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COLORADO RIVER RELOCATION PROJECT  
POSTON, ARIZONA

YOUTH PROBLEMS IN POSTON, 1942 - 1945

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## YOUTH PROBLEMS IN POSTON, 1942-1945

### I. Possible Causes

Sociologists give these as some of the factors contributing to the anti-social behavior of young people: lack of wholesome social resources and useful work, crowded living conditions, neglectful and misunderstanding parents, bad examples, inadequate police, a feeling of injustice, and the direct or indirect approval, on the part of superiors, of the attempt to get by or around the law. The Project Administrator, Internal Security (the police), Community Activities proper, and the Division of Education were well aware of the influence of such factors and that they not only would exist in Poston but in many instances would be intensified by the unavoidable abnormalities of community and home life in a relocation center.

It is generally conceded that the Japanese youth left California with a fine record for quiet, good behavior. Things which contributed to the establishment of this record were: plenty of work, strong family ties and parental control, adequate recreation, and association with different racial groups, of which they were one of the minorities.

But in Poston the first disconsolate cry of those who were having the greatest difficulty in adjusting to their new environment was, "There's nothing to do!" When presented with ideas for constructive work, their response was, "What's the use of doing that? There's no future in it." A few evacuee adults accepted and continued to hold positions even though they thought that the low wage scale did not justify efficient work or the honest observation of the number of hours of work required per day. Where the appointed personnel failed to combat this belief, poor work habits developed. Furthermore, some adults, who before coming to Poston had been scrupulously honest, appropriated government property, such as lumber, nails, and carpenter tools, for their own use. These dishonest practices were observed by the youth of the community and adopted by some. Conscientious parents found certain phases of the living conditions in Poston - for instance, eating in a community dining hall and living with another family in a barrack room - nonconducive to the maintenance of the usual parental influence. The crowding of some 275 or 300 people into a block, a space of 460' x 420', and the lack of family privacy made the development of gangs inevitable. Japanese were everywhere. There was no majority group to exert social control over them. The language barrier between

the them and essei, their new freedoms, their new limitations, the stress and frustrations of evacuation; together with a feeling of injustice and bewilderment, made some young people reckless in their behavior. And the war itself was a factor contributing to confusion, discouragement, and recklessness.

This recklessness was manifested in one or more of the following ways: (1) indifference to school attendance and the good opinion of teachers, (2) low regard for good work habits, (3) carelessness and dishonesty in handling the property of others, (4) callous treatment of those not in "the gang," and (5) contempt for the law. These manifestations ranged from mild cases of resentfulness easily overcome by the help of an understanding adult to felonies for which offenders were given jail sentences.

Many of the cases, however, never developed so far as to have to be handled by the police. Believing that young people can find in constructive activities an outlet for their energies, a satisfying sense of importance, and a basis for the development of high ideals, the following organizations exerted themselves to provide for the welfare of the youth of Poston: the schools, internal security, the community and local councils, community activities proper, family welfare, and the churches. These organizations not only initiated activities but also furnished competent guidance. Some of their work started as early as the summer of 1942, in fact, during "intake."

## II. School Problems

Since the schools dealt more directly with the young people than any other organization did, perhaps more cases of maladjustment were prevented and corrected by the teachers and school officials than by any other group. During the first term of school when the orientation of the whole group of students was most necessary, a guidance counselor was provided for the schools. During the last two years, educational guidance was provided by three student relocation counselors who also assisted students in making better adjustments in the school and community. Throughout all three years, Core teachers were especially charged with the responsibility of counseling. Despite the counseling delegated to others, the school principals and the director of education not only advised with the teachers regarding the solution of youth problems but also discussed the problems with the students involved and conferred with other administrative officials concerning them.

The school program provided for clubs, music, assemblies, school papers, and athletics, all of which, as far as facilities allowed, made it possible for students to have a well-balanced program. Classes and clubs, under the chaperonage of teachers, were allowed to have evening socials.

Many of the student difficulties were worked out satisfactorily through the wisdom and patience of the teachers and the help of other members of the class. However, in a school with an average yearly attendance of 4472, there were other problems which challenged the resources of both the school administration and the faculty. These problems may be classified thusly: classroom problems involving personality clashes with teachers, truancy, gangs, gate crashing, and property violations.

#### Student-teacher clashes

The ordinary student-teacher personality clash resulting in disorderly conduct on the part of the student was usually settled with little or no difficulty except when the teacher involved feared and mistrusted the students because they were of Japanese ancestry. A usual solution to the problem was to transfer the student to a more understanding teacher. But this solution had to be used with the utmost discretion in order that the teacher's influence with her more congenial students would not be lessened and also so as to prevent students from abusing the privilege of transfer. Sometimes the trouble was of such a serious nature that a transfer was not advisable and the student had to be suspended from school and/or referred to a higher authority. However, these transfers, which were most frequent during the first year, were quite effective.

There was the case of N. As a freshman in 1942-1943, he had a succession of Core teachers due to the difficulty of obtaining and holding teachers in Poston. By the time he began to study under the direction of his fifth Core teacher in the last quarter of the school term, he was considered a disinterested and troublesome student. But after a few weeks with this teacher, he began to show marked improvement in behavior and increased interest in his studies. The next year he enrolled in the Core class of a teacher who, though competent, instinctively (but perhaps unconsciously) distrusted the nisei. Before the close of the first semester, the teacher reported frequent serious trouble with N in the classroom - disobedience, rudeness, boisterousness, flagrant disrespect, and open rebellion. One day when she "sent him to the office," the majority of the boys in the class walked out with him. As a result, he was suspended from school, pending a teacher conference with the adult members of the boy's family. An older brother appeared for the conference, at which no successful agreement could be reached. It happened that at this time the high school principal resigned. In the interval before the new principal arrived, the boy quietly entered the class of another teacher who as quietly accepted him. In a short time this teacher was replaced by another one who did not know that N was not an official member of the class. When the situation came to the attention of the new principal, the boy was called to the office for a conference. The result was that he was allowed to remain in the class as a bona fide member. He finished the year without further trouble. When he left Poston High School in the middle of the

next term, he was worthy of the fine letter of recommendation which the principal sent with his transcript to the new school.

### Truancy

School started in October, 1942, without books, desks, or other equipment. It was during this year that truancy cases were most frequent. Sometimes there was organized absenteeism by blocks or classes. Early in the next school year, at the suggestion of the director of education, the Community Council of Poston adopted a school code which provided for compulsory school attendance (with justifiable exceptions) and gave the school greater authority in handling cases of truancy. Consequently, truancy was less frequent during the last two years. When a student persisted in being absent too often or his excuse for an absence did not ring true, the situation was investigated by a teacher or the principal. In a few cases no "cures" were effected, and the students failed their courses; in some other cases the students in question did attend classes often enough and did do enough make-up work to pass their courses. In the majority of cases, however, investigation and counseling stopped the practice.

In one instance when there seemed to be an epidemic of truancy, a certain Core teacher systematically visited in the homes of her students who were offenders. She could speak a little Japanese. As a result of her visits with the parents, truancy in her classes stopped and became appreciably less frequent in the whole school. At another time, a boy in another Core class broke his record for good attendance by frequent, unaccounted for absences. The principal's seemingly casual conference with him revealed that the boy's brother, a soldier in the U.S. army, had recently been killed in action and the boy was grieving over his loss. The principal encouraged the boy to improve his school attendance. But his frequent absences continued until the principal and two of the boy's teachers visited the parents. In the conversation with the father, the whole situation was discussed, and the principal indicated that the case might be referred to the Youth Counseling Board if the boy's attendance did not improve. The father asked that such action be postponed until he himself had a chance to work out the problem with the boy. His wish was granted. The boy's school attendance improved immediately and in a short time he was again a well adjusted student.

The school, however, was not so successful in dealing with O. He came to Poston as a freshman, having been class secretary and the president of the Scholarship Society in his California school. By the time school started in the fall of 1942, he seemed completely and permanently conditioned against Poston and all that it had to offer. His Core teacher for the first semester wrote of him, "In class only a few days and slept

during class period when he did come. Transferred to another teacher for the second semester." The second semester teacher wrote, "Visited in home. Interviewed father and expressed the hope that he would encourage his children to attend school more regularly." At the end of the term he had earned no credits. His case was referred to Family Welfare. A worker from that department approached O through the block manager and learned that the boy would refuse to make up his work during the summer even if he should have an opportunity to do so. But he did indicate a willingness to continue going to school by re-enrollment in the same grade the next year. When school started again in the fall, O, by some means or other, succeeded in enrolling in a tenth grade Core class. In December he made the following comments in a theme which he handed in to his teacher: "My second year in this school is nothing but a pain in the neck. I get gyped out of my last year credits and I have to make it all up again. I am supposed to go to freshman Core again but I don't know anybody in there as yet. This year I do not feel like studying because (our school) is not accredited anyhow; therefore I fool around in class and get D's and F's. I am also planning to go out next year on indefinite leave and will have to start from my freshman year again therefore this feeling adds to my laziness in school. If they had some decent teachers . . . . In other words, we have a rotten school here." His attendance this term was again poor. When he did come to class he was quiet and participated not at all in class discussions and very little in class activities, although he passed examinations with fairly good marks.. He continually committed small anti-social acts. Unless forced to do so, he would not bring to class the required absence and tardy slips. If there happened to be no chair behind the table where he was accustomed to sit, he simply stood behind the table, perhaps leaning on it, until the teacher insisted that he get a chair and sit down. He took the attitude that someone else should have the chair ready for him or get it for him after he arrived. His response to private counseling was an unreasonable tirade of criticism for the school. At the end of the semester, he passed all his courses except biology (no credit in that course) with grades not lower than C. His biology teacher reported that his study habits, social attitudes, and participation habits had all been unsatisfactory and that he had unofficially withdrawn from the class. Early in the second semester, his new Core teacher and the new principal arrived at about the same time. Their patient attempts to help the boy make a better adjustment to school also failed. He became such an outlaw that he was suspended from school. A copy of the principal's letter to the father was sent to the Youth Counseling Board, but the boy never returned to school. (A Family Welfare report states that the father was not aggressive and that O considered his parents lazy and indifferent. It states also that O, one of the

of nine children, has two older brothers. One refused induction into the army but another one was inducted some time after he relocated.) From May until August, 1944, O was on seasonal leave in Utah, where he worked in the beet fields. However, he also found this work unsatisfactory. He returned to the center and with two young friends began planning permanent relocation to a large city. Finally, October 31, arrangements for his relocation were completed and he left the center.

There are on record two cases in which the school appealed to the police concerning truancy. In the fall of 1944, it was reported to the police that eighteen boys in a certain class were continuously absent and disregarded discipline. When the boys were interviewed by an officer, they promised to go back to school and behave themselves. A later investigation revealed the fact that the boys were attending the class regularly and were doing good work. In the same month, the principal reported to the police a boy of school age who was not enrolled in school. By leaving home each day at regular intervals, he was deceiving his parents, who thought he was going to school. The investigating officer succeeded in getting the parents to take the responsibility of seeing that the boy did attend school.

#### Gangs and gate crashing

Gangs and gate crashing (going to socials uninvited) can well be discussed together, for the latter was one of the results of the gang spirit. Although Scout groups, other boys' clubs, and a program of sports were set up as soon as possible after the establishment of the center, the formation of gangs of boys of high school age and older persisted from 1942 until well into 1948. The problem of their offences against the school was made especially difficult by the fact that one or more out-of-school persons were frequently involved in the trouble. In the fall of 1943, a gang attack made on a student officer while he was on the school ground was of such a serious nature that it had to be reported to the police who, collaborating with school officials, apprehended the offenders and brought them to trial. One unassuming school boy refused to take a part in a play because he was unpopular with the gang in his block and was afraid to leave home at night in order to attend play practice. The determination of several mothers to place their young sons in eastern schools was based on the fact that the boys were persecuted by gangs.

Considering the isolation of life in Poston, it was natural that the young people put great emphasis on school socials. The expense of decorations and refreshments for these affairs was borne by the various groups sponsoring them. Naturally the attendance needed to be limited to members of the groups and to those who were especially invited to attend. But during the first two years of school there were small groups of "out-siders" who

by devious means gained entrance to these affairs. They became known as "gate crashers." Since the legitimate crowd was usually large, it was difficult to detect these crashers after they gained entrance. They danced with the girls and partook of the refreshments, much to the disgust of some who rightfully belonged to the group. On a few occasions serious fighting was barely prevented, although for the most part the crashers were treated like any other members of the group either because the others were indifferent to their presence or because they did not dare to oppose a gang or a gang leader. In fact, sometimes a girl or boy who had a friend among the crashers would aid in effecting his entrance.

It came to be impossible for the students to handle the crashers at the entrance as the guests assembled, and the teachers took over the job. Usually there were two or three women teachers and one or two men who worked at the entrance or entrances. As these persons became better acquainted with the student body, it became easier for them to detect crashers although some persons posed as members of the group, as representatives of the fire department or the evacuee police, as persons with important messages, etc. In repelling the crashers, quiet physical force was sometimes resorted to when persuasion failed. Then the group, of perhaps not more than six or eight boys, became noisy and insulting on the outside, repeatedly attempting to enter and cannily watching for a chance to slip in. On some occasions the local police was of some help to the teachers. As they struggled at the door, the social usually progressed peacefully inside.

In the case record of B, a high school senior, the guidance director of the school wrote, May 30, 1943:

In Poston he is more with a gang than with a constructive group. He has been a consistent party crasher. This has not been limited to Camp I affairs. On February 6, the Camp I orchestra was invited to the Camp III junior prom. B attended, passing as a member of the orchestra. I talked with him on that occasion but did not assume the responsibility of asking him to leave. He was not a member of the orchestra, but had several friends who were members. His (uninvited) presence at other school affairs has been reported.

On May 28, the girls of the senior class had a dance. This was a class affair and the girls invited the boys. Only couples were admitted. Early in the evening at the time the icecream was delivered through the kitchen door, B and a group of his friends made their way in. One of the teachers asked him to leave but he refused to do so. When I spoke to B

and asked him to tell his friends that they must go, he said they would in just a minute. They went to the kitchen and talked. When I next spoke to them, the older member of the group said that they could not leave because he had to watch his sister. B eventually led the way out. Later during the evening there was a loud knock at the door and the same group said that they had been requested by the fire department to tell us that our doors must be open. ...

On June 25, a student body dance was held. B, E, and a third boy came to the door. They had no tickets since tickets were sold to couples only and only to members of the student body (E was suspended from school on May 23). The boy who was at the door passed them tickets, attempting to hide the transaction by covering the tickets with a piece of paper. The boys entered, and I spoke to the boy who had passed the tickets to them and requested him to tell them to leave. They did so without creating a disturbance. Outside the building they asked why they could not attend though they were familiar with the student body rules governing attendance at dances.

July 1, 1943, the high school principal added this to the case history of B:

The frequent gate crashing activities of B have been reported to me by sponsors of various high school parties, but at the more recent parties the incidents have occurred before my arrival or after my departure. ... There were occasions early in the school year when I personally escorted him from the hall where a party was being sponsored by a group to which B did not belong.

Gate crashing in itself is not a particularly vicious practice, except when it is continued in face of all attempts and all appeals to have a stop put to it. Those who have persisted in the practice are those who have been associated with gang activities in the community, and it is in this association that the significance of B's activities lies.

In the Unit I high school the influence of gang A was felt more than that of any other gang. It is reputed to have originated as a block boys' club under the leadership of a young man who

was thought by some evacuee teachers to have a sinister influence on the boys. He was seen on the school ground the day of the serious fight in the fall of 1943, and some members of the gang were the aggressors in the fight.

The group as a whole was made up of boys with average or superior ability and fairly good family background. Their most significant tendency was to gang up and attempt to manipulate their environment to what seemed to them to be their advantage, such as enrolling in the same class, crashing conferences, offices, etc. at which a member of the gang was in legitimate attendance, and using pressure to get a member elected to a class office. Their successes were just frequent enough to give them (especially their leaders) an overbearing air, which they covered whenever they wished in order to gain their own ends.

Where their studies were concerned, they developed an attitude of not trying. They were fond of using the "what's-the-use" term and were, or posed as being, negligent and indifferent. They were careful to do the minimum amount of school work (unless the family interfered and insisted on better work), but were ready enough to argue about what their grades should be.

The boys of this group who remained in the center were seen together everywhere until the close of the last school term, even with dates at socials. At the beginning of this term, one of the boys was hired to work in the high school office. Soon two more were hired; and from that time until the close of the term, the high school office became the "hang out" for the group. They were often annoying to people who wished to transact business there and were too often incompetent in their work. However, they were under the eyes of the principal, and their influence, outside of being a nuisance in the office and occasionally in the classroom, was negligible.

The group, as well as others of its kind in Unit I, was weakened by the loss of leaders during the last year of school. While some parents were instrumental in relocating their sons to get them away from the persecution of gangs, others did the same in order to get theirs out of gangs. Furthermore, the re-organized police force was making gangs outside of school less popular and successful throughout the unit. During the last term of school there was no gate crashing problem.

As late as April, 1945, the principal of the Unit III school reported to the chairman of the Judicial Commission the full details of the bad conduct of twelve boys. In his memorandum he said:

Some of these boys are followers and onlookers, and others are definitely the leaders and instigators of trouble-making activities of many kinds. All of them, however, have displayed or supported in others the attitude of defiance of authority, and have participated passively or actively in beating up others, breaking into the school auditorium to see movies without paying admission fees, repeated truancy at school, dis-

putes or controversies with teachers, misuse of government cars, and the like. Perhaps the outstanding characteristic of the group is their "gang spirit." ... They even handicap each other in subtle ways in their school work, - for example, one is ashamed to have anyone in the gang see him reciting in class.

In a few days two of the boys were suspended from school. On May 8, under the auspices of the Young Peoples' Guidance Committee, the parents of these boys met with their sons and five block managers to discuss the principal's account of the bad conduct of the boys. A memorandum of this meeting, which was addressed to the principal and signed by twenty-one parents, indicated that the boys talked freely and that the group came to the conclusion that the boys were deserving of reprehension. While the parents felt that they themselves might have been more often notified of the derelictions of their sons, they were eager to do what they could to rectify the situation which had arisen in school. The memorandum further states that the session with the boys was long and serious and that the boys promised to "turn over a new leaf, reform, and learn to cooperate and obey the rules and regulations of the school." The parents petitioned for the reinstatement of the two boys who had been suspended. The principal responded to the request by readmitting the boys to school with certain restrictions. Better relations were established between the parents and the school, and the whole situation improved.

#### Property violations

The schools and other organizations continuously attempted to protect property by means of educating people concerning its value, how to care for and use it, and why it is necessary to respect the rights of others. Nevertheless, juveniles were guilty of some defacing, destroying, and stealing of government and other property.

The performance of a type of violation often became a fad or craze. It would flourish until some culprit was caught or until the property was fully protected. Sometimes these performances simply ran their course in epidemic form. Violations dealt with by the school and known to have been committed by students on the school grounds were the stealing of door knobs, appropriation of school books and minor pieces of equipment and bits of supplies, writing and carving on tables, defacing and mishandling of books, wasteful use of materials, tampering with stoves and locks, breakage of windows, destruction of partition walls of latrines, and defacing outside walls of adobe school buildings.

Whenever such violations were found to have been committed by particular students or groups of students, they were required to pay for losses or to repair, return, or

replace property if possible. Their privileges in connection with the use of the property were sharply curtailed.

In February of 1945, the high school shops of Unit I moved from the elementary to the new high school plant. In an interval of two weeks after the removal, sixty-six window panes of the vacant building were broken. A report of this damage was made to the police who, through the help of the shop teacher and a craftsman who sometimes used the building, ascertained that the damage was being done by a group of boys in a certain block nearby. The depredations stopped and were never repeated although the broken panes were replaced and the building remained empty.

A few days before an evacuee shop teacher in Unit II was to leave for permanent relocation, he was greatly disturbed over the disappearance of fifteen shop tools. The principal sent notices to all blocks saying that the teacher could not be cleared for relocation until the tools were returned. Within a few days all the tools except a few minor ones were back in the shop.

An inventory of school books was made at the close of the last term of school. It reveals that there was a one percent loss of elementary books and a six percent loss of high school books. School officials estimated that students were responsible for almost all book losses. There is no way, however, of estimating what percent of the school property loss was caused by the students themselves since the greater part of the loss was due to theft or burglary committed after school hours and the culprits were not apprehended.

The same types of problems - student-teacher clashes, truancy, gangs, and property violations - confronted the elementary school officials and teachers. They were strong in the use of preventive measures, and their problems were not nearly so frequent or serious as those in the high school. It is a noteworthy fact that few girls were ever involved in any kind of youth problem.

### III. Police Problems

Before September, 1944, the police did little work along the line of delinquency prevention and was often baffled in its efforts to apprehend offenders, especially those who committed annoyances and crimes in or with the backing of gangs. However, every apprehension was in itself a check on delinquency. There were four cases which were notorious enough to be warnings to the young people of the community.

1. Four gang leaders, all except one being juveniles, were charged with riot and brought to trial before the Joint Judicial Board consisting of Juvenile and Adult branches. They were found

guilty and sentenced to serve five days in jail. The sentence was suspended and they were placed on probation for a period of thirty days. During this time they were required to report to the police department each day and to remain in their respective blocks between the hours of 8:30 p.m. and 7:00 a.m. The names of these boys do not appear in the police records after this case was closed.

2. A seventeen year old boy was arrested for helping to transport liquor onto the project. He and his employer were delivered to the U.S. Marshal in Phoenix. Each plead guilty and was released on a \$500 bond. When they were brought to trial the older man was sentenced to one year in jail, but the boy's case was dismissed on motion of the U.S. Attorney.

3. The most notorious young trouble-maker in the center was apprehended and charged with "loitering in offices, refusing to leave on request, acting in a boisterous and insolent manner, and creating disturbances in said offices." The project director rendered the following decision: "Because of his record and because of the evidence in the present case, it appears that the defendant's continued presence on the center is detrimental to the welfare of the community. I therefore sentence the defendant to serve thirty days in the project jail at Yuma, Arizona."

4. In dispersing a group of annoying loiter<sup>ers</sup> in the hall of the administration building, the Chief of Internal Security struck a seventeen year old boy who resisted and used abusive language. The boy filed a complaint against the officer. After investigating the case, the project officials upheld the officer's action as being justifiable in the line of duty.

In the fall of 1944 there was almost a one-hundred percent change in the personnel of Internal Security. The new force was under the leadership of a man who was described by the project director as "having the knack of getting along with boys" and by the assistant project director as being a "strong believer in crime preventive programs." He organized a new evacuee police force to replace the old one which had completely disintergrated.

It was the aim of this new police organization to combat juvenile delinquency by the use of three main preventive measures: (1) revival of the languishing sports program, (2) encouraging clubs and social activities, (3) contacting gang leaders and getting them on the side of the law. While these things were being done, there was also a tightening of the enforcement of project regulations. For several months there was an increased number of arrests.

Between September, 1944, and November, 1945, the police brought some twenty or thirty juveniles before the Judicial Commission where charges were filed against them and they were referred to the Youth Counseling Board or the Young Peoples'

Guidance Committee. These offenders were charged with such violations as misuse of government property, petty thefts, burglary, drunkenness, drunk driving, assaults, and violation of the liquor law. Only two juvenile cases were taken off the project for final disposition.

One was the case of a boy guilty of burglary of a government building and theft of government and other funds. He was arrested and the money recovered the day after the theft was committed. He was lodged in the Parker jail pending disposition of the case by federal authorities. Five days later he was arraigned before the U.S. District Judge at Phoenix and charged with burglary under the Federal Juvenile Delinquency Act. The defendant was found guilty and given a six months' suspended sentence. He was placed on probation and returned to the project, where he was put into the custody of his parents.

The other case was that of a boy of low mentality who for three years was the "problem child" of the school and community. He was incorrigible and not amenable to supervision. This boy was known to roam about from place to place at all hours without lawful or visible business and absented himself from school for days at a time. He was apprehended for minor violations on several occasions before a block manager caught him in the act of burglary and theft. He was arrested and placed in jail. He confessed to five burglaries and surrendered stolen articles to the police. Within a few days he was sent to a hospital for psychopathic observation. In due time he was committed to a school for those mentally unfit for normal life.

During the same period of time mentioned above (between September, 1944, and November, 1945) many cases of misconduct were handled arbitrarily over the desk of the Chief of Internal Security. Boys involved in these cases were guilty of disorderly conduct, minor fights, the use of sling shots and BB guns, and other petty offences. At these conference-like hearings before the chief, one or two other persons were always present - a parent, the project attorney, the assistant project director, or a member of the evacuee police or of the Judicial Commission. In all cases, the penalties imposed were strictly observed and no repeat violations were ever evident.

#### IV. Youth Counseling Board and the Young Peoples' Guidance Committee

Before the summer of 1943 only two or three cases of juvenile delinquency were brought before the Judicial Commission of Poston. The Commission referred the cases to the Family Welfare Department for special investigation. But as the community became more alarmed about the growing tendency toward delinquency, it began to consider means by which delinquency could be checked and juvenile cases tried in the most effective way. As a result of this concern, in July of 1943, the Unit I

Council, "realizing that the problems pertaining to juvenile delinquency are peculiarly vested with the public interest," officially provided for the creation of the Youth Counseling Board. When, in 1944, the need arose for it, a comparable group known as the Young Peoples' Guidance Committee was organized in Unit III. In Unit II there were no cases of real juvenile delinquency; therefore, no board or committee to try such cases.

The Youth Counseling Board was given these responsibilities, and similar ones were extended to the Committee in Unit III:

1. The Youth Counseling Board shall investigate any and all cases involving juvenile delinquency and make recommendations to the Judicial Commission, the Project Director, the Police Department, or any other department concerning the disposition of the particular problem. The Board shall also act generally as a Counseling Board on any and all problems affecting juveniles.

2. The Youth Counseling Board shall hear all matters involving minors under the age of eighteen years referred to it by the Judicial Commission, and shall also hear all other matters involving the moral or delinquent conduct or any other misconduct of minors under the age of eighteen.

3. The Youth Counseling Board may confer with the Judicial Commission, the Police Department, the Department of Education, the Social Welfare Department, the Block Manager Supervisor's Office, and any other law enforcing and all administrative agencies for such information and reports as said board may find necessary.

Members of both groups were appointed by the local council. From the first, the Youth Counseling Board consisted of men who were free from local political factions in the community. They were known for both unusual ability and unquestionable integrity. Evacuees only were made members of the board. The director of education was often used as a consultant and sometimes served as a probation officer. In certain cases other members of the appointed personnel were consulted or called as character witnesses. The Young Peoples' Guidance Committee, made up of the same type of persons as served on the Youth Counseling Board, at first leaned heavily on the church for leadership. In 1945, just before the committee was to try a serious case, it added to its membership the high school principal and a trained social worker, both members of the appointed personnel. For convenience in this report both groups will be frequently referred to as the "board" or "boards."

The Judicial Commission referred juvenile cases to these boards. The boards heard the cases and made recommendations concerning them to the Judicial Commission, who accepted them recommendations and used them as final verdicts. Board members often accepted the responsibility of being probation officers.

School officials also had the privilege of referring cases to these boards or to individual members of the board when it

was necessary to create with parents or students an understanding which could not be brought about in any other way. Many cases of juvenile misconduct were corrected by such referrals. Block managers and parents also had recourse to these boards. Each case was investigated and handled according to its own peculiarities. The methods of the boards included formal hearings, informal hearings, and individual and group counseling. Recommendations coming from a board or any of its members were respected by school officials, students, and parents.

In considering a case, the board attempted to get the full background of the person involved and to consider all circumstances which might have contributed to his delinquency. The aim of the board was to reclaim erring persons for law-abiding society. At a meeting of the Judicial Commission in February, 1945, the chairman said, in referring a case to the board:

The Youth Counseling Board was created by the Local Council for the purpose of establishing a board composed of reliable characters in the community so that they might be in a position and able to help young people who do not know "what the score is" to get back on the right track.

In a memorandum indicating the appointment of the high school principal to the Young Peoples' Guidance Committee, the unit III administrator wrote:

As the name itself suggests, the Committee is not to hold itself out as a punitive one; but rather as one that will take a sympathetic and understanding view of youthful delinquency, and to take measures to guide the young people in question back to normalcy.

The two following accounts of hearings of juvenile cases will serve to illustrate the way the boards worked and the nature of the more serious cases of delinquency.

1. Three boys had rather doubtful permission to use a certain truck for school business within the unit. While in possession of the truck, they went for a joy ride. In the course of the ride, the truck was overturned and partially wrecked. Before they Judicial Commission they were charged with the unauthorized use of government property, and the case was referred to the Young Peoples' Guidance Committee. The Committee went into session with six members present. The boys were brought in for a formal hearing of evidence, which was presented with the aid of a prosecutor and a defense counselor. At the close of the hearing, the chairman announced that the Committee would take the cases under advisement and submit to the Judicial Commission a formal statement of its recommendations for the disposition of the cases.

The following day, the Committee submitted the following statement and recommendations:

Upon hearing the above case ... we believe, after careful deliberation, that all three are guilty as charged, and we recommend that the following restrictions and stipulations be placed upon all three boys:

1. That they be prohibited from driving any motor vehicle during the remainder of their stay in Poston.

2. That they report once a week to a probation officer (to be appointed by the Young Peoples' Guidance Committee) for a period of five months, reporting their activities throughout the past week.

3. That if, at any time, they break their probation or become involved in any further serious offense, they will automatically be excluded from all camp activities and be confined to their own blocks after 6:00 p.m.

2. Two boys, one fourteen and the other fifteen years of age, were apprehended by the police while they were walking from a place where they had abandoned a stolen government truck. Upon being questioned, they confessed to the theft of three government vehicles and two privately owned automobiles. All were recovered, but one of the former had been wrecked and one of the latter burned up while in possession of the boys. They also confessed to three burglaries. At a hearing in the office of the project director the next morning, the boys were put under severe restrictions and released to their parents, pending a hearing of the case before the Young Peoples' Guidance Committee.

The assistant project director made a study of the school record, the personality, and the family background of each boy. Evidence was found that there were conditions contributory to delinquency in the home life of each. The police and the director of education checked on their observance of the imposed restrictions, the regularity of their school attendance, and the nature of their conduct in school.

The authorities in the unit and the Young Peoples' Guidance Committee felt the seriousness of their responsibility to such an extent that they proceeded with hesitancy in handling the disposition of the case. But at the insistence of the director of education, the ~~C~~ommittee got under way in regard to it about five weeks after the boys were arrested. First, the ~~C~~ommittee added the high school principal and the social worker to its membership. At its first meeting, a member, who was head of the unit legal department, reviewed the case up to the time of the meeting. The social worker described standard methods for handling such cases and gave a family history of each boy. The principal expressed satisfaction with the recent school attendance and conduct of the boys. He also said that the mandatory restrictions which had been placed upon the boys had had a most desirable

effect in making the lads realize the toll society would exact for wrong-doing. The ~~Committee~~ decided not to have a formal hearing for the boys by the general committee. The members agreed that "not punishment from this point on but tactful and sympathetic understanding would be the proper approach to wean the boys from anti-social activities." The chairman appointed five members, including the principal and the social worker, as a sub-committee to work out a solution to the cases.

The sub-committee went immediately into session and after considerable discussion decided that the restrictions on the boys be lifted, that the boys be put on probation, and that the probation officer be a certain member of the committee, acting as friend and counselor to the boys, who would report to him every Wednesday and Saturday evening.

A few days later the boys were called before the sub-committee for a hearing "at which time it was made clear to them (1) that the offences which they had committed were serious in nature, (2) that their offences had been breaches against the peace and dignity of the people of their unit, which included their parents, (3) that the committee before whom they had been arraigned represented not so much the administration as it did the people of Unit III, and (4) that their offences could not be lightly overlooked." When the boys could present no justification for their actions, they were informed of the decisions which had been made regarding them at an earlier date.

Five weeks later the member of the committee who was acting as probation officer and "big brother" for the boys wrote a lengthy account of his experiences with the boys. Evidently, in an intelligent and unselfish way, he had exerted himself in an effort to bring about the reform of the boys. His report indicates that he was highly successful with one boy but that the other one did not respond so well to his efforts. However, when the latter boy had to report to the police instead of to the committee member, he was brought into line. He never broke probation again. Nor did the boys ever repeat the offences for which they had been arrested or commit any other similar acts. There was evidence, however, that the attitude of the more difficult of the two boys was not appreciably changed. The director of education urged the Relocation Division to encourage his relocation. Several months later he left Poston with his family.

#### Conclusion

The concern of the Poston community for the welfare of its youth was for the most part continuous in spite of the fact that there were rather frequent changes in the appointed personnel and evacuee leadership. The interest was in both preventive and curative measures to be used in handling

juvenile delinquency.

As early as May, 1942, the Poston Bureau of Legal Research corresponded with the U.S. Children's Bureau, the Berkeley Chief of Police, and the Children's Court of Los Angeles in its effort to get information regarding methods of handling juvenile delinquency. From the first, organizations other than the school, the police, and the local councils were effective in helping the young people. It was under the direction of the Community Activities Section that weekly movies were shown in Poston, that there was a center wide organization of sports, that youth forums were initiated, and that YWCA, YMCA, Girl Reserve, and Scout groups were organized. And it was under the auspices of this section that the Youth Conference was held in Poston in May, 1945. Throughout the three years of the existence of the center, the nisei Christian church furnished constructive training for young people, as did the Young Buddhist Association. The Family Welfare Department was always cooperative with organizations and individuals interested in the solution of youth problems, as well as active on its own part. Some unemployed members of families of the appointed personnel also worked unselfishly with the young people of the center.

Judging from information received concerning juvenile delinquency "on the outside," one may judge that from 1942 to 1945 juvenile problems were handled as well in Poston as elsewhere in the United States. In 1942, Judge Ben Lindsey of Los Angeles, wrote to an evacuee member of the legal department:

I sympathize with you in the problem of the juvenile situation. It is a growing problem everywhere, juvenile delinquency, it is said, having increased twenty-five percent in this country in the last year or so, and I notice in the papers that a special meeting is being called with the Juvenile Court and welfare agencies because of the alarming increase in this city.

Similar reports from various cities came continuously to the attention of the people in Poston, and perhaps these very reports helped to keep the community alert to its own problems of this kind.

November 12, 1945

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C. Acton  
(Geo. Kasai  
2/44)

REPORT ON THE PHOENIX VISITATION

The actual problem of Juvenile delinquents started immediately after the beginning of the war, when the parents of the children started to neglect the care of their children and began to seek jobs in the various essential war-industries. True enough the problem was present many years before, but never as acute or serious as the situation faced today. Children are being left to shift for themselves more and more and are given adult responsibilities almost over-night. This sudden change would not have been so serious had these children been given the proper education and preparation for the problems that they were to face. It has been largely through the lack of foresight on the part of the parents that these youngsters were left very much unprepared. The Maricopa County Officials and the YMCA has been very much aware of this present situation and has been attempting to remedy the situation by various measures.

One of the most outstanding achievements dates back to the later part of last year when I visited the city of Phoenix. It was during the early part of November that many of the city's prominent men got together to discuss this problem of Juvenile-delinquency with the youngsters themselves. It seems that the ground work for the solving of the problem was laid many months previous to this meeting that I had attended. Present at the meeting were representatives from all the Secondary Schools from the ten districts of Maricopa County. True enough these were select members of their respective Student Bodies that they represented, but they did express the minds of the majority of the students. The meeting was held in the chambers of Judge Scoville (County Court Judge on Juvenile Delinquency). Other persons present were those directly or indirectly connected with the welfare of children and young people. Teachers or other persons closely connected to the various schools were not asked to be present. The number present was rather limited since this was not given much publicity and more or less on an invitational basis.

At this meeting the students expressed their opinions freely and discussed various problems with the men present. They discussed the possibilities of having a number of Drop-Ins or Youth Centers where they could go and have a wholesome good time. The pros and cons of management and what they should have were discussed and many interesting points came up. The most interesting part was the willingness of young people to discuss the problems and their sincere attitude of wanting to correct the situation as much as possible.

Since my last visit many of these Youth Centers have been opened and are being operated rather successfully. At present the different members of the Y board help to operate these centers and to instruct the parents on the

various procedures and games to be used. It is the hope of the YMCA that gradually the management and the operation of these various centers will be taken over by the parents of the youths of the respective areas. Extensive leadership training courses are conducted in order to better acquaint the parents and prospective leaders in the art of conducting an interesting program for the youths. These courses are very informative in that they show one the new techniques in presenting different games. Some of the courses also help one to understand youths better and to get along with them.

One night I had the opportunity to visit and witness the operation of one of these centers. It was the Scouts Youth Center which is located in the Scouts District. This particular center was scheduled to open every Tuesday Night for the benefit of a certain group of children. The youths attending on these nights were mostly from the Osborne Grade School in that district and thus very few of them were above the eighth grade. The supervision was done by a member of the Y board who in this case was Mr. Fritz Engwall. Few of the parents are also supposed to come to act as chaperones and also to watch and see how the program is getting along. The first part of the evening was spent in group games which involved all the youngsters there. In these group games the youngsters were taught to learn to get along with each other and to respect the orders of the elders who were supervising. One definite incident that happened that particular night was during a game of Truth and Consequences. One youth had violated an order and thus was penalized by being blind-folded and told to look for some person on the floor. Of course that person was not there but it was to teach the youngster to obey and not to take things too much in his own hands when the rules of the game were given. While this was going on the rest of the group were enjoying themselves by dancing.

Following the games, dancing was started and the youngsters were supposed to dance among themselves and to teach each other. Following a short session of dancing a meeting was held by the entire assembly. Since it was the duty of the youngsters to more or less take charge of the running of the place with the supervision from the adults, they were supposed to elect their own Mayor, Clerk, Treasurer, and Commissioners. A registration assessment of 25¢ per year for membership cards was to be charged the members for operational expenses. This money was to be used for the purpose of getting additional records, or other equipment or materials necessary for the operation of the Youth Center. These membership cards were also to control those who were to be admitted to these Centers.

On the other nights the various Centers would be opened

to different groups and conducted somewhat in the same manner. The children themselves enjoy it because they are allowed to do things that the adults do and are given the liberty of running the show themselves with as little outside management as possible. Gradually they are learning to shift for themselves and to face certain situations that they hitherto did not know how to face. Unconsciously of course they are learning to imitate their elders in a more wholesome manner. Instead of Night-Clubs they have their Youth-Centers and instead of liquor they have soft-drinks. No smoking is allowed even for the adults while they are in these Centers. Once a youngster is inside a Center he or she is not allowed to leave until ready to go home. No one is allowed to wander in and out of one of these Centers.

Since the beginning of the operation of these centers and the occupation of youths along the right lines, delinquency has definitely decreased in the County. Prior to the establishment of these centers there had been a number of arrests for speeding, drunkenness, brawls, etc. due to the frequenting of the various Night-spots in the city of Phoenix. It was due to the initiative and foresight of a few men that this situation was remedied and now at the present time the percentage of delinquency has definitely declined. Records show that there are less Monday morning cases involving students and teen-age youngsters than existed before this campaign was started.

It is my earnest desire and hope that during the months that school is not in session something like this can be offered the youngsters of our community. During these months the evenings are unusually warm so that the average youngster will not stay at home but tend more or less to wander about. If there were places to visit he could be kept out of mischief and could be given the proper guidance that the Youths of today need not only to help him but us as well. It must be remembered that the Youths of Today are the Adults of Tomorrow and what we are in the future will depend upon how well we train our Youths today. I don't think it would be asking too much to set up a few of these Recreation Centers for our youths and supervised by older people during the few months where guidance is sorely needed. During the school months we are not faced with the problem as much as during the leisure months when it's so uncomfortable to stay at home. I hope that something can be done about the situation as soon as possible.

## GILA VISITATION

The Gila YMCA is divided into two separate groups with one group at each camp. Both are Phalanx groups with ages ranging from just out of high school to about twenty-five. Due to the drainage of their leaders and many of their members the clubs have become rather inactive and are attempting to revive the activities that they used to have and to encourage some new activities. The Butte Phalanx chapter along with the USO committee has been instrumental in the erecting of the Honor Roll of enlisted men who are now serving in the armed services from that center. At present they have one constructed in front of the main administration building and now have just completed a monumental type of Honor Roll built on the top of the Butte.

I was in hopes that something like an Honor Roll could be erected in our camp to honor those in service who were from this center. I believe this will help to bring about a more patriotic aire and more respect for our representatives in the armed forces of the United States. Something like this could be erected in front of the main administration building or in the park in some conspicuous place.

Other programs of interest that are being carried on are the leadership training programs which involve most of the young leaders of the camp. They meet to exchange ideas on the presentation of games, conducting of programs, and other things that are needed in the conducting of a successful meeting. These are carried out in form of informal socials which are held almost every week. Each week a new theme is used with the using of the same types of games presented in a different way. For example one week they had the "Ration Party" theme with everything rationed except the fun and entertainments. The YMCA Coordinator was telling me that no one knew what the theme meant until they got a leaflet explaining the details. In this manner everyone present learns how to conduct a social and to present games in an enjoyable manner. Everyone had a good time in spite of the fact that no one knew what it was all about.

During my visit the Phalanx group sponsored a public dance. This was to more or less raise funds for operational expenses for the YMCA. I dont believe that things like this are necessary for our camp in that we could get a little for carrying out of certain functions. As I see it, the YMCA can only be helpful during the "off-seasons" when there are no sports activities being carried on by the camp. Because of this I believe that there should be a closer working between the activities of the community and the YMCA. The YMCA could be very instrumental in helping in the Summer Activities programs. With the suggestions of Youth Centers along with an organized program of leadership training we could help combat any of the child problems that may arise.