Life Divided by War: Memory and Record

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ABSTRACT

The paper will interrogate the relationship between the master narrative of the Pacific war and events of the individuals who found themselves in the war, and questions the adequacy of the master narrative in accounting for individual events. The paper will closely examine how one Japanese American family was divided by the Pacific War on either side of the ocean, resulting in unanticipated consequences, such as different members of this family serving on the armed forces of either country. Several different kinds of relationship between the master narrative and the individual are identified in the conclusion. For one, two brothers served in the Japanese military while holding US citizenship. How are we to comprehend this fact of accepting members of an enemy nation? For the U.S., these brothers were "enemy combatants" while holding U.S. citizenship. But the U.S. government never made any issue of this fact. In the end this paper argues that the master narrative of the war itself is inadequate to account for the events and actions of each individual involved in the war. The master narrative has its own ideologically driven agenda, and facts of war are edited accordingly. Events and actions of individuals are incorporated into the master narrative only to the extent they support it.

Key Words: war, master narrative, Japanese American