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Nisei Opinion:

BEHIND THE STORY OF TULE LAKE SEGREGES

Writer Makes Plea for Enlightened
Justice in Dealing with Group

By Kiyoshi Hamanaka

There is an interesting and instructive parallel between the treatment of the Jews and segregees in democratic America. Both Jews and segregees have been accused of disloyalty. After mistreatment both groups have expressed a desire to leave their respective countries of persecution, the one to go to Palestine; the other, to Japan. Now that World War II is over it turns out that many segregees want to remain in America. They protest that they signed for expatriation and repatriation under duress. They believe that they will have better future in America. The point now is, will we let them remain here? And if not, why not?

There is an easy "solution" advocated by some government officials in words to the effect that "since these segregees signed for expatriation and repatriation and they knew what they were doing, we're going to ship all of them to Japan even if some of them want to remain here." Any lasting solution must be a just solution. Our concept of justice has gradually developed in its time context so that as we have grown more civilized we have included in more areas of life considerations of the past, present and future. For example, in the solution to the problem of juvenile delinquency we now consider the past and present environment of the delinquents as well as the possible future results of different techniques of corrective treatment. In line with this enlightened concept of justice, let us review segregation, registration and evacuation.

Any study of segregation necessarily involves a study of registration, for without registration segregation would not have taken place. In turn, any study of registration requires a study of evacuation, for without evacuation registration would not have taken place. This last statement is obviously true since there was no registration of Nisei and Issei who resided in areas that were not evacuated and that included the eastern half of Oregon and Washington, the northern half of Arizona and the rest of the forty-eight states except California. Again, the Japanese nationals and the Japanese Americans in the Hawaiian Islands did not undergo any registration or wholesale evacuation. German aliens and their offspring were not evacuated and underwent no special registration. Why, with all these obvious omis-

sions, did registration and segregation take place? Why did even evacuation take place?

The United States Army has maintained that evacuation was based on military necessity. The Supreme Court in the Korematsu case has upheld the army's enforcement of evacuation for the same reason, military necessity. A more accurate explanation would be that evacuation was based on racial discrimination and the economic exploitation of the evacuees.

Here are some salient facts: Lieut. General DeWitt stated that a "Jap is a Jap;" he was the Commander of the Western Defense Area and he gave the orders for curfew and evacuation. No wholesale evacuation of Japanese nationals and Japanese Americans in Hawaii or the United States prior to, during or since Pearl Harbor. Evacuees owned much property in the four western states and the Associated Farmers and other such groups pushed evacuation in order to exploit the evacuees. Over the four thousand Nisei and Kibei were in the armed forces of the United States before Pearl Harbor. There are more than 20,000 now because of the voluntary Nisei Combat Team and the draft. A few months after evacuation evacuees were released from camps to work in the sugar beet farms in Utah, Montana, Idaho, etc. in order to help save the crop. If military necessity prompted evacuation, why were evacuees released so suddenly for such work?

"After Pearl Harbor almost three months went by before Lt. General De Witt imposed curfew and travel restrictions on Italian, German and Japanese aliens and Japanese Americans. If military necessity caused such measures, why did the army waste so much time? Why were not the German and Italian aliens evacuated while American citizens of Japanese descent were? Is military necessity, in other words, a racial matter?"

But now let us consider registration. Registration took place during the months of February and March of 1943. By that time all of the evacuees were in relocation centers operated under the War Relocation Authority. Previous to the relocation centers, most of the evacuees resided in army controlled assembly centers with strict regulations, censorship and primitive accommodations. Some evacuees were moved directly from their homes to relocation centers and others came from the Hawaiian Islands.

At first the relocation centers were to have had large scale industrial and agricultural projects in view of the WRA assumption and policy that most of the evacuees would remain in the centers for the duration of the war. In fact, leave clearance

regulations were strict and difficult to fulfill. However as time went on and the public relations work was inaugurated to "sell the evacuees" the WRA changed its policy to facilitate leave clearance. This was around the month of December, 1942. Around the middle of that month a procedure whereby evacuees could make applications for leave clearance in advance of a definite assurance of a job was started. The response however was not encouraging. During the latter part of January the WRA made an announcement that an All-Nisei Combat Team would be organized by means of voluntary induction. During the first week of February an announcement was made by means of center newspapers that a general registration of all evacuees 17 or more years of age would take place. At the same time army representatives were to obtain questionnaires from all American citizens of Japanese ancestry who were 17 or more years of age. No registration was to be made of those who applied for repatriation. The reason given for the general registration was that "the WRA expects to get leave and thus be able to speed up the relocation program." During the entire registration period no statement was made by the WRA that the registration would be used as the basis for segregation.

The two questions in the general registration that caused the most difficulties were Questions 27 and 28. Question 27 asked: "Are you willing to serve in the armed forces of the United States on combat duty, wherever ordered," Question 28 was, "Will you swear unqualified allegiance to the United States of America and faithfully defend the United States from any or all attack by foreign or domestic forces, and forswear any form of allegiance or obedience to the Japanese emperor, or any other foreign government, power, or organization," The difficulty in answering Question 27 in the affirmative was that the evacuees had been evacuated from their homes and many of them had no place of their own since they had sold their properties at exorbitant losses. If the son were to volunteer or were drafted the family would be without manpower to start a new since most of the Issei parents were in their fifties and sixties. However, the explanation was added that an affirmative answer to Question 27 did not obligate a citizen to volunteer for the combat team. Nevertheless, the fact that the general registration and the registration for the combat team were held simultaneously was confusing.

Question 28 was the one that cause a great deal of difficulties. In reality it was three questions in one. They are--

1. Will you swear unqualified allegiance to the United States of America?
2. Will you faithfully defend the United States from any or all attack by foreign or domestic forces?

3. Will you forswear any form of allegiance or obedience to the Japanese emperor, or any other foreign government, power, or organization?

This question was put even to the Issei before a revision was made several days later. If the Issei had answered, yes, to the original question, they would actually have made themselves men without a country. The revised question for the Issei was, "Will you swear to abide by the laws of the United States and to take no action which would in any way interfere with the war effort of the United States?"

Because of the poor wording of Question 28, many interpretations were given to it by the evacuees. For example some evacuees thought that an affirmative answer implied that it exonerated the United States from evacuation. Then too the word "forswear" seemed to imply that the Nisei had a previous allegiance to the emperor of Japan, since one could not forswear an allegiance one did not have. This is like asking any American citizen, "Do you forswear allegiance to Hitler?" It should be remarked at this time that most of the Nisei do not have dual citizenship. In fact in 1924 an agreement was made between the United States and Japan that any child born of Japanese parents had to be registered with the Japanese Consul in American within two weeks after its birth if it were to be considered a dual citizen. If such registration did not take place, the child was automatically not considered a subject of Japan. The vast majority of parents did not register their children and the vast majority of those born prior to 1924 had expatriated from Japan before Pearl Harbor.

Because of the confusion resulting from the poor wording of Question 28; the fact that the questionnaire was first headed, "Application for Leave Clearance" which seemed to imply that the evacuees were applying to go out; the fact that at first registration was not specifically stated to be compulsory; the fact that the registration for the Nisei Combat Team was going on at the same time; and the fact that the registrars were largely untrained as many of them were not fluent or accurate interpreters of Japanese. These facts accounted for the poor response to registration and the subsequent increase in the applications for repatriation and expatriation. In many centers, registration dragged on for ever a month because of the large numbers that refused to sign.

For approximately four months after registration there was no mention of segregation. In the meantime during the latter part of June, the Dies Committee attacked the WRA with accusations of coddling evacuees and harboring spies. Although many

newspapers printed the accusations of the Dies Committee which put the WRA in a bad light, most of such newspapers did not print the refutations which followed a thorough investigation. Because of the attacks of the Dies Committee, the WRA in Washington confidentially asked some of the center appointed personnel to find out whether the evacuees favored segregation or not. Because of the poor preparation and conduct of registration the WRA was not confident enough without the approval of evacuee opinion to base segregation on registration and announce it. Thus during the latter part of June some of the center personnel asked some evacuees whether they favored segregation. Since most of the evacuees contacted were leaders among the repatriates and the loyal, and since leaders generally have extreme viewpoints, both groups seemed to favor segregation. Having thus obtained this information, Dillon S. Myer went before the Dies Committee during the early part of July and announced that segregation would take place beginning September 1. After segregation was announced, however, it was discovered that the majority of the evacuees did not favor segregation.

From this review of events one can ask the following questions:

1. If registration was to have been the basis of segregation, why wasn't such an announcement made during registration?
2. Why did the WRA not mention segregation until approximately four months after registration; until the time Dies Committee started to attack it?
3. If the WRA had felt that registration had been conducted properly, why did it ask some of the center appointed personnel to ascertain if the evacuees favored segregation or not?

Subsequent to the announcement of segregation the evacuees were divided into four groups. Hearings were conducted to those who answered, no, or who qualified their answers to Questions 27 and 28. The repatriates, expatriates and those who answered unqualified yesses to Questions 27 and 28 and who had not intelligence record were not given hearings. These hearings were to determine the loyalty of the questionable group.

Some of the appointed personnel who questioned the evacuees were prejudiced against evacuees in general. Others were particularly prejudiced against the Kibei and Buddhists. Such questions as, "Why aren't you a Christian?" were asked. Thus, since these hearings lacked democratic judicial procedure they were generally poorly conducted.

The purpose of segregation was to weed out the disloyal among the evacuees and incarcerate them for the duration of the war in the Tule Lake Center. Immediately upon the outbreak of the war the Federal Bureau of Investigation did just that. Could it be that the FBI was so incompetent that the WRA was able to uncover 18,000 additional disloyal that the FBI could not apprehend? Surely to assume such to be true would be an indictment against the FBI. If such were true, how many more disloyal were there in Hawaii and in the unevacuated sections of the United States? What then is true? What does the WRA mean by disloyalty?

The truth of the matter is that registration was not an adequate means of determining loyalty or disloyalty. Over 60 per cent of the segregates are American citizens who have never been to Japan. Most of them went to Tule Lake because their parents went there. And most of the parents who went to Tule Lake, in fact, most of the people in Tule Lake have no active disloyalty against the United States. Many of them answered as they did because they wanted to protest against the mistreatment they went through in evacuation and in the assembly and relocation centers. Practical considerations as where best they might earn a living after the war were predominant factors. Another determinant was what one's friends were going to do. It is not difficult to see the reason for this. Evacuation left many evacuees propertyless and with little funds. Friends can at least help each other out. But the most important determinant was the fact that the Government of the United States through its army carried out evacuation. If the Government in which they had put so much faith could do such a thing, after they had been law-abiding taxpayers for the past thirty years. or so, then this country must certainly dislike the evacuees. Such an act seemed to imply to the evacuees that they would not have any more future in this country. The Issei had put a lot of faith in the fact that their offspring were American Citizens, but even that fact did not prevent the Government from evacuating the Nisei.

What made matters worse was that in the assembly and relocation centers, evacuees did not have much say-so as to how the community was to be operated. The living quarters were crowded with as many as five sleeping in a twenty by twenty-five feet room. No running water in the rooms or private lavatory. Poor quality food that was prepared by mass cooking so that one had to eat what was dished out. Month average pay of 16 dollars a month for a 44 hour week and the presence of some appointed personnel who were prejudiced against evacuees. It is little wonder that the evacuees adjusted to the situation as they did.

What should be obvious from all this is the fact that registration was unfair. Any group that were treated in a like

manner as the evacuees have been would have reacted with more aggressive protest and activities which could easily be rationalized as disloyal. And the proof of all this is the difference in the treatment and conduct of the Japanese in Hawaii. Any student of the two groups would admit that the Japanese in America are more Americanized as a group than those in Hawaii. Why, if this true, are there more "disloyal" in America? Could it be that the more Americanized a group is the more it tends to be disloyal? Or did evacuation have something to do with it? The fact of the matter is that evacuation was not necessary. If it were necessary, then the Japanese in Hawaii would have been evacuated first. If it were necessary, then the Japanese on the Pacific Coast would not have been allowed to be evacuated first. If it were necessary, then the Japanese on the Pacific Coast would not have been allowed to be free for over three months after the outbreak of the war. And if it is granted that evacuation was not necessary, then all that followed--registration, segregation, and resettlement would have been unnecessary.