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# Voices

When people speak out, their voices have the effect of making visible previously invisible grievances, suffering, and anger. According to James Morone's 1998 book *The Democratic Wish*, Americans have historically been eager to participate in democracy and to promote reform because they are motivated by a belief that ordinary citizens can influence the political process. While many ordinary Americans' individual voices have themselves had little or no impact, the United States can be described as a nation built on the accumulation of people's voices.

However, Morone also observes that historically ordinary Americans' voices have not always produced the results sought and indeed have often contributed to undesired outcomes, such as the creation of a bloated government bureaucracy. Current events unfolding in the US further demonstrate how people's raising their voices and joining movements do not necessarily lead to a better quality of democracy. On the contrary, deepening social divisions in America appear to be depriving people with different experiences, perspectives, and opinions of the opportunity to engage in constructive dialogue about how to create a better society.

Moreover, the voices of the President, members of Congress, Supreme Court justices, and other prominent Americans, especially the wealthy, have outsized voices that can eclipse those of ordinary citizens and sometimes shape them -- both for ill and well. The voices of the powerful and the federal government itself, for example, have many times reminded Americans of the founding principles of the nation such as liberty and equality. However, the powerful have also used their influential voices to spread propaganda, often leading to the atrophy, fragmentation, and division in society, leaving some groups with virtually no voice in social and political discourse.

How then can "voices" lead to the development of a better civil society and nation? This is the question that this volume of the Japanese Journal of

American Studies addresses in multiple periods and contexts in American history. The essays are arranged roughly in chronological order by their topics.

Yukako Hisada uncovers the voices of women factory workers in Lowell, Massachusetts who protested poor working conditions while also engaging in antislavery activism in the 1830s. Hisada's paper explores how the women's activism in these two social movements were intertwined and how both they and their opponents grounded their rhetoric in republican values, thereby reflecting broader political contexts of the era. Junko Miura examines the January 1938 strike by over 8,000 Mexican American pecan workers in San Antonio, Texas. While the strike expanded union organizing in the Southwest, Miura argues that it resulted in very limited social and economic gains for the Mexican American workers because of racial discrimination. Takeya Mizuno analyzes the U.S. government's failed efforts during World War II to use Japanese Americans imprisoned in internment camps for propaganda purposes. Mizuno highlights the contradictory nature of using controlled media like camp newspapers and radio broadcasts to promote an image of the camps as "normal communities" that functioned under democratic principles.

The final three articles pertain to the post-World War II period. Ryoichi Yamane argues that Walker Percy's novel *The Moviegoer* (1961) critiques 1950s American masculinity, exploring through its characters' voices male anxiety about fertility in response to the hegemonic masculinity. Yamane's analysis challenges traditional body-focused studies of the novel and time period, arguing that Percy gives voice to intersecting physical, linguistic, and social forces that shape the role of gender, in particular masculine identity, in the culture. Keiko Wells compares and contrasts two influential mid-20th century popular singers, Janis Joplin and Nina Simone, who both sang the blues and suffered much personal turmoil, but whose differing musical styles, life and career trajectories, and social and racial backgrounds produced two distinct musical voices that expressed different elements of the human condition and of American contemporary society. Wells focuses on their distinct renditions of the American songbook standard "Little Girl Blue" as a vehicle to examine their lives and music more broadly. Lastly, Yohei Sekiguchi explores the portrayal of women's voices and silence in John Irving's *The Cider House Rules* and Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*. While *Cider House* reflects patriarchal control, Sekiguchi argues, *Handmaid's Tale* reclaims women's subversive voices and reconstructs a female network of care.

These six essays discuss the representation of different actors' voices at different times in US history and the impact of their voices and the consequences of their actions. It is hoped that readers will not only read one case study, but also compare and contrast the various essays to rethink how and the degree to which Americans' diverse voices have transformed the society and the current status and character of American democracy.

Lastly, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to John Lewis for his dedicated service as our English copy editor. His contributions have been invaluable, and we deeply appreciate his hard work and professionalism. In addition, I thank Maki Tsunoda for her administrative support. We also thank the American Studies Foundation for its generous financial support which has made possible the publication of this volume. The articles published in the Japanese Journal of American Studies, including those from back issues, are freely available online (https://www.jaas.gr.jp/). We appreciate responses and criticism from our readers.

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Editor