
Reviews

Christianity, Social Justice, and the Japanese American Incarceration during World War II. By Anne M. Blankenship. (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2016. xi + 298 pp.)

Anne Blankenship's historical account of a range of Christian involvements in social justice during the incarceration of Japanese Americans during the Second World War promises to deliver a story about how Christian activism during this time later blossomed into political activities during the Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s and 1960s. What she delivers, however, is a much more interesting and nuanced narrative that aligns with the theorist in whose shadow Blankenship's work arguably sits: Michel de Certeau.

The first mention of de Certeau occurs in the fourth chapter. In the first chapter, Blankenship describes the relative apathy of American Protestants and Catholics to the plight of the Nikkei after the attack on Pearl Harbor and their mass incarceration in light of Executive Order 9066, stymying the plans of even the most progressive of Christians in the Seattle Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church. It gets worse in the second chapter: a white Protestant Commission is formed, but despite some initial ecumenical successes, it is paralyzed by disagreements about the relationship between secular work and Christian theology. Frustrated by the impotence of their white counterparts, Japanese Christians begin to organize in the camps, mostly along ecumenical lines described in the third chapter. But this effort also frays at the seams, as the Episcopalians demand separate services, the Catholics complain about their inability to proselytize, and the rest of the Protestants' attempts to find consensus at the lowest common doctrinal denominator threatens their theological coherence.

Blankenship deploys de Certeau in the fourth chapter to show that despite the extraordinary circumstances of the incarceration, the Nikkei developed everyday lives in the camps in attempts to keep their faith. But here, too, the attempts of some Japanese Christians to put a positive spin on their terrible

circumstances is given the lie by those who despair of a God they see as capricious, as well as Buddhists who threaten those attempting to posit a Christian positivity with physical violence. In the fifth chapter, the infighting extends to attempts of Quaker, Protestant, and Catholic organizations to resettle the Nikkei, often delaying the efforts of Japanese Christians to form post-incarceration congregations of their own.

Previous reviews of this book have indicated that it is the definitive account of Christian activism around the Nikkei incarceration. I agree. But I also think that the potential of using de Certeau's *Practice of Everyday Life* has yet to be unleashed in this account. After all, the point of de Certeau's theory is that everyday lives are often bottom-up tactics that interrupt efforts at the organization of what he calls a "scriptural economy." Is not the infighting that Blankenship describes as frustrating Christian efforts to organize social justice precisely the kind of quotidian interruption that de Certeau describes? Fully unleashing de Certeau's theoretical framework, a historiographical one in its own right, would make sense of the number of frustrations that even beset later activism around civil rights and the development of Asian American theology.

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Witness to Loss: Race, Culpability, and Memory in the Dispossession of Japanese Canadians. Edited by Jordan Stanger-Ross and Pamela Sugiman. (Kingston, Ontario, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2017. lxxvi + 254 pp.)

Witness to Loss is the memoir of Kishizo Kimura, an Issei who belonged to two controversial committees that oversaw the forced sale of the property of Japanese Canadians in Vancouver during World War II. Kimura wrote the memoir in the later years of his life to explain his wartime actions. It is translated into English and published for the very first time along with commentaries from various authors, community activists, and academics who examine the challenges faced by Japanese Canadians during war and the meaning of collaboration and resistance.

The first half of the book consists of Kimura's memoirs in which he offers a unique perspective as a witness to the implementation of government policies and a participant in the liquidation of community assets. It would be easy to draw parallels with Kimura and certain Nisei in the incarceration centers in the United States whom some referred to as "*inu*" (dogs) as they traitorously supported officials in the implementation of racist policies for