



American Sutra

Buddhism & the World War II Japanese American Experience

DUNCAN
WILLIAMS

Wednesday, March 11, 2020
4:00pm | Ken Locke Hall



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Buddhism (ISHB)**

During WWII, Japanese American Buddhists launched one of the most inspiring defenses of religious freedom in American 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. 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 American conceptions of religious freedom and forged a new American Buddhism.

Duncan Ryūken Williams is Professor of Religion and East Asian Languages & Cultures at the University of Southern California and Director of the USC Shinso Ito Center for Japanese Religions and Culture. He is also an ordained Soto Zen Buddhist priest. Williams is

the author of LA Times Bestseller *American Sutra: A Story of Faith and Freedom in the Second World War* (Harvard University Press) and *The Other Side of Zen: A Social History of Sōtō Zen Buddhism in Tokugawa Japan* (Princeton University Press) and editor of 7 books including *Issei Buddhism in the Americas* (U-Illinois Press), *American Buddhism* (Routledge/Curzon Press), *Hapa Japan* (Ito Center/Kaya Press), and *Buddhism and Ecology* (Harvard University Press).

