



LOS ANGELES COUNTY

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS

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John Saito

"Black Power!!" "Chicano Power!!" and far in the background if you listen attentively, a faint voice is saying "Yellow Power?"

In the spring of 1942, 110,000 Japanese-Americans and their parents peacefully went off to concentration camps because military necessity under martial law required their removal from the west coast. If there was any violent opposition to this unjust evacuation it must surely have been confined to the private chambers of a hearing room. There were no resistance groups but there were groups urging cooperation with the federal orders to evacuate.

A symposium in reference to the evacuation was held in June of 1967 at UCLA. It was stated by one of the speakers that the ingredients that went into the attitudes and behavior of the Japanese then are still present, and that if there were a repetition of 1942 today, a vast majority would probably go back into the concentration camps just as peacefully as they had done in the past.

Oriental Culture Patterns

This present-day attitude can best be explained by way of Oriental culture. Cultural patterns can go a long way to explain the degrees of involvement on the part of the Oriental community, say, within the Civil Rights movement. The Civil Rights movement has been seen by many Orientals as a struggle between white and black Americans with the exclusion of the Oriental Americans. This arrangement has been convenient to many Orientals for it blends with the Oriental desire to be unobtrusive and the apathy which exists within our own American society.

The Oriental also is in a confused status as to self-identity. This confusion did not exist a quarter of a century ago since, as a visible minority, he too was an object of discrimination in

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in the areas of housing, employment, education, immigration, etc. But presently there appears to be a lessening of discrimination, almost to the point that some feel it is non-existent. Those who feel this way feel that they have been truly assimilated into the greater American society. (This is an illusion, if one accepts the recent Commission report of white racism.)

The white majority has heaped praise upon the Oriental: "Your children excel in studies and are model students," say the educators. "If all people in the community behaved like the Orientals, the problem of crime would be eradicated overnight," say law enforcement agencies. In addition, Orientals are impressed by the fact that economically they are, as a whole, better off than ever before--but so is the entire nation.

Middle Class Status

Among the other visible minorities, those who have "made it" turn their backs on the ghettos or barrios, and those who are left behind are often the objects of scorn. In the Oriental communities the majority have attained middle-class stature and those who have not yet made it to that level do not feel discouraged because there is tangible evidence that it is attainable.

The Orientals, as a rule, do not want to be the objects of public attention and therefore cannot identify with the Civil Rights movement as they see it in the present form. The Orientals have also achieved a standard of living never before imagined by their parents or even by themselves, and some do not wish to jeopardize this comfortable position by "rocking the boat."

There are other explanations why there is not an observable participation on the part of the Orientals in such issues as the Civil Rights movements, but they would ultimately interweave with the cultural reasons

Still, as the generation gap and cultural lag increase, it is predictable that the faint voice in the background will become stronger and we will hear more and more of the "Yellow Power."

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