

# THE NATION'S STORYTELLER

*The National Park Service, the Mystery of Japanese Bellboys, and the Making of the Model Minority*

*Monica Trieu*

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**Abstract.** The National Park Service (NPS) plays a vital role in shaping the United States' identity and collective memory through its storytelling efforts. This article examines the impact of NPS storytelling, focusing on which stories are shared and which are left untold, as well as their consequences. Specifically, I analyze the NPS story "Japanese Americans at Grand Canyon: Bellboys and WWII Heroes" to identify NPS storytelling gaps, examine its impact on racialized Asian American cultural narratives, and consider the settler colonial implications of these narratives. Drawing from U.S. Census data, NPS websites, and historical newspapers, this research asks: What history emerges when we delve deeper beyond the current NPS representations of Japanese American contributions? How does the NPS's narrative of Japanese bellboys as exemplary hospitality workers connect to the racialization of Asian Americans within the ongoing structure of U.S. settler colonialism? I argue that by moving beyond the limited NPS cultural narrative surrounding Japanese "bellboys and WWII heroes," this article uncovers not only the fundamentals of being racially "Asian" in the United States but also a more complex story about the evolution of a racialized Asian American identity and the ongoing function behind its persistent, troubling legacy.

As the nation's storyteller, the National Park Service strives to tell the stories of ordinary and extraordinary Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders preserved in our nation's parks, memorials, and historic sites.

—The National Park Service<sup>1</sup>

Nestled within the renowned Grand Canyon National Park (GCNP)<sup>2</sup> is the equally famous El Tovar Hotel. Since its establishment in 1905, this iconic hotel has branded itself as “a world-class destination,” attracting many prominent guests, including Theodore Roosevelt, Albert Einstein, and Oprah Winfrey.<sup>3</sup> In 1940, U.S. Census records indicate that this prominent establishment employed seven Japanese American bellboys.<sup>4</sup> Notably, they made up the entire bellboy staff at that time.<sup>5</sup> This intriguing fact is featured in a story about Japanese Americans at GCNP, titled “Japanese Americans at Grand Canyon: Bellboys and WWII Heroes,” and is part of the National Park Service’s (NPS) Asian American and Pacific Islander online collection.<sup>6</sup>

At first glance, the title suggests that the story presents two distinct groups of Japanese Americans. However, a closer reading reveals a narrative about Japanese Americans who served as both GCNP service workers and World War II (WWII) veterans. In the specific portrayal of Japanese American service workers (bellboys), the article highlights,

The Fred Harvey Company leaned into the infantilization of Japanese people and culture at the time by only hiring Japanese Americans for bellboy positions. In the early 1900s, it was considered prestigious to have a Japanese individual in a position of service for a wealthy white person.<sup>7</sup>

It is noteworthy that the NPS article employs the term “infantilization” to describe a widespread hiring practice of that time. While the NPS acknowledges this problematic approach, its article also depicts racialized and gendered images of submissive Japanese service workers alongside hypermasculine, patriotic heroes from World War II. The NPS, by framing the story this way and through its storytelling, appears to convey a singular narrative of Asian American exceptionalism. Additionally, the final sentence of the quote offers no further information, leaving the reader with an incomplete understanding of how employing Japanese service workers became a “prestigious” practice. What are the intended and unintended consequences of this storytelling?

Storytelling plays a crucial role in shaping national identity and collective memory. Every nation engages in storytelling, primarily crafting these narratives through social institutions. In the United States, the NPS, as a federal government agency, functions as one such institution. As indicated by the opening quote, the NPS, self-described as the “nation’s storyteller,” actively crafts and shapes the Asian American cultural narratives reflected in the nation. Carolyn Finney, in her research on the relationship between African Americans and the great outdoors, emphasizes the importance of understanding how cultural narratives are assembled and “the power they have to dismiss and make invisible ‘Others.’”<sup>8</sup> Additionally, mapping the nation’s history through curated storytelling carries psychological and material implications. As Finney further highlights, “[P]ower and privilege by design can diminish our ability to see people’s history and contemporary experiences more fully and in relation to our own experiences.”<sup>9</sup> In essence, these portrayals can lead to misrepresentation, dehumanization, or the complete erasure of specific groups. Therefore, it is essential to examine the NPS’s role as a cultural narrative content creator and its impact on either supporting or dismantling racial projects.<sup>10</sup>

The central aims of this article are to explore NPS storytelling, identify its gaps, examine its impact on racialized Asian American cultural narratives, and consider the settler colonial implications of these narratives. This research is guided by several key questions: What history emerges when we delve deeper beyond the current NPS representations of Japanese American contributions? How does the NPS’s narrative of Japanese bellboys as exemplary hospitality workers connect to the racialization of Asian Americans within the ongoing structure of U.S. settler colonialism? To address these inquiries, this research draws from various archival sources, including data from the U.S. Census, NPS websites, and historical newspapers from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to examine Japanese domestic workers at the turn of the twentieth century.

The exploration of Japanese American bellboys at the GCNP, and most importantly, their roots, reveals a key discovery that presents an alternative perspective of early twentieth-century Japanese immigrants as service workers rather than predominantly as farm laborers.<sup>11</sup> Specifically, redirecting the focus to how early East Coast Japanese immigrants evolved into exemplary service workers provides compelling evidence that illustrates how portrayals of Japanese domestic workers in early twentieth-century print media contributed to perpetuating the racial blueprint underlying the formation of the “model minority myth” during the Cold War period. By moving beyond the limited NPS cultural narrative surrounding Japanese “bellboys and WWII heroes,” this article uncovers not only the fundamentals of being racially “Asian” in the United States but

also a more complex story about the evolution of a racialized Asian American identity and the ongoing *function* behind its persistent, troubling legacy. This study illustrates how the narratives of social institutions, such as those found on the NPS website, can reinforce enduring racial narratives. Ultimately, it underscores how these cultural narratives serve to advance and legitimize U.S. settler colonial claims to land and existence.

### BRIEF ORIGIN STORY OF THE NATION'S STORYTELLER OF AAPI HISTORY

The current scale of NPS's Asian American and Pacific Islander storytelling dates back to April 2010, with President Obama's memorandum "America's Great Outdoors" directed to leaders of environmental agencies, including the Secretary of the Interior. Agencies were tasked with developing a plan to address environmental concerns and encourage U.S. Americans to engage with "landscapes of national significance," conservation, and outdoor recreation.<sup>12</sup>

The agencies' response, detailed in a report published in February 2011, included action items for engaging "underserved and disadvantaged" communities in outdoor recreation. It specifically addressed the importance of identifying the "financial, cultural, and safety" barriers these groups encounter in accessing the outdoors.<sup>13</sup> That same month, Obama gave a speech about connecting with underserved communities and the vital contribution of everyday Americans in outdoor narratives. He recounted the story of George Masa (1881–1933; born Masahara Iizuka in Japan), an Issei mountaineer and photographer known as the "Ansel Adams of the South Appalachians."<sup>14</sup> Obama shared,

[T]here's also the story of ordinary Americans who devoted their lives to protecting the land that they loved. That's what Horace Kephart and George Masa did. This is a wonderful story. Two men, they met in the Great Smoky Mountains of North Carolina—each had moved there to start a new life. Horrified that their beloved wilderness was being clear-cut at a rate of 60 acres a day, Horace and George worked with other members of the community to get the land set aside. But far from being discouraged, they helped rally one of the poorest areas in the country to the cause.<sup>15</sup>

In the context of the speech, Obama describes Masa as a dedicated, good citizen engaged in national conservation efforts. Ironically, the speech neglects

to mention that, as an Issei, Masa was legally barred from acquiring U.S. citizenship through naturalization during his lifetime. Moreover, the address fails to acknowledge the impact of these initiatives on the Cherokee tribe, the Indigenous people of the Great Smoky Mountains region. In essence, Obama's address reflects his administration's purported claims of inclusivity and multiculturalism. As Jodi Melamed points out, neoliberal multiculturalism emerged in the 2000s to represent the United States as an "ostensibly multicultural democracy and the model for the entire world."<sup>16</sup> Within this approach, a new privileged class of "worthy multicultural citizens" emerged, protected by the government because they are deemed "valuable to capital," while simultaneously relegating another class of subjects as "unworthy and excludable."<sup>17</sup> This ongoing framework underscores the persistent criticism directed at the concept of "multicultural inclusion" in outdoor initiatives, which previous scholars argue directly contributes to the erasure of, and violence against, Indigenous communities.<sup>18</sup>

In February 2013, Interior Secretary Ken Salazar launched the Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Initiative to engage stakeholders to "identify, research, and tell the stories of AAPI-associated properties."<sup>19</sup> Following this, the AAPI Heritage Initiative survey was launched in March 2015 to gather feedback from the AAPI community on significant local, state, or national places.<sup>20</sup> Several months later, Jonathan Jarvis, the NPS director, issued a press release emphasizing the need for greater inclusion of AAPI history. In this release, Jarvis clearly states the NPS's role as the nation's storyteller:

The National Park Service (NPS) system and programs belong to all Americans, and we are working hard to ensure that they reflect the rich diversity of our nation. [...] As *our nation's storyteller*, the NPS identifies and interprets sites that are associated with important events and people in American history. Many national park units are closely associated with AAPI history (emphasis added).<sup>21</sup>

By 2017, this initiative resulted in the emergence of NPS AAPI online content (of which the Japanese American bellboy blog post is a part) and, separately, the publication of the AAPI National Historic Landmarks Theme Study. Although stemming from the same initiative, the landmark theme study publication features contributions from twenty-one scholars, activists, and community members who aimed to challenge the inclusive multicultural narrative by highlighting more nuanced sociopolitical histories of AAPI.<sup>22</sup>

Ultimately, the NPS's multicultural inclusion of marginalized voices originates from Obama's Great Outdoors Initiative. The relatively recent AAPI Heritage Initiative has integrated AAPI history into the NPS's seemingly

diverse and inclusive storytelling framework. GCNP's "Whose Story is History" online collection exemplifies this effort by featuring narratives about disability access rights, women in STEM, Indigenous activism, voting rights, and labor contributions from white women (Harvey Girls) and men of color, particularly African Americans, Mexican Americans, and, the focus of this article, Japanese American bellboys.<sup>23</sup>

## THE ENEMY ALIEN, MODEL MINORITY, AND THE ASIAN ARRIVANT

Much of the previous research on early Japanese immigrants has primarily centered on farm laborers and picture brides in Hawai'i and the Pacific West Coast.<sup>24</sup> Conversely, the experiences of Japanese immigrants on the East Coast, particularly in New York during the late 1800s to early 1900s, are less documented.<sup>25</sup> Numerically, the Japanese population on the East Coast was much smaller than on the Pacific West Coast. The Japanese population first appeared in U.S. Census data in 1870, with 55 individuals.<sup>26</sup> By 1890, the Japanese population in New York comprised 7 percent (148), while California's Japanese population accounted for 56 percent (1,147) of the total Japanese U.S. population. As noted in table 1, New York's Japanese population remained in single digits, while California's percentage remained in double digits throughout the early twentieth century. By 1940, only 2 percent (2,538) of Japanese Americans lived in New York, compared to 74 percent (93,717) in California.

Furthermore, scholars studying early 1900s West Coast Japanese immigrant farm laborers argued that their WWII incarceration was economically motivated.<sup>27</sup> Specifically, removing "surplus" Pacific West Coast Japanese American workers, considered an economic threat, would benefit white capitalists.<sup>28</sup> However, the WWII labor shortage generated a demand for workers, leading to their early work release from incarceration camps.<sup>29</sup> In her study, Rebecca Jo Kinney found that Cleveland, OH—the third most popular destination for Japanese American post-imprisonment resettlement—was already seeing, by 1943, the War Relocation Authority (WRA) actively collaborating with local media to shift public perception of Japanese Americans from "enemy aliens" to "model citizens" during their resettlement process.<sup>30</sup>

Historically, Asian Americans have been trapped between two dominant racialized identities—the perpetual alien other and the model minority.<sup>31</sup> The U.S. has characterized Asians as a sociopolitical "threat" whenever it serves the nation's economic and national interests, as evidenced by the WWII incarceration

**TABLE 1**  
**JAPANESE POPULATION IN NY, CA, AND U.S.,**  
**1880-1950**

Year	New York	%	California	%	Total U.S.
1880	17	11%	88	59%	148
1890	148	7%	1,147	56%	2,039
1900	354	1%	10,151	42%	24,326
1910	1,247	2%	41,356	57%	72,157
1920	2,686	2%	71,952	65%	111,010
1930	2,930	2%	97,456	70%	138,834
1940	2,538	2%	93,717	74%	125,947
1950	3,893	3%	84,956	60%	141,768

Source: U.S. Census, 1880-1950, <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/decade.html>

of Japanese Americans. Other examples include the initial economic exploitation and eventual exclusion of Chinese laborers in the mid-to-late nineteenth century and that of Filipino laborers, particularly in the farming, fishing, and canning industries along the Pacific West Coast during the Great Depression of the 1930s.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, within the prevailing discourse surrounding nature and the environment, Asians and Asian Americans have historically been considered a threat and viewed through the lens of “ecological orientalism,” which perceives them as a danger to the U.S. economy, land, and environment.<sup>33</sup> According to Sarah Wald, this early twentieth-century frontier settlement anxiety towards the potential that Asian immigrants “might ‘Orientalize’ American landscapes, or...ideologically and materially repossess property from white settler state,” led to the enactment of numerous Alien Land Acts that prohibited Asians from owning land.<sup>34</sup> Thus, the racialization of Asians as the perpetual alien other has led to numerous forms of systemic anti-Asian racism, including exclusionary acts, legal barriers to citizenship rights, limitations on land ownership, restricted access to the labor market, reduced educational resources, and negative media portrayals.<sup>35</sup>

The model minority racial marker has also significantly organized Asian American experiences.<sup>36</sup> Identified by earlier scholars as a Cold War construct from the 1940s and 1950s, the model minority concept was invented to enhance the United States’ image as a benevolent democratic nation that champions its well-behaved minority citizens, depicted as capable of being “assimilating Others.”<sup>37</sup> Ellen Wu writes that, at its inception, these “touted” model characteristics

included the hardworking nuclear anti-communist family with a “predisposition to harmony and accommodation, the reverence for family and education, and unflagging industriousness to enhance their demands for equality.”<sup>38</sup>

As previously noted, the WRA actively shaped the “model Japanese citizen” during the post-WWII years, as the U.S. settler colonial nation was highly invested in creating a group of compliant postwar subjects to serve its capitalist needs. According to Madeline Hsu and Ellen Wu, the transformation of Asians from “aliens ineligible for citizenship” to “model minorities” can be understood through the framework of conditional inclusion, which reflected a “shift in racial thinking and practices” evident in changes within two interconnected domains: immigration law and domestic racial reform. These changes allowed for the conditional integration of Asians into U.S. society.<sup>39</sup> In the realm of domestic racial reform, the Japanese American Citizens League successfully utilized the image of the WWII “Nisei soldier icon” to reform prior restrictive anti-Japanese policies; Hsu and Wu argue, “In effect, the loyal soldier became the public face of Japanese America—a dutiful, reputable, bourgeois, prototypical ‘model minority’—despite the ideological and lived diversity of the ethnic community.”<sup>40</sup> The image of a strong and hypermasculine provider for the (Asian) nuclear family aligns closely with the purported U.S. democratic values of the post-WWII Cold War era. The effectiveness of this “Nisei soldier icon” campaign is reaffirmed by the NPS’s current use of the same inclusive multicultural storytelling.

The model minority as a racialized marker and discourse is part of an ongoing racial project that constructs the identity of an Asian American subject.<sup>41</sup> In the years after the 1940s, it was consistently used as a divisive racial instrument during the sociopolitical unrest of the 1960s, fueling discord among people of color;<sup>42</sup> it continues to be weaponized in this manner today.<sup>43</sup> As a consequential ideological concept, its persistent existence relies on its employment across various social institutions, including government, education, family, and media. For instance, numerous studies in education have highlighted the presence and harmful effects of the model minority myth imposed by and upon Asian Americans.<sup>44</sup> Thus, racialized markers like the model minority—via imagery such as a “Nisei soldier icon”—maintain enduring power by existing, gaining legitimacy, and solidifying themselves in unexpected spaces within social institutions such as the NPS.

It is crucial to recognize that these racialized markers are key in legitimizing the ongoing framework of U.S. settler colonialism. Asian Americans’ participation in national parks and outdoor spaces reflects significant socio-historical implications tied to the erasure and violence of U.S. settler colonialism. To unpack this, scholars such as Heidi Amin-Hong, Julia Hu Pegues, and lyko Day have applied Jodi Byrd’s concept of “arrivants” to make sense of Asian American positioning

within U.S. settler colonialism.<sup>45</sup> According to Byrd, the term *arrivant* signifies “those people forced into the Americas through the violence of European and Anglo-American colonialism and imperialism around the globe.”<sup>46</sup> While the concept of *arrivant* colonialism helps to understand Asian migrant experiences in the U.S., Candace Fujikane and lyko Day argue that this term—distinct from settler colonialism—does not “absolve” Asian migrants and their descendants from supporting and benefiting from U.S. settler colonialism, whether voluntarily or involuntarily.<sup>47</sup>

Other scholars have noted that many previous literary stories regarding Asian Americans and outdoor spaces tend to broadly replicate settler narratives that erase Indigenous presence in their desire to seek “settler mythologies of belonging.”<sup>48</sup> For instance, Julie H. Lee’s study of Asian American neo-frontier literature finds that the absence of “Native figures” within this subgenre “is not just a quirk or feature of the subgenre, but rather a precondition for Asian America’s literary grappling with the frontier.”<sup>49</sup> Similarly, numerous NPS stories about Asian American participation in nature and the environment evoke similar desires for belonging. For example, this is embodied in the celebratory tone of the stories told about “Chef” Tie Sing at Yosemite National Park, who served as a cook for Stephen Mather’s (the first NPS director) expedition parties beginning in 1915.<sup>50</sup> As Yenjen F. Chan’s seminal research on Chinese contributions to Yosemite reveals, the United States Geological Survey recognized Tie Sing’s crucial contributions as their “beloved” head chef from 1888 to 1918 by naming a peak (Sing Peak) in Yosemite after him in 1899.<sup>51</sup> Sarah Wald, in her research on Tie Sing, found stories about him celebrating his role as a chef, conservationist, and outdoor recreation enthusiast. These stories and the very act of naming landscapes are all a part of the ongoing settler colonialist project of naming, claiming, and erasing previous Indigenous presence.<sup>52</sup> In her research, Wald highlights the crucial impact of storytelling by noting, “The stories that are told matters; the ways those stories are told also matters.”<sup>53</sup>

### ***The Mystery of the Japanese Bellboys and Servants at GCNP***

In the article “Japanese Americans at Grand Canyon: Bellboys and WWII Heroes,” the NPS’s storytelling about Japanese Americans at the Grand Canyon begins with a paragraph about Fred Harvey, an influential figure credited with founding the U.S. hospitality industry.<sup>54</sup> The Fred Harvey Company constructed the renowned El Tovar Hotel at the GCNP in collaboration with the Santa Fe Railroad Company.<sup>55</sup> At its peak, the Fred Harvey Company operated hotels and dining services scattered from the Pacific coast of San Francisco, CA, through the Midwestern plains to Chicago, IL, and as far south as Galveston, TX. To maxi-

mize patronage, the establishments were deliberately located along the routes of railroad depots and Route 66.<sup>56</sup> According to the NPS story, Fred Harvey considered himself an “equal opportunity” employer who “hired many people of color” and was known for saying, “Real service is without discrimination.”<sup>57</sup> That said, the article—aligning with the Obama administration’s seemingly inclusive multicultural storytelling—also acknowledges that people of color “were often relegated to lower-paying service positions.”

While the NPS story does not address this, it is crucial to point out that at the start of the twentieth century, the Fred Harvey Company and the Santa Fe Railroad Company utilized racialized narratives in their tourism advertising, as illustrated by the 1909 *New York Times* print ads shown below (see figures 1 and 2). The travel print advertisement features troubling orientalist themes while promoting “the California Limited” rail line and the El Tovar Hotel, with the latter serving as a potential stop along the route to California. Phrases such as, “In California are every quaint bits of oriental life,” along with portrayals of “Asian” imagery (e.g., dragon, children, and font), depict this influence.<sup>58</sup> The term “quaint” conjures a stereotypical image of Asians as a group perceived as peculiar and stuck in time. These words and imagery illustrate Edward Said’s postcolonial theory of orientalism, described as a “system of ideological fiction” where the “Occident” (Europe and the West) is viewed as superior in contrast to the “Orient” (the East), characterized as inferior, undeveloped, strange, and the “other.”<sup>59</sup>

The tourist consumption of the ostensibly foreign “others” is not limited to the (East) Asian experience, as shown in figure 2.<sup>60</sup> In the print advertisement shown in figure 2, what is being sold is the equally racially problematic “romance of the old Spanish days” in California. This advertisement romanticizes the “old Spanish days” while omitting any mention of its destructive colonial history—first Spain and later the United States—and the violent displacement of the region’s native Indigenous population and land.<sup>61</sup> Jason Ruiz, in his scholarship on the impact of the U.S. empire’s tourism into Porfirian Mexico, has argued that “travel is not just a personal act but is, in fact, an ideology...travel is a practice with tremendous power to create and shape knowledge formations across cultural, racial, ethnic, and national boundaries.”<sup>62</sup> Additionally, the role of travel discourse can function “as a site of knowledge production and empire.”<sup>63</sup> Although Ruiz’s research examines travel across national borders, I contend that this perspective also applies within national boundaries. Specifically, the travel discourse shared, including contributions from the Fred Harvey Company and the Santa Fe Railroad Company, greatly influenced the racial views of U.S. Americans toward the foreign “other” within the country.

in Golden California

are many quaint bits of oriental life.  
On the way is that world-wonder, the

# Grand Canyon

of Arizona—

a mile deep, miles wide, painted in  
rainbow hues. A Pullman takes you to the  
rim, where stands El Tovar Hotel, like a  
country club—Fred Harvey management.

## The California Limited

between Chicago—Kansas City and Los Angeles, San Diego and San Francisco. You will enjoy the **Fred Harvey** dining-car service. This is the only Southern California train, via any line, exclusively for first-class travel. All others carry tourist sleepers and second-class passengers.

Let me give you our de luxe California Limited and Grand Canyon booklets. Geo. C. Dillard, Gen. Agt., A. T. & S. F. Ry., 377 Broadway, New York City.

Santa Fe

Figure 1.

Furthermore, the works of Manu Karuka's *Empire Tracks* and Julia H. Lee's *The Racial Railroad* also underscore the railroad's crucial role in reinforcing settler colonialism and shaping the social construction of race.<sup>64</sup> Julia H. Lee contends, "[T]he train has been a persistent and crucial site for racial meaning-making in American culture for the past 150 years. [...] Just as powerfully, the railroad has also been used to justify and reinforce racist hierarchies and narratives of exclusion and extermination."<sup>65</sup> The railroad, through its development and existence, significantly contributed to the dispossession of Indigenous lands and the exploitation of early Asian immigrant labor. Over time, these "others" have been classified into racial groups that are consistently viewed as outsiders to the nation's body politic. As previously indicated, this reality has historically affected U.S. Americans of Asian ancestry.<sup>66</sup>

The print advertisement's racial portrayal of "oriental life" alongside Fred Harvey's hiring practices offers insights into why Japanese men were employed in domestic roles, such as bellboys, at Harvey's establishments.<sup>67</sup> The racialized image suggests that "Orientals" are viewed as exotic—objects to be consumed, experienced, and owned in this relatively new technology's capitalist venture. This mindset appeared to be pervasive, as it was highly acceptable and even desirable to employ Asians in domestic service roles during this period. In their roles as bellboys, Japanese workers were subject to being directed and controlled within hotels or homes. As referenced at the start of this article, the NPS observes that this hiring method engaged in the "infantilization" of Japanese Americans. Hence, this hiring niche was accepted and even encouraged because it did not challenge the existing racial hierarchy. In fact, for a time, Japanese individuals were the preferred hires.

Following the coverage of Fred Harvey, the NPS story featured two Japanese American service workers at GCNP—George Murakami and Robert Kishi, who both served in the U.S. military. George Murakami's journey from his birthplace in Hawai'i to the Grand Canyon began when he heard a rumor that Victor Patrosso, the manager at El Tovar, favored hiring Japanese individuals for the bellboy position.<sup>68</sup> The rumor proved true: Murakami was hired as a bellboy in 1933 and was later promoted to bell captain in 1937. He worked at El Tovar until the early 1940s, when widespread anti-Japanese sentiments during World War II forced him to leave. During this heightened anti-Japanese period, the U.S. government pressured the Fred Harvey Company to fire its Japanese employees at El Tovar. The company succumbed to that pressure; by 1943, no Japanese Americans were listed as employees at this hotel.

During this time, Murakami and Kishi enlisted in the famed Second Battalion of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. After his military service, Murakami returned as a decorated veteran and was rehired at El Tovar in the postwar era.

# California

Has the romance of old Spanish days. The missions add to its charm. There every month is June. On the way are quaint Indian pueblos and the rainbow-hued

## Grand Canyon

of Arizona

with a Fred Harvey hotel, El Tovar, on the rim.

A Pullman to the Canyon on  
**The California Limited**

Only Southern California train, via any line, exclusively for first-class travel. All others carry tourist sleepers and second-class passengers.

Runs daily between Chicago-Kansas City and Los Angeles, San Diego and San Francisco.

**Fred Harvey** dining cars.

Let me give you our de luxe booklets about the train and trip.

Geo. C. Dillard, Gen. Agt.,  
A. T. & S. F. Ry.,  
377 Broadway,  
New York City.



Figure 2.

Once again, in keeping with the inclusive multicultural storytelling, the NPS feature briefly touches on his experiences with racism by noting, “[Murakami] was also subject to racially charged nicknames. When dealing with the broader public, Japanese Americans at the time were generally subjected to remarks of racism and fascination.” However, the NPS article does not elaborate beyond this. In a separate 1954 interview featured in the *Fred Harvey Hospitality* magazine, author Eloise Turner disclosed that the “racially charged” nickname given to George Murakami was “Ch-naman George.”<sup>69</sup> Turner trivializes this act of casual racism by explaining that the nickname “was all in fun, of course.”<sup>70</sup> She proceeds to use this racist nickname throughout the piece. The casual use of this derogatory nickname sheds light on the racially charged and denigrating experiences of Japanese Americans during this era. Ultimately, Murakami worked at the El Tovar Hotel until 1965 before moving to Los Angeles for retirement.<sup>71</sup> By opting not to disclose the complete story, the NPS’s storytelling offers an oversimplified and more digestible account of what truly occurred, thus reflecting a common practice in selling and presenting multiculturalism.<sup>72</sup>

Much less is known about Robert Kishi’s life. He was born in California and worked at the Grand Canyon South Rim, possibly as a cook.<sup>73</sup> The NPS story reveals that he was tragically killed during the war. Of great importance to the GCNP’s history, Kishi is honored on a memorial monument at the South Rim Cemetery in GCNP. His is the only Japanese name on the John Ivens Post 42 of the American Legion Memorial (see fig. 3). Notably, Murakami is credited for adding Kishi’s name to the memorial—a feat accomplished while he was an active member of the American Legion.<sup>74</sup>

In examining this storytelling, it is evident that the NPS has effectively upheld its commitment to an inclusive multicultural agenda. This is achieved by presenting celebratory narratives that highlight the contributions and achievements of historically underrepresented groups. Filed under the GCNP’s “Whose History is History,” the story fulfills its multicultural promise by showcasing exemplary Asian Americans who served as proud service workers and military veterans who overcame racism. The focus on the loyal bellboys and the “Nisei soldier icon” undoubtedly conveys the “prototypical ‘model minority’” imagery.<sup>75</sup> The article’s final sentence reinforces the reader’s memory of Murakami’s steadfast loyalty and immense dedication to the GCNP (and the nation): “Murakami left behind a legacy of 28 years of service and commitment to the Grand Canyon community.” The emphasis on the ongoing effort to forge a national identity centered around Asian American exceptionalism is unmistakable.

While acknowledging the points made in the article, it is also crucial to reiterate Sarah Wald’s argument that the way these stories are conveyed also matters. Notably absent from this NPS account is an examination of why Fred



Figure 3.

Harvey and his colleagues preferred hiring Japanese workers for domestic service and the significance of this decision in the context of the racialization of Asian Americans. To answer this question, we must look back to the late nineteenth century.

### THE ORIGINS OF JAPANESE SERVANTS

On March 13, 1874, *The Chicago Daily Tribune* published this single line under the "miscellaneous" section: "A New York lady is experimenting with Japanese servants."<sup>76</sup> This innocuous yet significant line would foreshadow the later trend of hiring Japanese men as domestic workers in the United States at the turn of the twentieth century. During this era, several notable individuals, including President Ulysses S. Grant, writers Helen Gardener and Jack London, and architect Frank Lloyd Wright, were known to have had Japanese servants.<sup>77</sup> The mystery of Japanese Americans working at El Tovar Hotel is directly connected to this hiring phenomenon. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, newspaper articles influenced public perceptions of Japanese domestic workers in the U.S., highlighting their migration and fueling the high demand for Japanese domestic services.

### *Learning “American Methods”*

In addition to the previously discussed differences in regional population sizes, a significant distinction is the Japanese motivation for migrating to the United States. Mitziko Sawada notes in *Tokyo Life, New York Dreams* that early Japanese immigrants to New York could be categorized based on their passports: *hi-imin* and *imin*.<sup>78</sup> The *hi-imin* passport holders were required to have a minimum of middle school education, and tended to be “students, merchants, businessmen, and professionals.”<sup>79</sup> In comparison, the holders of the *imin* passport mainly consisted of laborers. In 1907, the passage of the Gentlemen’s Agreement led to the Japanese government restricting emigration to the U.S., primarily targeting immigrant laborers (i.e., *imin*). This informal agreement between the U.S. and Japan stipulated that Japan would limit the emigration of Japanese laborers to the U.S. in exchange for the U.S. refraining from publicly humiliating Japan by enacting an anti-Japanese exclusion act.<sup>80</sup> This agreement significantly impacted the Pacific West Coast population, as most early Japanese immigrants in California were laborers (*imin*). In contrast, more than three-quarters of Japanese immigrants in New York were primarily students or business professionals (*hi-min*).<sup>81</sup> The students from this latter group became the backbone of the Japanese domestic labor force during the early twentieth century.

Multiple news articles documenting Japanese servants of the era consistently highlight that their stay in the U.S. was mainly to study “American methods.” A 1902 article in *The New York Times* titled “Japanese Student Will Act as Cook” begins with the following sentence:

When Japan began to send young men to this country to study *American methods* and a few women to acquire skill[s] as nurses and teachers[,] no one imagined that housekeeping and booking would be touched by the *Japanese thirst for American ways*.<sup>82</sup> [emphasis added]

Notably, although this article refers to Japanese women as domestic workers, they were far less prevalent in New York during this time than Japanese men. According to the 1910 U.S. Census, out of the 1,247 Japanese people living in New York, only 167 were women.<sup>83</sup> Despite these rare instances, this article centers on the transnational story of Misono Hama, a Japanese female student eager to learn American baking techniques. The article explains that “American pie has made an impression” on Miss Hama and that she “will return to Japan and tell other Japanese girls all about it.” Furthermore, the article states that Miss Hama is gaining culinary experience through school and working as a home

cook. The article notes, “Miss Hama has decided that, while it is very well to study in school cooking, the best way for her will be to live with an American family as a cook.”

The narrative of Japanese presence as temporary students due to their “thirst” for American knowledge is a recurring dominant theme. This story is not limited to Japanese domestic laborers in the New York area. The following passage describes the San Francisco Japanese servants in an 1894 article in *The Chicago Daily Tribune* titled, “Make Good Servants: Native Adaptability of the People of the Mikado’s Realm”:

In San Francisco [the Japanese] perform the duties of light housekeeping with success—they are polite, careful and intelligent—dainty dishes never are broken...many come to America for intellectual enlightenment.<sup>84</sup>

Similarly, in a 1904 article in *The Chicago Daily Tribune* about Chicago’s Japanese servants, the author emphasizes the role of temporary domestic work in supporting educational endeavors by stating:

According to the imperial consul most of the young Japanese who are engaged in domestic service in Chicago are pursuing this avocation simply as a means of supporting themselves until they obtain an education at the universities, medical schools, or business colleges. [...] In Japan they would not dream of entering upon domestic service.<sup>85</sup>

These articles highlight that the Japanese presence in the U.S. is fleeting and predominantly centered on education. Interestingly, Japanese nationals also shared this narrative. In a 1900 article in *The New York Times* featuring an interview with K. Okajima, the founder of a Brooklyn mission providing support for Japanese immigrants, Okajima states:

Many people think that the Japanese who are doing housework here are servants in their own country, but that is not so usually. [...] Most of those who come to this country and take household positions come to study the methods of *Western civilization*, and they will go home later to enter government positions or to go into business.<sup>86</sup>  
[emphasis added]

This statement reaffirms the Japanese temporary educational mission. The theme of Japan’s “thirst for American ways” not only illustrates the projection of American exceptionalism but also tells a story of Japan’s desire to imitate U.S. behaviors. Emulation is a key principle of classic assimilation.<sup>87</sup> The concept of assimilation is central to the Cold War’s “model minority myth,” which emerged five decades after these news articles were published. In discussing the development of the Cold War’s model minority status, Ellen Wu explains, “International imperatives of the 1940s and 1950s anchored the nation’s recasting of Asian Americans into *assimilating Others*—persons acknowledged as capable of acting like white Americans while remaining racially distinct from them.”<sup>88</sup> In this context, early twentieth-century media played an influential role in mitigating the perceived threat of a Japanese foreign entity “invading” the U.S. by portraying the Japanese as nonthreatening, eager to adopt American customs, and temporary visitors for education, suitable for temporary domestic work.

This final point is exemplified through a story written by writer and social activist Helen Gardener, published in the *Milwaukee Journal* in 1895.<sup>89</sup> In her article, Gardener recounts the story of her Japanese servant, Sakosska, who agreed to the position on the condition that he could have dinner thirty minutes earlier every other Thursday. Gardener agreed to this request and hired him. True to his routine, Sakosska would leave the house in an “evening suit” every other Thursday. Gardener was unaware of his whereabouts or purpose until she received a mysterious letter addressed to “Dr. Sakosska.” While this letter greatly piqued Gardener’s interest, Sakosska did not share much when handed the letter. However, her Japanese servant confirmed that he had a PhD. It was not until Sakosska returned to Japan at the end of his one-year employment that he left Gardener with a local *Brooklyn Eagle* newspaper article explaining his mystery. The article featured a story about Dr. Sakosska’s comparative political economy lectures to graduate students scheduled every other Thursday. Gardener was utterly unaware of Sakosska’s professional status the entire time he worked as her “cook and general servant.” In the article, Gardener shares that, based on her experience, she “is a firm believer in Japanese as servants, having found them satisfactory in all respects.” The article concludes with an update on Dr. Sakosska, who, at the time the article was written in 1895, was serving as editor of *The Scientific Monthly of Japan*.

### “J-ps Are in High Favor”

What began in the 1870s as a single line from a New Yorker “experimenting with Japanese servants” evolved into a widespread “fad” by the 1890s.<sup>90</sup> In an 1894 *Denver Evening Post* article, the author traces the “fad, if so[,] it may be

called, for Japanese servants was started many years ago when Commodore Perry, in command of a fleet of United States war ships, made visit to China and Japan.”<sup>91</sup> While the 1853 act of gunboat diplomacy may have sparked Westerners to hire Japanese servants, various newspaper reports indicate that the rising demand in the late 1800s originated in New York.

For example, an 1897 *Milwaukee Daily Sentinel* piece entitled “Picturesque Maid Servants” states that “the fad started in New York and has naturally reached its height in San Francisco, where the missions are not able to supply the people who call upon them.” During this time, the increased demand for Japanese servants created a supply shortage, enabling them to command higher salaries. However, this comes at a cost, as the servants are often regarded as a “fashionable” accessory or personal possession. The article states:

The Chinese and Japanese maid servant is becoming fashionable on account of her picturesque possibilities. If she wears her native dress she is as attractive as a \$1,500 vase or a rare piece of bric-a-brac, so the fashionable assert. Visitors like to look at her and consequently the prettier and more graceful the girl the higher wages can she command. Long, narrow eyes, thin black brows and a clear complexion are the things desired.<sup>92</sup>

These objectifying gendered perceptions and descriptors have long been weaponized against Asian bodies. Yen Le Espiritu contends that such “ideological assaults” have led to the “objectification of Asian Americans as the exotic and inferior ‘other.’” However, she asserts that they have “never been absolute.”<sup>93</sup> Historically, Asian men have been depicted as both “asexual” and a “threat to white women.”<sup>94</sup> For this specific group of Japanese men, they were seen as status symbols and subjected to a form of “asexual” objectification. For example, the term “picturesque” was not restricted to Chinese and Japanese women. In an 1898 article in *The Chicago Daily Tribune*, “Ruled by Fashion: Styles in House Servants Change Like Other Styles,” the men are described as “always picturesque and pleasant.”<sup>95</sup> The article notes that “J-ps are in high favor.” They are compared to “changing fashion,” which is subject to “alteration” every several years:

There are styles in the matter of household servants as in everything else, and these styles are just now undergoing a radical alteration. “Such an alteration takes place every two or three years,” declared one of the oldest and best known employment agents in Chicago.

“Just how and why the changes in popular taste and liking come it is impossible to understand or explain, but come they do, and in most peculiar fashion...when a woman prominent in the social world comes to me with a request for a man or maid of nationality hitherto unpopular or little called for[,] I know that the request portends a changing fashion and begin to lay my plans accordingly. Just now the budding demand is all for Chinese and Japanese servants.”

While there is mention of Chinese servants, the demand for Japanese servants is higher. This demand is expressed by the following individual interviewed for the article:

“I have been trying for some time,” said a woman prominent in Chicago society, “to procure a young Japanese man, a student preferably, to take the place of the day nurse who now cared for my little ones during their hours of outdoor exercise and recreation and in the nursery on winter evenings.”

The strong preference for Japanese servants is also reflected in a 1900 brief in *The New York Times* entitled, “Japanese as House Servants,” where the author writes that while the Chinese servants are a success on the Pacific coast, the “Japanese are said to excel them [the Chinese] in all the qualities that make the ideal house servant.”<sup>96</sup> All of this evidence raises the question: What drove this high demand for Japanese servants? Examining how the popular press depicted them will help unravel this mystery.

### ***The “Ideal Helpers” Who Are “Refreshingly Noiseless”***

In the previously mentioned 1894 article in *The Chicago Daily Tribune*, “Make Good Servants,” Japanese servants in San Francisco are described as “ideal helpers” who “perform the duties of light housekeeping with success—they are polite, careful and intelligent....”<sup>97</sup> These characteristics are ascribed as inherently intrinsic “natural” traits, as the piece continues:

The politeness of a Japanese servant is so abundantly natural, so an ever present part of himself, that it is first and last and altogether his most striking characteristics. Yet so evident is it that his deferential suavity has its source in his own self-respect rather than in a brief desire to please that he is withal peculiarly dignified.

These ostensibly “positive” attributes are found in another news article published in 1898, where Japanese male servants are described as possessing “cleanliness of mind and body, sunshiny good nature, patience, and perpetual cheerfulness, which are invariable Japanese characteristics.”<sup>98</sup> Likewise, another article published in 1904 describes the “Japanese household servant” as “clean, clever, and ambitious” with “their extraordinary ability to learn quickly soon put them upon a level with their more experienced fellows.”<sup>99</sup> The same article further “positively” portrays them as “their order of intelligence is high,” they are found to be “faithful, hardworking servants, refreshingly noiseless and spotlessly clean,” and are “always cheerful,” “rarely grumble, and never whine.”

Interestingly, Japanese servants were also compared to those of other races, including white European servants. A 1900 article in *The New York Times* explicitly expresses this comparison in its title, “Japanese House Servants: Superior in Many Ways to the Average White Girl.”<sup>100</sup> The article highlights that although “Japanese service is not cheap,” it features traits distinct from those of “average white girls.” For instance, they “are good workers, careful and conscientious. [...] The Japanese are so respectful that it is delightful to have them around, and they are always immaculately clean.” Finally, the most damaging portrayal of female domestic workers depicts Japanese men as less prone to drama. The article states:

There is another good thing about the Japanese. There is none of the frivolousness with the women servants which has caused so much trouble in many houses where a larger number of servants are kept.

Ultimately, the media primarily used “positive” terms to describe Japanese servants, such as polite, quiet, respectful, cheerful, intelligent, clever, and diligent.<sup>101</sup> Central to this manuscript is an inquiry into how these representations enhance our understanding of Asian American history and racialization. These descriptors echo a strikingly similar tone to the Asian American model minority. The previously mentioned characteristics of the model minority from the Cold War era—specifically, “self-sufficiency, hard work ethic, and emphasis on educational attainment”—are reflected in these print media accounts.<sup>102</sup>

This article’s findings reveal that descriptions of Japanese servants at the turn of the twentieth century contributed to establishing the foundational groundwork for the future emergence of the model minority myth. In use here is Natalia Molina’s concept of “racial scripts,” which refers to the racist narratives and tactics created by the dominant group that can be repurposed and “readily transferred” from one racialized group to another.<sup>103</sup> Molina argues that

over time, these racist scripts serve to “naturalize” the “discourse of violence” aimed at racialized communities.<sup>104</sup> Furthermore, understanding the existence of racial scripts allows us to see the “connections among racialized groups”<sup>105</sup> or how “the lives of peoples of color are linked across time and space and thereby affect one another.”<sup>106</sup> In this case, I show that this concept extends to relationships *within* racialized groups. Initially, the racialized narrative was specific to the Japanese sub-ethnic group, but later broadened to define the entire Asian American racial identity. In particular, the traits often viewed as “positive”—such as being quiet, intelligent, hardworking, and submissive—attributed to Japanese individuals have been reframed as part of the Asian American model minority myth. In short, these identifiable racialized characteristics were easily applied to the Asian body because they existed in the U.S. lexicon before the Cold War. Additionally, these racialized markers exist because they fulfill a particular agenda by presenting a group of people who could be *conditionally* assimilated and absorbed into the U.S. nation.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This article examined the NPS’s storytelling and its impact on shaping racialized Asian American cultural narratives. At its inception, the stated mission of President Obama’s America’s Great Outdoors initiative was to promote an NPS that “reflect[s] the rich diversity of our nation.”<sup>107</sup> In evaluating their efforts, the NPS has undoubtedly fulfilled its mission of documenting diverse narratives, including those of Japanese American bellboys and WWII heroes. Representation is indeed essential. Sarah Wald’s research on Asian American environmental history highlights its importance, stating, “Asian and Asian American outdoor recreation not only disrupt the racial scripts that render Asian Americans as alien and ecological other; they also disrupt one of the spaces through which whiteness reproduces itself.”<sup>108</sup> As I compose this conclusion in mid-2025, I wish to emphasize that the Trump administration is actively working to swiftly eliminate “diverse” representation and “inappropriate ideology” across various institutions.<sup>109</sup> Specifically, the NPS has been instructed to remove online content that “inappropriately disparages Americans” by September 17, 2025.<sup>110</sup> Nevertheless, while recognizing this ongoing campaign of erasure against all marginalized communities, it remains imperative to address the potential limitations of representation.

This article examines the implications of portraying Japanese bellboys as exemplary hospitality workers, going beyond existing NPS narratives. The representation of the infantilized Japanese service worker and the hypermasculine,

patriotic WWII hero is far from trivial; it reinforces the legitimacy of U.S. settler colonialism. It emphasizes the nation's claim to land by extending hospitality to the infantilized Japanese while asserting statehood by opposing global threats and requiring service in its (then) segregated military. Afterward, these individuals are re-scripted as the epitome of model soldiers and citizens, showcasing the great potential of those who fit into the category of assimilating others.<sup>111</sup> This cultural narrative serves as an ongoing racial project, maintaining the Asian American racialized identity across various social institutions.

Additionally, examining the history of Japanese domestic workers reveals that the racial scripts behind the model minority myth relate to early twentieth-century Japanese student/service worker immigrants. The popular press portrayed them as nonthreatening students suitable for domestic work, often described as the preferred "fashion" accessories due to their compliant, drama-free, and "refreshingly noiseless" qualities. Exploring their experiences reveals a deeper history of this racialized narrative that depicts Asian bodies not only as "perpetual foreigners" but also as "model citizens" in the United States. In this context, without telling a more comprehensive and critical story about "Japanese bellboys and WWII heroes," the NPS continues to shape the ongoing racialized cultural narrative of the model Asian Americans.

At the same time, it is crucial to recognize that the NPS website's depiction of "exceptional Asian Americans" can deeply resonate with those wanting to see themselves reflected in history. On an individual level, claiming a sense of belonging and being included in the body politic of a nation that has repeatedly socially, economically, and politically excluded Asian bodies can be enticing.<sup>112</sup> However, it is crucial to be cautious of such trappings and remain critical and conscious of what is at stake.<sup>113</sup> Since the creation of the "Asian American" identity, activists and scholars have warned against being used as racial pawns.<sup>114</sup> More recently, Wen Liu continued to echo these warnings by clarifying what is explicitly at stake here, writing, "The portrayal of Asian Americans as the exemplar of American multiculturalism and the ideal 'postracial' futurity has created a body politic easily recruited by neoliberal governmentality to disguise racial inequality."<sup>115</sup> Likewise, Josephine Park cautions Asian Americans on the allure of the Asian American exceptionalism narrative:

Asian American exceptionalism is a product of modern imperial warfare, itself shackled to the founding bloodshed of settler colonialism. In these times of resurgent nativism, we must contend with the wartime dimensions of the model minority, fashioned out of a suspension of civil rights to curtail the rights of all racial minority groups. Being good was never enough....<sup>116</sup>

In writing about arrivant colonialism, Jodi Byrd explains that it reflects, “oscillating dynamics that grapple with the desire for landed belonging and its simultaneous (im)possibility that are exactly the afterlives of slavery and colonialism.”<sup>117</sup> In borrowing Byrd’s ideas, I argue that a complete examination and understanding of the Asian American experience requires recognizing this paradox of “desired belonging” and “its simultaneous (im)possibility” within the paradigm of settler colonialism.<sup>118</sup> Julia H. Lee, in her examination of Asian American neo-frontier storytelling, advances that any potential for Asian American and Native American solidarity “lies in letting go of this lingering desire to link history and embodied presence” because, she concludes, “[Asian American] claims for belonging based on historical presence supports settler colonial logics of Native erasure.”<sup>119</sup> This raises the question: Can Asian arrivants and their descendants truly find a sense of belonging within this structural framework? More importantly, should it even be pursued after knowing the cost?

In today’s rapidly changing social media landscape, the NPS’s content now coexists alongside numerous others in the framing of racialized cultural knowledge. Although its impact may not be as extensive, Asian Americans are using social media to share their stories and (re)claim their presence in the great outdoors. Therefore, a question for future research is: How will these Asian American cultural narratives influence future Asian Americans? Various non-NPS social media accounts, such as @outdoorasian and its regional counterparts, remain active. Their content includes activities such as organizing meetups for outdoor activities and informative panel discussions about becoming an NPS ranger.<sup>120</sup> In formulating future cultural narratives, how can Asian American stories be represented to encompass a broader array of experiences—without further perpetuating the notion of Asian American exceptionalism—while also acknowledging their ongoing complicity in the ongoing U.S. settler colonial structure? Since the arrival of early Asian immigrants to the U.S., the racialization of Asian Americans has reflected a complex history. How will future storytelling shape the evolving identity of Asian Americans? The path toward more corrective storytelling requires sharing these more critical and nuanced cultural narratives. Although the past shapes the present, it does not need to dictate the future.

## NOTES

1. “Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage – Places,” National Park Service, accessed June 7, 2023, <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/aapiheritage/places.htm>. This reference moved to the “Introduction” page by November 23, 2024: <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/aapiheritage/introduction.htm>.

2. Grand Canyon National Park sits on land associated with eleven federally recognized indigenous tribes: Havasupai Tribe (Havasu'baaja), Hopi Tribe, Hualapai Tribe (Hwal'bay), Nungwu Kaibab Band of Paiute Indians, Las Vegas Paiute Tribe, Moapa Band of Paiute Indians, Navajo Nation (Diné), Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah, San Juan Southern Paiute Tribe, The Pueblo of Zuni (A:shiwi), and Yavapai-Apache Nation (Yavap'e - Nnédé). Tribal members still live in or nearby the Grand Canyon region today. "Grand Canyon National Park - Associated Tribes," National Park Service, accessed March 8, 2025, <https://www.nps.gov/grca/learn/historyculture/associated-tribes.htm>.
3. "El Tovar Hotel," accessed October 2, 2024, <https://www.grandcanyonlodges.com/lodging/el-tovar-hotel/>.
4. National Archives, 1940 Census Arizona, Coconino County, ED 3-33, (1940).
5. All were born in Honolulu, Hawai'i, except for one individual who was born in Oregon. These seven Japanese American included: Adam Harada, George Murakami, Hiko Maniya, George Kumasawa, Robert R. Nakama, Barney Ohara, and Allan Kimura. Archives, Short 1940 Census Arizona, Coconino County, ED 3-33.
6. The article can be found under the official GCNP's "History and Culture" section under the sub-section "Whose story is history." While NPS has an "Asian American and Pacific Islander" online collection, it should be noted that Asians' and Pacific Islanders' experiences share both similarities (e.g., subjects of U.S. colonialism) and differences (e.g., possessing distinct histories and cultures, the existence and notion of 'Asian settler colonialism' in Hawai'i, see Paul Spickard, "Whither the Asian American Coalition?," *Pacific Historical Review* 76, no. 4 (2007): 595–96. In this article, I am solely focusing on the Asian American experience. "Japanese Americans at Grand Canyon - Bellboys and WWII Heroes," National Park Service, accessed July 4, 2023, <https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/japanese-americans-at-grand-canyon-bellboys-and-wwii-heroes.htm>.
7. NPS, "Japanese Americans at Grand Canyon - Bellboys and WWII Heroes."
8. Carolyn Finney, *Black Faces, White Spaces: Reimagining the Relationship of African Americans to the Great Outdoors* (University of North Carolina Press, 2014), xvii.
9. Finney, *Black Faces, White Spaces*, xvii.
10. Viewing race as a social construct in constant flux, Michael Omi and Howard Winant "advance the concept of racial projects to capture how racial formation processes occur through a linkage between structure and representation." They "are efforts to shape the ways in which human identities and social structures are racially signified, and the reciprocal ways that racial meaning becomes embedded in social structures." Essentially, they are the "building blocks in the racial formation process" and "are taking place all the time." For more, see Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, 3rd ed. (Routledge, 2015), 13.
11. Sucheng Chan, *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History* (Twayne Publishers, 1991); Erika Lee, *The Making of Asian America: A History* (Simon & Schuster, 2015); Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore* (Penguin, 1989).

12. The four department heads included the secretary of interior, the secretary of agriculture, the administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the chair of the Council on Environmental Quality. "Presidential Memorandum - America's Great Outdoors," The White House, April 16, 2010, accessed February 22, 2025, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/presidential-memorandum-americas-great-outdoors>.
13. Council on Environmental Quality et al., *America's Great Outdoors: A Promise to Future Generations* (2011), 18; 73, [https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/microsites/ceq/ago\\_report\\_-\\_report\\_only\\_2-7-11.pdf](https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/microsites/ceq/ago_report_-_report_only_2-7-11.pdf).
14. Masa migrated to the United States in his early twenties for schooling in Colorado. He eventually found his way to Asheville, NC. Masa's mountaineering and photography played a seminal role in the mapping of the Appalachian Trail and the designation of Great Smoky Mountains as a national park in 1934. Paul Bonesteel, dir., *The Mystery of George Masa*. (Bonesteel Films, 2002), <https://vimeo.com/ondemand/georgemasa>.
15. "Remarks by the President on America's Great Outdoors Initiative," The White House, 2011, accessed 2025, February 22, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2011/02/16/remarks-president-americas-great-outdoors-initiative>.
16. Jodi Melamed, *Represent and Destroy: Rationalizing Violence in the New Racial Capitalism*, 1st ed., Difference Incorporated (University of Minnesota Press, 2011), xv, xxi.
17. Melamed, *Represent and Destroy*, xxi.
18. Joseph Whitson, "Indigenizing Instagram: Challenging Settler Colonialism in the Outdoor Industry," *American Quarterly* 73, no. 2 (2021); Sarah D. Wald, "Challenging White Sanctuary: Twenty-First-Century Representations of Asian American Outdoor Recreation," in *Nature Unfurled: Asian American Environmental Histories*, ed. Connie Y. Chiang (University of Washington Press, 2024), 232.
19. "The AAPI Heritage Initiative," National Park Service, 2013, accessed February 22, 2025, <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/projectHome.cfm?ProjectID=56325>. This was followed by a May 2013 White House forum and the creation of the May 2014 National Park System Advisory Board.
20. "AAPI Heritage Initiative Launch," 2015, accessed February 22, 2025, <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/document.cfm?documentID=64642>.
21. "Pushing for Greater Inclusion of Asian American and Pacific Islander History Through the National Park Service," 2015, accessed February 22, 2025, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2015/06/12/pushing-greater-inclusion-asian-american-and-pacific-islander-history-through-nation>.
22. "Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Theme Studies," National Park Service, 2017, accessed February 22, 2025, <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/tellingallamericans-stories/asianpacificislanderthemestudy.htm>.
23. "Whose Story Is History?," National Park Service, accessed February 22, 2025, <https://www.nps.gov/grca/learn/historyculture/whose-story-is-history.htm>.
24. Chan, *Asian Americans*; Lee, *The Making of Asian America*; Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore*.

25. For exceptions, see Gary Y. Okihiro, *American History Unbound: Asians and Pacific Islanders* (University of California Press, 2015); Mitziko Sawada, *Tokyo Life, New York Dreams: Urban Japanese Visions of America, 1890–1924* (University of California Press, 1996).
26. In the 1860 census, “Asiatic” was the only term used. The California “Asiatic” population in 1860 was 34,933 (33,149 males; 1,784 females). This population made up the majority (95 percent) of the approximately 36,796 Asians in the United States during that period. Source: Retrieved on Aug 14, 2024. Pages 592 and 620 from <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1860/population/1860a-46.pdf>.
27. Iyko Day, *Alien Capital: Asian Racialization and the Logic of Settler Colonial Capitalism* (Duke University Press, 2016), 118, 20.
28. Day, *Alien Capital*, 118, 20.
29. Charlotte Brooks, “In the Twilight Zone Between Black and White: Japanese American Resettlement and Community in Chicago, 1942–1945,” *The Journal of American History* 86, no. 4 (2000): 1661.
30. Rebecca Jo Kinney, *Mapping AsiaTown Cleveland: Race and Redevelopment in the Rust Belt* (Temple University Press, 2025), 26, 30.
31. Mia Tuan, *Forever Foreigners or Honorary Whites?: The Asian Ethnic Experience Today* (Rutgers University Press, 2001); Keith Osajima, “Asian Americans as the Model Minority: An Analysis of the Popular Press Image in the 1960s and 1980s,” in *Reflections on Shattered Windows*, ed. Gary Okihiro et al. (Washington State University Press, 1988); Claire Jean Kim, “The Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans,” *Politics & Society* 27, no. 1 (1999); Madeline Y. Hsu and Ellen D. Wu, “Smoke and Mirrors?: Conditional Inclusion, Model Minorities, and the Pre-1965 Dismantling of Asian Exclusion,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 34, no. 4 (2015); Luther Spoehr, “Sambo and the Heathen Chinee: Californians’ Racial Stereotypes in the Late 1870s,” *Pacific Historical Review* 43 (1973).
32. Dorothy B. Fujita-Rony, *American Workers, Colonial Power: Philippine Seattle and the Transpacific West, 1919–1941* (University of California Press, 2003); Chan, *Asian Americans*; Lee, *The Making of Asian America*.
33. Wald, “Challenging White Sanctuary,” 225.
34. Wald, “Challenging White Sanctuary,” 226.
35. Lee, *The Making of Asian America*; Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts* (Duke University Press, 1996); Kent A. Ono and Vincent Pham, *Asian Americans and the Media* (Polity Press, 2009).
36. See, for example, Spoehr, “Sambo and the Heathen Chinee”; Kim, “The Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans”; William Peterson, “Success Story of One Minority Group in the U.S.,” *U.S. News & World Report*, December 26, 1966; Osajima, “Asian Americans as the Model Minority: An Analysis of the Popular Press Image in the 1960s and 1980s”; Ellen D. Wu, *The Color of Success: Asian Americans and the Origins of the Model Minority* (Princeton University Press, 2014); Yen Le Espiritu, *Asian American Women and Men: Labor, Laws and Love, The Gender Lens*, (Rowman & Littlefield, 2000); Tuan, *Forever Foreigners or Honorary Whites?*; Robert G. Lee, *Orientals: Asian Americans in Popular Culture* (Temple University Press, 1999).

37. Wu, *The Color of Success*, 4; Lee, *Orientals: Asian Americans in Popular Culture*.
38. Wu, *The Color of Success*, 5.
39. Hsu and Wu, “Smoke and Mirrors,” 47.
40. Hsu and Wu, “Smoke and Mirrors,” 59–60.
41. Wu, *The Color of Success*, 7; Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987).
42. William Peterson, “Success Story, Japanese American Style,” *New York Times Magazine*, 1966; U.S. News & World Report, “Success Story of One Minority Group in U.S.,” 1966.
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