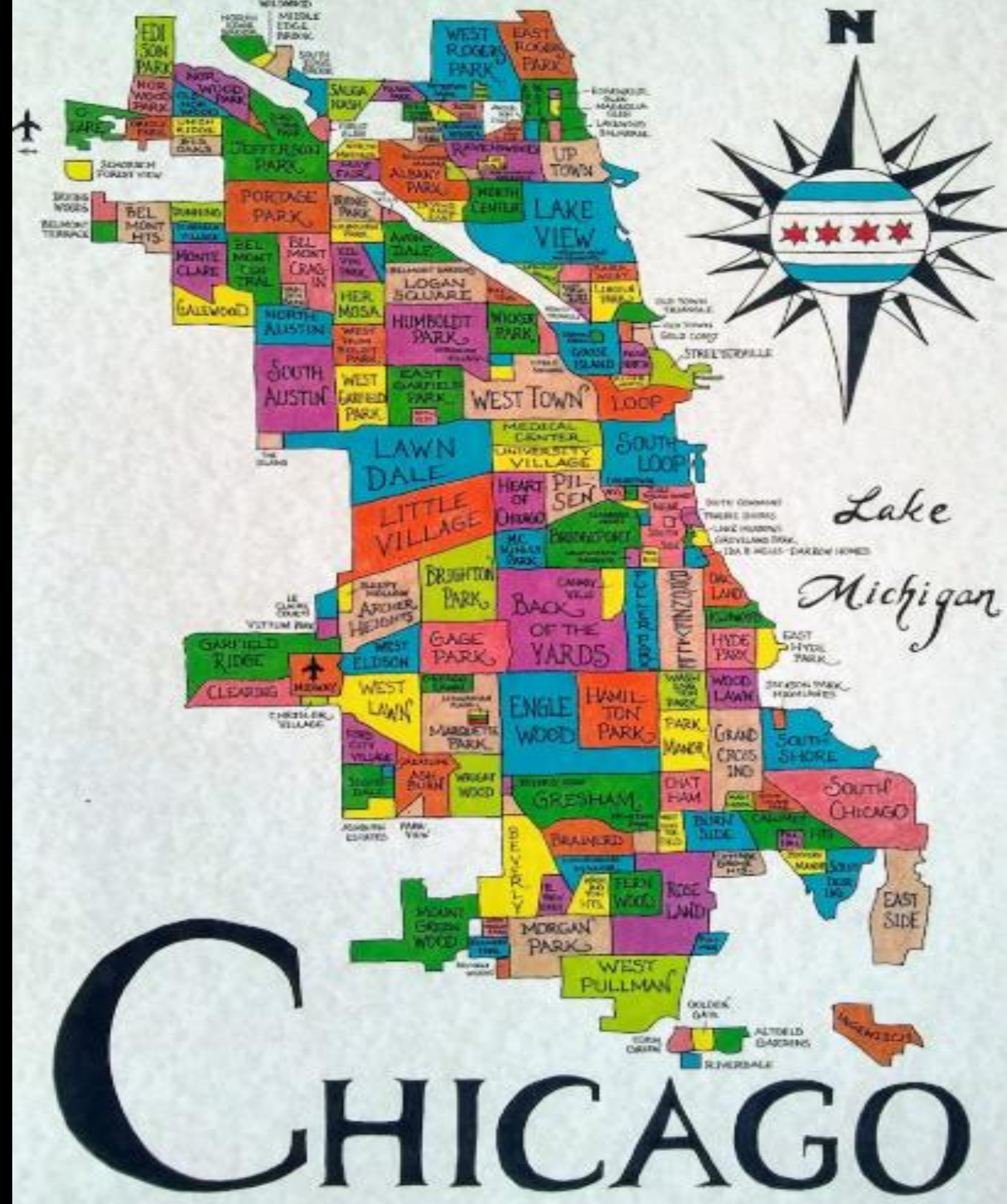




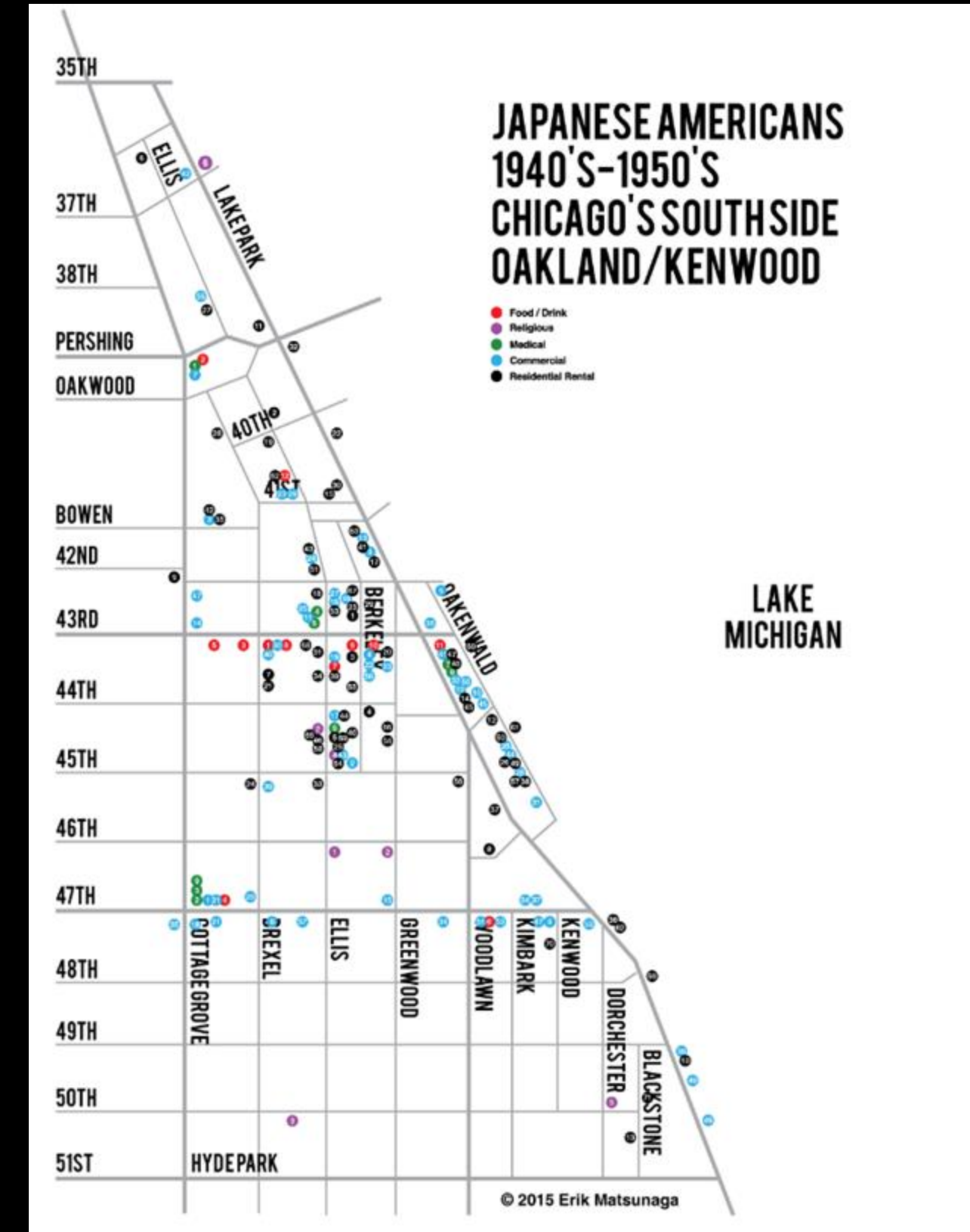
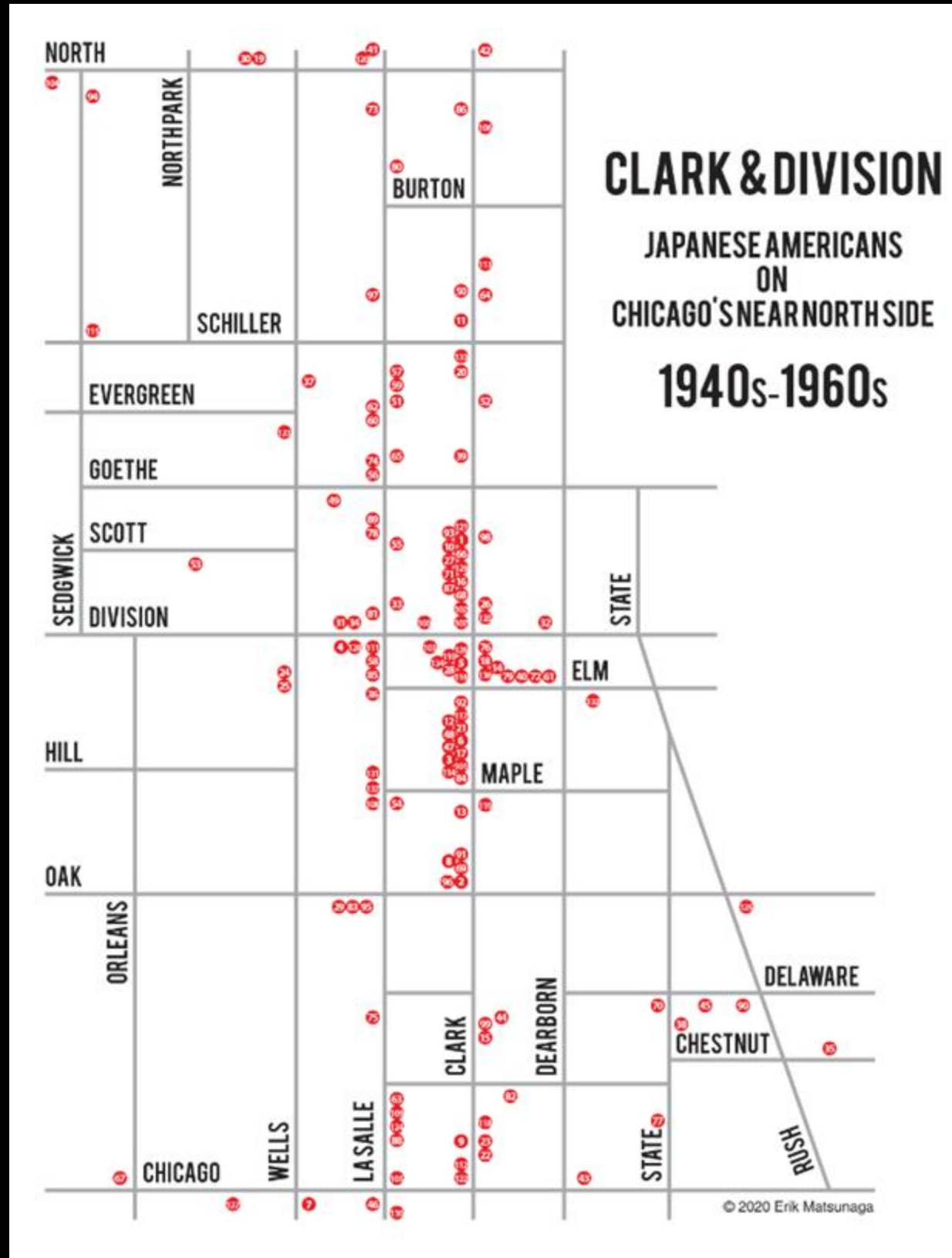
Japanese Americans in Chicago, 1940–1960: Post-Internment Nisei Identity

Hope Nagai
March 21, 2026

Map of Chicago Neighborhoods



Japanese American Chicago Communities



*Dots on the maps demarcate Japanese American owned businesses, housing, and other locales

Terms

Nisei

A person born in North America whose parents are immigrants from Japan.

In a pre- and post-internment context, they are defined by their **non-immigrant** and **citizen** status.

Issei

Persons who are Japanese immigrants to North America.

In a pre-internment context, Issei are defined by their **immigrant** and **noncitizen** status.

War Relocation Authority (WRA)

Civilian government agency responsible for the administration of the war relocation centers and resettlement

Institutional

Is defined by citizenship and race.

Communal

Is defined by ethnicity and community



(Chicago Historical Society)



(Chicago Historical Society)



(Densho Digital Repository)



As Chicago negotiated its post-war landscape, it became a microcosm through which post-internment Nisei identity was shaped by an institutional public life and a communal inner life. This inner life was nurtured and protected, as I will demonstrate by the Japanese American community as resistance to the assimilation process that occurred after internment.

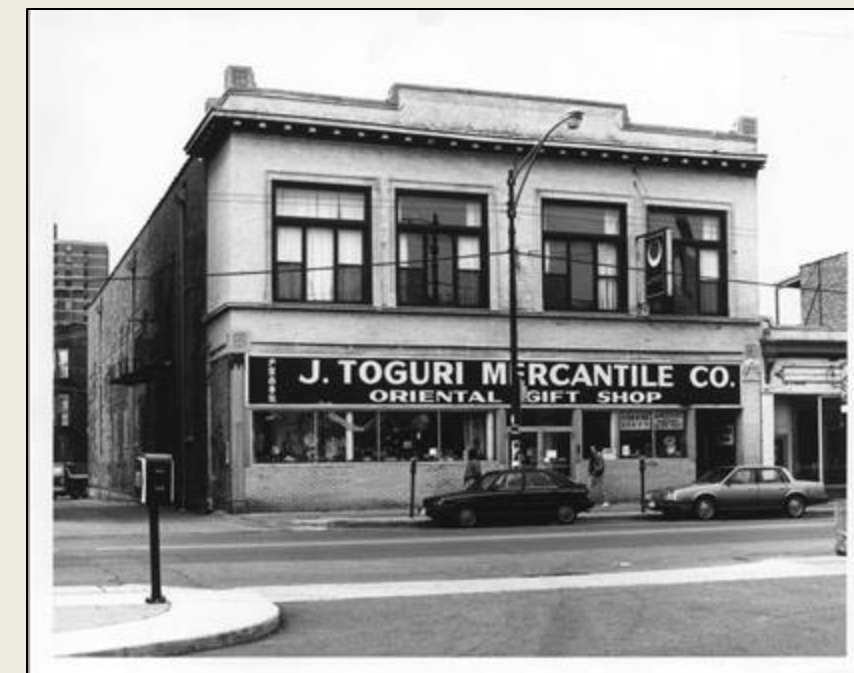
Japanese American History in Chicago

- **1893**
 - The World's Columbian Exposition
 - Ho-o-Den Pavilion
 - Small community established on the Southside near Hyde Park
 - Around 400 individuals
- **World War II – 1960**
 - January 1943
 - WRA opened its first regional field office in Chicago
 - July 1943
 - First Japanese American internees arrive in Chicago
 - 1943-1944
 - Successive waves
 - Nisei among the first
 - Issei and others arrive
- **1946**
 - A community grows
 - 20,000 Japanese Americans post-war



(Ho-o-Den at the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago Illinois, 1893)

(J. Toguri Mercantile, Chicago, Illinois)





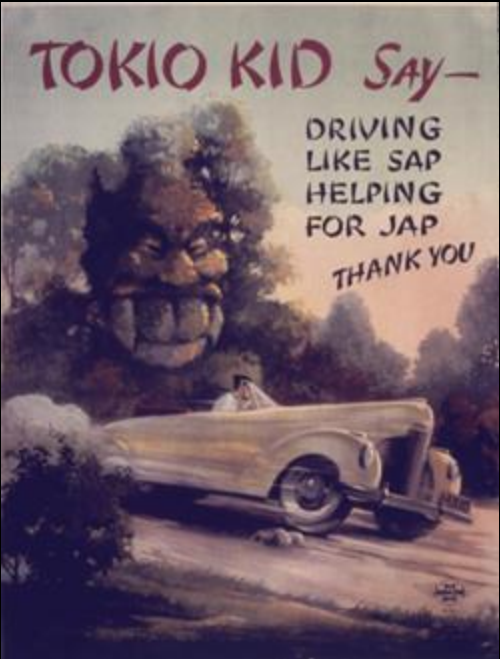
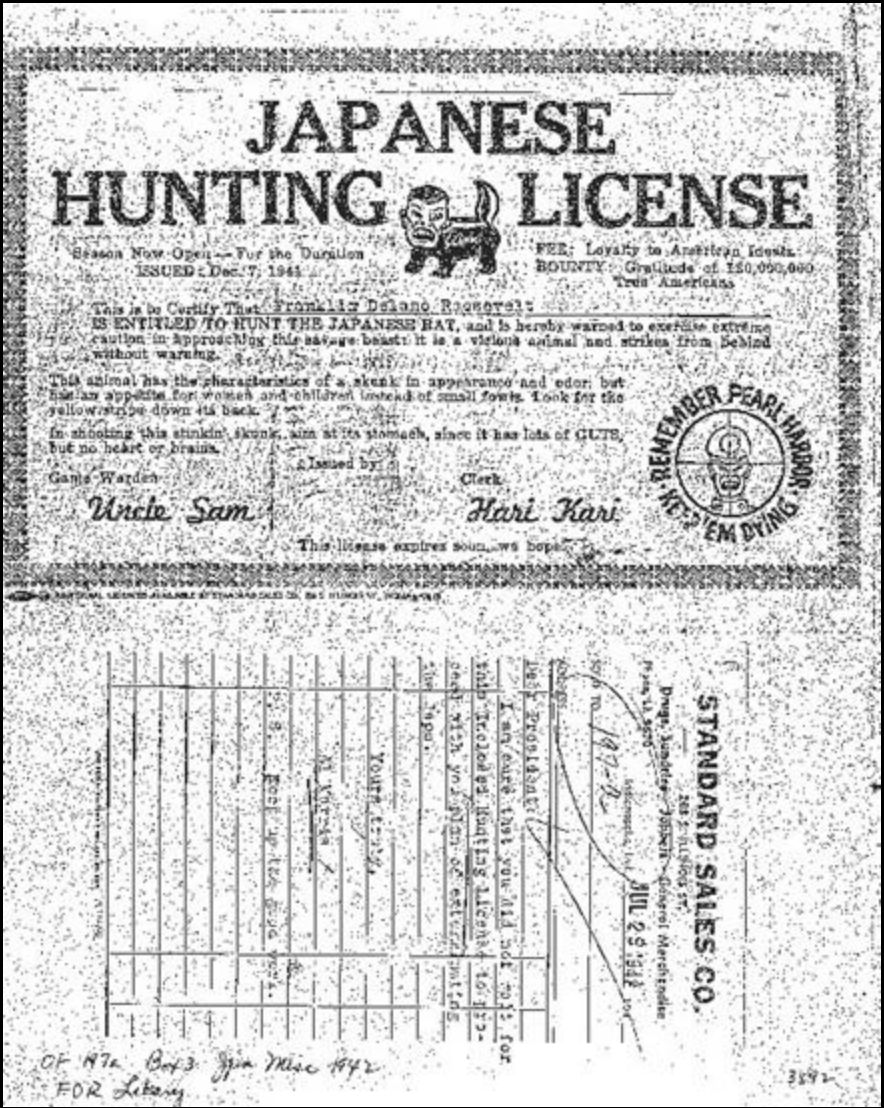
Tule Lake, California
(Densho Digital Repository)



(Thomas Nast, 1869)



(National Archives and Record Administration Collection, 1941-1945)





War Relocation Authority
(Dorothea Lange)



(Constance Yamashiro, August 10, 2018)



(Family Photographs)





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