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Reimagining Trauma: Japanese American Incarceration Reflected in *Kenji* by Mike Shinoda

Shofi Mahmudah Budi Utami[1] & Muammar Kadafi[2]
shofi.mahmudah.budi.utami@unsoed.id
[1] English Literature Department, Universitas Jenderal Soedirman, INDONESIA
[2] East Asian Languages and Literatures Department, Universitas Jenderal Soedirman, INDONESIA

Abstract

Trauma inherited by forbearers from those who had suffered racial injustice can endure so much consequence for later generations. Similarly, what had been affected to intergenerational Jews around the world about the Holocaust was, to an extent, repeated by Japanese Americans who had experienced incarceration during the World War II. This tragedy was recorded and reflected in several art and literary works including photography, short stories, and music. Interestingly, these eerie memories transmitted by the postgeneration or referred as 'witness' instead of 'testifier' (survivor) can be thoroughly seen present and well understood in such works. One of which is a song written by an American musician, Mike Shinoda, entitled Kenji. Therefore, this paper aims at figuring out on how this traumatic experience inhabited by the person who seemed to own the memories coming from someone else. Later in this study, the problem will be approached with postmemory by Frosh gradually by investigating constructive process in the lyrics of Kenji. In order to enhance discussion on this issue, the details of each line will be further analyzed with the concept of postmemory including memory, transmission and constructive process. As a result, the findings indicate that transmission of the trauma is reimagined through 'actively' constructive process by the songwriter as the 'witness' of the Japanese American incarceration. Rather than picturing the memory in similar context, the witness employs testimony in his creative reinvention to offer 'new context' in working through the trauma.

***Keywords**: Postmemory, Japanese American, Japanese American incarceration, Kenji*

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Introduction

Trauma is always associated with eerie events or experiences which cause "predominant emotions of being shocked, worried, and scared" to inhabit forbearers (Nagata et al., 2015, p. 358). Of these recollections attached with such emotions, those who were subjected to traumatic events potentially have two consequences; whether

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they kept away the stories they had been through, or they properly processed the trauma by letting later generations know in order to rethink and embrace the trauma in a new perspective. Therefore, to continue these memories, many stories of traumatic events have been passed down through generations, such as giving connection through narration to the postgeneration in a form of photography (Hirsch, 1997) or by active teaching or telling stories (Frosh, 2019). It can also be reflected through a wide range of means to share these memories of survival, such as Holocaust that is retold through the movie entitled *The Pianist* (2002), the historical tragedy of 1965 genocide in Indonesia that is inscripted in the novel *Dari Dalam Kubur* (*From the Grave*) by Soe Tjen Marching (2020) or the imprisonment of Japanese Americans after Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor that is clearly illustrated in a song entitled *Kenji* (2005). All of these shared stories address a theme about poignant memories and cultural trauma although in retelling or writing such horrific stories could be severely tough and complicated.

In some of the cases, memories of traumatic upheaval are mostly buried in individual's minds—those who suffered from the tragedy—they did not know whether their children knew they lived the sufferings, as mentioned by the interviewee of Japanese Americans living in incarceration—in this case, both of the parents and the children seemed to prevent this talk in the family, as they believed in "Shikata Ga Nai" (Tagouri, 2022, 18:40). However, this belief always make the children of the survivors stay distant from the story of sufferings, which positions the postgeneration "unknown" to life in the internment camps. Later when this generation began learning the tragedy, they cannot fully grasp the story because the only source they got was from history book portraying the evil act of Japanese. This partial story could potentially be one-sided story particularly based on the view of the dominant society; while the truth was never revealed by their parents. Therefore, in the context of Japanese American incarceration, the later generations namely *Nisei* (the second generation and was born in the U.S), *Sansei* (third generation) or *Yonsei* (fourth generation) would rather know from history books than the story passed down from the survivors since their parents or grandparents hide their memories as incarcerees (Tagouri, 2022, 19:6). Despite their memories are stored in silence, it does not mean they have freed the memories. They seemed to be trapped constantly as victims; thus they were unable to release the trauma. What Frosh identified is that the silence will keep shadowing the survivors with the trauma; by shutting themselves off, this trauma, associated with levels of anger and sadness, will be somehow failed to be decoded by later generations—leaving this hurtful memories as the 'enigmatic' message (Frosh, 2019), which situates postgeneration in between making sense of 'what they think they know about it' and 'what they actually know about it'. In other words, the postgeneration seemed to be connective with this distant past because their family were there experiencing life in the incarceration; while they, in different way, felt that they were not grasping very well of their parents' anger, sadness, or silence caused by trauma.

Through the song *Kenji* written by Shinoda, who is *Sansei* or third generation, the story of Japanese American incarceration is retold to listeners or those who might not hear the story firsthand. Known as an American musician and the frontman of Linkin Park and Fort Minor, Shinoda is at his best writing lyrics and creating rap verses in either Linkin Park's or Fort Minor's songs. The song *Kenji* was released in 2005, yet many online media platforms have recently reintroduced the song by relating it to his experience dealing with trauma. With the coming of his new solo album in 2018 entitled *Post Traumatic*, it draws a lot of attention as well as to connect the tragedy that his family ever experienced during World War II. During his time promoting *Post Traumatic* album, he did many interviews in which he was given opportunity discussing Japanese Americans' experience in the concentration camps. Interestingly, based on the interview that was published in an article by *Rollingstone*, Shinoda stated that "… much like Japanese families—there's not a lot of openness to talking about these difficult subjects. The term we use is *shikata ga nai*, which means 'It can't be helped.' It's almost like 'What's done is done" (Chong, 2022). Taking off from this point, it is central to argue that many traumatic experiences are, according to Frosh, not processed very well;

being in silence gives a 'maltreatment' causing "the trauma will never be resolved" (Frosh, 2019, p. 6); otherwise, it stays as poison. In *Kenji*, it is potential to look over that the trauma is treated indifferently. Borrowing Freud's concept of 'archaic remnants', Noriko & Osborne viewed this potential, that unspeakable memories generated from trauma can be expressed through art, music, literature, or theater as it originates individual's memory (Noriko & Osborne, 2018); but this paper particularly argues that the 'memory' discussed is not literally memory, but it is most likely compatible with the term 'postmemory' as it is coming from someone else who did not directly experience the tragedy. Additionally, in this case, a song can also render mechanism in explaining the memory that can potentially redress the 'trauma'.

Kenji, in brief, pictures the scenes of the event when Japanese Americans were forced to leave their homes. Nearly 80 years ago, the United States government put around 120.000 innocent Japanese Americans in the incarceration camps (Nagata et al., 2015), which included the first generation (*Issei*) and the U.S born second generation of Japanese Americans (*Nisei*). Similarly as artworks or literature do, this song, to an extent, tries to mediate cultural trauma for most Japanese Americans. Therefore, this paper would approach to view the trauma reimagined in the song that could potentially draw new interpretation on the trauma; that the concept of postmemory formulated by Frosh would be much compatible to figure this out. Most studies of postmemory are, however, centered on observing Holocaust since the postgenerational transmission of this memory is observable, and this was also a pivotal point in setting out the initial study on postmemory. Thus, there are a lot of discussions on Holocaust and its relation with postgeneration, one of which is researched by Wolf viewing the possible positivity in 'reframing' trauma among the children of survivors of Holocaust (Wolf, 2019). Another one is the research conducted by Larkin that found out a dialectic between the postgeneration with the 'memory' itself; such negotiation done by the postgeneration gives two options, whether they tried to reconcile or erase the memory traces of war in Lebanon (Larkin, 2010). The other research views the structures of transmission of the memory and highlights more on the importance of familial transmission rather than other forms of transmission. Compared to familial transmission, affiliative transmission is less likely to be found even though this is also contributive to the postgeneration (Assa, 2019; Kumalasari, 2016).

Pointing out from these previous studies on postmemory, they generally identify the direct connection of these inherited memories with the postgeneration, particularly of the holocaust survivors, which most postmemory relates to. By locating postmemory only on one event, this paper would rather view another event of which impacts are similar with the holocaust and perceive the connection through which this memory is shared such as being manifested in creative works. Moreover, viewing postgenerational transmission of trauma through the lyrics of *Kenji* that has never been done by others will enrich the discussion under the topics of trauma and postmemory since it will be focused on the lyrics or the representation in the research object instead of centering on the agency (such as the survivors or the generations of the survivors). Most studies in postmemory are centered on how the process of trauma is mediated through postgeneration that plays as the agent. Departed from this point, this paper will otherwise proceed on the assumption that there could be mechanism in passing down the story of trauma, not necessarily employing the recollections but through the inherited memories where imaginative creation can be produced in various representations.

Methodology

In order to grasp that there was an act of incarceration towards Japanese American in the United States, this research firstly explored the lyrics of *Kenji* and simultaneously investigating relatable historical background of the Japanese American internment camps in 1942, knowing that artwork such as song is "produced in a particular historical context" (Gracyk, p.26). It is also essential to note that the data in this research are primarily based on the song, *Kenji*. Therefore, the data are limited only on the lyrics along with its expression through the song. Because this study does not

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cover on the details of the song elements such as the music, tones, and the arrangement, this would be primarily textual based analysis. This research is also undertaken by secondary sources including the report of interview on podcast and magazine articles as well as academic articles under the topics of postmemory.

The song, *Kenji*, becomes the main focus in interrogating means of expression in the lyrics that are presumably connected to the issue on how Japanese Americans' trauma is reimagined and represented through many forces. The selected expressions of the lyrics of *Kenji* will be identified according to some of which indicate 'memory' of the incarceration. Then, it will be analyzed based on the concept of transmission whether the memory shared by 'testifier', the one who has experienced the traumatic event and therefore possesses the trauma; and 'witness', who does not directly experience the tragedy and responds to this testimony of suffering. This interpretation will lead to argumentation, as Hirsch points out, that family becomes the domain of transmitting cultural trauma through shared stories, images, or behaviors that are remembered intergenerationally (Hirsch, 2012). It will then concentrate to the songwriter of *Kenji* as the *Sansei* who is still interconnected with *Nisei* as the incarcerees; while to render this information, relevant sources indicating the historical background of the songwriter and the Japanese Americans in general are necessary.

My analysis on the song, *Kenji*, draws on two elaborations assisted by the concepts of postmemory by Frosh including transmission—which differs the person who transfers the inherited memories—and constructive process. Frosh emphasizes that constructive process does not only employ stories passed down by the testifier, but this process is also obtained when imaginative investment becomes a means to mediate trauma (Frosh, 2019). First, as highlighted in his book, intergenerational element becomes important to provide mechanisms to the continuity of memory as well as identity. Postmemory, according to Frosh, is essentially "concerned with understanding how the person might feel inhabited by memories that come from someone, somewhere or someone else—notably, from a traumatised previous generation" (Frosh, 2019, p. 10). In this perspective, the data taken from the lyrics will be interpreted to understand its mechanism of transmitting stories; drawing argumentation by distinguishing the experience of incarceration retold by two sides; whether it is transmitted by the 'testifier' or the 'witness'. Second, to view its constructive process, this discussion will draw a relation between the representation (the song, *Kenji*) and the agent (the songwriter, as the witness as well as postgeneration). The songwriter (*Sansei*) is then seen as the agent who maintains close connection to this suffering experienced by previous generation (the *Nisei*'s experience in the incarceration). Most importantly, it describes on how postgeneration reproduces these 'memory traces' not by the process of recalling of the memory or merely by means of stories but through imaginative process manifested in the creative work (the song) which gives a way to work with the trauma.

Results and Discussion

Recontextualizing the Japanese American Incarceration

Moving away from common understanding that 'trauma will soon be forgotten' through the silence or by not speaking about it, this paper would otherwise view that trauma can be 'worked through' not by forgetting it because the recollections force the memory to stay even starker. At this point, it will leave scars in the mind, and it keeps captivating. In this specific context, having experienced living in the Japanese American incarceration could be traumatic as the removal was only based on hatred toward a particular group of community while they were undeniably American citizens.

According to Shinoda's aunt (the recorded voice inserted in the song)

> *"Yeah, soon as war broke out, the FBI came and*
> *They just come through the house and, you have to come*
> *All the Japanese have to go*
> *They took Mr. Ni, the people couldn't understand*

Why they had to take him because he's an innocent laborer"
(Shinoda, 01:58)

that Japanese Americans generally or their family especially had a little notice upon their removal. After Pearl Harbor attack, President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 which urged Japanese Americans to leave their homes (Editors, 2021). This had affected 120.000 people who were actually American citizens with Japanese ancestry, most of whom were *Issei* and *Nisei*. In the quoted lines above, it is also emphasized that they left without knowing the reason why they were forced to go. The testimony from Shinoda's aunt suggests the feeling of "cannot make sense of the happening" as she goes on the story by asserting "he's an innocent laborer" which clarifies that her family personally has nothing to do with the war. In fact, German Americans and Italian Americans were not excluded when the United States was also at war with them.

This discrimination towards Japanese Americans, primarily for *Issei* and *Nisei* generation, had therefore endured an individual rather than collective level of trauma (Nagata et al., 2015). As Shinoda's aunt mentioned the word 'innocent' here, it somehow stresses that Japanese Americans were not villains of the war; they were merely victims who were treated unjustly by the country. This had impacted the rest of their life with scars in their identity, such as prejudices and discrimination; some Nissei's experiences are rejection by the dominant society (Nagata et al., 2015), and they were treated as if they were committed with Japanese allegiance—this was of course traumatic. It is even terrifying because the Japanese Americans did not know where they would be sent to. There were also lack of information for how long they would stay in the concentration camps (Nagata et al., 2015), and they had barely known of what the government planned for them. This certainly magnified their shock and fear on what would happen to their lives next.

They gave Ken a couple of days
To get his whole life packed in two bags
Just two bags, he couldn't even pack his clothes
And some folks didn't even have a suitcase
To pack anything in
So two trash bags, is all they gave them
And when the kids asked mom, "Where are we going?"
Nobody even knew what to say to them
(Shinoda, 01:16-1:32)

With no anticipation to leave the house and no imagination of places they would later stay at, psychologically they were attacked with anxiety. The selected lines said that the family of Shinoda even had no idea to answer their children about the destination they were going to. This was similarly happening to the other family who gave story in REP podcast about Japanese Americans incarceration; when he once asked his mother about where they were going, his mother just told him that they were heading home, which in fact was concentration camp (Tagouri, 14:57). Such memories lived in their minds, especially those of *Issei's* and *Nisei*'s, some of whom, likewise both Shinoda's aunt and the interviewee, experienced their childhood spent in the camps.

Living in the incarceration was also experienced by Shinoda's father as his voice recording is present in the song, "When we first got back from camp, uh it was pretty, pretty bad". Through this line, he testified that he once experienced camp life with his other siblings including Shinoda's aunt, but here Shinoda's father only highlighted the condition after the camp life—that they would be still rejected by the society and were still regarded as an evil. This is also stated in the song lyric in the following.

Then they got back to the home
And what they saw made him feel so alone
These people had trashed every room
Smashed in the windows and bashed in the doors
Written on the walls and the floor
"Japs not welcome, anymore!"
(Shinoda, 03:02-03:14)

The story from Shinoda's father acknowledges that they were ostracized even after the war and after the U.S shut the camp. This historical event prisoning the innocent Japanese Americans indeed restrained both individual trauma and prolongedly shattered their political identity as an American.

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All of those statements discussed earlier are entirely based on recollections owned by the *Nisei* generation as 'testifier' and characterized as 'memory'. As Frosh identified that memory is different form history for it is originally from personal experience, formed through a process of recalling, and has an affective charge (Frosh, 2019), therefore Shinoda's aunt and father have capacity to speak about the Japanese Americans incarceration. To an extent, these testifiers' stories are not only exclaiming historical truth but also giving intergenerational dialectic, between *Sansei* and *Nissei* who used to be kept it in silence. Shinoda added these voice recordings as if he wanted to present a historical truth taken from testimony of the testifiers. This seems to provide real picture that might not fully presented in history book; such action of discriminating a certain group of people is real. Furthermore, *Kenji* definitely wants to not only claim the truth of Japanese American incarceration but also redeem the past in such a way they can intergenerationally accept it—more specifically those who suffered this traumatic experience. Working through the trauma with this openness and such direct interaction with the survivors will not only lessen the weight of the pain, but also to acknowledge themselves conquering the trauma.

Performing such intergenerational dialectic also allows them to recontextualize the past event in different perspective, not in a painful way but a more redemptive manner. The writer of *Kenji* as *Sansei* tries to look on the other side of this trauma, by speaking of it and understanding that this trauma can be lessened. Here, Shinoda seems to give space of freeing this trauma by avoiding repetition given by his father and his aunt. The previous generation was only focused on the horror that keeps haunting, such as the lines testified by Shinoda's aunt in minutes 01:58—the shock that came abruptly without coping the fault they made. In this sense, the shared story can be dominantly occupied with the testimony of the survivors. If the story is centered only on the way presenting its haunting moment, then there will also be potential to repeat the story in such a way. However, Shinoda worked this testimony with another picture of life in the camp; as it is stated in this line—"Other than that, try not to think about it. Try not to worry 'bout it being so crowded 'Cause someday, we'll get out Someday, someday"—which shows the spirit and understands that life must be continued on. In addition, a song gives new experience particularly to hear the story in a new way—which raises a sense of escaping from the feeling of being haunted by trauma. In this understanding, recontextualization of trauma can make sense. In other words, the mechanism of transmitting this memory by the witness is not merely by means of 'remembering' the testimony but also by reflecting these inherited stories through the song.

Furthermore, by connecting such stories can "maintain powerful and evocative associations between then and now, between here and there" (Oksman, 2020), which helps particularly the postgeneration, in this case Shinoda, to get to its proximity with distant event experienced by *Issei* and *Nisei*. Despite its traumatic affect has impacted the postgeneration, this story helps the postgeneration remains connective with their ancestry. Moreover, it also gives awareness to the postgeneration that memories of traumatic events are sometimes "framed by variety intersecting forces" (Oksman, 2020), which sometimes distorts its historical truth. Therefore, the postgeneration needs to nullify any falsification on historical context including accusation of Japanese Americans' betrayal to the country and also to voice those who were "caught in the limitations addressing trauma as well as understanding it" (Tronsgard, 2017). So, such accusation of Japanese allegiance during the era or unproved betrayal to the country of United States of America can be clarified by the postgeneration through revealing truth of the incarceration. In this case, a song can be a way communicating such matters. *Kenji* does not only reflect the truth of the life in incarceration, but also give a space to acknowledge such 'remembering' accompanied with the spirit that has forced them to continue the life.

Reimagining Trauma as a Form of Redress

It is arguably true that the postgeneration to whom the forbearers transmitted the

traumatic memories can play pivotal role. Recalling those memories will be painful, but different way on approaching the trauma could be instead powerful. Through the term borrowed from Larkin about 'the agency' which most studies of postmemory are centered at, the postgeneration grew up with such monumental memories inherited from forbearers, which are actually translated in their own right—the postgeneration can choose position whether they are fully occupied on the 'haunting' part of the testimony or take different side by giving space to free this 'haunting' part. The postgeneration could therefore connect with such traumatic memories, not in a way silencing or forgetting the trauma but giving acts to articulate it overtly (Tronsgard, 2017). Actively creative manner is a case in point; this includes writing stories in a form of literary works or through artistic activities such as composing music or writing songs.

Shinoda, for instance, gives connection to the memory inherited by, the *Nisei* generation through imagery employed in the song lyrics, *Kenji*. The war, according to the song, was particularly narrated in a "scene" involving Japan and the U.S. In this sense, Shinoda 'witnessed' (as he was not the testifiers) the event by providing juxtaposition of Japanese as a country and Japanese as an ancestry. Preceding the picture of war, Shinoda gives few forewords of his grandfather's life by addressing the name, Kenji (Ken), which is actually Shinoda's middle name.

It was World War II
When this man named Kenji woke up
Ken was not a soldier, he was just a man
With a family who owned a store in L.A

That day, he crawled out of bed like he always did
Bacon and eggs with wife and kids
He lived on the second floor of a little store he ran
He moved to L.A. from Japan
They called him immigrant, in Japanese
He'd say he was called "Issei"
That meant first generation
In the United States when
(Shinoda, 00:26-00:46)

The first two stanzas above describe literally the origin of his family in the United States long before 1940s. His grandfather was coming from Japan and lived with their children in Los Angeles, California—"many *Issei* had lived in the United States for four decades at the start of the war, had no intention of returning to Japan" (Chiang, 2018, p. xiv). Even though most of them (*Issei*) were eventually naturalized as American citizens, they were ostensibly regarded as 'un-Americans', moreover when the war broke out. This indeed made them process cultural trauma, especially on how the mass downplayed their identity. Over time, this social and political rejection had created "a sense of shame, depression, humiliation, self-blame, and a feeling of being responsible for what had happened" (Nagata et al., 2015, p. 360)—therefore the song *Kenji* seems to redress the Japanese American identity which has been seen inextricable from the 1942 event. Shinoda otherwise makes clear on how to detach this public stigma on the Japanese Americans' trauma by juxtaposing 'two images of Japanese (as a country and as ancestry) in order to nullify its negativity for being incarcerees. In the song, it mentions "He'd say he was called "issei" that meant first generation in the United States." which portrays the Japanese ancestry is inseparable from their identity as an American while they in fact never gave allegiance to Japan.

It therefore seems proper that most *Issei* or *Nisei* parents were just silencing their experience in the incarceration to their children (*Sansei* generation). Beside this act of silencing trauma was common in Japanese American family, this was in other words an attempt to "repress incarceration trauma" (Nagata et al., 2015, p. 364). Thus, the postgeneration like *Sansei*, through the narration represented in *Kenji*, could create a public awareness towards this social injustice; and more personally to fill the gaps in their family history caused by the unspoken trauma. In the study of postmemory dichotomy, Cassar identified that the postgeneration potentially mediates between nostalgia and aversion towards traumatic memories inhabited by the forbearers (Cassar & Avellino, 2020)—in this sense, Shinoda reflected both the narrations directly from his father and aunt (*Nisei* generation) and his witness based on their

recollections. It is arguably true that through the representation in the song *Kenji* leads to communicate these 'witness' and 'testifiers' in order to negotiate these recollections of cultural trauma of being the Japanese Americans.

Everybody was afraid of the Germans,
afraid of the Japs
But most of all, afraid of a homeland
attack
And that morning, when Ken went out on
the doormat
His world went black, 'cause

Right there, front page news
Three weeks before 1942
Pearl Harbor's been bombed and "The Japs
are Coming"
Pictures of soldiers dying and running

Ken knew what it would lead to
And just like he guessed, the president said
"The evil Japanese in our home country
Would be locked away"
(Shinoda, 00:47-01:15)

In the lines captured above, Shinoda expressed how the war had assaulted the Japanese Americans' cultural and political identity in the postwar era in particular; the U.S government subjected all Americans with Japanese ancestry to be excluded from being an American, neither as an American citizen nor a part of American society. The military attack on Pearl Harbor seemed to reveal the villainy of Japanese, which is clearly mentioned in the lyrics with the phrase "the evil Japanese". More specifically "Everybody was afraid of the Germans, afraid of the Japs" declares that the actual attack was by Japan as a country not as ancestry. However, Shinoda asserts how the society reacted by exclaiming "But most of all, afraid of a homeland attack", which can be understood that Japanese as ancestry dealt with being prejudiced as the perpetrator of the ruin of 'home', America. The lines above also emphasizes that the consequences the Japanese Americans had were caused by racial discrimination; the society narrowed their view towards the war and the social forces had irrelevantly become the basis to assault their American identity embedded in the act of racial injustice. It was later on continued by the response of the U.S government and American society suspecting that the American with Japanese ancestry were "potentially disloyal and capable of espionage or sabotage" (Nagata et al., 2015, p. 357); and they therefore "would be locked away" (Shinoda, 2010).

This imagery juxtaposing two different perspectives on carefully viewing Japanese American identity leads to an overt expression in order to address the trauma and of course to serve as reinterpretation towards the trauma, that through this expression they can redress the disloyalty attached to their cultural identity. It can also be understood that the testifiers from *Nissei* generation (Shinoda's father and aunt) had been processed by the *Sansei* (Shinoda) in giving new reconceptualization understanding the trauma. This familial transmission is essential but, in this sense, the postgeneration has so much to do to communicate the social injustice but most importantly negotiate the effects that the Japanese Americans had from the trauma.

In order to prove their loyalty to the United States, the Japanese Americans joined the army instead. Their allegiance was indicated by the "loyalty questions" given when they were relocated in the camps, or by being "asked to serve in the armed forces of the United States" (Nagata et al., 2015, p. 358), which in the song, Shinoda obviously explained the circumstances.

And time passed in the prison town
He wondered if he'd live it down
If and when they were free
The only way out was joining the Army,
and supposedly

Some men went out for the army, signed
on
And ended up flying to Japan with a bomb
That fifteen kiloton blast
Put an end to the war pretty fast

Two cities were blown to bits
The end of the war came quick
And Ken got out, big hopes of a normal life
With his kids and his wife, but
(Shinoda, 02:37-03:01)

The judgment towards their allegiance to defend the United States then became the basis where to put these Japanese Americans; it

could be in more restrictive camp in Tule Lake (California) or less restrictive camps in around the Midwest and East (Nagata et al., 2015). Such condition was seemingly apt to apply to those who were confined, but this case was completely humiliating since they were American citizens and had no implication of the espionage for Japan. As the lines say "Some men went out for the army, signed on; And ended up flying to Japan with a bomb" obviously asserts that they were a part of the American society that of course would defend their own country—as a proof of their loyalty to the United States. Again, Shinoda highlights that these situations were actually experienced by Japanese Americans in the camp. More importantly, he raises awareness that it is not the people being incarcereed that is humiliating but rather the act of unjustly discriminating by the country to their people. Here, *Kenji* is after all as a potential platform to repair and particularly redress Japanese American identity.

Even after the war ended, the Japanese Americans were still not entirely accepted in the American society.

Then they got back to the home
And what they saw made him feel so alone
These people had trashed every room
Smashed in the windows and bashed in the doors

Written on the walls and the floor
"Japs not welcome, anymore!"
And Kenji dropped both of his bags at his sides
And just stood outside

He looked at his wife without words to say
She looked back at him wiping tears away
And said someday, we'll be okay, someday

Now, the names have been changed, but the story is true
My family was locked up, back in '42
My family was there, where it was dark and damp
And they called it an internment camp
(Shinoda, 03:02-03:33)

The lines above exemplified how the American society treated the Japanese Americans soon after the government closed the camp. Here, Shinoda tried to illustrate when his family returned to the previous region in the West Coast where they initially resided. However, this comeback seemed full of anxiety, uncertainty, and daunting as the lines said "These people had trashed every room; Smashed in the windows and bashed in the doors; Written on the walls and the floor "Japs not welcome, anymore!" (Shinoda, 2010). Shinoda's family encountered such social rejection expressed by the anti-Japanese sentiments. Not only that, his family also struggled to restart anything they had been built before they were relocated; "many returned to small farm and fishing communities to which they had given a lifetime of labor" (Park, 2020, p. 277) which directly exposed them for racial prejudice or discrimination. However, with stressing "And said someday, we'll be okay, someday", Shinoda narrated how his family still held on their spirit having viewed the positivity on their future life. To an extent, this constructive process gives way in reimagining trauma of the *Nissei* generation, that attaching such spirit on the Japanese American identity transforms this trauma into more thriving life and reforms the Japanese identity with no lasting effect on incarceration. Shinoda, through this song, seems to be connective with the past and then by giving physical coping of the Nissei's trauma, and in reverse bridging the society and the Japanese American community with no perpetuating negativity on their cultural identity.

Conclusion

Rather than focusing on the structure of transmission, which is consequently centered at the agent—the postgeneration—the creative reinvestment through artwork such as song, *Kenji*, views the strategy to represent the actual blocked memories experienced by the *Nissei*. Constructive process represented in the song gives path to not only connect with the memory of the past but also to recontextualize the Japanese American incarceration in clear understanding on their ancestry. Other than that, this creative narration in the song addresses the trauma powerfully, by representing the story of Shinoda's grandfather in a form of verbal articulations. The most significant implication from the song is however giving awareness

that the Japanese American identity is not constructed through their inheritance of incarceration memory possessed by the forbearers but by being attached to their ancestry which always fostered positivity in life; and this is how it can avoid its prolonged negative impacts of the trauma.

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