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THE JAPANESE IN AMERICA

THE PROBLEM AND THE SOLUTION

BY AN INTELLIGENCE OFFICER

ON FEBRUARY 19, 1942, the President authorized the Army to exclude any person, alien or citizen, from any area on the West Coast, as military necessity might require. By May 31st some 112,000 Japanese had been moved from their homes to a series of assembly centers—usually race tracks, parks, or fair grounds—scattered up and down the West Coast. Here they are now confined, pending their removal to permanent relocation sites selected by the War Relocation Authority. This agency was set up on March 19th for the express purpose of preparing and overseeing permanent resettlement centers. A number of sites have been selected in Arizona, California, Idaho, Wyoming, Utah, Colorado, and Arkansas. Four of the relocation centers have been completed and the Japanese have been moved in. The majority, however, on August 1st were still at the race-track camps. The projects are large scale in character and each will accommodate 10,000 or more persons.

With the exception of those who are already in the custody of the Federal authorities as individually suspect, these 112,000 Japanese represent the West Coast Japanese population, including the Japanese from southern Arizona. Young and old, lame and able-bodied, loyal and disloyal are all herded together; when moved to the relocation sites they will still be herded together. Some of them are aliens, some are American citi-

zens, some have sons serving in the American Army. Many have had to give up homes and possessions. Owing to the necessity for quick action, the innocent had to suffer with the guilty. As Mr. McWilliams pointed out in our September issue, the Army has done a magnificent job of moving them to the assembly centers. But what is to be the eventual disposition of these people? Many of them are fellow-citizens of ours, educated in American schools, trained in American businesses and professions. Many of them who are not citizens themselves have children who are. What purpose is served by having their loyalty to the United States hammered and buffeted?

The situation is complicated and difficult. Public opinion on the Coast has been inflamed by appeals to prejudice and fear. On the one hand, it is impossible to turn loose persons about whose loyalty there is doubt; on the other hand, the virtual internment of innocent and loyal people is intolerable. Democratic freedom in these times is sufficiently jeopardized as it is. It is even worse to pen up the loyal Japanese with those who are at heart our enemies. Already there has been trouble between the two groups; the loyal ones have been taunted with the charge of being suckers for trusting in the United States and taking patriotism seriously. Furthermore, we need the enthusiasm and the spirited support of those persons of Japanese

birth or descent who are truly with us. But what can be done? Ignorance is widespread; those who want to do the fair thing are about as ignorant as those who are calling for wholesale punishment and discrimination.

The following statement—shortened somewhat for brevity but excluding no essential information—was prepared in May, 1942, by an intelligence officer who for a number of years was stationed on the West Coast and who during that time had made a particular study of the Japanese population. The report, here made public with government assent, is not issued by the War Relocation Authority, nor is it a statement of the Authority's policy. It was written, as stated, as a confidential memorandum. It is the statement of an expert—a description of the situation, an enumeration of criteria for separating the sheep from the goats, and a suggestion of policy. Bracketed passages were written in by the Editors to bridge gaps made in the process of condensation.

It will be noted that *individual examination* is the core of the author's proposal, and it is on this score that those Japanese who are loyal to the United States are most sensitive. They feel that to deny them the right to individual hearings is to make a convincing case in support of the argument that evacuation—and consequently the entire handling of the racial minority problem as far as they are concerned—was done solely on a racial basis and not on the ground that individuals were or were not loyal. Admittedly incomplete, the report contains the only positive formula yet put forward to deal with this crucial part of the problem. We publish it in the belief that our readers will welcome the information. Efforts are now being made by the State Department to sort out the alien-born Japanese who would choose to be repatriated and returned to Japan if the opportunity arises. On July 31, 1942, the WRA announced that American citizens of Japanese ancestry who had never lived in Japan nor gone to

school there might obtain permits to accept jobs and leave relocation centers with their families, provided the Authority was satisfied about their loyalty. Such persons remain in the "constructive custody" of the military; their permits may be revoked at any time.—*The Editors*

I

Within the past eight or ten years the entire "Japanese question" in the United States has reversed itself. The alien menace is no longer paramount, and is becoming less important every day as the original alien immigrants grow older and die, and as more and more of their American-born children reach maturity.

Three words are commonly used in identifying the Japanese in the United States:

Issei (pronounced ee-say) meaning "first generation." The word refers to those who were born in Japan—hence, alien Japanese in the United States.

Nisei (pronounced nee-say) meaning "second generation." The word identifies the children, born in the United States, of *Issei*.

Kibei (pronounced kee-bay) meaning "returned to America." The word refers to those *Nisei* who spent all or a large portion of their lives in Japan and who have now returned to the United States.

The primary present and future problem is that of dealing with the American-born United States citizens of Japanese ancestry. I consider that at least seventy-five per cent of them are loyal to the United States.

As a basic policy tending toward the permanent solution of this problem, the American citizens of Japanese ancestry should be officially encouraged in their efforts toward loyalty and acceptance as bona fide citizens; they should be accorded a place in the national effort through such agencies as the Red Cross, U.S.O., civilian defense, and such activities as ship- and aircraft-building or other defense production activities, even though subject to greater investigative checks as to background and loyalty than Caucasian Americans.

My opinion has been formed largely through personal contact with the *Nisei* themselves and their chief organization, the Japanese American Citizens League. It has also been formed through interviews with many people in government circles, law enforcement officers, and business men who have dealt with them over a period of many years. Many of the *Nisei* voluntarily contributed valuable anti-subversive information to this [the author's] and other governmental agencies. The Japanese Consular staff, the Central Japanese Association, and others known to have been sympathetic to the Japanese cause did not themselves trust the *Nisei*. A great many of the *Nisei* had taken legal steps through the Japanese Consulate and the Government of Japan to divest themselves officially of Japanese citizenship (dual citizenship) even though by so doing they became legally dead in the eyes of the Japanese law and were no longer eligible to inherit any property which they or their families might have held in Japan.

The United States recognizes these American-born Orientals as citizens, extends the franchise to them, drafts them for military service (it is estimated that approximately 5,000 *Nisei* in the State of California have entered the United States Army as a result of the Selective Service Act), forces them to pay taxes, perform jury duty, and so on, and has extended to them the complete protection afforded by the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. At the same time it has viewed them with considerable suspicion and distrust, and so far as is known to the writer, has made no particular effort to develop their loyalty to the United States, except by permitting them to attend public schools. They have been segregated as to where they may live by zoning laws, discriminated against in employment and wages, and rebuffed in nearly all their efforts to prove their loyalty to the United States. There has been a great deal of indiscriminate anti-Japanese agitation—the work of lec-

turers, radio commentators, newspaper editors, and others. There were just enough half-truths in these articles and statements to render them exceedingly dangerous and to arouse a tremendous amount of violent anti-Japanese feeling among Caucasians of all classes who were not thoroughly informed. Many of those agitating against the *Nisei* and *Issei* have done so from ulterior motives. An example is the anti-Japanese agitation of Yugoslav fishermen in California who frankly want to eliminate competition in the fishing industry.

The only practical permanent solution of this problem is to indoctrinate and absorb these people and accept them as an integral part of the United States population, even though they remain a racial minority, and officially to extend to them the rights and privileges of citizenship, as well as to demand of them its duties and obligations. The *Nisei* could be accorded a place in the national war effort without risk or danger. Such a step would go farther than anything else toward cementing their loyalty to the United States.

II

Of the Japanese-born alien residents [the *Issei*], the large majority are at least passively loyal to the United States.

There are, among the Japanese, both aliens and United States citizens, certain individuals, either deliberately placed by the Japanese government or actuated by a fanatical loyalty to that country, who would act as saboteurs or enemy agents. This number is estimated to be less than three per cent of the total, or about 3,500 in the entire United States.

The most potentially dangerous element of all are the *Kibei*—those American citizens of Japanese ancestry who have spent the formative years of their lives between ten and twenty in Japan and have returned to the United States to claim their legal American citizenship within the past few years. These people are essentially and inherently Japanese

and may have been deliberately sent back to the United States by the Japanese government to act as agents. In spite of their legal citizenship and the protection afforded them by the Bill of Rights they should be looked upon as enemy aliens.

[It must be remembered that the *Kiba* are a part of the much larger group of *Nisei*, all of them native-born citizens of the United States. Quite apart from the *Kiba*, some of the other *Nisei* have occasionally gone back to Japan to visit or to work. Most of these have made the journey to Japan after they have reached the age of seventeen. The reception given to these Japanese-Americans in Japan is very different from the welcome extended to the *Kiba*.]

They [these other *Nisei* who went back to Japan after they had grown up] found themselves viewed with more distrust in Japan than was the case in the United States; in Japan they were looked on with more suspicion than if they had been white persons. They were laughed at for their foreign ways; they were called American spies. In other ways they didn't conform and found themselves unable to conform. They couldn't live on the Japanese standard of living or the Japanese diet; they couldn't accustom themselves to Japanese ways of life. The majority of them returned after a short time, thoroughly disillusioned with Japan and more than ever loyal to the United States. It is my firm belief that the finest way to make a pro-American out of any *Nisei* is to send him back to Japan for one or two years after he is seventeen. Often a visit of a few months, in the past, has been sufficient to do the job.

The parents of a maid who worked for me had taken her back to Japan to a small farming village when she was sixteen. She was utterly miserable. She did not speak the Japanese language very well—which is the case with most *Nisei*. She was laughed at and talked about and ridiculed by the entire village for her American way of thinking and American mannerisms. She was so miserable that she finally prevailed upon

her parents to allow her to return to the United States alone. She was under the nominal charge of an aunt who lived in Los Angeles. Since the girl who was a high school graduate in the United States, had a talent for home economics, she entered domestic service where she was most happy and contented until the evacuation. At that time she was forced back into the family of her aunt, where she is now too contented, and at the moment [May, 1942] she is interned in the Santa Anita Assembly Center.

It is the *Kiba* who are a dangerous group. It seems logical to assume that any child of Japanese parents who was returned to Japan at an early age, grew up there, studied in Japanese schools, possibly did military service in the Japanese army or navy, and then as an adult returned to the United States, is at heart a loyal citizen of Japan and may very probably have been deliberately planted here by the Japanese government.

It is my belief that the identity of the *Kiba* can be readily ascertained from United States government records.

Such persons must be considered guilty until proven innocent beyond a reasonable doubt. *They should be segregated from those not in that classification.* [At the moment all West Coast Japanese—*Issei*, *Nisei*, and *Kiba*—except those who are definitely known to be dangerous and who are in custody, are together in the assembly centers.] They should not be allowed their liberty and should really be treated almost as alien internees. Furthermore, the parents or guardians who sent them back to Japan must have done so for a reason. It appears to me that they are equally suspect.

There is another reason for such segregation. There are a number of people, both alien and citizen, who, if given an opportunity and assurance that such an admission would not result in bodily harm, would frankly state their desire to be considered as Japanese nationals and would like to return to Japan either in

exchange for American nationals or after the war. Such people should be given the opportunity to announce their choice, and, if interned, have their American citizenship revoked, and be returned to Japan as soon as possible, with no opportunity of ever re-entering this country as citizens. The country would be well rid of them.

In the operation of such a classification, some injustice would probably result. Some perfectly honest and loyal persons would fall into this category. They could well be given opportunity to make application for a change of status. On the basis of information submitted, a thorough investigation as to background, reputation, employment, associates could be made to determine, not loyalty entirely, but degree of probable menace. I would recommend that groups or committees of *Nisei* of known loyalty and integrity also pass on the applicant, and that such group or committee state in writing whether or not they would be willing to sponsor the applicant. If the investigation showed beyond a reasonable doubt that the applicant was trustworthy, he could be released and take his place in the non-suspect group.

Similar tests could be made among the *Isa*, the older ones who were born in Japan. Determining factors could be the age when each one came to America; the number and lengths of trips made back to Japan, whether or not he is a member of any nationalistic Japanese society; the strength of ties with Japan, including the degree of kinship with any relatives there; whether or not contributions were made in the past to the Japanese war funds; his reputation among his Caucasian-American friends; above all, he should likewise be passed upon by the same committee of loyal *Nisei* as in the *Kibi* procedure outlined above.

In this manner I firmly believe that the potentially dangerous could be readily sifted out, leaving a balance of about three-fourths of the total Japanese population which could be safely accepted as American citizens.

A forcible argument in favor of separation of the *Kibi* and potentially dangerous aliens from the other Japanese is the effect such a segregation would have on the American population as a whole. If other American citizens could be assured [through strong and vigorous advertisement and publicity by the government] that some step of this nature had been taken, and that those persons permitted to accept private employment or to be members of the War Relocation Authority work corps were only those who were not considered to be dangerous by the Authority, I believe that much of the hysterical resentment against these people would disappear. [Employers] would have far less hesitancy about accepting such people for harvesting crops or even doing war production work. Such action would permit a very appreciable saving in government funds and effort.

III

The Americanization of the *Nisei* is far advanced. The attitude of the *Isa* parents has had a great influence on the *Nisei* children. The last *Isa* to enter the United States did so in 1924—eighteen years ago. American influences have affected these *Isa*, consciously or unconsciously, directly or indirectly, since that time. It must be remembered that one of the chief factors affecting the Americanization of the parents has been the children themselves, in the reports they bring back from their school life, their play, and their association with white American children.

These factors have worked to a greater or lesser degree on the individual *Isa* parents. The real conflict between the two ideologies, American and Japanese, is in the *Isa*, for they have their background of life in Japan and must struggle to reconcile these two very different phases of their lives.

It must therefore be conceded that the Americanization of the *Nisei* children has proceeded with at least the tacit con-

sent, if not the active co-operation, of many of the Japanese-born parents. The degree to which the parents oppose it [Americanization] is a measure of the strength of the loyalty to Japan of the parents. That there have been factors in America tending to strengthen that loyalty is conceded—the Japanese Associations, the Japanese consular system, and most of all, the fact that the parents cannot become citizens of this country though they have the status of legal residents. That some of the *Nisei* children are more Americanized than others is not so much a measure of the success of an Americanization program as it is a measure of the strength of the opposition to such a program, usually on the part of the parents. Unless there is a conscious, active, continuous opposition, the child will absorb Americanization as naturally as he breathes.

It is a Japanese characteristic to have a very great reverence and thirst for knowledge and education. The teacher is a person of importance to the Japanese mind; the words and teachings of the teacher are greatly respected. The school influence carries over into the home and to the hours outside the school through such mediums as schoolbooks, school magazines, sports, contests, hygiene, diet, dress, and so on.

The Japanese is a great conformist. The *Nisei* children have always been in the minority in schools and community life and have naturally and very conscientiously striven to conform to the American standards of the majority. This is far more than a surface conformity. The expression "That thing is or is not done" applies to the *Nisei* in far greater degree than would be the case with the average American.

This idea of conformity can be illustrated by a story told by Fred Tayama of Los Angeles. "My parents came over here many years ago," he said. "They desired quite earnestly to adapt themselves to the ways and customs and life in this country. They were poor and had to work very hard. They were anxious

that we attend American schools; that we children who were born here and were citizens should have every opportunity to make our own place in this country. Nevertheless, we suffered somewhat in that our parents could not fully bridge the gap, largely because of language and were not able to take effective part in American activities like the Parent-Teacher Associations and so on. We *Nisei* feel that we have bridged that gap. My little girl is ten years old. She plays the violin in the school orchestra and works in the school library. We are members of the Parent-Teacher Association and freely and frequently consult with our daughter's teacher. As far as we are able to tell, she mingles with her Caucasian schoolmates on terms of absolute equality. She can understand a very little bit of Japanese which she has picked up from her grandmother but cannot and will not speak the language at all. We value her association with her teacher and playmates above everything else and those are the things which we are being asked to give up by this evacuation program."

I believe that this is a typical sentiment with these people.

The position of women is far, far higher in America than it is in Japan. The *Nisei* mother in nearly all cases desires this higher position not only for herself but for her daughters. Even in opposition to the father, she will encourage her daughter to adopt the American standards and encourage her sons to accord women the position they occupy in American life. Co-education [go much farther] in this country than in Japan; boys and girls learn to know and understand each other to a degree that is completely impossible in Japan. The girls themselves demand and receive from the boys the deferential treatment accorded to American women in general. The Japanese marriage system [has broken down] on this account. In Japan marriages are arranged by family contracts, usually by means of a marriage broker. The parties very seldom, if ever,

know each other before the marriage. In America this has been among the first Japanese customs to be broken down. The form still persists to some degree, largely as a sentimental concession to the parents, but in nearly all cases the boys and girls are well acquainted and in love on their own, and they themselves, as a rule, arrange the formalities of "go-between" and contact between families.

Differences will be noted in dress. The *Iwa* women have universally adopted Western costume. It is true that on certain ceremonial occasions they do resort to the Japanese kimono. This, however, is a sort of fancy dress costume I have never seen in the United States. Japanese girls use the Japanese style of hairdress or the Japanese style of make-up even on the most ceremonious occasions.

The Christian religion as practiced in the United States is a powerful influence toward Americanization. In order to persist the Buddhist religion is conforming to the American way of life and now includes Young Men's and Young Women's Buddhist Associations modeled on the Y. M. C. A. and Y. W. C. A. That many of the priests are alien importations who have deliberately used their influence in favor of Japan, and who may have been planted here by the Japanese government for that very purpose, is freely admitted and must always be borne in mind. Most of the pro-Japanese *Iwa* are members of the Buddhist faith. Nevertheless, the tenets of the faith are perfectly acceptable and cannot be classed as anti-American.

In the Japanese community of Terminal Island, the Baptist Church was the center of community life. The Sunday School was the social center of all *Nisei* activities. It conducted cooking and sewing classes, had church suppers, baseball games, and picnics in the American way. The pastor of the church was himself a *Nisei*, educated in the United States. The contrast between the activities at the Baptist Church

and those surrounding the Buddhist Temple, less than a block away, was startling. The Christian church always had at least five times as many people participating in its activities as did the Temple.

In general, the caste system does not exist among the Japanese in America, [chiefly] because all of the *Iwa* who came to America came from the same social group. Hence the caste lines were not imported. There did and do exist social distinctions, but they are essentially the same as those in any American community and are based on business success, the degree of education, and so on. The breakdown of caste [may be seen in the case of] Walter Takamoto, a very brilliant young *Nisei* attorney from Sacramento, who has been voted the outstanding *Nisei* in the United States and who is admired as a speaker and as a lawyer. He came from the "Eta" class, the untouchables who are almost pariahs in Japan.

There is among the *Nisei* a desire to rise above their environment and to separate themselves from a purely Japanese community. There were, for example, two young men from Terminal Island, both college graduates and both young men of considerable ability. One of them asked me point-blank what I thought his chances were of getting employment as a machinist in the shipbuilding plants in Los Angeles harbor. He stated that he had a degree in engineering, that he was a good machinist with considerable knowledge and experience with Diesel engines, and that in the past few years he had made his living as an engineer of a fishing boat. He could see no future in his present employment, as long as he remained on Terminal Island in the fishing industry, he was classed as "just another damn Jap." He thought he saw in the demand for skilled laborers in the shipyards an opportunity to separate himself from this Japanese environment, to do a patriotic service for his country, and to establish himself in a recognized trade. I told

him. I thought his chances were slim, not because of his race but because he belonged to a minority group of whose loyalty and integrity the people at large were not sure. He replied, "Well, thank you for the answer. It's at least an honest one and nobody can stop me from trying." But he did not get the job.

Loyalty is a rather predominant characteristic of these people. Loyalties are rather slow in being given, but once conferred are conferred without reservation. The Japanese themselves do not consider the *Nisei* loyal to Japan. This has been reflected in many of the official acts of the Japanese Consul at Los Angeles. The Japanese Consulate was considerably alarmed at my apparent and open friendship with the *Nisei*.

It may be asked why the views expressed in this memorandum are not more common. This is attributable to the extreme youth of the *Nisei* and, as a class, to their economic dependence on the *Japs* to date. This dependence forced many *Nisei* to do many things which otherwise they would not have done. The holding of jobs was sometimes made contingent upon regular contributions by *Nisei* toward the purchase of Japanese war bonds, upon joining some Japanese society and the like. Also, Americans of power and influence whose opinions and decisions carry weight are the same people who—rightly at the time—brought about the Exclusion Act, and who see in all Oriental faces *Nisei* and *Nippon* alike, the very alien and incomprehensible type of peasant who was entering the country twenty-five or thirty years ago. The white contemporaries of the *Nisei*, the young people who were their school mates, are not yet in positions of influence in politics or business. Ten to fifteen years from now, when both groups have matured, these conditions would no longer obtain; they would meet on grounds of mutual acquaintance and understanding.

Had not this war come along at this time, in another ten or fifteen years

there would have been no Japanese problem, for the *Japs* would have passed on, and the *Nisei* taken their place naturally in American community and national life.

IV

Suggested Segregation Procedure

1. Publish openly and genuinely the fact that any person desiring to announce himself as a loyal citizen of Japan may do so without fear or prejudice, irrespective of whether or not he holds American citizenship. Solemnly assure such people upon the word of the Government of the United States that they will be accorded the legal status of internees, that if they so desire and opportunity presents they will be exchanged during the period of hostilities for American citizens held by the Japanese. Further, assure them in writing, if desirable, that as soon as possible after the conclusion of hostilities they will, unless sooner exchanged, be repatriated to Japan by the United States Government.

2. By a process of registrations within assembly and relocation centers, determine the identity—together with the identity of parents, spouses, and dependents—of all Americans of Japanese ancestry who have spent three years or more in Japan since the age of thirteen after 1930. These lists may be checked against the records of the Federal investigative services, including the records kept by the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization. This second category will include those citizens of Japanese ancestry who, in all probability, may be considered as potentially dangerous. Parents or guardians of such persons are included for the reason that it was these parents who sent the children originally to Japan. It is this category which, for the best interests of the United States, must be considered guilty unless proven innocent.

3. At each assembly or relocation center boards for the review of such cases should be set up. These boards should consist of representatives of the military

Service of the Department of Justice and of the War Relocation Authority. These boards are for the express purpose of deciding, on the basis of logic and reason and in view of the circumstances in each case, whether or not the individual is to be considered in the class of the potentially dangerous.

The boards can be guided by the following principles:

- a. Families shall not be divided except at their own wish.
- b. Considering the position held by the male in Japanese society, the classification of the male should be the deciding factor. If a *Kibei* male is married to a *Nisei* female, the family should probably be classified as *Kibei*. If the reverse is true, the family probably should be classified as *Nisei* and therefore not dangerous.
- c. Children below the age of seventeen shall take the classification of the parents. Children above that age shall be judged on their own merits and given the choice of accompanying their parents or not.

Once the classification has been made, these dangerous persons and their families should be segregated and kept separate from the other evacuees pending removal to special internment centers.

4. At this time their exact status should be carefully explained to them and they should then be given the opportunity to file application for a change of classification if they so desire. It is here that the status of guilty until proven innocent really takes effect. Application for change of status, with supporting facts and references, should again be carefully considered by the reviewing board. Consideration should be given to the entire family history and background. For example, if there are three sons in the family, only one of whom falls in the *Kibei* class, and the parents have not made repeated voyages to Japan in recent years or have not made contributions to the Japanese war chest or are not themselves members of

suspect organizations and finally if the classification of this person as non-dangerous is acceptable to members of the loyal *Nisei* group, this person and his family might well be classed as non-dangerous.

5. The segregation of the alien is more difficult than is the case with the *Nisei*. In general, the following should be classed as dangerous:

- a. Persons who have made repeated voyages to Japan within the past ten years.
- b. Officials of Japanese nationalistic organizations such as the Japanese Navy League, the Military Virtue Society, and the like.
- c. Aliens (or *Nisei*) citizens whom the Military or Naval Intelligence of the FBI would classify as potentially dangerous.
- d. Parents of *Nisei*.
- e. Any alien who has entered the United States since 1933, including students, trade treaty aliens, priests or ministers of religion, and the like.

It may well be that the first classification does not turn out to be sufficiently accurate. Some of those originally classified as not dangerous may possibly be reclassified as dangerous. Often the *Nisei* themselves will be the first so to classify a person. Provision must be made for a review of such cases. The possibility of such a reclassification should act as a very strong deterrent upon persons in the *Nisei* project.

The desirability of utilizing the advice of members of the loyal *Nisei* group should not be overlooked. They will be judged on the reputation of their group, therefore they should have some voice in deciding who shall be members of the group.

To sum up, The entire "Japanese Problem" has been magnified out of its true proportion, largely because of the physical characteristics of the people. It should be handled on the basis of the individual, regardless of citizenship, and not on a racial basis.