

OUTLINE

100 YEARS OF JAPANESE LABOR IN U.S.A.

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- 1868 - First Japanese "contracted" immigrants (153) were brought to Hawaii sugar plantations for 3 years at \$4 per month pay.
- 1869 - 20-30 Japanese were brought to Gold Hill farm (Wakamatsu Colony) near Coloma by Schnell on an 8-year "contract." Two years later Schnell abandoned the colonists including the girl named OKEI.
- 1870 - "The Anti-Chinese Convention of the State of California" formed in S.F. (7/15).
- 1874 - Tsurukichi Tanaka became the first Japanese cannery worker in Alaska.
- 1882 - Chinese Exclusion Act passed. Samuel Gompers, who later became president of A.F.L., boasted of his help to pass this racist law.
- 1883 - 44 Japanese jumped American whaling ships in S.F. because of intolerable conditions aboard ship.
- 1884 - Sen Katayama, who later became an internationally known communist leader, arrived in S.F. to study theology (January).
- 1884 - Shigezo Yoshida (Takoshige) became the first Japanese railroad surfaceman in U.S.A. He was lynched by a white mob in Ogden, Utah, for killing a white prostitute who had refused to marry him (April).
- 1886 - Two Englishmen - Moor and Goldman - brought 7 Japanese farmers to Soquel near Santa Cruz to plant tangerines. This venture failed.
- 1886 - Tatsuo Baba, leader of democratic rights movement in Japan, fled to this country as a political refugee; he asked Americans to aid the cause. He died in Phila.
- 1888 - Another political refugee, Shunta Yamaguchi, published the first Japanese language paper "Shin Nihon" in Oakland. The paper was suppressed in Japan.
- 1888 - A group of Japanese, first to work on farms in the Vacaville area, were "welcomed" by the growers since they came to replace Chinese workers.

- 1889 - Hiroshi Goto, an interpreter, was hanged on the Island of Hawaii because he had refused to interpret falsely for plantation owners in court.
- 1890 - Fusataro Takano, a newspaperman, and ten others formed 'Shokko Giyukai' (Craftmen's Guild) in S.F. They studied the program of the A.F.L. Takano returned to Japan in 1897. He and Sen Katayama (see 1884) formed the first trade union there.
- 1891 - Seinosuke Onishi entered the University of Oregon, School of Medicine. He graduated in '95 and returned to Japan and became a socialist. He was executed in 1911 along with 11 others for "plotting the assassination of Emperor Meiji."
- 1892 - Japanese went to work as fishermen in Monterey Bay to catch cuttlefish.
- 1892 - In Vacaville, several hundred unemployed "Hakujin" demanded dismissal of Chinese and Japanese cherry pickers, attacking their camps and beating up many.
- 1892 - Japanese labor contractors in the Vacaville area formed 'Zaibei Nihonjin Rodo Kumiai' (Japanese Labor Union of America) to establish a uniform fee. The word "union" was used to counteract anti-Japanese feeling in the area.
- 1893 - Tsunetaro Jo and others established 'Japanese Shoemakers' Association' in S.F. Membership rose to 300. Jo returned to Japan with Takano and was among those who helped to organize the first union there. (See 1890).
- 1893 - Chushichi Tanaka, first railroad labor contractor, gained notoriety not only for collecting 10¢ per day from several hundred men in the Idaho area but also for pocketing \$15,000, which the men thought was being sent to their families in Japan. Tanaka was "dismissed" by the Union Pacific R.R. Co.
- 1896 - 200 Japanese railroad maintenance workers in Nampa, Idaho, went on strike. They got a raise - \$1.10 for 10 hour day. However, their contractor Kichizo Takatsuka and several other leaders were fired.
- 1898 - Near Rainier, Oregon, a group of unemployed "Hakujin" raided Japanese railroad workers' camp, telling them to get out of town or they would be shot. Company officials intervened and the Japanese returned to the camp.
- 1898 - 8 Japanese were among the crew members aboard the "Battleship Maine" that went down in Havana Harbor (2/15).
- 1899 - Hajime Nishiyama, another "successful pioneer," was the first contractor to supply Japanese to the Union Pacific R.R. mines in Rock Springs, Wyoming.

- 1900 - Hundreds of Japanese worked in the Gallup, New Mexico area coal mines. In succeeding years some 30 died from cave-ins and silicosis (the miners' dread disease).
- 1900-07 - About 57,000 Japanese left Hawaiian sugar plantations, where pay was 69¢ to 75¢ per day, for the mainland mines and railroad work where pay rates were \$1 to \$1.35 per day.
- 1902 - Sawmill owners of Oregon and Washington began hiring Japanese to replace Chinese because "Japanese were more laborious."
- 1903 - 2,000 Japanese and Mexican farm workers jointly formed 'Sugar Beet and Farm Laborers Union of Oxnard' (2/11) after winning a bloody strike. Officers elected were: President - Kosaburo Baba, a contractor; Vice-Pres. - Heizo Otomo, contractor, and Secretary - J. M. Larraras. The secretary applied for A.F.L. charter. Gompers rejected the application on grounds ". . . that the union refused to exclude Chinese and Japanese members."
- 1903 - Ishitaro Sugitani contracted to send 100 Japanese to can salmon in Alaska for the Peterson Red Salmon Company of S.F.
- 1903 - Kyutaro Abiko, one of the better known pioneers, formed the 'Nichibei Kangyosha' (company) in S.F. to supply Japanese laborers to various businesses, charging the more than 3,000 men under contract \$1.00 each per month for handling their mail.
- 1903 - Maintenance workers of the L.A. Railway Company went on strike for higher pay. Yoshimatsu Kataura, a Fresno contractor, sent 50 Japanese to scab at \$1.50 a day. Kataura in turn collected 15¢ per day from each man.
- 1904 - Sen Katayama landed in Seattle, on his second trip to the U.S.A. He organized 'Soko Nihonjin Shakaishugi Kyokai' (S.F. Japanese Socialist Ass'n.) with 23 members (2/3).
- 1904 - When miners of Castle Gate Mine of the Utah Fuel Co., went on strike, Kotaro Nakagawa of Rock Springs dispatched a "picked team" of Japanese to scab.
- 1904 - Gompers, at the A.F.L. National Convention in his address, said: "American God is not the God of the Japanese." The convention passed a resolution against the Japanese because "Japanese were as difficult to assimilate into the American culture as the Chinese."
- 1905 - The S.F. Chronicle carried its first anti-Japanese editorial - "The Menace to the Country from Japanese Immigration" (2/23).
- 1905 - I. W. W. organized (7/8) making a strong appeal to all immigrant laborers.

- 1905 - Shusui Denjiro Kotoku, a well-known anarchist in Japan, came to the Bay Area (12/5) visited the IWW, SP, and SLP. The following year he organized 'Shakai Kakumeito' (Social Revolutionary Party) with 50 members in Oakland (6/5). Kotoku returned to Japan and was among those executed in 1911. (See 1891).
- 1906 - 'Rafu Shakaishugi Kurabu' (L.A. Socialist Club) was formed by Shoden Nagata, a follower of Shusui Kotoku.
- 1906 - Toyoji Shoyo Abe organized 'Nihonjin Rodo Kumiai' (Japanese Labor Union) in Seattle with 600 members and published "Doho" (Brotherhood). In 1915, Tetsuo Takahaski, president of the union, sent \$25.81 to the family of a Ravensdale, Washington, miner killed in a mine explosion.
- 1906 - During height of anti-Japanese campaign, S.F. Japanese domestic workers formed 'Nihonjin Rokyokai' (Japanese Labor's Aid Ass'n.). In 1910, the Association merged with Koyukai (Friends Ass'n.) of Richmond and became 'Rodo Kyoyukai.'
- 1906 - Kiichi Kaneko, a socialist, who had arrived in America in '04, married Josephine Conger, a writer. They published "The Progressive Women" in Chicago. Kaneko also issued "Heimin" (People) in English.
- 1908 - In Rock Springs, Gibson, an organizer of the UMWA, signed up 500 Japanese (May). Contractors Rokuhiko Suzuki and Tetsukin Kondo represented the men on 50-man negotiation committee who met with nine mine operators in Denver. When Gompers heard of this he instructed their exclusion, writing, "It is unthinkable that orientals sat in the same lodge room with whites and that the union demands the same wages for the yellowmen as for whites."
- 1908 - Tetsugoro Takeuchi and several Japanese socialists, followers of Kotoku (See 1905), organized "Rodo Domeikai" (Labor Ass'n.) in Fresno (8/20) with aid of the IWW. 4,000 Japanese grape pickers joined.
- 1908 - Another pioneer was Naokichi Hokasono, who settled in Colorado. During construction of Boulder Creek Reservoir, 5 of Hokasono crewmen were killed from dynamite explosion. That same year, trade unions in Denver formed the Korean and Japanese Exclusion League. Hokasono instructed his men not to get drunk, to stay inside camp at night and not to sing Japanese songs.
- 1909 - Hayao Oka supplied 430 Japanese railroad workers to the Bingham copper mine in Utah and collected \$1.00 per month as bookkeeping fee from each man.
- 1909 - 8,000 Japanese sugar plantation workers went on strike in Oahu Island, Hawaii (4/1). 100 were arrested. Strike was lost after 3 months.

- 1910 - Big protest meetings throughout USA against jailing of Kotoku and his comrades in Japan (See 1905). Jack London was one of the protest sponsors.
- 1911 - Koichiro Maedagawa wrote "Hangman" based on the execution of the Kotoku group which was printed in "The Coming Nation."
- 1912 - Shizutaro Toyota supplied 250 Japanese and 50 Mexicans as scabs to the McGill Refinery in Nevada where the IUMMSW was on strike.
- 1913 - IWW established its Local 283 in a Ketchikan cannery in Alaska (March). The Local had 100 Japanese among its members.
- 1914 - Organized miners, including some Japanese, angered at the Ludlow, Colorado, massacre (4/20), raided scab camp and set fire to it. Several Japanese scabs who refused to come out from the camp also perished in the fire.
- 1914 - Katayama returned to USA again. In 1915, he helped to form 'Zaibei Nihonjin Rodo Domeikai' (Japanese Labor League of America) in S.F. In 1916, he began publishing 'Heimin' and organized a socialist group among Japanese in S.F. He moved to New York, became one of the founders of the American Communist Party in 1919. He left for Moscow in 1921, where he died in 1933. (He is buried in the Kremlin).
- 1915 - Japanese crew members aboard the 'Minnesota' of the Great Northern Steamship Co. protested against slave conditions and got fired when it docked in Seattle. The crew was deported to Japan as undesirable aliens (11/20).
- 1915 - Japanese gardeners in the Hollywood area, formed 'Seirin Rodo Doshikai' (Brotherhood of Hollywood Labor).
- 1917 - Toyohiko Kagawa, later to become world famous as a Christian crusader, organized several hundred Japanese sugar beet sharecroppers in Ogden, Utah, into Sharecroppers Union and led a successful strike.
- 1917 - 106 Japanese employees of Tooele refinery in Utah struck against their contractor-boss Mitsugoro Watanuki for firing a fellow worker (11/2).
- 1919 - Ryosho Yamane was elected Sec'y of Local 1763, Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way, AFL (5/8) in Roosevelt, Wash. The Japanese local had 120 members and eliminated the 10 cents per day rake-off to contractor. During WW2, he moved to Denver, became president of Local 6511, UMW with 50 members.

- 1920 - Cheyenne, Wyoming, Japanese railroad round-house machinists having been refused membership in the union, did not join strike but worked as scabs.
- 1920 - Vancouver, B.C., "Japanese Camp & Mill Workers Union" organized and affiliated to the Canadian Labor Congress. In 1924, the union started to publish "Rodo Shuho" (Labor Weekly - it later became a daily publication).
- 1920 - 6,000 Japanese and 2,700 Filipino sugar plantation workers on Oahu Island went on strike for more wages (1/19). After six months strike was lost.
- 1920 - In Hawaii, from 1868 to 1920, 72,000 Japanese participated in 62 strikes and work stoppages on sugar plantations. In that same period some 600 were arrested on various charges.
- 1921 - Sukei Miyata started to publish "Rodo" (Labor) in Seattle.
- 1922 - Maintenance crews of N.P.R.R. Co. went on strike in Auburn, Wash. Japanese took strikers' jobs. Many mysterious fires were started in Japanese stores in the area.
- 1923 - A mine in Frontier, Wyoming exploded, killing 99 miners; 17 were Japanese (8/14). All were members of UMWA. The following year another mine nearby exploded, killing 39; 6 were Japanese (9/16).
- 1923 - 'Nihonjin Rodo Kyokai' (Japanese Workers Ass'n.) organized in New York. Ten years later the same group organized Japanese Local of Restaurant Employees Union, A.F.L.
- 1924 - Japanese Exclusion Law passed.
- 1925 - White mob kidnapped 27 Japanese and 4 Filipinos, employees of Pacific Spruce Lumber Company, in Toledo, Oregon, and put them on train (7/12).
- 1926 - 'Rafu Nihonjin Rodo Kyokai' (L.A. Japanese Workers Ass'n.) organized.
- 1929 - 'Nihonjin Insatsuko Kumiai' (Japanese Printers Union) organized in S.F.
- 1929 - "Good Will Visit" of two battleships from Japan showered with thousands of anti-war leaflets in S.F. and L.A. (8/11-16). Tetsuji Horiuchi and Karl Hama (Yoneda) were arrested for giving out the leaflets in L.A. (8/12).
- 1929 - Japanese Marxist Circle formed in Honolulu, Hawaii.
- 1930 - Japanese Branch of the International Labor Defense (ILD) formed in L.A.

- 1930 - Huge unemployed marches held throughout U.S.A. (3/6). Several Japanese among those arrested in L.A. The following year similar marches were held. Karl Hama jailed for 90 days on "disturbing peace" charge (2/10).
- 1930 - Horiuchi, Trade Union Unity League organizer, sent to prison along with nine others on "Criminal Syndicalism" charges for attempting to organize 8,000 (1,000 Japanese) farm workers in Imperial Valley.
- 1930 - Yotoku Miyagi, an artist, and others formed the 'Proletarian Art Circle.' Miyagi and Mrs. T. Kitabayashi, another Circle member, returned to Japan and were among those arrested in the "Zorge Spy Case" (1941).
- 1930 - Group of Japanese communists started to publish "Rodosha no Koe" (Voice of Labor) in Seattle.
- 1931 - Japanese communists among members of the 'Unemployed Council' and the 'Sawmill Workers Union' began to issue the "Voice of Labor" in Vancouver, B.C.
- 1931 - Fifty employees of "Nichibei" (Japanese American Daily) in S.F. went on strike for reinstatement of a union leader, the dismissal of four executives and back pay (7/26). This strike ended in victory for the workers (9/2).
- 1931 - 'Rono Taishuto' (Labor Farmer Mass Party of Japan) sent three spokesmen to this country. They established branches in S.F., L.A., Canada and Mexico.
- 1932 - Eight Issei attending a Communist Party (C.P.) meeting in Long Beach jailed along with 100 others, after meeting raided by "red squad" (special police squad). The 8 were held for deportation. During same period ten other Japanese were to be ousted from this country, including Horiuchi. The ILD fought for and obtained "voluntary departure" to the Soviet Union for these victims - who faced long prison terms or execution in Japan if returned as "communists."
- 1932 - 'Seirin Teien Gyosha Kumiai' (Hollywood Japanese Gardeners Union) formed with 300 members.
- 1933 - Kentaro Abe organized the 'Rafu Nihonjin Yoshokuten Jugyoin Kumiai' (L.A. Japanese Restaurant Workers Union). In 1936 this became Local 646 of the Culinary Workers Union, A.F.L.

- 1934 - Sanzo Nosaka, presently the Chairman of the C.P. of Japan, entered the U.S.A. illegally. Published radical magazines and newspapers, with the help of Japanese communists in this country; these publications were sent to Japan over a four year period.
- 1934 - During bloody - world famous - waterfront strike on the Pacific Coast, which led to the S.F. General Strike, shipowners tried to recruit Japanese as scabs. This was exposed by issuing many leaflets in Japanese and English explaining what it meant to "scab."
- 1934 - Karl Hama, editor of "Rodo Shimbun," was the C.P. candidate in the S.F. 22nd Assembly District (Fillmore), receiving 1,017 votes. That same year, the late Clarence Arai, an attorney for Alaska cannery workers, ran as a Republican for a Seattle assembly seat - he got 320 votes.
- 1934 - 'Soko Rodo Kyokai' (S.F. Japanese Labor Ass'n.) formed with 300 domestic workers.
- 1935 - Alaska Cannery Workers Union Local 20195, AFL, formed in S.F. One of the organizers was Karl Yoneda (Hama). Later Yoneda became vice-president of the Local, one of its delegates to the S.F. AFL Central Labor Council and in 1938 was one of the "union delegates" to Alaska canneries to oversee that cannery owners lived up to their contracts with the Union. At its peak the Local had 2,000, including 100 Japanese, members. Meetings were conducted in English, Spanish, Italian, Filipino, Chinese and Japanese.
- 1935 - 'Kashu Nihonjin Noen Rodosha Kumiai' (Calif. Japanese Agricultural Workers Union) formed in L.A. - 800 members. Its president, Tokijiro Saisho and secretary, Mike Deguchi, jailed for heading a militant strike in the Venice area (4/36).
- 1936 - A.F.L. union led 5,000 Filipino farm workers strike in the Salinas area. Fifteen Nisei growers were among those deputized to help break the strike.
- 1937 - C.I.O. Farm & Cannery Workers Union established in Seattle, Vice-President: George Taki, Executive members: Dyke Miyagawa, Yukio Kumamoto.
- 1937 - Produce Market Employees Local 20284, AFL, formed in L.A. with 300 Japanese.
- 1937 - Brotherhood of Teamsters Local 630, AFL, organized with 600 Japanese, in L.A.: Secretary - Shuji Fujii, Business Agent - Harold Ono.

- 1937 - Jack Shirai of New York, the only Japanese volunteer in the Abraham Lincoln Battalion fighting with Loyalists, was killed near Madrid, Spain (7/11).
- 1938 - C.I.O. cannery unions established in Monterey, San Pedro, San Diego and other cities. The unions had more than 1,000 Japanese women members.
- 1938 - Many of Japanese ancestry assisted in the boycott of shipping scrap iron to Japan and "Don't Buy Japanese Goods" campaigns in protest against rising militarism in Japan and its attack on China.
- 1938 - I.L.W.U., CIO, started membership drive in Hawaii. More than 25,000 members now belong to the Hawaiian Local - Newton Miyagi, secretary.
- 1940 - Japanese growers in Stockton and Terminous formed 'Kashu Noro Kyokai' (Calif. Farm Labor Ass'n.) with 300 members to check organizing drives of the A.F.L. and C.I.O. (12/2).
- 1941 - Attack on Pearl Harbor destroyed the entire Japanese union structure. Immediately after the attack, the following sent wires to President Roosevelt offering full support and service to U.S.A.: Shuji Fuji of "Doho," Shigeki Oka, Karl Yoneda, Karl Akiya, JACL (Mike Masaoka), Oakland Nisei Democratic Club (Ernest Iiyama), New York Japanese American Democratic Committee (Isamu Noguchi) and Okinawa Youngmens' Ass'n. of North America.
- 1950 - McCarran Act passed. Three Japanese ex-communists deported and five other Issei faced deportation. The charges were later dropped against the 5.
- 1951 - Four Hawaiian-Japanese indicted under Smith Act along with three others. Charles and Eileen Fujimoto, Koji Ariyoshi, Denichi Kimoto and the others were convicted and sentenced to 5 years in jail; this was appealed. The Federal District Court reversed the decision, and charges dropped.
- 1956 - The Japanese government, with help of Nisei growers and Mike Masaoka of the JACL, formed 'Tanki Nogyo Romusha Habei Kyogikai' (Short Term Farm Laborers' Council) to send 1,000 Japanese nationals to California farms every year. None of the growers lived up to the agreement, which provided such things as sightseeing trips, English study, no-strike-breaking, etc. They were used as scabs on Katsuta farm in Oxnard and Inoue farm in Yuba City in 1960. AFL-CIO denounced these strike-breaking activities.

1969 - In recent years, more and more persons of Japanese ancestry are joining and becoming active in their respective trade and professional unions. The main stumbling block still prevails among thousands of low-paid farm workers, including several hundred Japanese. These are at the "mercy" of big agri-business, among whom are some Nisei growers.

Japanese "labor" as such may disappear in this country but the rich heritage will remain among Nisei, Sansei, Shisei