

CONCENTRATING ON FAIRNESS

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The overall structure of the relocation camps during W.W. II instituted both physical and mental cruelty to the Japanese-Americans. The living conditions, food, and treatment of the people ~~brought about an unparalleled disregard for human rights~~ *manifested another display of* ~~that this country has never seen in the twentieth century.~~ *shown to peoples of color from its inception.*

On the other hand, the American authority lived ~~very~~ comfortably, but the evacuees lived in conditions ~~a lot like slums.~~ *that were limited and confined.* Some evacuees considered their life style in the camps unbearable. Barbed wire fences, guards, and guardtowers surrounded the camps, leaving the Japanese-Americans with the feeling of total imprisonment.

Their lack of freedom was only surpassed by their uncomfortable, unappealing, and inexcusable housing. Two reporters from The San Francisco Chronicle described the quarters as dirty and uncomfortable. They measured out the rooms to be fifteen by twenty-five... *which may seem reasonable, but it was their entire home. (There was no kitchen or bath-room).* The contents of the rooms consisted of "two Army cots, two Army blankets, one pillow, some sheets, and pillow cases, a coal burning stove ~~/no coal/~~ no dishes, rugs, curtains, nor house keeping equipment."<sup>1</sup> A very unattractive light bulb provided the illumination, for those fortunate enough to have any light at all. ~~Many~~ *There was no pipe-line to the* Rooms did not ~~even~~ have running water. *(living quarters)*.

~~Due to the overcrowding,~~ *as were the* The bathrooms were community, ~~and in some centers the Japanese-Americans lived without~~ *Don't know anything about this* toilets, forcing them to use outhouses. *Communal* (Therefore, they had to bear the cold and live with the stench.) ~~Indoor~~ bathrooms were embarrassing for the evacuees,

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<sup>1</sup>Personal Justice Denied (San Francisco, Japanese American Citizens League. 1983) 159.



because the toilets and showers were left unpartitioned.<sup>2</sup> (In some camps, the evacuees put up curtains themselves).

Glady Bell, a Japanese evacuee, remembered how they had to cut large holes in the walls, in order to hook up the stoves, resulting in absolutely no privacy. Total strangers ended up sharing rooms, and family units were split up, causing children to be left unattended. The only authority figures children were required to obey were the American officials. Also, married couples had to live with other families, leaving them without privacy, and older people had to put up with loud children and undesired music.<sup>3</sup>

Consequently, the stability of the Japanese-American rooms was ~~almost nonexistent~~<sup>difficult</sup>.<sup>4</sup> The rooms were horse stables and flimsy structures built of planks nailed to studs covered with tar paper.<sup>4</sup> Cracks were not only unappealing, but also a health hazard, due to dust storms, rain, and freezing weather. During dust storms sand blew through the cracks and holes and hit like little needles all over the evacuees' bodies.<sup>5</sup> When it rained, the evacuees had to fight the flooding and the clouds of mosquitos. Some illnesses were acquired from the damp conditions.<sup>6</sup>

Finally, during winter the weather got down to thirty below zero and freezing air seeped through the cracks and holes.

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<sup>2</sup>Miche Weglyn, Years of Infamy (New York, William Morrow and Company, Inc, 1976) 11.

<sup>3</sup>Personal Justice Denied . . . 155.

<sup>4</sup>Allan R. Bosworth, American's Concentration Camps (New York, W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1967) 69-71.

<sup>5</sup>Weglyn 15.

<sup>6</sup>Personal Justice Denied . . . 162.



Therefore, low room temperatures caused sickness and even death for some evacuees.<sup>7</sup> One foreman, referring to the cracks and holes in the walls, commented, "'Well, I guess those Japs will be stuffing their underwear in there to keep the wind out.'"<sup>8</sup>

Also, the cafeteria style dining was meager and unappealing. The variety consisted of weiners, dry fish, rice, macaroni, and pickled vegetables. Meatless days were common (two to three times a week). The evacuees were to have the same treatment as American citizens; however, due to the harsh feeling toward all Japanese people, their treatment was poor. Fluid milk was given only to those in special need; others had watery skim milk. There was special food for the infants and elderly, but <sup>some of</sup> the elderly had to walk a mile for each eating session. Women with infants had to make the trip many times a day to receive the formula for their babies.<sup>9</sup>

Futhermore, the clothing situation was no better. The clothing brought by the evacuees was not warm enough, and they were unable to bring much luggage. Therefore, their clothes supply was scarce. The WRA provided the evacuees with any clothing necessary; however, shipments were delayed, and money was unavailable. ~~Therefore, evacuees got stuck wearing old G.I. peajackets and uniforms~~ <sup>could be purchased nominally at the commissary (or PX).</sup> ~~(sizes thirty-eight to forty-four).~~<sup>18-10 (typo)</sup>

<sup>7</sup>Peggy Fletcher, "Harry Kitano Returns to the Site of His Incarceration and Recalls the Price of Prejudice", People Weekly 2 May 1983: 115-116.

<sup>8</sup>Personal Justice Denied . . . 159.

<sup>9</sup>Personal Justice Denied . . . 162-163.

<sup>10</sup>Personal Justice Denied . . . 163.



~~Consequently, The~~ authority in the relocation centers was set up in two committees, ~~the Japanese American Citizens League~~ *The Japanese American Citizens League supported the WRA.* ~~[JACL]~~ and the Wartime Relocation Authority (WRA). President Roosevelt assigned Milton Eisenhower ~~[brother of General Eisenhower;~~ who previously served as an official in the Department of Agriculture, to build an agency to direct and supervise the lives of 100,000 Japanese people, and at the same time figure out what to do with them. Eisenhower knew nothing about the Japanese people nor their culture. Eisenhower and his committee, the JACL fought for better conditions for the evacuees.<sup>11</sup> However, everything had to be approved by the WRA because it provided money, clothing, food, and any other kind of expenses for the camps. The WRA was created in three months through the Executive Order 9102 of March 18, 1942. Because of its negligence, shipments were late, and supplies and money were cut each month.<sup>12</sup>

Consequently, Eisenhower and his committee devised jobs for the evacuees to earn money. Some worked in developing the land, farming, manufacturing, or public works called reclamation projects. Some evacuees worked outside the centers *doing seasonal work on fruit and sugar beet farms.* ~~in private employment and created a new self-supporting center.~~<sup>13</sup> The evacuees also had to build the quarters for the administrative personnel. Ironically enough, those structures were to be solid, comfortable buildings, quite unlike the Japanese quarters.

Moreover, the WRA came up with a self-supporting method to

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<sup>11</sup>Fletcher 116.

<sup>12</sup>Weglyn 15.

<sup>13</sup>Bosworth 71.

rehabilitate evacuees in the eyes of the countrymen. They had as many men as could join the corps, (jobs developing land, building irrigation structures, producing food, and turning out war-related manufactured items.) <sup>(Never heard of this)</sup> ~~If someone would not join the corps, he was charged twenty-dollars a month for himself and each dependent.~~<sup>14</sup>

Also, the WRA came up with a new plan called Partner Enterprises. The Japanese men would continue to work in the corps, but if they made more wages than needed, it would be divided among the not-so-fortunate members. However, their plan was crushed, because a newspaper reported that the evacuees were attaining more money a month than the soldiers in the war. They made everyone excluding the evacuees<sup>7</sup> happy by cutting the evacuees' wages. The Partner Enterprises Plan died, because the evacuees were not inspired to work.<sup>15</sup> ?

The camps were punishment enough, but there were different kinds of punishment bestowed on the Japanese people who either had bad demeanors or did something wrong. <sup>Never heard of such</sup> ~~Some of the girls were used as typists in the Center Housing offices, and when they made a mistake, they were slapped or insulted.~~<sup>16</sup>

Trying to escape was a serious crime, and punishment was death. Guards were armed and were not hesitant to open fire. In one center five Japanese were killed; therefore, the guards were disarmed.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Personal Justice Denied . . . 166.

<sup>15</sup> Personal Justice Denied . . . 166-167;

<sup>16</sup> Bosworth 190-191.

<sup>17</sup> Roger Daniel, Concentration Camps U.S.A. (Dallas: Holt, Rhinehart, and Wilson, Inc., 1972) 7-9.



*INUS (small letters; not caps)*  
The INUS Japanese who were very cooperative or close to the administration<sup>7</sup> were beaten or stoned by Black Dragons (Japanese who strongly protested against the camps). Japanese accused of being Black Dragons were arrested and sent to prison. The accused Japanese were placed in a "Steel cell block that accommodated four persons (a cage-like square in which wild animals would be confined)." <sup>18</sup>

In conclusion, the Japanese-American citizens who were placed in these camps during W.W. II had their freedom and rights taken away. They were taken from their homes, stripped of their dignity, and put in an environment that could have meant death because of the hazardous conditions. Race was no excuse for confining U.S. citizens. Hopefully the U.S. government and people have learned from this great mistake.

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<sup>18</sup>Weglyn 12.



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