



American Sutra: A Story of Faith and Freedom in the Second World War

Duncan Ryūken Williams

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This groundbreaking history tells the little-known story of how, in one of our country's darkest hours, Japanese Americans fought to defend their faith and preserve religious freedom.

The mass incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II is not only a tale of injustice; it is a moving story of faith. In this pathbreaking account, Duncan Ry?ken Williams reveals how, even as they were stripped of their homes and imprisoned in camps, Japanese American Buddhists launched one of the most inspiring defenses of religious freedom in our nation's history, insisting that they could be both Buddhist and American.

Nearly all Americans of Japanese descent were subject to bigotry and accusations of disloyalty, but Buddhists aroused particular suspicion. Government officials, from the White House to small-town mayors, believed that Buddhism was incompatible with American values. Intelligence agencies targeted the Buddhist community for surveillance, and Buddhist priests were deemed a threat to national security. On December 7, 1941, as the bombs fell on Pearl Harbor, Attorney General Francis Biddle issued a warrant to "take into custody all Japanese" classified as potential national security threats. The first person detained was Bishop Giky? Kuchiba, leader of the Nishi Hongwanji Buddhist sect in Hawai'i.

In the face of discrimination, dislocation, dispossession, and confinement, Japanese Americans turned to their faith to sustain them, whether they were behind barbed wire in camps or serving in one of the most decorated combat units in the European theater. Using newly translated sources and extensive interviews with survivors of the camps and veterans of the war, *American Sutra* reveals how the Japanese American community broadened our country's conception of religious freedom and forged a new American Buddhism.

American Sutra: A Story of Faith and Freedom in the Second World War Details

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Author : Duncan Ry?ken Williams

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From Reader Review American Sutra: A Story of Faith and Freedom in the Second World War for online ebook

Penny Atcheson says

This book was the most comprehensive and readable account of Japanese American Buddhist influence during the years of Japanese incarceration of WWII, I've yet to come across. If you read; and pause, you can envision everyone struggling to understand what it means to be American. It illustrates using the Buddhist Eight-fold path to resolve this suffering. but I think you need to be mindful about this as you read. It makes me wonder what the image of being a Japanese American is today. The yonsei, gosei, and mixed hapa citizens surely have a unique perspective and definition of "Japanese American." Will there be a time when the Japanese part of that term is dropped? Should it be? Should it be retained? Or maybe the terms should be flipped, "American Japanese?"

I've yet to come to a conclusion, especially as it relates to current immigration and citizen behaviors towards new immigrant populations. It makes me concerned and curious about what's being repeated today. The results that come from defining who's American and who's not based on where you're physically from... that's a continuously moving and evolving target. One that Duncan Williams cleverly poses without being obvious.

Widad says

Good

Melinda Lewis says

Thus I have heard

Greg Soden says

This book tells such an important perspective on why religion mattered in the wake of Pearl Harbor. This is a deeply insightful, important, and compassionate book that explores an egregious violation of the First Amendment of the Constitution.

Check out my conversation with the author, Duncan Ry?ken Williams, here:

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/e...>
