

The New York NICHIBEI

"Community Service Since 1945"

Volume XXXIII, No. 1676

260 West Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10013

Thursday, August 31, 1978

The Case for Redress—Part 2

(The following is a continuation of the text of "Japanese American Incarceration: A Case for Redress," a booklet issued by the National Committee for Redress of the JACL.)

The American agricultural industry recruited Japanese laborers to work in the sugar cane fields of Hawaii, and the fruits and vegetable farms of California. From the handful who were here prior to the Chinese Exclusion Act, the Japanese population increased to about 61,000 in Hawaii and 24,000 on the mainland by 1900. The Japanese replaced the Chinese as the largest non-white ethnic group in the West Coast and Hawaii.

As long as the Japanese remained docile, their hard labor was welcomed, but as soon as they showed signs of initiative they were perceived as threats to white dominance. Japanese farm laborers, together with Mexican farm laborers, conducted the first successful agricultural strike in California in 1903. Japanese farm laborers were well organized and engaged in collective bargaining for higher wages; many saved enough money to lease or buy land.

The Japanese farmers reclaimed much of the unwanted land and developed it into rich agricultural areas. In California, Japanese farmers produced 50-90% of some fruits and vegetables despite operating only 4% of the farmlands. Envy led to hate, and the prevailing anti-Asian animosities became focused on the Japanese.

The anti-Japanese campaign began with acts of violence and lawlessness: mob assaults, arson, and forcible expulsion from farming areas became commonplace. Soon these prejudices became institutionalized into law. As with the earlier Chinese pioneers, the Japanese were also denied citizenship, prohibited from certain occupations, forced to send their children to segregated schools, and could not marry whites. In addition, some laws were specifically directed against the Japanese, including the denial of the right to own, lease, or give gifts of agricultural land.

Like the Chinese exclusion movement before, California lobbied the federal government to stop all immigration from Japan. As a result of these pressures, Japanese laborers were excluded by executive action in 1907, and all Japanese immigration for permanent residence was prohibited by the Asian Exclusion Act of 1924. Japan considered the Exclusion Act a national insult, particularly since the United States had insisted upon Japanese immigration in the first place. President Theodore Roosevelt once remarked: "The infernal fools in California insult the Japanese recklessly and in the event of war it will be the nation as a whole which will pay the consequences."

To the dismay of the exclusionists, the Japanese population did not quickly decrease as the Chinese population did earlier. There were sufficient numbers of Japanese women pioneers who gave birth to an American-born generation, and families decided to make the United

States their permanent home. As the exclusionists intensified their efforts to get rid of the Japanese, their campaign was enhanced by the development of a powerful new weapon—the mass media.

Newspapers, radio and motion pictures stereotyped Japanese Americans as untrustworthy and unassimilable. The media did not recognize the fact that a large number of persons of Japanese ancestry living in the United States were American citizens. As Japan became a military power, the media falsely depicted Japanese Americans as agents for Japan. Newspapers inflamed the "Yellow Peril" myths on the West Coast; radio, movies and comic strips spread the disease of prejudice throughout the United States.

Trapped in segregated neighborhoods and with no access to the media, Japanese Americans were unable to counteract the false stereotypes. Even though those born in the United States were culturally American, spoke English fluently, and were well educated, they faced almost insurmountable discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations and social interaction.

(Continued on page 2)

No Nichibei Sept. 7

There will *no* New York NICHIBEI next Thursday, Sept. 7 as the staff will be taking their annual Labor Day week off. The next issue of the newspaper will be dated Sept. 14.

Buddhist League To Convene Here

New York Buddhists will host an Eastern Buddhist League convention to be held Sept. 2, 3 and 4 at the Biltmore Hotel, Madison Avenue and 43 Street. Among scheduled highlights are seminars, workshops and a banquet and ball.

Delegates may register from 9 to 10 a.m. on Sept. 2 in the Music Room Promenade. The fee for the entire weekend is \$35.

Seminars will be held at 11 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. on Sept. 2, and at 1:30 p.m. on Sept. 3. The convention banquet will begin at 7 p.m. on Sept. 3 following a half hour for cocktails. The ball will be held in the grand ballroom at 9 p.m. A general meeting at 10:30 a.m. on Sept. 4 will be followed by the closing service at 11:30 a.m.

Report Bias Against AAs in Highway Work

A six-month research project to assess the involvement of Asian Americans in federal-aid highway construction work in California has uncovered evidence that Asian Americans suffer from racial discrimination within the construction industry generally.

The Department of Transportation recently released findings and recommendations of a survey of 12 Asian ethnic groups—Cambodian, Chinese, Guamanian, Hawaiian, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Laotian, Pilipino, Samoan, Thai and Vietnamese.

According to Acting Federal Highway Administrator Karl S. Bowers, the Federal Highway Administration financed the study to determine the extent of Asian American employment on not only federal-aid highway projects, but in on-the-job training programs. It was found that discrimination against Asian Americans also exists in highway construction-related trades and apprenticeship training programs.

The 54-page report of the study, which was conducted by Equivest Associates of Pasadena, Calif., includes data compiled through personal interviews and reviews of source materials from federal, state and private agencies.

Mr. Bowers said that the report will be discussed with officials of the California Department of Transportation by FHWA's Regional and Division officials, and that all necessary follow-up steps will be taken by the FHA to ensure that Asian Americans will be equitably treated in FHWA's on-the-job training programs.

JAHFA Seeking Coordinator for Research Project

Japanese American Help for the Aging (JAHFA) is seeking applicants for the post of coordinator to implement a six months' research project to assess the needs of Japanese American elderly residing in the metropolitan New York area.

The coordinator's functions will also include aiding the elderly gain access to and receive services.

Applicants should have the following qualifications: (1) MSW degree with experience in administration and program supervision; (2) demonstrated experience in research; (3) fluency in the Japanese and English languages; (4) sensitivity to the needs of older persons and Asian Americans; (5) knowledge of the network of public and private resources for older persons; (6) good writing skills; and (7) should be a self-starter.

The position carries a salary of \$1,600 per month.

Letters of application, together with a resume, should be sent to: Search Committee, JAHFA, Inc., 7 W. 44 St., New York, N.Y. 10036, by Sept. 6.

* * *

Need Part-Time Worker For Outreach Service

As a non-profit voluntary agency which provides community service, JAHFA's office at 7 W. 44 Street has been designated by the New York City's Department for the Aging as a placement site for a part-time worker to supply information and referrals and to provide outreach services to the elderly.

JAHFA is therefore accepting applications for the position which will pay \$2.65 and hour for the first three months and \$3.00 an hour for the remainder of the initial one-year period. The number of work hours required will be 20 hours per week. As an employee of a city agency, the worker will receive the same benefits as other part-time city employees.

To be eligible for the job, a person must be 55 years of age or older and have an income no higher than the following levels: (1) family of one, \$3,140; (2) family of two, \$4,160; (3) family of three, \$5,180; and (4) family of four, \$6,200.

Applicants must be fluent in Japanese and English.

Additional information may be obtained by calling Gregg Yoshida at 561-4659.

Haiku Songs Slated

A group of 20 songs based upon English translations of haiku will be included in a recital by soprano Helen Trezlie to be presented Sept. 9 at the birthplace of Theodore Roosevelt, 28 E. 20 St., by American Landmark Festivals.

The haiku songs, ten of which will be heard for the first time, were composed by Robert Fairfax Birch. The singer will be accompanied by Ilse Sass. Admission is free.

Retirement Bill Gets Senate Nod

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Legislation to grant credit under the Civil Service Retirement System to wartime internees who were 18 years of age and older who later entered the federal service was passed by a unanimous voice vote in the Senate on Aug. 18.

The bill, H.R. 9471 sponsored by Congressman Norman Y. Mineta, was returned to the House for concurrence on Senate amendments.

Although retirement credit for Japanese Americans covered by Social Security was made law in 1972, many Nisei who went on to become federal civil servants were prevented from claiming such credit because employees of the federal government are not eligible for Social Security benefits.

Said Rep. Mineta of his bill's passage, "I am deeply gratified by the overwhelming support given this measure by both the House of Representatives and the Senate. This legislation will provide some redress to those Americans of Japanese ancestry who were unjustifiably denied their constitutional and human rights."

He said that he was certain that the measure would be on the President's desk before the present Congress adjourns.

PAC Opens its Office In Washington, D.C.

WASHINGTON, D.C.—The Pacific/Asian Coalition (PAC) has announced the opening of its Washington office in Room 812, 927 15th Street, N.W., from which coordinator Mark Tajima will direct lobbying efforts on behalf of its growing constituency.

Members of PAC's National Issues Task Force have listed the following as the organization's three major objectives: (1) to develop closer linkages between Pacific/Asian communities and Federal agencies; (2) to increase the awareness and sensitivity of all sectors of the Federal government to problems, concerns and needs of Pacific/Asian Americans; and (3) to protect and promote the civil and human rights of Pacific/Asian Americans.

Urge Early Signup For "Awareness Workshop"

Those persons who wish to participate in the "Japanese American Awareness Workshop" to be held Sept. 30 and Oct. 1 at the Stony Point Conference Center, are urged to make their reservations early, as only the first 60 requests can be accepted.

The New York chapter of the JACL is sponsoring the weekend workshop, for which the fee is \$25 for students and retired persons and \$35 for all others. Reservations should be sent to the chapter, c/o Ruby Schaar, 50 W. 67 St., New York City 10023.

Redress

(Continued from page 1)

OUTBREAK OF WAR

It is difficult to pinpoint exactly when World War II began. Germany and Japan became military powers in the 1930s and began their conquests by annexing neighboring nations by sheer intimidation. Actually military conflicts broke out in Asia when Japan invaded China in 1937, and in Europe when Germany invaded Poland in 1939.

As Germany overran the European continent and drove into Africa and the Soviet Union, and Japan likewise in Asia and Southeast Asia, the United States was placed under tremendous pressure to enter the war. In July, 1941, the United States together with Britain and the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia) imposed a total embargo on exports to Japan, thus effectively cutting off Japan's oil supply.

The United States had broken Japan's top secret code and was aware of the oil crisis in Japan and the probability of armed conflict. Consequently, the U.S. government undertook certain precautionary measures. In October, 1941, the State Department dispatched a special investigator, Curtis B. Munson, to check on the disposition of the

Japanese American communities on the West Coast and Hawaii.

In November, 1941, Munson submitted a confidential report to the President and the Secretary of State which certified that Japanese Americans possessed an extraordinary degree of loyalty to the United States, and immigrant Japanese were of no danger. Munson's findings were corroborated by years of secret surveillance conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and Navy Intelligence. Both the FBI and Navy Intelligence reported there were a few potential extremists identified but almost 100% of the Japanese American population was perfectly trustworthy. High U.S. government and military officials were aware of these intelligence reports, but they kept them secret from the public.

Japan's military forces attacked the U.S. military bases near Honolulu, Territory of Hawaii, and near Manila, Territory of the Philippines, on December 7, 1941, and the United States declared war on the following day.

Many people who are unfamiliar with the historical background have assumed that the attack on Hawaii was the cause of, or justification for, the mass incarceration of Japanese Americans on the West Coast. But that assumption is contradicted by one glaring fact: the Japanese Americans in Hawaii were not similarly incarcerated en masse. Such a massive injustice could not have occurred without the prior history of prejudice and legal discrimination. Actually it was the culmination of the movement to eliminate Asians from the West Coast which began nearly 100 years earlier.

The FBI was well prepared for the war and arrested over 2,000 persons of Japanese ancestry throughout the United States and Territories of Alaska and Hawaii within a few days after the declaration of war. Nearly all of these arrestees were Japanese nationals, but some American citizens were included.

No Charges Filed

No charge of espionage, sabotage, or any other crime was ever filed against these arrestees. They were apprehended only because they were thought to be "suspicious" persons in the opinion of the FBI. Evidently, anyone who was a community leader was "suspicious" to the FBI because almost all of the arrestees were organization officers, Buddhist or Shinto priests, newspaper editors, language or judo school instructors, or labor organizers. The established leadership of the Japanese American

community was wiped out. Inexperienced teen-agers and young adults were suddenly thrust into the position of making crucial decisions affecting the entire Japanese American community.

Men were taken away without notice, and their families were left without a means of livelihood. Most families had no idea of why their men were arrested, where they were taken, or for how long. Some arrestees were released after a few weeks, but most were secretly transported to one of 26 internment or isolation camps scattered in 16 states plus the Territories of Alaska and Hawaii.

Some families did not learn for years what happened to their loved ones. Most internees were eventually reunited with their families, but only within another barbed wire compound—the mass detention camps where their families had been sent in the meantime. Some, however, were confined in these special prison camps for the duration of the war, together with the Central and South American Japanese who were brought in for internment at the insistence of the United States.

Perhaps due to the swift action of the FBI, there was very little public panic, hysteria, or irrationality for the first month of the war. In fact, public opinion was remarkably enlightened: some newspapers even published editorials and letters sympathetic to Japanese Americans, and some elected officials urged the general public not to blame or harm Japanese Americans.

The white economic interests in California, however, were not satisfied with the arrests of individuals, and the fact that domestic security was under firm control. They wanted the entire Japanese American population eliminated from California. The same pressure groups and newspapers that agitated so long for Japanese exclusion organized an intense rumor and hate campaign. Totally false stories were published about spies and saboteurs among the Japanese Americans. The war became the

MOVIES

BLEECKER ST. CINEMA, 144 Bleecker St. (674-2560)
 SEPT. 5—"Sword of Fury," directed by Tai Kato, with Hideki Takahashi (1973). New York premiere of new version of the legend of Musashi Miyamoto. Also "Sword of Doom," directed by Kihachi Okamoto, with Tatsuya Nakadai and Toshiro Mifune (1967).
 SEPT. 12—"Stray Dog," directed by Akira Kurosawa, with Toshiro Mifune and Takashi Shimura (1949); and "The Bad Sleep Well," directed by Kurosawa, with Toshiro Mifune (1960).
 CARNEGIE HALL CINEMA, 7th Ave. oetw. 56th and 57th Sts. (757-2131)
 SEPT. 7—"High and Low," directed by Akira Kurosawa, with Toshiro Mifune (1963); and "Pale Flower," directed by Masahiro Shinoda (1964).

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N.Y. TOKYO TOURS, INC.

527 Madison Avenue
 New York, N.Y. 10022

Published every Thursday except week of Labor Day by the Japanese American News Corp., 260 W. Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10013.

Second Class Postage Paid at New York, N.Y.
 ISAKU KIDA, President and General Manager
 ROBERT K. EMY, M.D., Vice-President
 T. KUSUNOKI, Editor English Section
 TSUGIO UTADA, Editor Japanese Section

SUBSCRIPTIONS: \$10.00 year; \$6.00 six months
 \$ 3.50 three months

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perfect pretext for the anti-Japanese groups to accomplish the goal they had been seeking for almost 50 years.


The truth was that no person of Japanese ancestry living in the United States or Territories of Alaska and Hawaii was ever charged with, or convicted of espionage or sabotage. On the other hand, numerous persons of non-Japanese ancestry were charged and convicted as agents for Japan.

(To be continued)

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