site or taken to a family’s new residence only to be replaced by nicer pieces over time.

Planting gardens and lawns outside the barrack apartment helped internees feel a level of ownership for their new surroundings. Two of the barracks on block six in Manzanar began their own “beautification program” by planting a lawn between the barracks with seeds purchased through the Sears, Roebuck catalogue. A group of sixty people worked to fill holes, till the soil, and water for thirty days. Manzanar’s first green lawn between barracks appeared eleven days later through the ingenuity and hard labor of the incarcerated.³¹⁹ Gardens became even more elaborate. Decorative fences and rock gardens appeared between the barracks. Vegetables and flowers filled the barren desert landscape. Visitors and administrators commented on the changes Manzanar occupants made and encouraged such projects in the community newspaper as a way for everyone

³¹⁷ My thinking about the gendered practice of furniture making and women’s participation in it draws from Valerie J. Matsumoto, *City Girls: The Nisei Social World in Los Angeles, 1920-1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 153.

³¹⁸ “Hanging My Hat in Manzanar,” *Manzanar Free Press*, September 10, 1943.

³¹⁹ Togo Tanaka, “Documentary Report, no. 3,” June 11, 1942, JERS.

to participate in the beautification of the camp.³²⁰ Four months after the first evacuees arrived at Manzanar, they had planted three hundred Victory Gardens, sowed one hundred and fifty acres of farmland, seeded one hundred lawns, and tended fifty acres of pear and apple orchards on site.³²¹

Making a space for oneself and one's family, however, sometimes came at a social cost. In order to find materials for makeshift furnishings, families raided woodpiles or stole supplies. While being held at the Tanforan Assembly Center, Charles Kikuchi and his family raided the Clubhouse of the racetrack and pulled up the linoleum from the bar tables for use in their squalid apartment. Kikuchi did not consider taking the linoleum from federal officials to be illegal or immoral, but he considered the common practice of stealing linoleum from other families' stables to be socially reprehensible and to indicate bad manners. Kikuchi remarked that the behavior of those who broke the furnishings used by the community, like the camp coal bin, or stole from other families, would only continue to deteriorate so long as they resided in a camp setting. "I hate to think of seeing them eat in a restaurant after they eat in those mess halls for a year or so!" he wrote in his diary. "They will be so coarse and vulgar; under frontier conditions, one could not expect to hope for any better."³²² For Kikuchi, theft and vandalism of the federal government's property was not reprehensible, but violations of community trust were unacceptable.

³²⁰ "From the Project Director Roy Nash," *Manzanar Free Press*, vol II., no. 3, July 27, 1942.

³²¹ Togo Tanaka, "Summary Report on Center Requested by Dr. Carter," July 24, 1942, JERS.

³²² Charles Kikuchi, "May 3, 1943 Sunday," *The Kikuchi Diary: Chronicle from an American Concentration Camp, The Tanforan Journals of Charles Kikuchi*, edited by John Modell (Urbana, IL: Illinois University Press, 1973), 53, 67.

Bad Design and Family Breakdown

Experts warned that the housing and living conditions of the camp would lead to “family breakdown” and the collapse of established power relationships within Japanese American families. Changes to daily life in the camps diminished family authority since children were now dependent upon the schedules of the WRA rather than their parents’ schedules. Fathers worked outside the family apartment during the day, but the increased role of the WRA in family affairs diminished their role. Federal officials reported that teenagers would retort: “I don’t owe you anything; the government is feeding and clothing me, you aren’t.”³²³ With their parental roles challenged, Issei parents felt they had lost control of their families and faced yet another injustice in their incarceration.

Japanese Americans and administrators cited the absence of a kitchen in barrack apartments as a common reason for the dissolution of “normal” family life. Eating meals in mess halls disrupted quality time, authority, and gendered roles of family members. “The person most completely displaced is the hard-working Japanese mother,” Genevieve Carter, the head of the education department at Manzanar, argued. Japanese mothers now had “no kitchen to cook in because all families eat in common mess halls, no field to work in because they left their farms at evacuation, no children to keep at home because there is no place for children to romp in a room already filled with five or six beds.”³²⁴ Long lines for each meal demoralized hungry residents, but the lack of control over children during mealtime was even more problematic. Children no longer ate with their parents, and they “wander[ed] about the community and [ate] in any of the thirty six mess halls that happen to be near their place of play. Parents may not see their

³²³ Ibid.; “The Teacher and the War Relocation Project,” Box 13, Manzanar War Relocation Center Records, UCLA.

³²⁴ Carter, “Child Care and Youth Problems.”

children all day, until bed time.”³²⁵ Since there would be no kitchen equipment in the barracks, one Issei father suggested that the WRA reserve a table in the mess hall for each family or serve meals in each barrack apartment on a special tray. “Mealtime is the only time a family gets together,” he argued, “and family spirit and ties should be preserved for this occasion.”³²⁶

What some administrators and older generation parents viewed as “family breakdown,” others saw as an increasing generational divide between Issei and Nisei that allowed the younger generation more individual freedom. “Continuing friction” and “incessant clashes” between family members resulted from teenage and young adult Nisei sharing crowded space with their older, Issei parents. If the close quarters were, in part, the cause of the discord among these families, then new living arrangements would be the solution. One Japanese American internee offered: “it may be cruel to separate families... but it is more cruel to keep dissenting elements together. Separate camps should be maintained for those having the differing loyalties and ideologies.”³²⁷ Administrators conflated culture, generation, and loyalty, seeing Nisei as controllable or flexible while their older parents were inassimilable and set in their ways; they encouraged the Nisei to participate in community governance and management, while the Issei were not allowed.

Age and generation shaped Japanese American parents’ understanding of educational programming in Americanization at Manzanar. Togo Tanaka, a newspaper editor incarcerated at Manzanar, reported on the living conditions in Manzanar in his role

³²⁵Carter, “Child Care and Youth Problems.”

³²⁶ Togo Tanaka, “Documentary Report, no. 72,” October 12, 1942, JERS.

³²⁷ Togo Tanaka, “Documentary Report, no. 47,” August 12, 1942, JERS.

as “documentary historian” for the federal government and for the Japanese American Evacuation and Resettlement Study (JERS) at the University of California at Berkeley. Tanaka reported that Nisei parents thought about “eventual assimilation into American life,” and wanted their children to be prepared to re-enter American society. They spoke English to their children, encouraged participation in community activities, and believed their American citizenship would be maintained and respected.³²⁸ Meanwhile, Kibei, Japanese Americans born in the United States and educated in Japan, and Issei parents were increasingly “convinced that this is a race war” and that “as long as you have slant eyes and black hair you’ll always be stigmatized as a Jap here... this is a white man’s country.”³²⁹ Kibei and Issei were therefore more likely to be distrustful of educational programming and community activities and monitored their children’s participation in these activities. For those who believed they would be returning to Japan after war, courses in English language and the American way of life were unimportant.³³⁰

In some respects, teenagers at Manzanar were performing the same type of generational separation from their parents as white teenagers in the United States during the war. As historian Steven Mintz argues, “whether in response to the threats of the adult world’s war or the stress of family disruption, adolescents took on a new and distinctive social identity, independent of their parents’.”³³¹ Families moved to new communities

³²⁸ Togo Tanaka, “Documentary Report, no. 47,” August 12, 1942, JERS.

³²⁹ Ibid.

³³⁰ Togo Tanaka, “Documentary Report: Summary Report on Center Requested by Dr. Carter,” July 24, 1942,” JERS.

³³¹ Steven Mintz, *Huck’s Raft: A History of American Childhood* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 267.

and parents, either deployed as soldiers or working in defense industries, no longer monitored their children in the same ways they had before the war. Teenagers began to depend more upon their peer group for connection and developed their own popular culture distinct from their parents. While Issei and Nisei certainly had different views with respect to citizenship, incarceration, and Americanization, they also experienced a generational separation typical of the period as Nisei teenagers found independence.

These concerns about family stability—particularly their implications for adolescent sexuality—would ultimately provide the impetus for a home economics course within the high school at Manzanar. Rumors of sexual immorality circulated at Manzanar as teenage internees explored their newfound freedom from the authority of their parents and neighbors. In the first two weeks at Manzanar, a rumor circulated that there were thirty-eight unwed teenage mothers in camp. Conditions in camp were thought to be so disruptive to moral behavior that young women supposedly prowled the apple orchards at night. Though there was undoubtedly sex among unmarried residents at the camp, at the time of the rumor only one unwed pregnant woman had arrived just days earlier. A related rumor that there were forty-five advanced cases of syphilis also struck the camp at the same time and was found to be an exaggeration from the six men and women who had a syphilis diagnosis. The rumors prompted police patrols of the camp at night to question any person out for a midnight walk.³³²

In a closed community like Manzanar, reports of childhood mischief soon became rumors of juvenile delinquency. An editorial in the *Manzanar Free Press* illustrated the way rumors spread about bad behavior. A broken window and a couple in an argument soon transformed through gossip into “gangs of hoodlums” performing “malicious

³³² Togo Tanaka, “Documentary Report, no. 4,” June 12, 1942, JERS.

vandalism” and hundreds of girls in trouble because “the parents let them wander around at night with young men.”³³³ Despite Carter’s assertion that there was not a problem of juvenile delinquency in the camp, she acknowledged that the residents would say that their children were misbehaving according to their own strict guidelines. Each incident of misbehavior would also be amplified throughout the community because of the close proximity of living quarters and lack of privacy in which to discipline their children.³³⁴

Despite fears and rumors to the contrary, juvenile delinquency was not a real problem at Manzanar. Genevieve Carter wrote a summary of the childcare issues of the camp in a psychological journal in 1944. Countering widespread rumors about delinquency, she challenged unfounded claims with data from the camp. She noted that in two years of Manzanar’s community life there were only thirty-two juvenile arrests made for crimes that, for the most part, seemed like normal adolescent rebellion, including: battery, burglary, defacing property, a “Peeping Tom,” being out of military bounds, and disturbing the peace. Carter argued that only three or four cases could be termed delinquent.³³⁵ Young people at Manzanar attended high school with greater frequency than in neighboring public schools, they had no markets for stolen goods, no storage to hide their loot, and fewer assault and battery crimes than the population of the camp might suggest. As Carter explained, the “crowded living conditions, the abnormal family situation and lack of normal community outlets” should have created an environment for

³³³“Squelch Those Rumors,” *Manzanar Free Press*, vol II., no. 8 (August 7, 1942).

³³⁴ Carter, “Child Care and Youth Problems.”

³³⁵ Ibid.

delinquency to flourish, but the data simply did not bear out an increase in juvenile delinquency at Manzanar.³³⁶

Building the Model Barrack

Beatrice White, a home economics teacher, saw the lack of a “normal home situation” as the most troubling influence on the youth of the camp. She advocated for home economics instruction and believed that the construction of a model barrack apartment in “an acceptable standard for an American family home” could alleviate non-normative influences.³³⁷ A model barrack would not only immerse students in the creation of an acceptable single-family home, it would demonstrate authentic American home standards in keeping with the educational goals for the camp. At least one other War Relocation Center, Minidoka in Idaho, created a model apartment for evacuee edification. The Minidoka exhibition showcased the furniture of George Nakashima, who honed his skills under the tutelage of a professional woodworker in the War Relocation Center. The famed Japanese American designer exhibited his furniture, which he had made from scrap materials found throughout the camp, in an empty barrack space.

In general, however, exhibitions of art and craft were more common than model apartments and were encouraged throughout the concentration camps. In August 1942, five months after arriving in Manzanar, internees hosted a series of exhibitions with crafted objects to “stimulate your imagination as to how to fix your own homes.”³³⁸

³³⁶ Ibid.

³³⁷ White, “A Barrack Becomes A Home.”

³³⁸ “Craft Exhibit Features Unique Entries,” *Manzanar Free Press*, vol. II, no. 16, August 26, 1942.

Exhibitions featured woodworking created without standard tools, flower arranging, painting, and textile crafts.

In the 1943-1944 school year, White and the students in her home economics course got to work on a model apartment in Manzanar. They began with structural modifications to the twenty by twenty four foot barrack to give shape to the unadorned, box-like apartment (Figure 17). Students sealed a large, garage-style door on the southern wall of the barrack and replaced the door with a small window to let in southern light. They moved the front entrance of the apartment to the center of the east wall, replacing the central window along the long wall of the barrack with a typical residential door. The apartment retained a total of six windows, but relocated them in a different orientation. The eastern-facing door of the apartment blocked prevailing winds and sand from coming into the barrack apartments. Depending upon the location of the barrack in the larger block, the eastern-facing door of the apartment would have either faced away from the block, allowing privacy, or toward the block, allowing greater community access. For the barracks in the first three rows, eastern-facing doors would have concealed the entrance to the barrack on a less populous side.³³⁹

To an empty room, the students added partitions to designate living spaces. Near the newly constructed front door, students added a kitchen to the apartment by installing three partitions to enclose the space. Partitions were likely made of the same fiberboard the WRA installed years before. They formed three closets: two in the living room area and one in the sleeping area. The students did not enclose the sleeping area with partitions, but cordoned it off with the use of a screen that could extend the living room when needed.

³³⁹ Ibid.

The model apartment's interior decoration followed decorating schemes more likely to be teacher Beatrice White's taste than the taste of her students. Photographs of the model apartment interior show a space that is not decorated in the latest modern styles, but in a style that reproduced the forms of antique or heirloom furniture (Figure 18). Young men in the Manzanar High School woodshop class built wooden shelves for the sleeping area and living room and wooden cupboards in the kitchen, which were, according to White, "integral parts of the decorative scheme."³⁴⁰ The large scale of the wall shelves – seven feet long and four feet high in the living room – made the large, spare space appear home-like and cozier. The shelves were built with more woodworking skill than a simple and modernistic shelf might have been. The traditional scallop design along the scrollwork of the wall shelf is consistent with a Swiss chalet revival style that had been in pattern books for furniture design at least since *The Architecture of Country Houses* in 1850.³⁴¹ The scalloped designs would have been showpieces for the woodworking class and would have distinguished the wall shelves in the model barrack from the homemade shelves made from scrap lumber by many residents. Furniture that incorporated a design feature like scalloped edges symbolized an elevated, traditional, middle-class American home.

In contrast to White's preference for traditional designs, advertisements and advice for teenage consumers emphasized a more casual trend toward individual personalization. The teenage consumer distinguished her tastes from her parents and teachers by choosing furniture and décor that suited her own style and pushing against the

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

³⁴¹ Andrew Jackson Downing, *The Architecture of Country Houses* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1969 [1850]).

middle-class standards of federal domesticity. The consumer market for teenagers emerged in the postwar period following a developing cultural awareness of the differences between teenagers and their parents during the war.³⁴² *Good Housekeeping* explored the changing tastes of young women in 1941 when they surveyed ten thousand college students from forty four colleges for a series: “If Your Daughter Had Her Way” (Figure 19).³⁴³ In this series, editors created model rooms that displayed the results of the survey of college students. To modernize the living room, college women altered the color, fabrics, and accessories of the room. The decorative scheme of the college women’s room was lighter and brighter than that of her mother. Pink and plum chintz slipcovers masked the large furniture, and new pieces of furniture on a smaller scale varied the design of the room. The secret to this new modern look, *Good Housekeeping* shared, was boldness and simplicity.³⁴⁴

In Beatrice White’s classroom, the model apartment meant to represent anyone and everyone lacked personal elements from the girls who designed the rooms. Personalization, often called “personality,” in the form of artwork, photographs, and handmade household goods, was an increasingly popular decorative trend in the early 1940s, especially for the young adult women moving away from home to live in dormitories for college or for defense work. Following the “If Your Daughter Had Her Way” spread, *Good Housekeeping* offered advice on “How to Be a Success in One

³⁴² Cohen, *A Consumers’ Republic*, 319.

³⁴³ “If Your Daughter Had Her Way,” *Good Housekeeping*, vol. 113, no. 2, August 1941.

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

Room!”³⁴⁵ They advocated for decoupage artwork made of magazine clippings, fishnetting for pinning and displaying “funny claptrap,” and “amusing” tablecloths with lipstick kisses from your best friends (Figure 20). The personalization trend acknowledged the limited funds that young women had for decorating and offered solutions for using inexpensive materials to make a space feel more homelike.³⁴⁶

A shortage of materials and cumbersome government regulations presented obstacles for White’s plans for the model barrack. Since household equipment could not be purchased with government funds without a special permit, White improvised by culling household goods from around the camp. Other administrative departments donated the bedding, table linen, and range of the model apartment. The home economics room supplied the small kitchen equipment, and the school superintendent loaned the refrigerator. Since the WRA did not permit students to leave the bounds of the camp to shop for fabrics, they ordered sample swatches provided by mail order catalogs and department stores. Students contributed to the contents of the model apartment by purchasing their own dishes through a mail-order catalog. The students earned money for the dishes by selling cookies and flowers and by waiting tables during administrative functions in the camp.³⁴⁷

Design elements that evoke traditional Japanese style are conspicuously absent from the model apartment. In one image from “A Barrack Becomes a Home” (Figure 21), a tea set fills a shelf on the kitchen wall. The ceramics, possibly meant to allude to a

³⁴⁵ “How to Be a Success in One Room!” *Good Housekeeping*, vol. 113, no. 2, (August 1941): 114.

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

³⁴⁷ White, “A Barrack Becomes a Home.”

traditional Japanese tea set, are the last vestige of Japaneseness in this typical American home. Even so, the ceramics themselves are mass-produced and would have been purchased through a mail order catalog. Although the three photographs from “A Barrack Becomes a Home” do not depict the folding screen separating the living and bedrooms, it is possible that the screen was of Japanese design. The use of partitions and screens that can be adjusted to open or close off space is typical of designs from Japan and may have been part of the domestic material culture of Japanese Americans. However, the lack of specialty furniture from home suggests that the folding screen was probably a basic model that was produced in the camp.

The home wares the students used to decorate the model apartment came from a variety of sources made within the camp and purchased outside the camp. Incarcerated families could purchase goods for their home, clothing, and food from mail order catalogs or from cooperative stores run by a committee of Japanese Americans in the camps using the money they earned at their WRA jobs. The WRA pay scale ranged from approximately \$12 a month to \$19 a month based on the skill level and experience necessary for the job. Mail order companies like Sears, Roebuck and Company and Montgomery Ward advertised in the community newspaper and delivered their catalogs by the truckload to the Relocation Centers. In September 1942, an estimated 2,500 copies of the Sears catalog were delivered to Manzanar where “local mailmen broke their backs and the populace went on an imaginary shopping spree.” Manzanar, just like other isolated country towns, depended on mail order for merchandise that local stores did not carry.³⁴⁸

³⁴⁸ “Sears Catalogs Swamp Center,” *Manzanar Free Press*, September 2, 1942.

Internees also purchased goods at co-op stores. In the early days of the camp, the co-op operated The Canteen, which carried canned foods, coffee, fresh fruits, and bestsellers like soda pop and ice cream; or the General Store, which carried fabric, clothing, shoes, and dry goods for the home.³⁴⁹ These stores were operated as consumer cooperative enterprises wherein members made the purchasing, staffing, and financial decisions for the stores and distributed the profits back into the stores to purchase more inventory or, if there was an excess of profits, to the community in the form of sales refunds.³⁵⁰ The co-op was highly professionalized with a Board of Directors with previous retail experience who marked up merchandise by fifteen percent, paid applicable taxes to the State of California, secured discounts from major mail-order retailers, and engaged with professional organizations for cooperative enterprises.³⁵¹ Manzanar residents joined the co-op for a membership fee of five dollars and retained their receipts to receive periodic rebates on their purchases, which were distributed based on the amount they spent.³⁵² By 1944, the co-op system raked in annual sales over \$750,000 and operated “the Canteen, Dry Goods Store, Shoe Repair Shop, Laundry Depot, Watch Repair, Beauty Parlor, Barber Shop, Photo Studio, Sporting Goods, Flower Shop, Movie Department, the *Manzanar Free Press*, Check Cashing Department, and the Sewing

³⁴⁹ Togo Tanaka, “Documentary Report, no. 21,” July 9, 1942, JERS.

³⁵⁰ John Howard, *Concentration Camps on the Home Front: Japanese Americans in the House of Jim Crow* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 75-76.

³⁵¹ Harlan D. Unrau, *The Evacuation and Relocation of Persons of Japanese Ancestry During World War II: A Historical Study of the Manzanar War Relocation Center*, (National Park Service, Department of the Interior, 1996), 586-590.

³⁵² *Manzanar Free Press*, October 28, 1944.

Department.”³⁵³ In the three years the co-op stores operated at Manzanar, members received over \$150,000 in rebates.³⁵⁴

Like all of the education programs at Manzanar, the model barrack and home economics classes were designed as courses in Americanization. All age groups attended a full slate of educational programming at Manzanar. There were nurseries, elementary schools, high schools, libraries, adult education, and vocational classes that met regularly on site. Courses were designed to promote “loyalty to American institutions and train for the responsibilities of citizenship, of family, and for economic independence both on the projects and in the communities to which the students may return.”³⁵⁵ Young children were asked to speak in only English during their schooldays and they played with American toys through an innovative Toy Library system. “Our World,” the Manzanar High School yearbook, reveals a high school that, if not for its entirely Japanese American student body, could have been any high school in the United States. Teenagers stand in straight rows in their club photographs, smiling for the camera next to text that reads: “Home Economics Club” or “Future Farmers.” The yearbook is full of the nostalgia of typical high school yearbooks, but juxtaposes sentiments like “Our Fond Memories” with a photograph of one of Manzanar’s guard towers.

Programs for adults also had an Americanization bent. A seminar in American table manners diagrammed the placement of silverware, plates, and glasses at the dinner table as well as polite ways to cut meat, stir coffee, and use a fork. In addition to practical

³⁵³ “Consumer Enterprises,” *Our World*, Manzanar Yearbook, 64, Manzanar War Relocation Center Records, UCLA.

³⁵⁴ Unrau, *A Historical Study of the Manzanar War Relocation Center*, 590-591.

³⁵⁵ “The WRA and Education,” *Manzanar Free Press*, vol. 2, no. 14, August 21, 1942.

advice, the pamphlet for American Table Manners was specifically designed to teach cultural lessons about dining. Several times, the document reminds the diner to eat all of the food on their plate in order to try foods the hostess has prepared, to show good manners, and to be respectful of the hostess' wartime sacrifice. Because the American Table Manners document includes such tips as watching for cues from the hostess in order to match her behavior, the authors of the book designed the etiquette lessons not for life in the War Relocation Center, but rather as pre-emptive lessons for re-assimilation.³⁵⁶

While students could use the model barrack apartment for their lessons in home economics, the construction of it had more to do with their lives outside of the concentration camp than inside it. Once the model home was completed, students used the space as a practical tool for courses in the home economics curriculum.³⁵⁷ In their new homelike space, students would have participated in lessons that rehearsed typical homemaking scenarios like cleaning, maintenance, and general care of the home. Home economics teacher Beatrice White used the model apartment to direct her students in how to budget for a home. Students, meanwhile, used the model apartment as a place to study, relax, and escape the crowds and their families. However, the model apartment was only available to students in the last year the concentration camp was in operation. Delays in receiving the household furnishings needed for the space pushed the construction of the project passed the point where it would be useful as a model apartment for anyone incarcerated.

³⁵⁶ "Manzanar Adult Education Quarterly Report, Summer Semester 1943," Box 13, Manzanar War Relocation Center Records, UCLA.

³⁵⁷ White, "A Barrack Becomes a Home."

The construction of the model barrack apartment educated young women in domestic roles that were different from their mothers' and prescribed by representatives of the federal government. The aesthetic content of the model apartment directed the teenagers toward an "American" style that did not incorporate modern flourishes or elements from their Japanese heritage. As part of a larger Americanization project thought to ensure Japanese American loyalty through education, the model barrack apartment represented Americanization through interior decoration. Not only did the model barrack apartment enshrine the ideal of a single-family home, it encouraged consumption, and it immersed young Japanese American women in an aesthetic style that symbolized, rather loosely, an American colonial heritage rather than a multicultural or Japanese American heritage.

As such, the model apartment was a prime example of the Americanization education the young Nisei of Manzanar were meant to receive. Camp Director Ralph Merritt was proud of the successful training that teenagers and young adults received at Manzanar. "I believe every father and mother now knows," he said in a community lecture, "that the evacuation has given to their children opportunities that they themselves could never have created for their own families. Young citizens of Japanese ancestry going out from Manzanar are now better trained, more stable, more deeply conscious of their rights of citizenship and their obligations as citizens than they would have been had evacuation not taken place."³⁵⁸ Merritt believed that assimilation into a wider American culture was the best course of action for young Japanese American families. He suggested that these families would eventually elide their Japanese Americanness

³⁵⁸ Ralph Merritt, "America in the War and American in the Peace," May 30, 1944, Box 48, Manzanar War Relocation Center Records, UCLA.

altogether in the hopes of rising through the social ranks. “I believe that in the next generation we will see doctors, lawyers, teachers, scientists, newspaper men, and people throughout the business and religious groups of America who have Japanese names and Japanese faces but who are thoroughly American in thinking and living and contributing.”³⁵⁹ The young women who produced the model barrack apartment may not have created a space that could be replicated by families there, but, according to Merritt, they did practice their American citizenship as consumers and homemakers.

Officials used the living conditions at Manzanar as an example of how not to live, thereby aligning the Japanese American families incarcerated there with those conditions. Rather than acknowledging that poor living conditions were the responsibility of the federal government who evacuated Japanese Americans to this space, they chalked up the conditions to Japanese national character. These officials seemed to ignore that most Nisei lived a “thoroughly American” existence in middle class homes before their incarceration. White knowingly or unknowingly exploited generational differences between the Nisei and Issei by acting as the benefactor and tastemaker young women should hope to emulate. The décor itself immersed Japanese Americans in an imagined, “American” way of living that celebrated a traditional style and represented a “traditional” American home and family. This American way was, of course, inauthentic to the incarcerated Japanese American women’s spatial experience of Manzanar. It hearkened back to an inauthentic, or imaginary “American” style. Not least, this “American” style celebrated an imaginary American family, which was no more real for Japanese American families imprisoned there as it was for white American families who represented normative citizenship on the outside. In making the model apartment,

³⁵⁹ Ibid.

officials at Manzanar wanted incarcerated Japanese American teenagers to remake themselves.

Chapter 5

GUESTS OF THE STATE: THE PUBLIC PERFORMANCE OF FEDERAL DOMESTICITY IN THE EMERGENCY REFUGEE SHELTER

On June 25, 1945, eleven Boy Scouts lined up in front of a panel of Congressmen who were visiting from D.C. to investigate the Emergency Refugee Shelter at Fort Ontario in Oswego, New York (Figure 22). The boys were members of a select group of 983 European Jews and other persecuted minorities who had made the perilous journey to upstate New York ten months prior to the Congressional Hearing. That Monday afternoon, they stood at attention. The boys recited the Boy Scout oath, promising to do their best and to do their duty for God and their country. They waited to answer questions by Congressman Samuel Dickstein, Chairman of the House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization. Dickstein was a New York Democrat who was born to a Jewish family in Lithuania, graduated through the Tammany political machine, and sponsored the legislation at the heart of the House Un-American Activities Committee investigating Nazi propaganda in the 1930s. He and the other members of Subcommittee VI traveled to the edge of the United States, twenty miles from Canada across Lake Ontario, to determine what should be done with the refugees now that the war was over in Germany and ending in the Pacific.³⁶⁰

³⁶⁰ U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, "Investigation of Problems Presented by Refugees at Fort Ontario Refugee Shelter," 79th Congress, June 25 and 26, 1945 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1945), 25 (hereafter Refugee Hearing).

The Boy Scouts from Fort Ontario displayed their patriotism, Judeo-Christian values, and interest in American customs while dressed in the familiar Boy Scouts of America uniform, a symbol of good behavior and moral character modeled on U.S. Army uniforms. Dickstein questioned each Boy Scout separately, running through a gamut of questions that jumped from the innocuous to the probing. He asked the boys about their families, which subjects they preferred in school, and whether they liked baseball. Most of the boys could not definitively answer the Congressman's questions about their native countries because they had no knowledge of their relatives or their communities. The boys did not know whether their fathers were living or dead or whether their homes were still standing. Dickstein pressed on. He asked the boys whether they enjoyed living in the United States, whether they would like to stay and become American, whether they were willing to defend the country in war, and whether they were willing to use a gun. The boys were polite. They answered Dickstein's questions in clear English, telling quick stories about their emigration and their experiences with the Nazis.³⁶¹ Perhaps out of a morbid sense of play, Dickstein asked one young boy about the quality of the food in a Nazi concentration camp, hoping to hear that the American refugee camp where he conducted the interviews offered better meals. He seemed satisfied when the boy confirmed that the American food was better. It had taken months and increased rations to counteract years of malnutrition and bring the boys and their families back to health.³⁶² And still Dickstein pressed on. For two days, the Congressmen interviewed refugees and government

³⁶¹ Statement of the Fort Ontario Boy Scouts, Refugee Hearing, 24-30.

³⁶² Statement of Edward B. Marks, Jr., Refugee Hearing, 3.

officials, schoolteachers, and family members. They considered newspaper articles and the testimonies of sociologists, psychologists, and religious men, entering each into the Congressional record. Despite this performance of citizenship by the Boy Scouts and the refugees called to testify, the United States government did not have a solution for the refugees at Fort Ontario for seven more months.³⁶³

The Congressional hearing was the final act in several public performances of federal domesticity by the refugees. The group at Fort Ontario seemed like perfect candidates for a program in federal domesticity, but their unclear immigration status as “guests of the state” confounded the process of Americanization since neither federal officials nor the refugees themselves knew what would happen to them after the war. The primary goal of using housing, objects, and education in the service of federal domesticity was to remake displaced people into stable American citizens. To this point, however, federal domesticity had been most frequently applied to American citizens who officials believed could be redeemed into productive and reproductive families. The stateless refugees fleeing the Nazis already met some of the standards of federal domesticity – they were middle-class and white, although their foreignness and religious practice was perceived as racial difference. But their lack of American citizenship would confound the process of federal domesticity since, for most observers and officials, a safe haven and not American citizenship was the goal of the Emergency Refugee Shelter.

The foreignness of the refugees at Fort Ontario and their status outside the immigration system signaled them as temporary residents and therefore ineligible for

³⁶³ War Relocation Authority, *Token Shipment: The Story of America's War Refugee Shelter* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office), 102.

full citizenship. As “guests of the state,” their status in the country confused expectations for how refugees should behave in the camp, both for frustrated federal officials and for disappointed refugees. Most government officials did not believe that refugees would be allowed to become American citizens and were surprised when the objects, education and architecture adapted from other temporary camps for displaced people did not appear to organize the community. Solutions that “worked” to control displaced people in camps established by the federal government for migrant workers in California as early as 1933 did not seem to work at Fort Ontario. Officials remarked that Fort Ontario residents never developed a cohesive community and brought in psychological experts to understand why the refugees did not behave in quite the way the officials believed they should. At the same time, refugees, coached by other well-meaning officials, performed federal domesticity in order to show their value as potential citizens of the United States. They enacted their role as model citizens during a welcome ceremony, an open house, a visit from the First Lady, their psychological evaluations, and the Congressional Hearing held by Congressman Dickstein. On these occasions, the refugees performed and, importantly, were described as performing federal domesticity in order to resemble citizens of the United States. These performances of federal domesticity ultimately communicated their willingness and ability to become American citizens, and many of the refugees were permitted to repatriate to the United States.

The reason refugees were not immediately accepted as potential citizens was because of FDR’s initial order to accept them as “guests” coupled with their national origins, religions, and language. Pre-selected in Italy by the U.S. Army using standards based in federal domesticity, refugees were white members of

heteronormative, mostly middle-class families. To confirm their readiness for productive American citizenship, refugees and the federal officials that advocated their permanent repatriation emphasized a common Judeo-Christian tradition and their openness to an undefined and all-encompassing “democracy.” Writing about the refugees at the Fort Ontario Emergency Refugee Shelter eight months after their arrival in the camp, Ruth Gruber mused about their relationship with democracy: “The greatest influence for democracy,” she argued, “was America itself. Democracy became a process of osmosis. Just living near a small American town, where the word democracy, where all its dreams were in the air, made the people democracy-conscious.”³⁶⁴ Performances of federal domesticity were examinations in enacting “democracy” for wide audiences. The onus of becoming a democratic citizen lay squarely on the shoulders of the individuals. How well could they absorb and then enact American values and prove themselves worthy of citizenship?

Houseguests in Federal Domesticity

Franklin Delano Roosevelt authorized entry to the select group of refugees at Fort Ontario by sending a memo to Ambassador Robert Murphy in Algiers on June 9, 1944. The cable read, in part:

I have decided that approximately 1,000 refugees should be immediately brought from Italy to this country, to be placed in an Emergency Refugee Shelter to be established at Fort Ontario near Oswego, New York, where under appropriate security restrictions they will remain for the duration of the war. These refugees will be brought into the country outside of the regular

³⁶⁴ Ruth Gruber, “Eight Months Later,” Box 1, Emergency Refugee Shelter Reports, Record Group 210: Records of the War Relocation Authority, NARA-DC (hereafter RG 210: WRA).

immigration procedure just as civilian internees from Latin American countries and prisoners of war have been brought here. The emergency refugee shelter will be well equipped to take good care of these people. It is contemplated that at the end of the war they will be returned to their homelands.³⁶⁵

The rescue and relocation of refugees from southern Italy would alleviate the strain on the Allied Command in Italy. The plan also indicated that the United States was ready to fulfill the humanitarian work expected of it by the world community. FDR further directed Murphy that the refugees should be selected among those for whom other havens of refuge were not available, that the “group [include] a reasonable proportion of various categories of persecuted people who have fled to Italy,” and that Murphy conduct health checks to screen those “afflicted with any loathsome, dangerous, or contagious disease.”³⁶⁶ Of the groups of displaced people in this study, the refugees at Fort Ontario were the only ones pre-selected for federal temporary housing by government officials.

Initially, at least, the assumptions of heterosexual patriarchy within federal domesticity did not dictate the refugee program’s scope, even if it involved many of the same federal agencies that had enforced federal domesticity in other settings. In his brief guidelines, the President did not exclude single parent families or families with female heads of household. When he forwarded his plans for the Emergency Refugee Shelter to Congress on the following Monday, the President noted that a majority of the refugees would be women and children. The circumstances of refugee survival were such that the President knew not to expect ideal families untouched by hardship

³⁶⁵ Cablegram from Franklin D. Roosevelt to Ambassador Robert Murphy, June 9 1944, Exhibit 2, Refugee Hearing, 99.

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 100.

and war. Roosevelt ordered that the War and Navy Departments cooperate in bringing the refugees to the United States and that the War Relocation Authority of the Department of the Interior, the same agency responsible for the internment of Japanese Americans, administer the camp upon their arrival.

Immigration to the United States had become especially difficult by the time Roosevelt made his decision to authorize the refugee transfer – only three days after the Allied Forces landed on Normandy beach. Roosevelt had not lifted the national immigration quotas established by the Immigration Act of 1924 (the Johnson-Reed Act) as families fled the Nazis and sought refuge. Thousands had been denied visas or awaited processing. Members of Congress would later learn that only a fraction of the immigration quota had been met in the years preceding the establishment of the Emergency Refugee Shelter. Publicly, Roosevelt's rhetoric emphasized compassion toward those devastated by the Nazis. In November 1938, immediately following *Kristallnacht*, he condemned the violence upon German Jews, but he did not subsequently remove barriers to immigration or admit refugees.³⁶⁷ In 1939, the ill-fated MS *St. Louis*, an ocean liner carrying nine hundred Jewish refugees from Germany, had been turned away from the United States and Canada and returned to Europe, delivering passengers to European countries that would be invaded by the Nazis a year later.³⁶⁸ By mid-1942, the first cables detailing the extermination of Jews

³⁶⁷ Edward N. Saveth, "Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Jewish Crisis: 1933-1945," *The American Jewish Year Book*, vol. 47 (1945-16): 14.

³⁶⁸ Of the 937 original passengers, 254 were murdered in Auschwitz, Sobibor and other internment camps. Scott Miller and Sarah Ogilvie, *Refuge Denied: The St. Louis Passengers and the Holocaust* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2010), 174-175.

and other minorities reached members of the Roosevelt Administration only to be suppressed and deemed “unsubstantiated” by the State Department. In December 1942, the Allied Nations released a joint statement condemning the “mass executions” of “hundreds of thousands of entirely innocent men, women and children;” the statement ran in its entirety in the *New York Times* the following day.³⁶⁹

It was not the violence toward European Jews nor news of the Holocaust that prompted Roosevelt to act, but rather the threat of political scandal that forced his hand. Roosevelt continued to speak publicly about bringing Nazi perpetrators to justice, but he did not order the rescue of any European Jews or authorize a change to the immigration quota system. A full year after the Allies condemned the execution of Jews, in January 1944, Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, Jr. shared his department’s memorandum with the President. The report, originally titled “Report to the Secretary on the Acquiescence of This Government in the Murder of the Jews,” and retitled “Personal Report to the President,” detailed the State Department’s suppression of facts, intentional delay, and systematic obstruction in rescuing European Jews from their extermination.³⁷⁰ Within the week, FDR signed Executive Order 9417 creating the War Refugee Board, which was comprised of the Secretaries of State, Treasury and War. John Pehle was named the Executive Director.

³⁶⁹ Ruth Gruber, *Haven: The Dramatic Story of 1,000 World War II Refugees and How They Came to America* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2000 [1983], 17; Roger Daniels, “Immigration Policy in a Time of War: The United States, 1939-1945,” *Journal of American Ethnic History*, vol. 25, no. 2/3 (Winter – Spring 2006): 111.

³⁷⁰ Daniels, “Immigration Policy,” 111.

Some Jewish politicians, among them John Pehle, believed that temporary havens could be the mode by which the United States set an example to the rest of the world in dealing with the masses of displaced Jews and other persecuted minorities.³⁷¹ By May 1944, the War Refugee Board led by Pehle had compiled evidence of public support for temporary havens from political, religious and labor organizations as well as the media and the American public.³⁷² The National Democratic Club and National Republican Club issued a joint statement in September of the previous year urging Congress to adopt a resolution that would suspend immigration restrictions and allow refugees to stay in the United States as “visitors.” The AFL and CIO both called for the United States to open “free ports” in the fall of 1943. Christian religious leaders urged sanctuary as a Christian act. Organizations formed to advocate for saving European Jews and longstanding Jewish organizations mobilized. Among the groups that sent letters and petitions to the White House, were the American Joint Distribution Committee, the World Jewish Congress, the Emergency Committee, the Jewish Labor Committee, the American Council for Judaism, and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.³⁷³ An overwhelming seventy percent of Americans polled by the Gallup organization were in favor of temporary refugee camps.³⁷⁴ The

³⁷¹ Harvey Strum, “Fort Ontario Refugee Shelter, 1944-1946,” *American Jewish History*, vol. 73, no. 4 (June 1984): 401.

³⁷² “Memorandum,” May 14, 1944, Box 1, Records of the War Refugee Board, Basic Documentation, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library, Hyde Park, New York.

³⁷³ Strum, 403.

³⁷⁴ “Memorandum,” May 14, 1944, Box 1, Records of the War Refugee Board, Basic Documentation, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library, Hyde Park, New York.

Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People of Europe, with chapters across the United States, ran an advertisement in late May in newspapers from Washington, D.C. to Los Angeles arguing that twenty-five square miles and existing infrastructure in the United States could house refugees, who were in a “race against death.”³⁷⁵

Despite his refusal to act on the part of Jews and other persecuted minorities in Europe until June of 1944, Roosevelt’s public comments evoked a Judeo-Christian tradition as the democratic foil to the tyranny of fascism. Roosevelt linked Jewish and Christian teaching through a “common source of inspiration in the Old Testament,” and urged Americans to “find unity in our common biblical heritage.”³⁷⁶ Judeo-Christian tradition and democracy combined in opposition to the authoritarian states of Axis Europe. FDR also highlighted familial bonds – parents and family members of United States citizens – as a connection between the United States and the Jews of Europe. It would be the alignment of democracy and Judeo-Christian tradition developed over the course of the New Deal and the war that would set the stage for realignment of American religion and politics in the 1950s.³⁷⁷

³⁷⁵ Strum, 403; “25 Square Miles or 2,000,000 Lives, Which Shall It Be?” *Los Angeles Times*, May 29, 1944, 9.

³⁷⁶ Franklin D. Roosevelt quoted in Edward N. Saveth, “Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Jewish Crisis: 1933-1945,” *The American Jewish Year Book*, vol. 47 (1945-16): 37-50.

³⁷⁷ Kevin M. Kruse, *One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America* (New York: Basic Books, 2015), xiv.

Roosevelt called for the “free peoples of Europe and Asia temporarily to open their frontiers to all victims of oppression.”³⁷⁸ Instead, 983 people made the journey from Allied refugee camps in Italy to the United States, among them: 369 Yugoslavians, 361 Austrians and Germans, 146 Poles, forty-one Czechs, sixteen Russians, and forty-five others from Spain, Bulgaria, Romania, Greece, Libya and elsewhere. They were primarily women and children, ranging in age from a newborn to an octogenarian. Most (731) came in family groups ranging from two members to eleven, but there were also 185 single men and sixty-seven single women in the group.³⁷⁹ All of the refugees were middle class. There were skilled workers, sales people, office workers, service personnel, and a few were agricultural workers.³⁸⁰ Nearly everyone in the group (916) was Jewish, including 135 Orthodox Jews. The exceptions were forty-seven Catholics, fifteen Greek Orthodox, and five Protestants.³⁸¹

The unwritten rules of federal domesticity shaped the refugees approved for emigration. The Americans preferred to take people in family groups; they chose those in greatest need, including as many as possible from concentration camps; they rejected those with disease, including those with contagious colds; and they tried to

³⁷⁸ Franklin D. Roosevelt, “Statement by the President Regarding the Atrocities of War,” March 24, 1944, Box 18, 1-F: Press Releases-Drafts, President’s Personal File, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library, Hyde Park, NY.

³⁷⁹ B.R. Stauber, “Preliminary Report on Refugee Group,” July 30, 1944, Box 1, Emergency Refugee Shelter Reports, RG 210: WRA, NARA-DC.

³⁸⁰ Statement of Edward B. Marks, Jr., Refugee Hearings, 3.

³⁸¹ Stauber, “Preliminary Report.”

include people with a variety of skills in order to make the Emergency Refugee Center self-sustaining.³⁸² The refugees were selected by Leonard Ackerman of the War Refugee Board, Max Perlman of the Joint Distribution Committee, and Captain Lewis Korn of the U.S. Army in southern Italy.³⁸³ Max Perlman described the job as “lousy,” and the “toughest of [his] life.” Perlman felt as if he was playing God with people who had lost everything already. Three thousand people had applied for the one thousand spots and anxiously awaited the results of the officials’ decisions.³⁸⁴ In addition to the minimal guidelines the President laid out in his first cable, American military officials in Italy narrowed the selection criteria. They selected refugees for the Emergency Refugee Shelter “particularly for the type of attitude they had toward the Government, that is so they would give no offense to our democracy.”³⁸⁵ Families with healthy males of military ages and families who were wholly self-supporting were ineligible. Each person also had to be cleared by intelligence twice before they departed for the United States; eighteen of them quit the process and withdrew their names before that happened.³⁸⁶ It is likely that the efforts of federal officials to select refugees meeting these standards resulted in the dismissal of people in dire need from the approved number of refugees.

³⁸² Gruber, *Haven*, 66.

³⁸³ *Ibid.*, 53.

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 55-56.

³⁸⁵ Statement of Brigadier General O’Dwyer, Refugee Hearings, 16.

³⁸⁶ Stauber, “Preliminary Report.”

The refugees that made the journey across the Atlantic aboard the *Henry Gibbins* were the first and only that would be admitted to the United States during the war. There were fewer than a thousand of them. They sailed in a flotilla of thirteen warships and sixteen troop and cargo ships. The refugee ship was flanked on two sides by ships carrying Nazi POWs. Ruth Gruber, a special assistant to Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes, accompanied the refugees from Italy to New York. She learned *en route* that approximately one hundred thousand Nazi POWs had been brought to the United States. That enemy prisoners took one hundred times the beds and material refuge as those escaping torture and certain death shocked Gruber and seemed to sharpen her resolve to give the refugees a higher standard of care.³⁸⁷

Perhaps unwittingly, though, the United States greeted the refugees by forcing them to reenact their arrivals to Nazi concentration camps. When they arrived in New York, the refugees were “in rather bad physical condition, both in terms of their dress and in their actual physical health.”³⁸⁸ Ruth Gruber remembered that they “looked like refugees.” Some wore makeshift shoes of sackcloth and ropes, and most were in rags.³⁸⁹ The morning of their arrival, the refugees were taken to a Quonset hut – a temporary, metal shelter – to be separated, stripped, and sprayed with DDT.³⁹⁰ With

³⁸⁷ Gruber, *Haven*, 79.

³⁸⁸ Gruber, Refugee Hearings, 50.

³⁸⁹ Ibid.

³⁹⁰ Although spraying immigrants with DDT (dichloro-diphenyl-trichloroethane), a synthetic insecticide, seems unconscionable now, it was common practice at the borders of the United States, especially the Southern border, as a delousing agent until 1972 when the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) canceled its use. Today, DDT is still used on people in Africa as a deterrent for malaria and is promoted by the World Health Organization for the same purpose. United States Environmental

their already-tattered clothes shrunk or ruined by the DDT, the refugees received a cardboard tag to wear around their necks with their identification number and the phrase: “U.S. Army Casual Baggage.”³⁹¹ After they were processed, the sick, elderly, and pregnant were removed to the hospital. The remaining refugees were led directly to a press conference where those who could speak English answered questions about their lives and their escape to an eager press corps.³⁹² Overnight, the group traveled upstate to Oswego by train – another emblem of their previous torture – only to arrive at Fort Ontario, a military base surrounded by a barbed wire fence.³⁹³ When a few of the refugees learned they would be housed in a military base they made sure that Gruber knew of their displeasure. “‘How could you do this?’ Artur Hirt asked Gruber, shaking her by the shoulders. “‘In the free America? It’s another concentration camp!’”³⁹⁴ Refugees would encounter an archaic military base in the shape of a star, surrounded by barbed wire on three sides and a blustery lake on the fourth. They arrived by train and would stand in lines to receive their assignments, leaving their baggage in piles upon their entry.

For some, arrival in America felt terrifyingly familiar and for others, it was the “greatest day of their lives.” Ruth Gruber remembered that “They stood out on the

Protection Agency, *DDT – A Brief History and Status*,
<https://www.epa.gov/ingredients-used-pesticide-products/ddt-brief-history-and-status>.

³⁹¹ Gruber, *Haven*, 125.

³⁹² *Ibid.*, 124-132.

³⁹³ *Ibid.*, 131-133.

³⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

deck... looking at the Statue of Liberty, with their mouths open, and their eyes glued to the Statue and the skyline. They kept sucking in the air, saying ‘I never knew the air in New York smells different from the air in Europe. It smells like free air.’ Then we all came up to Oswego, and on the first morning here, they all went around and said ‘This looks like Paradise.’ To some of us, it looked like any old Army fort, with typical Army barracks, but to them, it was America. There was one little woman, who had been given a barracks room overlooking the lake. She came up, threw her arms around me and said ‘I have a villa by the sea.’”³⁹⁵ In retelling one vignette of her experience with the refugees, Gruber managed to underscore the refugees’ interest in democracy through the imagery of “free air,” she referred to the Judeo-Christian shared belief in Paradise, and illustrated both refugee gratitude and aspirations to a capitalist, single-family home by sharing this description of a villa by the sea.

Fort Ontario sits at the edge of Lake Ontario to the east of the small city of Oswego, New York. The British established Fort Ontario in 1755 and the fort changed hands between the English, Americans, and French for almost a century. The United States rebuilt a massive, stone, star-shaped complex in the 1840s to house soldiers and munitions. The stone wall surrounds an inner ring of barracks and buildings with a flat, grassy area in the center for drilling and parading. Sloping knolls descend from the top of the exterior wall to the back of the ring of buildings, enabling soldiers to climb to the top of the exterior wall for an unobstructed 365 degree view. The historic fort at the top of a low hill and the surrounding grounds make up a complex of less than a square mile. In 1944, a six-foot fence topped with barbed wire surrounded

³⁹⁵ Gruber, Refugee Hearings, 50.

the fort complex to control refugee movement. But the view from the top of the historic fort must have offered the refugees living there views of a nearby neighborhood, the marina, and the Great Lake.

The refugees had been asking Gruber about their housing in America since they left Italy. “I guess when you’ve been on the run so long, when you’ve been homeless, housing becomes an obsession,” Gruber admitted.³⁹⁶ The residents of Fort Ontario lived in repurposed military barracks that had been remodeled before the refugees arrived to accommodate families. The buildings originally consisted of two large dormitory rooms, one on each floor, with smaller rooms intended for petty officers and a toilet and shower on the first floor. Thirty two-story “theater of operation type” barracks had plumbing and electricity with a bathroom on each floor. Federal officials redesigned the barracks by providing partitions between the rooms and installing a toilet and shower on the second floor.³⁹⁷ Each family apartment was divided into a living room, kitchen, and bedroom, and each barrack held eight apartments, or four on each floor. The barrack buildings each had forced draft hot air furnaces and a heating duct in each room to combat the cold upstate winters.³⁹⁸

The apartments were equipped sparingly, but they offered a “paradise” compared with the dwellings the new residents had experienced under Nazi imprisonment. Each barrack apartment was equipped with metal cots, a small table,

³⁹⁶ Gruber, *Haven*, 66.

³⁹⁷ C.H. Powers, “Final Report of the Shelter Director,” April 18, 1946, Emergency Refugee Center Records, RG 210: WRA, NARA-DC.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

chairs, and a metal locker. The War Department supplied the camp with cots, mattresses and bedding of regulation army type.³⁹⁹ The remaining wooden furniture was constructed on-site by the carpentry division of the Emergency Refugee Shelter. The shelter managers hired additional carpenters in order to complete five hundred wardrobes or cupboards and fifteen hundred wooden tables of different sizes.⁴⁰⁰ Olga Maurer praised the Americans for their efficiency and took immediate ownership of her small space: ““I feel already it’s mine,”” she gushed. ““My first apartment.””⁴⁰¹ Ida Polivka had to get used to sleeping in a bed again after the first few days.⁴⁰² And Kitty Kaufman shared that she “used to dream about bedsheets” as she slept in caves while hiding from the Nazis.⁴⁰³

Shelter officials knew that the living conditions would still not be suitable for families in the long term.⁴⁰⁴ The construction of the buildings was not conducive to “normal” family life according to officials in that they were not private and did not allow for family self-sufficiency and self-governance. Refugees felt the temporary buildings were cramped and uncomfortable. The thirty buildings of eight apartments each turned out to be too small to house the group of 982. Since single men, single

³⁹⁹ George W. Allen, “Final Report of the Operations Division,” February 26, 1946, Box 1, Emergency Refugee Center Records, RG: 210 WRA, NARA-DC.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁰¹ Gruber, *Haven*, 135.

⁴⁰² Mary Nash, “Door, Bed, Chair Make Paradise for One Refugee,” *The Buffalo News*, September 1944.

⁴⁰³ Gruber, *Haven*, 136.

⁴⁰⁴ C.H. Powers, Final Report, 10.

women, and couples without children would live in separate, smaller rooms from families with children in the first place, officials decided to move the single men into the permanent, brick and masonry barrack buildings built between 1905 and 1912 and the officer quarter buildings built in the same period.⁴⁰⁵

Despite protests by refugees and officials managing them, the living conditions at Fort Ontario were far-and-away better quality than those at Manzanar. The refugee shelter was in close proximity to local communities, giving the shelter more of a community feeling rather than an isolated desert camp. Local residents crowded around the edges of the shelter to watch the refugees disembark and were interested in the lives of the residents whereas Manzanar was ten miles of desert away from the small communities in the desert and, at capacity, was the largest community for hundreds of miles. The barracks at Fort Ontario selected for use as apartments were larger and had built-in plumbing and electricity. They were finished prior to the arrival of the refugees and, based on lessons from the War Relocation Centers for Japanese Americans, were designed as family apartments with separate rooms for living and sleeping. The residents of Fort Ontario received more furnishings for their barrack apartments than Japanese American internees received, including chairs, tables, locking cabinets, and small luxuries like drinking glasses and ashtrays.⁴⁰⁶ In some ways, the improved amenities for the European refugees reflect lessons learned from previous camps. WRA officials visited the internment camps to understand how best to house the refugees before they arrived in the United States. The improvements in

⁴⁰⁵ Allen, Final Operations Report, 5.

⁴⁰⁶ Mrs. Lenore G. Levin to Mr. Joseph H. Smart, October 2, 1944, Box 11, Fort Ontario Subject-Classified Files, RG 210: WRA, NARA-DC.

the camp over the Japanese American camps, however, also reflect the racial differences and wartime prejudices of federal officials. Federal domesticity for European Jews, just as with white migrant families during the Depression, black women war workers and Japanese Americans, was a process of race-making. European Jews, with white skin and middle-class values, were made less foreign and more white by the delivery of material culture and provisions. The citizens of the United States imprisoned in the West were treated as more foreign and more dangerous than the white refugees that followed them into federal temporary housing.

A Showcase of American Values

The day after the refugees arrived, the War Relocation Authority, the refugees, and one hundred leading townspeople from Oswego gathered for a welcome ceremony on the parade grounds at Fort Ontario. The WRA organized the reception in order to orient the refugees to their new, day-to-day lives as wards of the United States, but the event was full of ceremony and symbolism. The ceremony was not open to the public, which the federal officials up from Washington found regrettable, since they knew that the townspeople of Oswego would have been satisfied by the appearance and reactions of the refugees during the ceremony. The patriotic program opened with the National Anthem and was followed by speeches by representatives of the federal government, local officials, religious leaders, and two of the refugees. The editorial staff of the *Oswego Palladium-Times* documented each speech and sentiment. The editorial decisions to report about specific details of the ceremony reflected the qualities Americans wanted to find in the refugees and the qualities the federal officials ensured were in their talking points. Refugees were described as grateful, but traumatized, patriotic and obedient, religious and, importantly, temporary.

American officials used the welcome ceremony in Oswego to tout the rehabilitative possibilities of democracy. Annie Laughlin, representing the War Refugee Board, assured the refugees that they were to be free from want and fear and would have freedom of worship during their stay in the United States. Dillon S. Myer, Director of the War Relocation Authority, read from a speech prepared by Harold Ickes, Secretary of the Interior. Ickes welcomed the refugees on behalf of the United States government and delivered a message of hope that “this haven from the intolerance, suffering, and persecution that you have undergone will in some measure ease your tragic memories.”⁴⁰⁷ The United States, Myer read, “has become a great republic and a strong democracy through the peaceful intermingling of all races and creeds.”⁴⁰⁸ The decision to accept the refugees by the United States was celebrated by the speakers as a magnanimous act. The mayor of Oswego, Joseph T. McCaffrey, reassured the refugees: “It is, of course, not possible to bring large numbers of the needy from the stricken countries of Europe to America, but bringing your group here is an indication of the spirit and good will that Americans feel and always have felt for the downtrodden people of other countries.”⁴⁰⁹ The soaring presentation of American values was translated into German so some of the refugees could understand. Most spoke multiple languages with German or Yiddish as their primary language.⁴¹⁰

⁴⁰⁷ “Reception Moves Refugees Deeply at Fort Ontario,” *Oswego Palladium-Times*, August 7, 1944, 4.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁴¹⁰ International Migration Service, “A Study Made at Fort Ontario Shelter for Refugees,” Box 2, Emergency Refugee Shelter Reports, RG 210: WRA, NARA-DC.

Messages of personal and national gratitude followed the patriotic program. The refugees selected Yugoslavian doctor Leon Levy of Zagreb to deliver their message of thanks from the group. The gratitude Levy expressed was not an act. The refugees were truly moved by the generosity of the United States in bringing them away from southern Italy and away from the Nazis. Levy thanked the citizens of Oswego and the entire nation for bringing them to safety. The Mayor of Oswego also added his thanks to the local community and stirred community pride by declaring the selection of Oswego an important honor. It was up to the Oswegan community to “demonstrate how an American community receives and welcomes in democratic fashion nearly 1,000 men, women and children who have suffered much at the hands of our common enemy.”⁴¹¹ Oswego was performing a patriotic duty, participating in the war effort, and helping the downtrodden victims of the common enemy of democracy and Judeo-Christian values.

Other speakers highlighted the temporary nature of their stay to reassure the public gathered there that refugees would only be in their community for a short time and were to be treated as guests. As part of his closing message about American values, the Mayor emphasized the impermanent nature of their stay: ““When your temporary sojourn in Oswego is at an end, we want you to carry back to your various native lands a vivid impression of what the American small city is like, not only its physical characteristics, but particularly the harmony with which the American people live with one another, although composed, as we are, of many different races and

⁴¹¹ “Reception Moves Refugees Deeply at Fort Ontario,” *Oswego Palladium-Times*, August 7, 1944, 4.

believing in many different creeds.”⁴¹² In the Mayor’s message was an admonishment that Europeans had turned on each other, that they did not fully embrace the democratic values that permeated tiny Oswego, New York. Only in America would their decision-making be free, but they were only to stay in America for a short time.

In the Emergency Refugee Shelter, residents were allowed to practice any religion they chose. To speak to the religious freedom the refugees might expect in the United States, the welcome ceremony included several religious leaders. The invocation for the ceremony was conducted by Rev. Jeremiah J. Davern, pastor of St. Joseph’s (Italian) church. The refugees were welcomed from the Oswego Council of Churches by Rev. A.S. Lowrie, pastor of the West Baptist church. Rabbi Sidney Bialik of Adath Israel Temple spoke compassionately about the loss refugees must have felt about their family members and their homelands. The language of religious freedom had its limits, however. Reverend A.S. Lowrie spoke as a Christian minister, saying: ““We are here to serve all peoples regardless of race, color or language,” before adding “and whatever we can do will be done in the name of Jesus Christ.”⁴¹³ He could not articulate the ideal of religious freedom outside of a Christian context. Reverend Lowrie continued, ““Although this may not be the practice of all people, yet it is the aim and purpose for which the ministers of Christ stand. It is in this spirit that our welcome is extended to you. May God speed the day when war shall cease; when peace shall prevail in the world and all men shall dwell together as brothers in Jesus Christ.”⁴¹⁴ Freedom and peace, as communicated by the Christian leaders of the

⁴¹² Ibid.

⁴¹³ Ibid.

town, were Christian values accessible through a love of Christ alone. They could not yet articulate a wide-ranging Judeo-Christian ethos without Jesus Christ at the center.

The welcome ceremony's public performance with community leaders and, at least, regional newspaper coverage, was a way to describe the care and benefits the refugees would receive in the United States to American citizens. Federal officials explained the benefits the refugees would receive in this public gathering in order to assuage fears that refugees were receiving too much aid, while also touting their philanthropy. Officials explained that refugees would eat in mess halls operated by the government under common wartime rationing restrictions. Perhaps knowing they might be asked to provide Kosher meals, the federal officials noted that "insofar as possible menus will allow for the tastes of refugees."⁴¹⁵ Monthly cash allowances for clothing and incidental purchases were to be provided based on age: a maximum of \$4.50 for children eleven years old and younger, \$7.00 for adolescents from twelve to seventeen and \$8.50 for adults over eighteen.⁴¹⁶

Housing at Fort Ontario was slightly improved over other temporary shelters. It is possible that the federal government learned how best to house a smaller group of displaced people in the two years since the establishment of internment camps and an ongoing sociological study about family breakdown. Alternatively, refugees met many of the white, middle-class standards of federal domesticity prior to their arrival, and their improved housing conditions could suggest additional benefits based on those

⁴¹⁴ Ibid.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid.

⁴¹⁶ Ibid.

unspoken norms. Construction on the housing projects was complete prior to the arrival of the refugees, and the staff of the Emergency Shelter had already received a roster with family composition and nationality and had assigned each person to appropriate quarters based on family size.⁴¹⁷ Like in other shelters, single people would be housed in dormitories rather than individual apartments. Mess operations, like those in internment camps, were in centrally located kitchens and dining rooms.⁴¹⁸ Unlike any of the other temporary sites, however, each apartment had running water and sanitary facilities shared among a few families rather than separated by sex and shared by large groups of people. Each apartment also had more furnishings than other temporary sites, including cots, tables, chairs, and lockers.

Unlike other federal government camps for displaced people in this period, vocational programs were not popular with refugees because they arrived in the United States with more education and professional experience than other displaced people. Of the 496 heads of household, both men and women, 263 held professional and managerial occupations prior to their displacement; 117 were in skilled and semi-skilled trades; sixty-eight worked in clerical and sales; there were five in service, four in agriculture and thirty-nine housewives. Of the white collar jobs held by refugees there were merchants and salesmen, bookkeepers and clerks, lawyers, executives, writers, bankers, physicians, stenographers, pharmacists, jewelers, dentists, engineers, and rabbis. Other refugees worked as tailors and dressmakers, artisans, butchers, artists, and farmers. The most popular and longest lasting vocational course was

⁴¹⁷ C.H. Powers, Final Report, 13.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid., 34.

Beauty Culture, a course in cosmetology and hair dressing that was primarily attended by women.

Educational programs meant as recreation rather than vocation were better attended (Figure 23). English conversation classes drew 160 people, American Home, Economic and Government Life lectures drew 253, Arts and Crafts classes had 136 attendees.⁴¹⁹ Every Tuesday evening at eight o'clock, American Life lectures brought experts and speakers from outside the camp. American Home Life lectures were traditional home economics lectures, featuring information on what foods to eat, how to purchase and prepare food, best buys for the household, and American manners and customs. Clubs and social organizations like the Boy Scouts, Club of the Lonesomes for singles, and Old Couple's Club kept high enrollment numbers.

The Fort Ontario Coordinating Committee, a consortium of primarily Jewish philanthropic foundations and established relief and welfare agencies, provided the adult education and recreational programs and other supplies that were deemed outside the government's purview. The Coordinating Committee justified its involvement in the Emergency Shelter because they believed the government limited its "care to the provision of shelter, food, clothing and essential medical care."⁴²⁰ The Coordinating Committee worked to organize the many charitable agencies clamoring to provide the "things the government should not do."⁴²¹ When the Shelter first opened, small

⁴¹⁹ Edward Huberman, "Final Report of the Community Activities Section," February 9, 1946, Box 1, Emergency Refugee Shelter Reports, RG 210: WRA, NARA-DC.

⁴²⁰ Statement of Edward B. Marks, Jr., Refugee Hearings, 3.

luxuries poured in for the refugees, including furniture for the recreation areas, radios, phonographs, records, a movie projector and public address system, books, religious objects, athletic equipment, art supplies violins, candy, and fabric for curtains and upholstery.⁴²²

Educational and recreational programs that steered displaced people toward a Judeo-Christian family morality were essential to the project of federal domesticity, but the delivery of religious instruction and ritual objects was not necessarily provided by the federal government. In most cases, the federal government provided the opportunity for religious practice, but relied on philanthropic groups to support specific religious needs. In Oswego, the Coordinating Committee took responsibility for hiring a rabbi to provide instruction (even though there were rabbis among the refugees) and handled requests for skull caps, Mezuzot, and the provision of kosher meals. The practice of Judaism in the U.S. military was similar. Jewish G.I.s were given opportunities to practice a modified form of their faith, limited by time, space and leadership, without regard for Jewish religious difference or orthodoxy. The opportunity for religious practice was codified into the military's Standard Operating Procedure, but ritual objects and special needs for holiday traditions were often organized and donated by the Jewish Welfare Board or other philanthropic group.⁴²³

⁴²¹ Lotta Loeb, "Report of the Coordinating Committee," February 21, 1946, Box 1, Emergency Refugee Shelter Reports, RG 210: WRA, NARA-DC; C.H. Powers, Final Report, 35.

⁴²² Huberman, "Final Report of the Community Activities Section."

⁴²³ Deborah Dash Moore, *GI Jews: How World War II Changed a Generation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 118-155.

The attempt by officials to clearly inform the community members assembled at the welcome ceremony about the benefits refugees would receive in a federal shelter could have been in response to gossip and complaints from residents of the city of Oswego that the refugees were being treated better than American citizens. The Emergency Refugee Shelter was in town rather than on the outskirts of communities as in other shelter situations. The visibility of refugees in the community, even behind barbed wire, and the timing of the refugee shelter later in the war effort and after the institution of rations contributed to community unrest about refugee benefits. As in other shelters during this period, the federal government emphasized federal domesticity in public relations campaigns and in staged presentations of refugee life.

The most audacious presentation of federal domesticity came one month after the refugees arrived in the shelter during an “open house” over Labor Day weekend. The open house was part family reunion for those who had family members in the United States and part inspection as townspeople from Oswego came in to observe the refugees’ “home life.”⁴²⁴ Upwards of ten thousand people entered the shelter over the weekend and toured the barrack apartments. The shelter’s Boy Scout troop had been established in the first month, and the boys led their visitors on a tour of the buildings.

As townspeople from Oswego inspected the barrack apartments and other buildings, they were pleased to see that the rooms were comfortable, but not too comfortable. The *Oswego Palladium-Times* reported on the barrack apartments’ amenities, including electric lights, cold and warm water, and showers. They were “comfortably furnished with cots” and “equipped with a table, chairs and other articles

⁴²⁴“More Than 10,000 Made Inspection of Fort Shelter,” *Oswego Palladium-Times*, September 5, 1944, page 12.

of the ordinary home.”⁴²⁵ Rumors of electric stoves, refrigerators and radios had spread through the town, so the newspaper documented the location of the radios in common spaces and noted that some had been given by philanthropic agencies and others had been given as gifts from relatives and friends.

A careful description of the “typical apartment” of Carlo and Lotta Selan and their children in the *Oswego Palladium-Times* used the material culture of their apartment to demonstrate their respectability as upper- or middle-class white people. The apartment is described as having three rooms, one of which was used as a living room and the other two as sleeping rooms. The Selan’s children were listed by name and age (Myra, 6 and Edna, 4), which meant that adults slept in one room and children of the same sex slept in another. This configuration, which could not have been possible for some of the other families in the group, conformed to USHA housing regulations and would have seemed typical to middle-class readers. Carlo Selan had built a closet in the apartment, the mention of which made him seem ingenious and driven to make a nice home for his family. In the living room were books, maps, and photographs, which gave the impression that the Selans were worldly and educated. At the end of the description of the apartment, the newspaper explained that Selan was the European manager of Twentieth Century Fox of Hollywood, which would have solidified the Selan’s social class in the minds of readers and made the family seem American-enough and worthy of aid. If a man with such a glamorous profession could end up in the shelter, then maybe the other shelter residents were also deserving of the small and comfortable apartments they were each making into their new homes.

⁴²⁵Ibid.

Material culture, again, functioned as a way to signal the refugees' worthiness of full American citizenship. The description of the refugees as people of quality was also on display during a program of entertainment for visitors. Refugees and their children performed folk dances from their native countries, there was a cabaret show featuring the talents of several residents, and the recreation building held an exhibition of pictures and sculpture. One of the artists is described by the *Oswego Palladium-Times* in detail. Mariam Sommerburg, they explain, was an internationally renowned sculptor, who supported her five children through the sale of her artwork until she was "chased by the Nazis" for nearly ten years. Shelter officials and the local newspaper editors were interested in showing the quality of the people at the shelter. They demonstrated through their apartments and their abilities that they were middle to upper class, not destitute or reliant on the federal government. They were not "likely to become a public charge" if they were allowed into the United States because they possessed the values and abilities of a middle class. The refugees added to their value as middle class families by providing "immigrant gifts" to the community in the form of arts and crafts. The belief that immigrants could "contribute to American life by transmitting Old World cultural traditions" through public performances and displays of art, craft, music, and dance, draws from Progressive Era Americanization efforts. The immigrant gifts movement, as historian Kristin Hoganson argues, was inextricably tied to Americanization efforts as pageants and performances of folk culture served as fundraisers for Americanizers, helped them to build relationships with immigrants, and demonstrated the need for Americanization work by highlighting their foreignness.⁴²⁶ Providing accessible folk culture and products, then, was a typical

⁴²⁶ Kristin L. Hoganson, *Consumers' Imperium: The Global Production of American*

strategy used by American philanthropists to Americanize immigrants and outsider groups.

Soon after the successful open house, Eleanor Roosevelt visited the refugee shelter with Elinor Morgenthau, the wife of the Secretary of the Treasury and the man responsible for FDR's movement to accept refugees into the United States.⁴²⁷ The First Lady spent a full day at the shelter "inspecting" the buildings and apartments and participated in a religious ceremony at the shelter. She spoke with the refugees, mostly in French, and reported to the press stationed there that she heard no complaints from the residents. As she prepared to leave the shelter, Mrs. Roosevelt reminded the local newspaper's readers that they had "a real opportunity and a real obligation to let the rest of the people of the United States know about our guests."⁴²⁸ Acts of goodwill to the guests of the state would spread goodwill throughout the nation, throughout the world, and would lead to worldwide peace. By welcoming the refugees as guests of the nation, Mrs. Roosevelt argued, conflating the United States with a family home, individuals could make affect global change. The reality of life in the shelter was not as peaceful and unifying as Mrs. Roosevelt hoped.

Residents of the shelter complained to federal and private officials about their access to education, their inability to work for themselves and requirement to work for the shelter, and their restricted movement within the camp grounds and isolation

Domesticity, 1865-1920 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 217-232.

⁴²⁷ "Mrs. Roosevelt Visits Refugee Shelter," *Oswego Palladium-Times*, September 20, 1944, 14.

⁴²⁸ Ibid.

within an area enclosed by a barbed wire fence. Federal officials reported on and attempted to address problems in the shelter by assessing the emotional and psychological health of the refugees rather than acquiescing to material change. In much of the analysis, officials and outside experts concluded that unfreedom, uncertainty, and the refugees' conception of their status as "guests of the United States" were at the center of the problems.

According to the staff at Fort Ontario, the status of the residents as "guests" created problems for managing the shelter. The refugees able to work received eighteen dollars a month to work on the property by cleaning their own quarters, managing mess operations and the warehouses. They supplemented a small, hired staff that maintained the plumbing, carpentry, electrical and coal.⁴²⁹ The refugees' status as "guests" was thought to affect their willingness to work in the shelter. As C.H. Powers asserted in his final report, when additional jobs around the shelter needed to be done, the refugees who worked alongside the staff assumed that additional staff would be hired by the federal government and not that they were expected to do more. Maintenance staff complained that the refugees had no ownership in cleaning or maintaining the property and held no responsibility for caring for "himself, his family or his fellow inhabitants."⁴³⁰ According to staff reports, refugees "resented the fact that it was necessary for them to repair buildings, plumbing, electric facilities, etc., and to deliver coal to the buildings occupied by refugees. This made an intolerable situation."⁴³¹

⁴²⁹ Statement of Mr. Pitts, Refugee Hearing, 44-45.

⁴³⁰ Allen, Final Operations Report, 8.

⁴³¹ C.H. Powers, Final Report, 20.

Confinement and rigid camp security shattered any interest refugee families took in building a sense of community in the Emergency Refugee Shelter. Each person was issued a photo-identification card with their name, age, address in the shelter, and signature and had to show their passes when leaving and entering the Shelter. In addition to the fence around the property, Fort Ontario had entrance and exit restrictions, including a six-hour limit to visits outside the shelter and an 11:45 p.m. curfew. Security staff reported that the refugees “resented” the control the federal government had over them and that they called themselves “Prisoners in a free country without cause.”⁴³²

As staff members of the shelter tried to come to terms with the conflicts they had with refugees, the Health division of the shelter assessed the “emotional problems” of the refugees as reasonable and similar to those experienced in a hospital. Any medical social worker, they argued, would find similar problems with respect to family life. After interviews and counseling with refugees, Health division officials found:

there was a concentration and intensification of these problems, however, brought about by the traumatic experience from which this entire selected group had suffered for several years immediately preceding their arrival in this country and from the abnormal in-grown conditions under which they had to live in the shelter. Separation and loss of parents, children, husbands or wives, family disharmony, sexual incompatibility and insecurity about the future were some of the causes which led to emotional problems and physical break down.⁴³³

⁴³² G.G. Beavers, “Final Report of the Internal Security Section,” Box 1, Emergency Refugee Shelter Reports, RG 210: WRA, NARA-DC, V.

⁴³³ Ronald L. Loeb, MD, “Final Report of the Health Section,” February 5, 1946, Box 1, Emergency Refugee Shelter Reports, RG 210: WRA, NARA-DC, 13.

Confinement to the shelter in family groups strained those relationships. One of the shelter residents “never made a good adjustment to her marriage” and suffered with a heart condition and an overall sense of malaise. One young husband feared he would “lose the affection of his young and attractive wife” since he was “unable to give her the luxuries he believed she wanted.”⁴³⁴ Divorces could not be legally granted at the shelter because it was considered federal property and not state property and there was no federal provision for divorce. Should a resident request a divorce, shelter officials were asked to arrange for separate living quarters and treat the couple as if they were divorced. The legal divorce could then happen when they returned to their home countries after the war.⁴³⁵

Still, federal officials were not convinced that the restrictive regulations in the shelter were the reason for failures in community formation. To analyze the emotional and psychological problems that inhibited community formation at the Emergency Refugee Shelter, federal officials hired Dr. Curt Bondy. Bondy was not able to analyze everyone, and he specifically did not assess the psychological state of the children during his four-day encounter with the refugees. Dr. Bondy observed that some people, who he determined wanted to stay in the country, “tried to make a good impression, to appear pleased and thankful,” while others attempted to intimidate and threaten him. Others were hesitant and did not reveal much about their inner lives.⁴³⁶

⁴³⁴ Loeb, Final Report of the Health Section, 14.

⁴³⁵ Mr. Joseph H. Smart to Mrs. Levine, September 16, 1944, Emergency Refugee Shelter Reports, RG 210: WRA, NARA-DC.

⁴³⁶ Curt Bondy, “Observations on the Emergency Refugee Shelter,” Box 1, Emergency Refugee Shelter Reports, RG 210: WRA, NARA – DC, 3.

Bondy understood the attitudes of the residents to be comparable to the unemployed or to internees in other concentration, refugee, and prisoner-of-war camps. They had “unrealistic attitudes,” had “lost their sense of proportion, of what is important or unimportant, of what they can reach or not.”⁴³⁷ They presented a “dark and unfriendly” present and future, and nostalgia shaped their memories of the past.⁴³⁸ The people he met were “restless, nervous, and full of inferiority complexes.” They argued and bickered over the smallest conflict. They were listless and lost interest in doing crafts and other activities.⁴³⁹ The attitudes of the refugees in the shelter led to “contempt and resentment against them rather than understanding or sympathy” from shelter staff.⁴⁴⁰ But Bondy believed the refugees were “fundamentally as good and as bad as any other group of a thousand people taken from any other place.”⁴⁴¹ They had suffered deeply, and Bondy urged officials to recognize that their traumatic experiences explained their unsavory attitudes and strange behavior.⁴⁴²

Dr. Bondy conceded that the War Relocation Authority and the participating private groups had done all they could to make the shelter accommodations comfortable, but his overall impression was that confinement in the shelter was damaging. The army camp, he argued, was not suited to house families and children or

⁴³⁷ Ibid., 5.

⁴³⁸ Ibid.

⁴³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid., 10.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴⁴² Ibid.

older residents with health problems. Even though the families had their own rooms in the barracks, Bondy reported that there was too much crowding and families could hear each other talking in the adjoining rooms.⁴⁴³ Bondy reminded federal officials that the climate in upstate New York was vastly different from southern Italy. The residents did not want to work outside not because they were lazy or ungrateful; they were simply cold.⁴⁴⁴ Bondy was focused on answering three primary questions for the federal officials: Why were they ungrateful to the Americans? Why were they so dissatisfied, resentful, and unbalanced? Why didn't they develop a cohesive community? The format of the questions reveals the true source of the inquiries as the federal officials who struggled to control the refugees.

Bondy underscored that referring to refugees as “guests of the United States,” gave residents of the shelter “false illusions” about what their lives would be like, which led to very little gratitude for federal officials.⁴⁴⁵ Instead of a passenger liner, the group traveled across the Atlantic on a military transport. They knew they would stay in a camp for a time, but they did not know that they would be limited to the camp indefinitely. When federal officials began to meet refugee requests for more liberty, higher wages, and to stop censoring their letters, they expected gratitude in return. Refugees instead felt that these were the first steps in righting the wrongs of the

⁴⁴³ Ibid., 4.

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid., 10.

shelter and an indication that other needs might be met with additional demands and complaints.⁴⁴⁶

Bondy found that the refugees were ultimately dissatisfied because of the uncertainty of their lives in the United States. Many had endured a long period of uncertainty before they arrived in the United States and now found themselves isolated from their families, friends, occupations, and cultures.⁴⁴⁷ A flattening of social status in the shelter also led to their dissatisfaction and fostered envy among the residents and toward the staff of the shelter. “O, these people on the first floor are all uneducated, mere workers and communists” one resident told Bondy. Others watched as shelter staff freely came and went, earned more money than they did for similar work, and had more and better quality food.⁴⁴⁸

When assessing why the group had not formed a cohesive community, Bondy concluded that the shared religious practices of a majority of the group was not enough to form a community. Bondy noted that they took no pride in the shelter and felt no moral obligation to work for little or no money or for a group that did not foster a sense of loyalty.⁴⁴⁹ At most, he argued, this group was a “community of victims” who suffered the same persecution. Some national loyalty persisted, but there was no sense of a broad European community. While many shared a religion, Bondy underscored that it was “unrealistic to expect community feeling because of the same

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid., 13-14.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid., 14-15.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid., 15-16.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid., 17.

Jewish religion as to expect it in any casually mixed Christian community.” He challenged federal officials to see the diversity in the group as the barrier to the formation of a single community. “There are here,” he wrote, “all the differences of the Jewish religion as they are found in the outside world.”⁴⁵⁰ Importantly, Bondy placed the impetus for community formation on the refugees and did not blame the government’s confinement and restrictions. Bondy did not implicate the federal government in causing the problems of the camp, but in his final recommendation to close the camp immediately, he did stand with the refugees against the officials. In future work with displaced people, he recommended that the federal government be very clear about how displaced people would live in the United States. Everything “should be pictured very carefully and not too promisingly, and all should be done to prevent false hopes.”⁴⁵¹ Bondy, Gruber, and psychiatrist Rudolph Dreikurs’ reports communicated to officials in Washington the challenges and psychological problems facing refugees because of their confinement.

Freedom and full American citizenship for refugees in the Emergency Refugee Shelter became the primary objective of several federal officials, including Joseph H. Smart, the Director of the Shelter. In May 1945, Smart publicly resigned as head of the shelter in order to take on the campaign for their freedom. He launched a letter-writing campaign and organized Friends of Fort Ontario, a prominent group of Americans who would lobby Washington on behalf of the refugees and included Eleanor Roosevelt, Albert Einstein, Charles Beard, Reinhold Niebuhr, and others. The

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid., 17.

⁴⁵¹ Ibid., 12.

same week, Congressman Samuel Dickstein announced he would open congressional hearings on the Fort Ontario shelter.⁴⁵²

The Dickstein Hearing was the ultimate open house, the event that could determine the fate of the refugees in the United States. Coached by Gruber and Smart and with summaries of likely testimonies already provided to Dickstein prior to the hearings, the refugees were ready to perform their Americanness. After the Boy Scouts testified and answered Dickstein's questions, a few of the students and mothers of children under twelve spoke to the committee. They spoke to the committee about their favorite subjects and some brought their artwork to show. When Dickstein motioned to the girls to ask whether they wanted to say something, they asked the congressional committee for their autographs.⁴⁵³

As part of their hearings, the Congressional Committee recorded the costs of the program, perhaps as a way to dissuade the federal government from continued funding. In the 1945 fiscal year, the costs of construction and operations totaled \$873,340 or \$2.70 per person per day, much higher than other internment camps. When Congressmen questioned the costs of the shelter, officials working in the Emergency Refugee Shelters explained that the size of the group was so small that the operational costs of the shelter, which had to be provided regardless of the size of the group, increased the overall expense. The fort chosen for the Emergency Refugee Shelter was too big for the number of refugees housed there even though the barrack apartments were frequently described as crowded. Finally, the expense of feeding and

⁴⁵² Sharon R. Lowenstein, *Token Refuge: The Story of the Jewish Refugee Shelter at Oswego, 1944-1946* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 124.

⁴⁵³ Refugee Hearing, 37.

outfitting the refugees at the beginning of their stay, when most were malnourished and underserved, cost the government more than anticipated. The trauma endured by the refugees required special dietary needs to build the strength of the residents, a factor that did not weigh in the expenses of other FHA and WRA camps.⁴⁵⁴ Also new to FHA and WRA camps were private investors who donated money through philanthropic agencies, most aligned with the Jewish faith. Over \$100,000 was contributed for the camp and for tuition for students who attended local schools and colleges. These groups purchased the furniture in the room the Congressmen met in, equipment in the shops, and “many of the things that make life much more livable around here.”⁴⁵⁵

Congressmen were particularly interested in the “progress” the refugees made in performing federal domesticity. Federal officials listed the ways the refugees had been Americanized through their experience living in the shelter, emphasizing the amount of work they had done. Residents had published a newspaper, presented their work in the arts, and held waste paper drives and other benefits for the local Red Cross.⁴⁵⁶ Ruth Gruber, who had prepared the Boy Scouts for their testimony and wrote effusively about the refugees learning “democracy,” also spoke before the Committee:

In these 10 months, they have ceased to be a little Europe and they have become a little America. Oswego, today, is a typical small town in America. These people are completely democracy-conscious. The children listen to the radio, they go to the movies, they study the Constitution, they bring the whole

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid., 47.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid., 48-49.

⁴⁵⁶ Statement of Edward B. Marks, Jr., Refugee Hearing, 3.

spirit of the Bill of Rights home to their parents. The parents are just as conscious of American democracy as the children are.⁴⁵⁷

It was unlikely that any refugees believed in the forms of government they fled and that they would have made it past several intelligence screenings. The notion of “democracy” then, meant more than governance. For Gruber, American citizenship was inclusive of democracy, capitalism, and an “American way of life.” Participation in mass culture was equivalent to the study of the Constitution. Democracy was a principle to be adopted, and it was the responsibility of the refugee to invite and accept democracy into their beings as if through osmosis. Refugees were said to have “absorbed quite a bit” and been capable, through education, of becoming “imbued with the principle of our form of government, and our way of life, to the extent they would help defend that way of life.”⁴⁵⁸ Dickstein questioned the potential of assimilation into the United States in part because there was a real possibility that refugees would have nowhere else to go after the war.

The primary argument for developing a new plan for the refugees was based on the absence of a “homeland” as described by FDR in his initial memo to create the refugee shelter. Brigadier General O’Dwyer, who had previously been the Executive Director of the War Refugee Board, reminded the Committee that few of the people could return to “homelands” because they were “stateless.” The conditions in Europe not only precluded their return, but sending back the people the United States committed to save was not in keeping with FDR’s original intent nor with

⁴⁵⁷ Gruber, Refugee Hearing, 50.

⁴⁵⁸ Refugee Hearing, 54; Statement of Edward B. Marks, Jr., Refugee Hearing, 5.

humanitarian policies.⁴⁵⁹ O'Dwyer urged the Committee to resettle the refugees in other countries according to their wishes, but he wanted Congress to allow the refugees to stay in the United States until the United Nations "have settled the world problem of displaced persons."⁴⁶⁰

With the fate of the refugees in the balance, the Congressmen wanted to confirm the details the refugees had agreed to upon their sojourn to the United States. Surely, they figured, they were not responsible for reversing policy that the refugees themselves had agreed upon with their signature prior to leaving Europe. Speculating on the type of person that might have agreed to come to the United States as a refugee, Brigadier General O'Dwyer testified:

We won't run into people like this again in our lifetime. You have them in a very confused mental state, and they were going to America. I think any of them would have signed any piece of paper you handed to them at that time. And they were going to America, that was the only place in the world, having been harassed the way they had, everyone wanted to go.⁴⁶¹

O'Dwyer's testimony helped put into perspective the desperation that refugees must have felt upon being told that they could travel to the United States. In doing so, he seems to have stopped this direction of questioning by Congressmen, who did not argue about the contracts or agreements signed by refugees again during their hearing. But O'Dwyer's assumptions negated the experience of the refugees, who read the term "reception" in the documents and information they received as temporary and thought

⁴⁵⁹ Statement of Brigadier General O'Dwyer, Refugee Hearing, 7.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid., 8.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid., 17.

they would be treated as “guests” who could determine their own living arrangements once in the United States.⁴⁶²

That so many of the residents of Fort Ontario were relatives of American citizens and American veterans added to the connundrum. There were thirty-one children, step-children and children-in-law of refugees serving in the Armed Forces, seven brothers and brothers-in-law, and one hundred thirty-three uncles and nephews. One young woman had been engaged to marry an Army soldier before the refugees left Italy.⁴⁶³ Dickstein reminded the Committee that should one of the men serving be killed, the refugee relatives would have to return to their home countries where the ten thousand dollars they would receive as a death benefit would be taxed by the foreign country, bankrupting the grieving family instead of the family spending money in the United States.⁴⁶⁴

Family formation happened in important ways that altered the conditions of the refugee’s relationships with American citizenship. Eleven babies had been born at Fort Ontario and eight more were expected at the time of the Congressional hearing. When Congressman George P. Miller of California questioned the status of those children, the other members of the Committee highlighted the Fourteenth Amendment and the provision for birthright citizenship. Since the children were born in a free port, however, some argued that they were in a suspended or liminal position. Writing in

⁴⁶² Joseph H. Smart, *Don’t Fence Me In: How They Won Their Freedom* (Salt Lake City, UT: Heritage Arts, Inc., 1991), 28.

⁴⁶³ Statement of Edward B. Marks, Jr., Refugee Hearing, 4.

⁴⁶⁴ Statement of Brigadier General O’Dwyer, Refugee Hearing, 13.

The American Journal of International Law in January 1945, Albert G. D. Levy explained the complications of birthright citizenship for those born in the refugee camp.⁴⁶⁵ The refugees at Fort Ontario were never officially “admitted” into the United States and their transfer to the upstate fort was outside the immigration system’s procedures. In this way, the Emergency Refugee Shelter was akin to Ellis Island, a place the Supreme Court had determined was frontier territory with respect to births of children to parents awaiting entry or deportation.⁴⁶⁶ Levy argued that Fort Ontario, however, was *terra firma* before the establishment of the refugee shelter and pointed to Roosevelt’s own language as he directed military and civilian officials to bring the refugees “into this country.”⁴⁶⁷

Roosevelt brought the refugees to the United States, but President Harry S. Truman would be the one to deliver the news on their fate. On December 22, 1945, Truman announced that the refugees at the Emergency Refugee Shelter would be allowed to stay in the United States. The immigration quotas would not be changed or adjusted to accommodate them; instead, the refugees at Fort Ontario would re-enter the country from Canada and be issued a temporary visa to begin their permanent immigration process in the United States. Truman argued that all of the residents of the shelter would meet the requirements for immigration and that it “would be inhumane and wasteful” to send them back to Europe to begin an immigration

⁴⁶⁵ Albert G.D. Levy, “Acquisition of Nationality in the Emergency Refugee Shelter,” *The American Journal of International Law*, vol. 39, no. 1 (January 1945): 13-19.

⁴⁶⁶ *Nishimura Ekin v. United States*, 1892; *United States v. Ju Toy*, 1905; *Kaplan v. Tod*, 1935.

⁴⁶⁷ Levy, 16.

process.⁴⁶⁸ The refugees who planned to stay in the United States were sponsored by family members or by the National Refugee Service in New York City. In the coming months, the refugees returned their government property, aided in dissolving the shelter, and made arrangements for their new lives in the United States.

On January 17, 1946, three buses traveled to the Canadian side of Niagara Falls, where each of the refugees received a visa from the American consul. The buses then turned around and drove back over the bridge to the United States, this time with passengers who were legal immigrants.⁴⁶⁹ Most planned to stay in the United States. They traveled to major cities across the country, including New York City, Buffalo and Rochester, New York; Hartford, Connecticut; Patterson and Newark, New Jersey; Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington, D.C.; Chicago, Indianapolis, and Kansas City; New Orleans and Phoenix; and San Pedro, Los Angeles, and Hollywood, California.⁴⁷⁰ Twenty-two families wanted to migrate to new countries, including to Britain and Palestine and to other places in Africa, Australia and South America. Nine families planned to go back to their home countries, most of the nine having learned that their family members had survived the war. Sixty-eight families wanted to

⁴⁶⁸ Gruber, *Haven*, 242.

⁴⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 245.

⁴⁷⁰ Allan Markley, "New Residents of America: Final Study of the Attitudes at the Fort Ontario Refugee Shelter," February 13, 1946, Box 2, Emergency Refugee Shelter Reports, RG 210: WRA, NARA-DC, 35.

repatriate to Yugoslavia, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Germany, or Poland. Ninety-two had not decided their final plans yet.⁴⁷¹

Federal officials staged opportunities for the refugees to perform their Americanness and their fitness for American citizenship after their return to the United States. In a final study of their attitudes and behaviors, Allan Markley of the War Relocation Authority enumerated the many ways the refugees had been prepared for their potential citizenship.⁴⁷² The primary benefit of their time in the refugee shelter, Markley argued, was learning English through educational courses and by building relationships with Center staff and the residents of Oswego. Markley praised the refugees for the knowledge they gained in the Shelter of “American ways, customs, ideals and democracy.”⁴⁷³ Even the difficult times in the shelter helped prepare the refugees for life in America. When they were forced to wait for decisions to be made about their cases, they learned that they could trust a stable, federal government. When they were interrogated by Congress, they learned the methods of a democracy. When residents of the local communities attacked them in editorials in the press, they learned about the freedom of the press. And when their children were teased or acted out in school, they learned the behaviors expected in public schools.⁴⁷⁴

⁴⁷¹ International Migration Service, “A Study Made at Fort Ontario Shelter for Refugees,” June, 8, 1945, Box 2, Emergency Refugee Shelter Reports, RG 210: WRA, NARA-DC.

⁴⁷² Markley, 35.

⁴⁷³ Ibid., 13-14.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid., 20-28.

Despite the many frustrations in the camp from refugees and officials alike, Markley painted a triumphant picture of their final departure. The refugees, who months before were questioned about their gratitude to the United States, left the shelter with “immense gratitude” and admiration for “their future homeland.”⁴⁷⁵ Refugees knew, Markley preached, that Americans worked hard and they looked forward to reestablishing their businesses in a new country. They were idealistic about the United States, believing it “a country of freedom, of good wages, of a high standard of living, of modern conveniences and of splendid opportunities.”⁴⁷⁶ Despite the bravado of federal officials’ final assessments of the camp, Markley and others may have gotten one part right: Refugees were optimistic about their new lives and ready to explore their new freedom outside the barbed wire.⁴⁷⁷

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid., 31.

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid., 38.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid., 27.

Chapter 6

EPILOGUE: CHILD DETENTION AND THE LESSONS OF FEDERAL DOMESTICITY

In June 2019, Sarah Fabian, an attorney with the Office of Immigration Litigation in the Department of Justice, stood before a panel of three judges in a California courtroom and argued that it was not the government’s responsibility to provide toothbrushes, toothpaste, soap, blankets, or adequate provisions for sleep to migrants held in federal custody. Fabian referred to language that required “safe and sanitary conditions,” but did not enumerate the details of those standards. She argued that the previous ruling was vague in its description of safe and sanitary conditions because different agencies had different processes for detaining migrants and required different standards. Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) facilities, she explained, were designed to be temporary with detainees staying fewer than twenty-four hours before being deported, typically to Mexico. The three judges were incredulous. Toothbrushes, toothpaste, and soap had not been enumerated in the original settlement language, they responded, not because of internal debate among the parties or because different government agencies cared for migrants in different ways. The settlement requirements to “safe and sanitary” conditions were so obvious as to be common sense. Judge A. Wallace Tashima, who had been imprisoned in a Japanese American internment camp during World War II as a child, countered Fabian’s argument: “It’s within everybody’s common understanding that if you don’t have a toothbrush, if you don’t have soap, if you don’t have a blanket, it’s not safe and sanitary. Wouldn’t

everybody agree to that? Do you agree to that?”⁴⁷⁸ Fabian fumbled. Her arguments, developed in the context of defending Obama Administration violations to the settlement agreement, were indefensible in light of current events.

Migration from Central American countries in the Northern Triangle, specifically El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, to the United States has a long history that began with a movement of people following trade and economic opportunity.⁴⁷⁹ Mass migrations from the region increased in the 1980s following civil wars and again in 1998 following devastation from Hurricane Mitch in Honduras. For the last eight years, migration from the region has escalated to a global emergency as families with children and unaccompanied children flee economic insecurity, gang violence, human trafficking, and exploitation. In the federal government’s fiscal year 2019, the CBP arrested 851,508 people at the southern border of the United States (an increase of more than one hundred percent over the previous year). Of those arrested, 76,020 were unaccompanied children (an increase of fifty-two percent over the previous year), the most unaccompanied children since reporting began and five thousand children more than the previous record year in 2014. Most of the families apprehended at the southern border in the last year came from Honduras and most of the unaccompanied children from Guatemala.⁴⁸⁰ According to CBP records, the

⁴⁷⁸ A. Wallace Tashima quoted in Michael Barbaro, “Inside the Migrant Detention Center in Clint, Tex.,” *The Daily, New York Times Podcast*, July 1, 2019.

⁴⁷⁹ Peter Iglinski, “Crisis at the border? Anthropologist looks at Central American migration,” *University of Rochester Newscenter*, April 4, 2019, <https://www.rochester.edu/newscenter/crisis-at-the-border-anthropologist-overview-central-american-migration-372762/>

⁴⁸⁰ U.S. Customs and Border Protection, “Southwest Border Migration FY2019,” <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/sw-border-migration>.

Border Patrol apprehended more people in the spring and summer of 2019 (with a peak in May) than in the entire 2017 fiscal year.

Families and unaccompanied children who travel from Central America to the United States make a treacherous month-long journey of between fifteen hundred and three thousand miles, traveling by truck and train as possible and on foot when required.⁴⁸¹ Migrants “carry almost nothing – a bottle of water, maybe a T-shirt, usually a scrap of paper with the name of a relative in case something happens to them.”⁴⁸² To meet their needs for food and shelter along the way, they rely on the mercy of strangers and philanthropic groups to stay in migrant shelters or safe private areas, take day jobs to make a few dollars, and forage or beg for food. Some are in a vulnerable state before they begin the difficult journey: they are pregnant or injured or suffer debilitating medical conditions. After their arrival in the United States and arrest by CBP, migrant families’ “needs are often monumental” as they recover from dehydration, malnutrition, injury, illness and psychological trauma.⁴⁸³ Depending on when they entered the United States, families could be separated upon their arrest at the border and their children sent to detention centers with other unaccompanied children.

⁴⁸¹ Philip Bump, “That caravan has a long way to go before it gets close to the U.S.,” *The Washington Post*, October 22, 2018.

⁴⁸² Alfredo Corchado, “Central American migrants face grueling journey north,” *The Dallas Morning News*, <http://res.dallasnews.com/interactives/migrantroute/>

⁴⁸³ Sophie Novack, “Doctor Details ‘Insane,’ ‘Demoralizing’ Condition for Kids at Texas Migrant Detention Center,” *Texas Observer*, June 27, 2019.

In the same week that Fabian appeared in court and a month after the highest number of CBP arrests to date, doctors and lawyers who had interviewed children detained at two CBP facilities in Texas broke with confidentiality agreements to reveal deplorable living conditions. They described “children as young as seven and eight, many of them wearing clothes caked with snot and tears... caring for infants they’ve just met.”⁴⁸⁴ They had no access to toothbrushes, toothpaste, or soap. They had not been able to shower or wash their clothes. Children slept on mats on concrete floors and the lights in the facility remained on for twenty-four hours and never dimmed.⁴⁸⁵ All children, regardless of age and nutritional needs, were fed the same tray of food consisting of the “same meals every day – instant oats for breakfast, instant noodles for lunch, a frozen burrito for dinner, along with a few cookies and juice packets.” Everyone reported being hungry.⁴⁸⁶ At a second detention center in South Texas, young mothers did not have the nutritional support or hydration necessary to continue to produce breast milk nor did they have the appropriate soap and water to wash bottles of formula.⁴⁸⁷ The pediatrician who examined children at the second facility found that a majority of the infants in detention had respiratory illnesses likely compounded by malnutrition and trauma. These children, the pediatrician noted:

⁴⁸⁴ Caitlin Dickerson, “‘There Is a Stench’: Soiled Clothes and No Baths for Migrant Children at a Texas Center,” *New York Times*, June 21, 2019.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁷ Sophie Novack, “Doctor Details ‘Insane,’ ‘Demoralizing’ Condition for Kids at Texas Migrant Detention Center,” *Texas Observer* (June 27, 2019).

Do not come with the ability to face even the slightest trauma. [Then] you put them in a room, you don't let them clean themselves, you don't let them clean bottles for their children, you have the lights on 24 hours a day, you don't let them sleep well... all that is totally demoralizing... and can be torturous.⁴⁸⁸

In 2019, reported living conditions for migrant children in detention in the United States are worse than in any other form of shelter for displaced people in the last century. And yet, appalling conditions in detention facilities are far safer than the arduous trek many faced as they traveled from Central America to the United States, far safer than the situations they faced in their home countries, and far safer than those families turned away to camp in tents on the Mexican side of the southern border as they await their asylum hearings.

How do we square the current crisis with a history of federal domesticity in temporary shelters for displaced families in the previous century? If federal domesticity, a process that sought the physical and social rehabilitation of migrant families into stable American citizens, was widely employed by the federal government, then why are migrant families and especially migrant children held in such conditions today? It is not that federal domesticity has disappeared or become an irrelevant artifact of a bygone era, but rather that the families of the current migration crisis are not considered eligible for it.

To be certain, the process of federal domesticity has changed over time. Some aspects of federal domesticity, including the centrality of the family and requirements for living conditions, have been solidified over the course of the last seventy-three years and codified into international law, United States policy, and case law. Some of

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid.

federal domesticity's limits, including supporting families that do not meet the breadwinner-homemaker model, are the subject of current civil rights battles, especially among LGBTQIA+ families. But the ultimate goal of federal domesticity in the twentieth century – to create stable American citizens – has not changed. The federal government has no interest in enacting the practices we now understand as federal domesticity today because the migrants in question are not deemed suitable for permanent settlement or United States citizenship.

The Current Migration Crisis

Since the repatriation of the European Jews at the Emergency Refugee Shelter at Fort Ontario, the federal government has altered its policies for displaced people and refugees. The establishment of the United Nations (UN) in 1945 helped shape the delivery of humanitarian aid around the world. In 1948, the UN adopted The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNHR), widely considered to be the basis for international law. The UNHR solidified the role of the family as a “natural and fundamental group of society... entitled to protection by society and the State.”⁴⁸⁹ Article 16 of the UNHR addresses the right of men and women without any limitations of race, nationality, or religion “to marry and found a family” and entitles equal rights to all people during their marriage and at its dissolution. While “family” itself is undefined with respect to behavior and composition in the document, the establishment of family as a fundamental unit in society follows language regarding the right to marriage and reflects the prevailing belief that a “family” has an opposite sex relationship and children at its core.

⁴⁸⁹ United Nations, The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948, <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>.

Laws in the United States did not immediately follow the UN's articulation of human rights with respect to marriage and family. For example, anti-miscegenation laws prohibiting legal marriage between men and women of different races in several states were not overturned until the Supreme Court ruling in the *Loving v. Virginia* case in 1967. Additional treaties and legal instruments like the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (both entered into force 1976) follow much of the language developed in the UNHR. As in the United States case, countries that ratify UN covenants on human rights do not adopt every aspect of the agreements immediately; they agree to "strive for the promotion and observance of the rights recognized."⁴⁹⁰ In the ongoing international debate regarding the right of same-sex couples to marry, the UN Human Rights Committee has asserted that same-sex marriage is not included in the terms of the covenant even though the language of the covenant does not explicitly preclude same-sex marriage, since marriage and family protections are offered for both "men and women," not just opposite-sex couples. Same-sex couples did not have the right to marry and have their marriages recognized by the United States federal government until *Obergefell v. Hodges* in 2015. Same-sex couples around the world continue to fight for that recognition.⁴⁹¹ Despite uneven and imperfect applications of human rights law, legal historians nevertheless point to "family protection" as a foundation of

⁴⁹⁰ United Nations, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx>.

⁴⁹¹ Mark Fowler, "Same-sex marriage: What does human rights law say about claims of equality?" *Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) News*, August 31, 2017, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-09-01/what-does-human-rights-law-say-about-marriage-and-equality/8856552>.

U.S. immigration policies after the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act and in light of international human rights law beginning with the UNHR in 1948.⁴⁹²

Shifting immigration policies since the inauguration of President Donald Trump have complicated the way the federal government shelters migrant families to devastating results. In July 2017, the Trump Administration began a pilot program to separate children from their families as they arrived as undocumented migrants at the southern border of the United States near El Paso. The program followed through on public comments the President made earlier that spring and on rhetoric he employed throughout his presidential campaign. As families entered the United States, parents and adult guardians were immediately taken for criminal prosecution and their children were designated as Unaccompanied Alien Children and placed in the custody of CBP before being transferred to facilities run by the ORR in the Department of Health and Human Services.⁴⁹³ Family separations continued through 2017 and increased in April 2018 as a result of a “Zero Tolerance Policy” to prosecute any person who attempted unauthorized entry into the United States. An injunction issued by a federal court in June 2018 legally halted family separations except to protect the safety of the child and required the Administration to reunite children with their families within one month or within two weeks if the child was younger than five years old. The Trump Administration continued to separate children from their

⁴⁹² Kristin Collins, Serena Mayeri and Hiroshi Motomura, “Op-Ed: Family relationships have long been part of the bedrock of U.S. immigration policy. Then came Trump,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 20, 2018.

⁴⁹³ U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Oversight and Reform, “Staff Report: Child Separations by the Trump Administration,” July 2019.

families after the injunction by claiming that children were in danger due to their parents' criminal history, which could include minor crimes and even accusations of criminal activity.⁴⁹⁴ Although some Trump officials claimed that the policy of separating families did not exist, others declared that family separation and child detention were intended to deter other migrants from entering the United States.

In addition to the human rights violations inherent in family separation, the Trump Administration's immigration policies flout the 1997 *Flores* Settlement Agreement that established regulations for the care of unaccompanied migrant children in federal custody with provisions based in federal domesticity. The *Flores v. Reno* (1993) Supreme Court case held that immigration detention did not violate due process and that detained migrant children could only be released to parents, legal guardians, or other related adults. The wide-ranging impact of the case, however, came four years later in the language of the settlement agreement. The guiding principle of the agreement is that the federal government should release children in custody expeditiously and "shall continue to treat all minors in its custody with dignity, respect and special concern for their vulnerability as minors."⁴⁹⁵

Over time, the *Flores* Settlement Agreement has been supplemented with additional requirements. A reorganization of immigration agencies under the Department of Homeland Security in 2002 changed the responsible federal agency from the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) to the ORR. In 2008, the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act required that unaccompanied

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁵ Stipulated Settlement Agreement, *Flores v. Reno*, No. CV 85-4544-RJK (C.D. Cal. Jan. 17, 1997).

children be transferred from CBP custody to ORR custody within seventy-two hours. And in 2015, a federal judge expanded the *Flores* Settlement to include minors traveling with their families, which means that no child may be held in federal custody with or without their parents for longer than twenty days. When the federal government and the plaintiffs in the *Flores v. Reno* case agreed to the settlement, they stipulated that it could be terminated if the federal government created additional laws and regulations that met the *Flores* standards. Since the current administration does not intend to release undocumented immigrants while they await their hearings and the overarching goal of the *Flores* Settlement is to release people, all attempts to supersede the agreement have been struck down by the court.

In July 2019, the Department of Health and Human Services reported that 3,602 children were separated from their families at the southern border.⁴⁹⁶ Preliminary study of family separation by the House Oversight Committee found that infants and toddlers separated from their parents were held for months, the CBP held children beyond the legal limit of seventy-two hours before they were transferred to the ORR, the ORR held separated children longer than previously known,⁴⁹⁷ ICE detained separated children for months after reunifications, the administration repeatedly moved separated children, and many children still had not been reunited

⁴⁹⁶ Department of Health and Human Services, *Report to Congress on Separated Children*, July 2019, <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/uac-report-separated-children-july-2019.pdf>.

⁴⁹⁷ The Department of Health and Human Services reported that the average length of care for minors in the care of the Office of Refugee Resettlement was seventy-four days. Twenty days was previously considered the reasonable maximum time to hold children while finding suitable sponsors.

with their parents or guardians more than a year after the injunction required.⁴⁹⁸ The Trump Administration defended these violations of the *Flores* Settlement by asserting that the influx of unaccompanied children has choked the system and that Congress has not provided funding support to rectify the situation or remove the restrictions of the *Flores* Settlement and allow for family detention.

Federal Domesticity Today

Living conditions for children in federal custody are more difficult to assess today than their historic counterparts. Private citizens with no relationship to the children in custody are not permitted to enter and journalists who have toured facilities are not permitted to speak to the children. As such, records for living conditions have come from professionals – lawyers and doctors – who have seen the conditions firsthand and broken confidentiality agreements, Congressional leaders who have toured the facilities, court filings, and from other individuals who have provided testimony to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. Most of the journalistic reports about deplorable living conditions in federal facilities focus on the overcrowding and unsanitary conditions in CBP or Border Patrol facilities where children are placed before they are transferred to the Office of Refugee Resettlement (Figure 24).⁴⁹⁹ But

⁴⁹⁸ House Committee on Oversight and Reform, Staff Report.

⁴⁹⁹ See, for example: Jeremy Raff, “What a Pediatrician Saw Inside a Border Patrol Warehouse,” *The Atlantic*, July 3, 2019; Michael Barbaro, “Transcript: Inside the Migrant Detention Center in Clint, Tex.,” *The Daily, The New York Times Podcast*, July 1, 2019; Joel Rose and Bobby Allyn, “Scenes Of Tearful, Flu-Stricken And Underfed Migrant Kids Emerge In New Accounts,” *NPR News*, June 27, 2019; Isaac Chotiner, “Children Remain in Dangerous Conditions on the Texas Border,” *New Yorker*, June 25, 2019; Paul LeBlanc and Pricilla Alvarez, “U.S. Moves 219 Migrant Children from Texas Facility After Reports of Poor Conditions,” *CNN*, June 25, 2019;

some have focused on the inability of privately run facilities contracted through the ORR to provide necessary care.⁵⁰⁰

Experiments in federal domesticity in the 1930s and 1940s are the basis for federal regulations for temporary shelters today. The *Flores* Settlement Agreement includes written provisions for housing, health care, educational programs,

Scott Simon, “Opinion: The ‘Filthy and Uncomfortable Circumstances’ Of Detained Migrant Children,” *NPR News*, June 22, 2019; Caitlin Dickerson, “‘There Is a Stench’: Soiled Clothes and No Baths for Migrant Children at a Texas Center,” *New York Times*, June 21, 2019; Nicole Acevedo, “Why are migrant children dying in U.S. custody?” *NBC News*, May 29, 2019; Amanda Morris and Monica Ortiz Uribe, “It’s Easy For Migrants To Get Sick; Harder To Get Treatment,” *NPR News*, December 30, 2018; Joel Rose, “Pediatricians Voice Concerns About Care Following Two ‘Needless’ Migrant Deaths,” *NPR News*, December 28, 2018; Maria Sacchetti, “Official: Guatemalan Boy Who Died in U.S. Custody Tested Positive for Influenza B, Final Cause of Death Remains Under Investigation,” *Washington Post*, December 28, 2018; Miriam Jordan, “‘A Breaking Point’: Second Child’s Death Prompts New Procedures for Border Agency,” *New York Times*, December 26, 2018; Simon Romero, “Father of Migrant Girl Who Died in U.S. Custody Disputes Border Patrol Account,” *New York Times*, December 15, 2018.

⁵⁰⁰ See, for example: Riane Roldan, “The federal government opened a model facility for migrant kids last month. Now it’s being closed,” *The Texas Tribune*, July 23, 2019; Abigail Hauslohner, “U.S. Returns 100 Migrant Children to Overcrowded Border Facility as HHS Says it is Out of Space,” *The Washington Post*, June 25, 2019; John Burnett, “Tent City Housing Migrant Children To Close As Kids Are Released To Sponsors,” *NPR News*, January 4, 2019; Angel Philip, “Southwest Key to Close 2 Phoenix-area Migrant Shelters, Pay Fine to State,” *Arizona Republic*, October 24, 2018; Topher Sanders and Michael Grabbel, “‘Humanitarian Crisis’ Looms as Arizona Threatens to Revoke Immigrant Children Shelter Licenses,” *ProPublica*, September 21, 2018; Scott Neuman, “Allegations Of Sexual Abuse Surface At Arizona Shelters For Migrant Children,” *NPR News*, August 3, 2018; Camila Domonoske, “A Latino Nonprofit Is Holding Separated Kids. Is That Care Or Complicity Or Both?” *NPR News*, June 22, 2018; Manny Fernandez, “Inside the Former Walmart That Is Now a Shelter for Almost 1,500 Migrant Children,” *New York Times*, June 14, 2018.

acculturation, and recreation mirroring federal domesticity. Under *Flores*, facilities holding migrant children are required to be:

Safe and sanitary... provide access to toilets and sinks, drinking water and food as appropriate, medical assistance if the minor is in need of emergency services, adequate temperature control and ventilation, adequate supervision to protect minors from others, and contact with family members who were arrested with the minor.⁵⁰¹

Furthermore, *Flores* prioritizes placement in state-licensed facilities for long-term care if children cannot be released to their parents, guardians, or other family members while they await their immigration hearings. These facilities are required to provide: “suitable” living accommodations, food, clothing, and personal grooming items; routine medical and dental care, family planning services, and emergency health care; educational services in a classroom setting, English language training, acculturation services, and recreational activities; weekly individual counseling sessions, bi-weekly group counseling sessions, and religious services; and a “reasonable right to privacy” including the right to wear their own clothes, have private space, talk privately on the phone and with guests, and send uncensored mail.⁵⁰² Although the plaintiffs in the *Flores* case were Latin American migrants, the federal government no longer considers refugees from the same countries to be eligible for permanent residence or citizenship. The government’s inability to consistently deliver on the standards of federal domesticity as required by *Flores* reflects a hesitance to spend billions of dollars for non-citizens.

⁵⁰¹ Stipulated Settlement Agreement, *Flores v. Reno*, No. CV 85-4544-RJK (C.D. Cal. Jan. 17, 1997).

⁵⁰² *Ibid.*

While the standards of federal domesticity in the twentieth century, especially regarding education and Americanization, could be intrusive into the daily life of the family, they required the consistent delivery of services, and the staff, supplies, and space to do so. Today, the federal government finds these services negotiable. In June 2019, the *Washington Post* reported that the Trump Administration had cut the budget for federal migrant shelters housing unaccompanied children, including the children separated from their parents at the border. These cuts specifically targeted educational programs like English classes, recreational programs, and legal aid. The Department of Health and Human Services had deemed these activities “not directly necessary for the protection of life and safety.”⁵⁰³ Three weeks after the announcement of budget cuts for these services and after widespread public anger, President Trump signed an emergency appropriations bill to restore them.⁵⁰⁴ Furthermore education programs are only required for children under eighteen; vocational education and training is not required and not offered for adult migrants in federal custody.

The Trump Administration maneuvers around the established conditions for migrant children, which are based on previous experiments in federal domesticity, by constructing temporary facilities. Facilities designated “temporary emergency shelters” are not subject to state child welfare licensing requirements and skirt the *Flores* requirements for licensed centers.⁵⁰⁵ One such facility under construction in

⁵⁰³ Maria Sacchetti, “Trump administration cancels English classes, soccer, legal aid for detained migrant children,” *The Washington Post*, June 5, 2019.

⁵⁰⁴ Monique O. Madan, “Recess time, education and legal services will be restored at Homestead detention center, agency says,” *Miami Herald*, June 28, 2019.

⁵⁰⁵ Garance Burke, “US opens new mass facility in Texas for migrant children,” *Associated Press*, June 7, 2019.

June 2019 in South Texas was planned to house migrants “in tents with less than fifty square feet of living space for each person.”⁵⁰⁶ Although the temporary space was only due to be inhabited for eight months, a much shorter period of time than other temporary shelters in this study, the planned amount of living space per person is smaller than any other amount of living space this study considers. In Japanese American concentration camps, each person was allotted thirty additional square feet, a space equivalent to a full-sized mattress.

Government officials conceal the horror of the conditions that migrant children are subjected to by diverting attention away from the specificity of those conditions and dismissing overcrowded conditions as an impersonal design problem. ORR spokeswoman Evelyn Stauffer told the *Associated Press* in June 2019 that unaccompanied children “are waiting too long in CBP facilities that are not designed to care for children.” Another CBP official confirmed: “our short-term holding facilities were not designed to hold vulnerable populations.”⁵⁰⁷ At first blush, this explanation seems fair. The facilities were built to control populations of single men who would swiftly be deported within the span of twenty-four hours. When placed in the context of the history of temporary shelters for migrant families, however, it is obvious that the federal government can and has quickly created alternate facilities based on changing demographics of displaced people. One only has to remember the federal government’s insistence that male and female defense workers required

⁵⁰⁶ Dan Solomon, “What the Hell is Happening at the Border? (An Occasional Series, June 10 Edition), *Texas Monthly*, June 10, 2019.

⁵⁰⁷ Martha Mendoza and Garance Burke, “Government moves migrant kids after AP exposes bad treatment,” *Associated Press*, June 24, 2019.

different interior design features during World War II or that refugee families fleeing Nazi persecution entered military barracks that had been renovated for family use. In the Fort Ontario case, the time between President Roosevelt's authorization of refugee transfer for one thousand refugees, their selection by officials in Europe, their travel to the United States, and the renovation of the military facilities was less than two months. Japanese Americans imprisoned by the federal government were notified and placed in shelters within a span of ninety days.

By contrast, the surge in unaccompanied children over the southern border has varied dramatically over the course of the last five years, but at no time since 2014 have there been fewer than thirty-nine thousand children apprehended at the border in one year. Planning for an influx by reserving an appropriate number of beds, as is supposed to occur under the terms of *Flores*, would have prepared the federal government for a yearly average of over fifty thousand migrant children. Had there been beds enough for this average amount of children per year, the federal government would have been in a better position to shelter the over seventy-three thousand that were arrested – because of Trump Administration policies – in 2019. For the government to take more than five years to develop the infrastructure necessary to house these children is astounding given the speed at which officials previously moved to house displaced people or built facilities for imprisoned people.

Federal officials today continually point to a lack of funding to change dangerously overcrowded facilities. After reports that six children died in or immediately after their detention, officials deflected responsibility to Congress for not appropriating more funding. They requested an additional \$4.8 billion to complete

appropriate infrastructure.⁵⁰⁸ An analysis of the expenditures from the federal budget in 2019 and the cost of the initial construction of Japanese American internment facilities reveals that the federal government today has spent approximately half of the amount of money necessary to house the number of displaced people in its care. In 2019, the federal government allocated \$1.69 billion for the operations and facilities of the Office of Refugee Resettlement and \$2.84 billion for CBP and ICE facilities and improvements (a fraction of the larger \$25.5 billion CBP and ICE budgets).⁵⁰⁹ In comparison, the cost to evacuate Japanese Americans, transport them, store some of their belongings, construct temporary assembly centers and then permanent relocation centers, and fund the first year of operation for the WRA was nearly \$89 million in 1942. That amount today would be approximately \$1.4 billion adjusted for inflation, which was used to shelter one hundred and twenty thousand people. In 2019, the CBP arrested and detained seven times that number of people. In order to provide at least the standard of care in Japanese American internment camps, which is far from the best model for safety, sanitation or comfort, the federal government would need to double its budget for these facilities. The federal government response to the Central American migrant crisis has been woefully inadequate at best and tantamount to torture at worst.

⁵⁰⁸ Cedar Attanasio, Garance Burke and Martha Mendoza, “Lawyers: 250 children held in bad conditions at Texas border,” *Associated Press*, June 20, 2019.

⁵⁰⁹ Department of Homeland Security, “Budget-in Brief: Fiscal Year 2019,” <https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/DHS%20BIB%202019.pdf>; Department of Health and Human Services, “Budget-in-Brief: Fiscal Year 2019,” <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/fy-2019-budget-in-brief.pdf>.

The Lessons of Federal Domesticity

As worldwide migration rises as a consequence of global climate change, what can the lessons of federal domesticity teach us about how to care for displaced people in the future? Should displaced families be placed in temporary shelters at all? Today, the *UN Policy on Alternatives to Camps* acknowledges that camps can be helpful during emergency situations, but that they limit the “rights and freedoms of refugees and their ability to make meaningful choices about their lives.”⁵¹⁰ The history of federal domesticity in temporary housing in the United States confirms this evaluation.

In the 1930s and 1940s, the United States government harnessed material culture to assert the unspoken standards of federal domesticity and remake migrant families into productive American citizens based on strict racial, gender, sexual, and class norms. Programs in federal domesticity, officials believed, would rehabilitate families into culturally proper and politically significant American families and curb migration and the social ills they believed it to cause. In the 1930s and 1940s, the federal government spent billions of dollars to construct permanent and temporary facilities for families on the move, including families fleeing economic instability, persecution, and war and families detained by the United States. In all of the historical cases considered in this project, federal officials have concluded that their work in federal domesticity was successful. As they closed temporary camps and resettled families in their care, they often remarked on the changes they witnessed in migrant families. According to federal officials, migrants left the temporary camps more

⁵¹⁰ UN High Commission for Refugees, *UNHCR Policy on Alternatives to Camps*, July 22, 2014, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/5423ded84.html>.

American, prouder, better educated, and prepared to contribute to the cultural and economic life of the country.

For displaced families, federal domesticity had both negative and positive effects as they negotiated federal resources that came coupled with cultural and material ideas about family life. Federal domesticity was damaging to displaced people, forcing them to conform to rigid family norms and constraining their mobility in often-undesirable conditions. Moreover, federal domesticity has always failed when it comes to racial difference. Black and brown migrant families have been segregated within and apart from temporary federal facilities, made to find substandard options, detained because of their race, and excluded from the benefits of federal domesticity altogether. Federal domesticity has reinforced perceived differences in racial identity and constructed racial difference through exclusion and Americanization. The current crisis at the southern border is a continuation of this failure to see the ideal American citizen as anything other than white and middle class. But federal domesticity has also proven beneficial. The premise of federal domesticity was built on delivering humanitarian aid. The practices of federal domesticity included resources and education that improved the health and material well-being of displaced people and helped them to establish permanent settlements after they left federal facilities. Standards for the care of displaced people developed in the context of federal domesticity have been widely adopted since the 1940s, with a vast majority of the practices for hygiene, health, education, recreation, acculturation, and housing written into law.

More than law, federal domesticity has shaped the physical design of permanent houses in the United States and refugee shelters used around the world.

Permanent houses designed with standards of federal domesticity in mind, houses that remain a part of American housing stock today, reified the breadwinner-homemaker model of the American family. Federal domesticity excluded all other, just-as-traditional relationships and family compositions, from same-sex families to extended families common to many ethnic groups, both ideologically and from government benefits. Conversely, the Better Shelter refugee shelter, which was funded by the Ikea Foundation and the United Nations, offers refugee families many of the benefits of federal domesticity (Figure 25). The shelters are flat packed and can be assembled by four people in four hours. They have ground cover, locking doors, mosquito netting, storage space, ventilation, and solar panels to power a lamp and charge a cell phone.⁵¹¹ Better Shelters were designed in a participatory process with refugee families to better meet their needs, which they articulated as maintaining family cohesion, privacy, and safety. As the UNHCR promotes the use of the Better Shelter and solicits donations for their deployment, they also warn against the creation of camps wherever possible.

In all but one of the cases in this study, and despite celebratory claims to the contrary, federal officials, psychologists, and other experts have roundly criticized temporary camps for displaced people. The former camp manager of the Emergency Refugee Shelter at Fort Ontario quit his job at the shelter to advocate for freeing the families detained there. Officials working with the refugees used federal domesticity as a strategy and coached refugees on performing American citizenship to facilitate their release. In 1983, the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of

⁵¹¹UN High Commission for Refugees, “Refugee Housing Unit,” <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/refugee-housing-unit.html>.

Civilians assessed the internment of Japanese Americans and recommended the United States issue apologies and reparations. The Committee argued:

There were physical illnesses and injuries directly related to detention, but the deprivation of liberty is no less injurious because it wounds the spirit rather than the body. Evacuation and relocation brought psychological pain, and the weakening of a traditionally strong family structure under the pressure of separation and camp conditions. No price can be placed on these deprivations.⁵¹²

Despite federal domesticity providing some relief for displaced people in temporary shelters, the negatives far outweigh the positives. When federal officials praised displaced people for becoming better citizens after their stay in temporary shelters, they glossed over the fact that families seemed improved as they were being released or moving on.

Just as in previous temporary shelters for displaced people, the facilities currently used in the United States to detain refugees from Central America have been widely pilloried. Doctors and psychologists warn of the psychological trauma, sexual violence, and malnutrition that unaccompanied children in detention facilities face. “The children should be home with their parents,” offered Lynn Johnson, assistant secretary with the Department of Health and Human Services, the department that manages the detention centers of the ORR. While Johnson likely meant that refugees should cease migrating to the United States if they want to keep their families together, her comments also condemn family separation and the practice of keeping

⁵¹² Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, *Personal Justice Denied, Part 2: Recommendations* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1983), 6.

displaced people detained in camps since “the government makes lousy parents.”⁵¹³

She’s right. #CloseTheCamps

⁵¹³ John Burnett, “Tent City Housing Migrant Children To Close As Kids Are Released To Sponsors,” *NPR*, January 4, 2019.

FIGURES

Figure 1 Russell Lee, *Sewing lessons at the Yuba City FSA farm workers' camp. Yuba City, California*, December 1940. Farm Security Administration – Office of War Information Photograph Collection, Library of Congress.

Figure removed due to copyright.

Figure 2 Map of Federal Migratory Labor Camps, California.

Figure removed due to copyright.

Figure 3 Dorothea Lange, *Migrant workers' camp, outskirts of Marysville, California. The new migratory camps now being built by the Resettlement Administration will remove people from unsatisfactory living conditions such as these and substitute at least the minimum of comfort and sanitation*, April 1935. Farm Security Administration – Office of War Information Photograph Collection, Library of Congress.

Figure removed due to copyright.

Figure 4 Dorothea Lange, *Tom Collins, manager of Kern migrant camp, with drought refugee family. California, November 1936.* Farm Security Administration – Office of War Information Photograph Collection, Library of Congress.

Figure removed due to copyright.

Figure 5 Russell Lee, *Furniture made of vegetable crates and scrap lumber. Community building of the Yuba City FSA farm workers' camp. Yuba City, California, December 1940*, Farm Security Administration – Office of War Information Photograph Collection, Library of Congress.

Figure removed due to copyright.

Figure 6 Roger Smith, *War worker goes to Washington. The young war worker, Miss Clara Camille Carroll of Cleveland, Ohio, is elated to find a bright and cheery room open to her at the 760,000 dollar Lucy D. Slowe Resident Hall in the nation's capital and prepares to move in immediately*, 1942-1943. Farm Security Administration – Office of War Information Photograph Collection, Library of Congress.

Figure removed due to copyright.

Figure 7 Arthur Rothstein, *Douglas Dam, Tennessee. Tennessee Valley Authority. Trailers for housing defense workers, June 1943*. Farm Security Administration - Office of War Information Photograph Collection, Library of Congress.

Figure removed due to copyright.

Figure 8 Roger Smith, *War worker goes to Washington. Miss Clara Camille Carroll of Cleveland, Ohio, contributes her bit to the war effort in her daily work. She is one of thousands of Negro girls now filling clerical positions in the nation's capital,* 1942-1943. Farm Security Administration - Office of War Information Photograph Collection, Library of Congress.

Figure removed due to copyright.

Figure 9 Map of Federal Dormitory Construction Project with White Dormitories (red) and African American Dormitories (blue) with Historic African American Neighborhoods, Washington, D.C.

Figure removed due to copyright.

Figure 10 “Life Visits Scotts Hotel for Women,” *Life*, August 10, 1942.

Figure removed due to copyright.

Figure 11 Roger Smith, *Government hotel for Negro women war workers. A group of young war worker-residents are shown enjoying a game of cards in the fully equipped game room of the Lucy D. Slowe Residence Hall, first government constructed hotels for Negro women war workers in Washington, D.C., 1942-1943.* Farm Security Administration – Office of War Information Photograph Collection, Library of Congress.

Figure removed due to copyright.

Figure 12 Cover, *A Barrack Becomes a Home*, 1945.

Figure removed due to copyright.

Figure 13 Map of War Relocation Centers.

Figure removed due to copyright.

Figure 14 National Park Service, Layout of Manzanar War Relocation Center,
1944.

Figure removed due to copyright.

Figure 15 National Park Service, Layout of a Typical Residential Block.

Figure removed due to copyright.

Figure 16 Fumiko Fukuda, [Map of Barrack Apartment, Poston], 1942.

Figure removed due to copyright.

Figure 17 “The Barrack Home Completed,” *A Barrack Becomes a Home*, 1945.

Figure removed due to copyright.

Figure 18 “South Window,” *A Barrack Becomes a Home*, 1945.

Figure removed due to copyright.

Figure 19 “If Your Daughter Had Her Way,” *Good Housekeeping*, vol. 113, no. 2 (August 1941).

Figure removed due to copyright.

Figure 20 “How to be a success in one room!” *Good Housekeeping*, vol. 113, no. 2 (August 1941).

Figure removed due to copyright.

Figure 21 “N. Wall Leading to Kitchen,” *A Barrack Becomes a Home*, 1945.

Figure removed due to copyright.

Figure 22 IP KP, NC. KEY A, N. XJFM, "Members of the scout troop 28 of Fort Ontario appear before a house immigration subcommittee investigating future of refugees at open hearing in Oswego, June 25, 1945. Each scout was asked how he like the U.S.A.," *Associated Press*.

Figure removed due to copyright.

Figure 23 "What's What in Community Activities," Final Report of the Community Division, NARA-DC.

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Figure 24 U.S. Customs and Border Protection's Rio Grande Valley Sector,
McAllen, Texas, June 17, 2018.

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Figure 25 Interior of Better Shelter Refugee Shelter, bettershelter.org.

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John Ihlder Papers

Charles F. Palmer Papers

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Nathan Straus, Jr. Papers

Rexford G. Tugwell Papers

War Refugee Board Records

Caroline Ware Papers

Winterthur Museum, Garden & Library, Winterthur, Delaware

John and Carolyn Grossman Collection

Saul Zalesch Collection of American Cookery Ephemera

Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles, California
Manzanar War Relocation Records

Museum Exhibitions, Collections and Extant Sites

Fort Ontario State Historic Site, Oswego, New York
Japanese American National Museum, Los Angeles, California
Presidio of San Francisco, National Historic Site, San Francisco, California
Manzanar War Relocation Center, National Historic Site, Independence, California
Museum of Modern Art, New York, New York
National Museum of African American History and Culture, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.
National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.
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Shops at Tanforan, formerly Tanforan Racetrack, San Bruno, California
United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, D.C.

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Appendix A

FEDERAL DEPARTMENTS & ABBREVIATIONS

DHS	<p>Department of Homeland Security (2003 – present)</p> <p>Preceded by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• INS – Immigration and Naturalization Service (1787 – 1993)• United States Customs Service (1745 – 1974) <p>Component Agencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• USCIS - Citizenship and Immigration Services• CBP - Customs and Border Protection• FEMA – Federal Emergency Management Agency• ICE - Immigrations and Customs Enforcement
DOI	<p>Department of the Interior (1849 – present)</p> <p>Component Agencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• NPS - National Park Service (1872 – present)
FEMA	<p>Federal Emergency Management Agency (1979 – present)</p> <p>Preceded by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• NSRB - National Security Resources Board (1947 – 1953)• ODM - Office of Defense Mobilization (1950 - 1953, 1953 -1958)• OCDM - Office of Defense and Civilian Mobilization (1958 – 1961)• OEP - Office of Emergency Planning (1961 – 1968)• OEP - Office of Emergency Preparedness (1968 – 1973)• OP - Office of Preparedness (1973 – 1975)• FPA - Federal Preparedness Agency (1975 – 1979)
FERA	<p>Federal Emergency Relief Administration (1934 – 1935)</p>
FHA	<p>Federal Housing Administration (1934 – present)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Part of HUD - Department of Housing and Urban Development since 1965
HHS	<p>Department of Health and Human Services (1980 – present)</p>

	<p>Preceded by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HEW – Department of Health, Education and Welfare (1953 – 1979) <p>Component Agencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACF - Administration for Children and Families <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ORR – Office of Refugee Resettlement (1948 – present) ○ CB - Children’s Bureau (1912 – present)
HUD	<p>Department of Housing and Urban Development (1965 – present)</p> <p>Preceded by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • USHA – United States Housing Authority (1937 – 1942) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Part of the Department of Interior (1939 – 1939) ○ Part of the FWA – Federal Works Agency (1939 – 1942) ○ Renamed FPHA – Federal Public Housing Authority in 1942 • Defense Housing Coordinator (1940 – 1941) • NHA - National Housing Agency (1942 – 1947) • PHA – Public Housing Administration (1947 – 1965)
OWI	Office of War Information (1942 – 1945)
SERA	State Emergency Relief Administration, California
TVA	Tennessee Valley Authority (1933 – present)
UN	United Nations (1945 – present)
USDA	<p>United States Department of Agriculture (1935 – present)</p> <p>Preceded by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subsistence Homesteads Division, Department of the Interior (1933 -1935) • Rural Rehabilitation Division, Federal Emergency Relief Administration (1934 – 1935) • Predecessor agencies organized under RA – Resettlement Administration (1935 – 1936) <p>Part of USDA after 1937:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RA – Resettlement Administration (1937) • FSA – Farm Security Administration (1937 – 1946) <p>Constituent Agencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bureau of Home Economics (1923 – 1960)
WPA	Work Projects Administration (1939 – 1943)

Part of the FWA – Federal Works Agency (1939 – 1943)

Preceded by:

- CWA - Civil Works Administration (1933 – 1934)
- FERA - Federal Emergency Relief Administration (1933 – 1938)
- WPA - Works Progress Administration (1935 – 1939)

WPB War Production Board (1942 – 1947)

Preceded by:

- War Resources Board (1939 – 1939)
- OPM – Office of Production Management (1941 – 1942)

WRA War Relocation Authority (1942 – 1946)

WRB War Refugee Board (1944 – 1945)

Appendix B

DISPLACED FAMILIES & GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION

- 1601 Enactment of English Poor Law to determine worthy and unworthy poor
- 1785 First federal land grant to establish public schools in Northwest Territory
- 1818 Revolutionary War Pension Act
- 1824 Bureau of Indian Affairs establishes Indian schools
House of Refuge for juvenile delinquents established, New York
- 1845 Dorothea Dix founds first state asylum, New Jersey
- 1851 YMCA founded, Boston
- 1865 Freedman's Bureau formed; abolished 1872
- 1867 Tenement House Law becomes first housing law, New York
- 1878 Salvation Army formed
- 1881 American Red Cross formed
- 1889 Jane Addams establishes Hull House, Chicago
- 1891 Bureau of Immigration established
- 1906 San Francisco Earthquake and Fire
- 1912 Children's Bureau established in the Department of Labor
- 1917 Immigration Act establishes literacy requirement
- 1920 Women's Bureau established in the Department of Labor

- 1921 Emergency Quota Act
- 1924 Immigration Act (Johnson-Reed Act)
- 1932 Bonus March
- 1933 Federal Emergency Relief Act
- 1935 Emergency Relief Appropriations Act
- 1937 United States Housing Act creates United States Housing Authority
- 1940 First federal Census of Housing
Community Facilities Act (the Lanham Act)
- 1941 Executive Order 8802 – Banned discrimination in federal employment sectors
- 1942 Executive Order 9066 – Excluded people of Japanese descent from the
Western Zone
- 1943 Executive Order 9417 – Established a War Refugee Board and to plan for the
Emergency Refugee Shelter at Fort Ontario, New York
- 1944 Servicemen's Readjustment Act (GI Bill)
- 1945 United Nations formed
Presidential Directive on Displaced Persons
- 1948 United Nations Declaration of Human Rights
Displaced Persons Act allows admission for victims of Nazi persecution
(approximately 650,000) to gain U.S. residency
- 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention
- 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act
- 1953 Refugee Relief Act allows for non-quota immigrant visas for refugees from
Communist countries
- 1956 U.S. accepts refugees fleeing Hungarian (38,000) and Cuban (125,000)
revolutions
- 1960 Fair Share Refugee Act

- 1962 Migration and Refugee Assistance Act
- 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act
- 1967 United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) protocol revised 1951 limitations
- 1975 Indochinese Immigration and Refugee Act allows for transportation and resettlement of Southeast Asian refugees (130,000) after the Vietnam War
- 1976 United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- 1978 Vietnamese “Boat People” (111,000) allowed entry into the United States
- 1980 Refugee Act sets a ceiling and target number of refugees per year, 207,000 people admitted in 1980. Resettlement protocols are standardized, including the Presidential Determination Process, which allows the president to set the number each fiscal year.
Mariel Boatlift
- 1997 *Flores* Settlement Agreement
- 2002 Department of Homeland Security created
- 2005 Hurricane Katrina displaces 1.5 million people
- 2006 Post-Katrina Management Reform Act
- 2008 Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act
- 2011 Dramatic increase in migration from Northern Triangle countries
- 2017 Family Separation Policy begins
- 2018 “Zero Tolerance Policy” increases family separations