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NOTES ON THE POSTON PROJECT

John F. Embree (Phoenix Sept. 9, 1942)

CAMP CONDITIONS

Poston, like Gila River, is located in the middle of an Arizona desert. There are two minor differences. Poston has an occasional growth of mesquite trees instead of cactus and Poston has more dust, if that is possible, than Gila.

The relocation center at Poston is broken up into three units, two of 5,000 and one of 10,000. Camps one and two are pretty well settled, while camp three is still receiving people.

There is much more <sup>living</sup> space at Poston. There is in Camp one (10,000) a recreation hall in each block, a public library occupying a whole barrack, a beauty parlor and barber occupying a whole barrack, a store occupying a whole barrack as well as a branch store. There is a special building for the fire department and another for the police department. Both these organizations are patterned in imitation of small town institutions. The police department has a jail, a police car and a series of special subdivisions like a regular police office. As might be expected, the police are generally unpopular in Poston (in contrast to the wardens in Gila). All police are Japanese Americans. They are accused by other evacuees



of wasting time riding around in the police car.

The library is run by an evacuee woman (Mrs. Ohta) who was formerly a librarian in Los Angeles. It has around 5,000 books and a growing membership now totaling about 939 adults and 1,039 juniors (as of September 7). Most of the books were donated, but some have been purchased and are lent on a rental basis. What income the library has comes from five cents a day fines on overdue books.

There is a Buddhist Church with three altars, one for Shinshu, one for Zen, and one for Shingon. The Sunday service is a compromise of all three sects, but each month there is one orthodox service for each sect.

Between many of the barracks are vegetable gardens. Many of these are individual but in at least one block the vegetable gardens form a communal enterprise. One man from each house helped to spade up the ground. Some of the seed was given from government sources and some was purchased. Irrigation ditches flow through the camp and can be let into the block gardens at will. This creates a series of narrow earth walkways reminiscent of paddy fields in Japan.

There is considerable home decoration of houses with wooden porches, roofs, and boardwalks made by evacuees. Some of these entrance ways are constructed like a Japanese genkan.

A shibai platform has been erected and plays are occasionally given here. One of the first was the 47 ronin.



One or two sumo rings have also been erected. There is also a boxing club. But the major sport is baseball with 85 organized teams all told, both men's and women's clubs. Some of the men's teams are very superior. The Mojave Indian's prize ball team played them a game and was beaten 29 to 0. As a result the Mojaves have no love for the evacuees.

Some good bands have been formed and dances are frequently given.

A newspaper has been established with press offices in all three camps. An adobe press club is in process of building. All this activity as well as a number of others has been stimulated by Norris James, WRA reports man.

Among the numerous social clubs is a Kamaaina club made up of people from Hawaii.

A park called Wade Head Park after the project director has been made at one end of camp one. Here a little shade is available among the mesquite trees and here is one place where a little stunted romance can take place. It is said by a Japanese informant that romance in Poston is shortlived, and people do not like to get married here, having such an uncertain future.

Agriculture is less well developed at Poston than at Gila due partly to the illness of the agricultural director and partly to the fact that the raw desert had to be subjugated here whereas lands already tilled were available at Gila.



A community council has been set up and block managers' meetings are regular occurrences. The council has, among other things, investigated alleged irregularities in the hospital and in the commissary. The report on the hospital contained serious charges and was given to the project director and not made public. According to some evacuees it resulted in the dismissal of the head doctor -- according to some of the administration he left because he was drafted.

The investigation of the commissary is incomplete since the administration refused to allow the committee to examine the books. This of course only confirmed the suspicion that the chief steward is engaged in or in collusion with graft in connection with the food and milk supply.

The food of the evacuees is definitely poor, lacking in fresh vegetables, and most unappetizing. At one lunch I ate at a mess hall the food consisted of canned peas, lima beans and corned beef mixed, bread and butter. That is all; there was neither a drink nor a dessert nor a salad.

There is a sharp contrast between evacuee food and evacuee accommodations on the one hand and administration food and accommodations on the other. The administration live in cheery white frame houses, the walls are lined and sealed in contrast to the bare tar-papered barracks of the evacuees. The staff has maid service and towels are changed



daily. The food is better and more plentiful. It is served in an administrative dining room by young Japanese American girls.

#### ATTITUDES

Poston is more settled and more developed along certain lines than Gila River. However, there is a bigger gap between administrators and evacuees, together with a more marked paternalistic attitude on the part of the latter.

The race issue has been accentuated by the dining room refusing to serve evacuee guests brought in once or twice by individuals of the staff. This refusal to serve Japanese extends even to the sculptor, Isamu Noguchi, who is half Irish and who is in the center voluntarily to do what he can to help his fellow Japanese-Americans. This rule, like many at Poston, is explained by saying it is an Army regulation.

Among the people of the center, anxieties are plentiful, about food, about the hospital, about their own future. One strong fear is that of dying in the center and being buried in Poston's desert graveyard -- delicately called Memorial Park. There is also the fear on the part of the older people that their children will lose their morals.

While housing is not so crowded as at Gila, still there are plenty of cases of two families in one apartment



and as at Gila there is absolutely no place where a man or woman may be alone to attend to personal needs, let alone two people being together by themselves without everyone knowing about it. As can be readily imagined, feminine hygiene involving a douche is strongly inhibited. Personal living standards in Poston as in Gila are bound to take a sharp drop as a result of living in these conditions of overcrowding and utter lack of privacy.

Evacuee attitudes are all in all about the same here as at Gila. Young Japanese Americans cannot see why, as American citizens, they should be put in a concentration camp. Some of them are bitter on the subject. Many are thrown back on the older generation. There is a pervading fear of what the future holds in store for them. The limited liberties they enjoy are distrusted. A typical attitude in meetings is to turn down proposals on the theory that if they are carried out the army will take away what little freedom they have. One reaction on the part of educated Japanese Americans is that the camp liberties have been given so the evacuees can hang themselves. For example, in giving religious liberty, the whites can then point to Buddhist developments as an argument that Japanese are unassimilable and should be shipped back to Japan. One curious result is an emphasis on Christian Sunday schools.

A contrary reaction also occurs, however, when young



people formerly Christian turn to Buddhism feeling that Christianity, which they identify with American democracy, has betrayed them.

An obvious trend in both Gila and Poston is the Japanization of the American evacuees as a result of living in a concentration center made up exclusively of Japanese. The former associations with whites <sup>are</sup> ~~is~~ gone, identification with America is blighted, and the large numbers of older Japanese form a constant pressure to identify themselves socially as well as racially with the Japanese. Many young people who never did this before are now proud to do so by present circumstances. Many older Japanese on the other hand, as a result of not being able to pursue their own individual careers as they did before, and being forced to live along certain American patterns are perhaps becoming more Americanized. But the net result is more serious for nisei than for issei because issei presumably will soon die off, but the nisei have a future in this country which is being seriously jeopardized by the present mode of life. This trend also has its anecdote. A child, after a few days residence in the center, said, "Mama, I want to go back home now. I don't like Japan."

Miss Findlay of community services reports some instances which reflect attitudes. On a picnic of 50 or 60 people which was organized a few days ago by Norris James, a boy was told of a law against picking cactus.



He replied, "What can they do to me? They can't fine me because I only have 40 cents a day. They can't put me in prison for I am already there." A girl taken into Parker on a trip said "Now I know what a bird feels like when let out of a cage."

Incidentally there appears to be a freer policy of taking people out of the center at Poston. Together with this is <sup>a custom</sup> policy of picking up evacuee pedestrians and giving them lifts, something not done at Gila. Local variations in custom such as this are likely to develop with time giving to each project its own cultural character.

There is a preponderance of administrative staff, mostly in the Indian Service. Whereas Gila is understaffed, Poston is overstaffed. As one Japanese-American wryly put it, there is an expert for every evacuee. The educated young people especially resent being guinea pigs. They also resent the patronizing attitude of the staff. Many evacuees resent the association of Poston with the Indian Service, as they feel that they are being treated like Indians on a reservation.

An example of how unconsciously this Indian Reservation attitude comes over people is a suggestion made one day in the staff dining hall that a curio store should be set up to sell trinkets made by evacuees, "Young men make such nice necklaces and things for girls out of seeds, tooth brush ends, etc. . ."



The democratic edifice set up by the staff in the camp resembles that of a high school -- i.e. it is pseudo-democratic and all the important decisions are pushed through by administration people.

Staff people call the center a town or village and speak of going "down in the village" from the administration buildings. Another staff attitude is that Poston is to remain as is for the duration and evacuees are advised not to hope they can leave during the war.

#### DOCUMENTATION

Documentation is very fully carried out at Poston. The Reports man, Norris James, is keeping a file of all local publications and as many reports as he can lay his hands on. He also has taken the trouble to obtain some interviews with evacuees from Salinas. These last were so bitter he has kept them in a private file.

Dr. Alec Leighton and Ned Spicer as a Bureau of Sociological Research are making a large scale study of the whole project, collecting minutes of block managers meetings, reports of the administrative staff, interview material and other data. They are also much concerned with recording both evacuee and administrative attitudes. If John Collier agrees, Dr. Leighton is willing to send to WRA copies of all the wider aspects of his documentation.

Dr. Thomas of California also has a representative here, Dr. Tamie Tsuchiyama. She is also working with Dr. Leighton.



Miss Nell Findlay is keeping records of her social work. Dr. Miles Carey, head of Education, intends to keep extensive documentation. They and other administrative officials have expressed a willingness to cooperate in documentation if they can get enough paper and typewriters. The paper shortage is felt by all the staff at Poston.



## THE HUMAN EQUATION IN RELOCATION

### The Problems of Teachers in Relocation Centers

April, 1943

by John Embree

The War Relocation Authority has just passed its first birthday. This is a good time to look back and take stock of what has occurred to all of us during the past year, and in the light of what has gone before, to foresee what is likely to come in the future. In education, as in other aspects of the program, a great deal of attention was paid in the early stages to the material problems of finding buildings in which to teach, acquiring text books, and locating teachers. It is consequently true, though perhaps to a less extent in education than in other fields, that the human problems, in particular the individual human problems created by relocation, have tended to be overlooked or over-generalized. There has been a tendency to take for granted that given 10,000 people and the proper mechanical facilities, that any program such as education could be almost automatically carried out. I think that by now most of us realize that this assumption is a great over-simplification of the situation. Human beings cannot be dealt with or understood in terms of cold statistics.

The way of the school teacher is hard. The way of the school teacher in a relocation center is almost impossible. To begin with, there is the basic dilemma of trying to teach American democracy to children in an undemocratic situation. Then there are the heartbreaking difficulties of teaching without text books and without school buildings. Finally, there are the pupils themselves--often absent, and when present, frequently either inattentive or rowdy.

In the face of this herculean effort, many teachers have surrendered and resigned; or they have retired into a protective shell, observing school hours and so fulfilling the requirements for getting a pay check, but giving no extra-curricular effort to the problems of the schools. They may quiet their consciences with the comforting words that since the situation and the students are impossible, there is no use trying to do anything about it.

But is it really as bad as all this? American school teachers have always had to carry the torch of democratic ideals in the face of undemocratic practice in certain areas of, or by certain groups of people in the United States. As far as housing is concerned, the pioneer school-maams did much with very little. They had a strong faith in the goodness of what they taught.

Finally, there is the problem of the children themselves--can they be taught, can their behavior and attitudes be improved? I think they can. But in order to do so, it is necessary to know what lies behind their present attitudes and those of their parents in order to discover just what it is that makes them behave as they do.

There are three important aspects to be considered in regard to the people now in relocation centers: (1) the experiences they have undergone in pre-evacuation days and in assembly centers; (2) the experiences and events of relocation center life; and (3) ideas and anxieties as to the future outside of relocation centers. All three of these things, the past, the present, and the future contribute toward the attitudes and behavior of each individual now in a center. When someone, for instance, questions the desirability of leaving a relocation center for a job outside, he may be raising the question on the basis of previous experiences in California, or on the basis of having become adjusted to the sheltered life of a relocation center, or finally, he may be worried about his chances of success on the outside in time of war. As a matter of fact, probably all three of these things lie behind the reluctance to relocate indicated by his questions. It is



worth looking back, therefore, at some of the experiences these people have gone through as a result of the attack on Pearl Harbor. The remembrance of things past may help to explain the existence of things present.

#### Pre-Evacuation Days

When the news of Pearl Harbor broke, everyone in America was shocked almost to the point of disbelief. The Japanese people on the West Coast were not only shocked but also fearful. The Japanese-American war which had been discussed so often, always with the hope that it would never occur, had finally come. What would happen now. What would be the effect on the Japanese in America of this war? On the whole, it is probable that many of the older people, as nationals of Japan, expected that some sort of action might be taken against them. Young Americans, on the other hand, thought that by showing their loyalty by volunteering, buying war bonds, and aiding the war effort, their citizenship rights would be recognized.

During the early weeks following Pearl Harbor, nothing very much of a violent nature occurred. The Federal Bureau of Investigation arrested a number of people and this seemed to take care of most people's fears in regard to any danger from sabotage or fifth column activity. But many things occurred quietly which shocked the Nisei. They were dropped from Civil Service jobs, they were classified by their draft boards as 4-C (enemy alien), and still worse, some who had already been inducted were discharged. Thus they were cut off from showing their loyalty in any effective way to the country of their birth.

Then a month or six weeks after Pearl Harbor, rumors began to float in from Hawaii about sabotage in the Islands, rumors brought back by evacuee Navy wives, newspapermen and others. Although these were later denied by military and civil officials in Hawaii, the denials never caught up with the rumors and many Californians became very agitated by them. At the same time the Japanese armies made rapid progress in Southeast Asia and there were many people who feared a similar offensive against the West Coast. Added to these factors, there was, of course, the existence of a number of special anti-Oriental pressure groups which had existed for some time before the war. They, together with certain newspaper editors and columnists, began agitation for some sort of evacuation.

From the point of view of the Japanese, an initial fear of drastic action against them had been allayed during the first few weeks of quietness, then this was followed by new anxieties as the result of the agitation for evacuation and the uncertainty as to what the government might do next. These were finally resolved for them by the evacuation order of General DeWitt in March.

#### Assembly Center Period

A hundred thousand people cannot suddenly move from one part of the country to another without arousing all sorts of social and economic dislocation. After about 8,000 people had moved inland, the situation became critical because of violent resistance to the migrants on the part of people in Utah, Arizona and elsewhere. As a result, it became necessary for the government to provide some sort of protection and support for the people evacuated from the restricted areas. Thus came into existence the relocation centers, not as a part of any preconceived plan, but as an expedient to meet a special emergency situation. Since no such centers had been planned, and so were not in existence, it became necessary to locate sites and to construct buildings. In the meantime, temporary assembly centers were created on the West Coast. These assembly centers, as you know, were extremely temporary in nature, being simply reconstructed race tracks and fairgrounds. However, it took longer to construct the relocation centers than was originally expected, and as a result, thousands of people lived in these temporary centers for periods of months instead of periods of weeks.



What were these assembly centers like? How did they effect the people living in them? Let us look back to those early days of relocation. First of all, the Nisei who had felt that whatever happened to their parents, they themselves as citizens were safe from any evacuation ruling, found their sense of security badly shocked. However, most of them were told, and believed, that they could best demonstrate their loyalty by doing just as the government said without question; that for the good of themselves and for the peace and security of the West Coast, they should leave the area and settle in new self-supporting communities further inland. But the assembly centers turned out to be very different places than they had been painted. Thousands of people were housed in cramped quarters, guarded by fences and military guards. Some people were lodged in quarters that had been formerly used as stables. The Japanese had been told they should be guarded for their own safety, but most of the people in California, and certainly the guards themselves, once the assembly centers came into existence, regarded the guarding as a means of restraint rather than a means of protection. People of all social classes were thrown together. Japanese who had rarely seen so many other Japanese found themselves in a crowded community with thousands of others of their own race. Privacy was practically non-existent and all of the ordinary standards of American living to which young Japanese-Americans had been educated were lost. Visits between people in the assembly centers and their friends from the outside were very difficult and hedged about by many restrictions. In some centers, for instance, a guard was always present during such a visit--the assembly center resident on one side of the fence, the visitor on the other.

All of this, shocking as it was to the people involved, would not have been so bad if it had been only for a few days; but due to the length of time required to locate sites for relocation centers and to construct the necessary facilities, this assembly center waiting period lasted from March to September and October. The experiences of assembly center life color the thinking of every evacuee. The minds of young Americans as they lie in bed before going to sleep, go over the bitter experiences of induction to the assembly centers over and over again. The disorganizing effects of this period, the long lapse without any regular school system, the affronts to self-respect, form part of the personality structure of every pupil and parent with whom relocation center teachers come in contact.

#### Relocation Centers

Then finally, after long waiting and uncertainty as to just when and where they would be moved, the people come to the relocation centers. High hopes had been built up by some people as to what it would be like in these new communities, hopes that were doomed to disappointment. In most of the relocation centers, people were sent from assembly centers before housing was completed and before plumbing and other facilities had been finished. This meant inevitable confusion and overcrowding during the initial stages of relocation center life. Thus the early inhabitant staff and residents alike, underwent a very difficult and frustrating experience in almost every center. This applied to schools as well as to housing and employment. There were not enough school teachers, there was inadequate space for classrooms, and in general, the whole school program, as you no doubt remember, was in a badly confused state during most of last summer.

A number of problems have arisen in connection with the schools in the centers which were rather unexpected. Back in California, the social controls in most Japanese communities were rather strong. There was considerable pride in regard to scholastic achievement and school attendance, and it was a rare child of Japanese ancestry who was ever absent from school or careless in his study habits. In the relocation centers, on the other hand, it is all too common a complaint of teachers that their students are inattentive, that many of them do not attend classes regularly, and that classroom discipline is a problem. The question arises as to why this contrast should be so. I think we can find the answer partly by referen

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to the events of evacuation and partly by looking at social conditions in the centers themselves.

First of all, the organized community sentiment which existed in the Japanese communities before the war has been badly broken down in a number of ways. Many of the Japanese leaders have been interned; Japanese neighborhood areas have been broken up and have not been recreated in the relocation centers; people of diverse social backgrounds are housed together so that there is no general public opinion in regard to what is good and what is bad in child behavior; and parental influence over children has been weakened through mess hall eating. Many of the children, due to the frequent upsets in manner of life caused by moving from Restricted Area I to Restricted Area 2, and then later from Restricted Area 2 to the assembly center, and finally from the assembly center to relocation center, have lost their sense of stability and find it very difficult to settle down to the routine of regular school work. In the course of assembly center life many of the children acquired new attitudes of opposition to and suspicion of the authorities, attitudes in rather striking contrast to pre-evacuation days. These anti-administration attitudes have been carried over to the teacher so that, whereas in California a student usually had considerable respect for his teacher, in the relocation center he is likely to have an uncooperative attitude.

And then there is the situation within the school system itself on the relocation center. Frequently the schools are simply made-over recreation halls or barracks not especially adapted to classroom teaching. The school is not clearly enough set off physically from the rest of the center so that there is a marked lack of school atmosphere. Due to the limited opportunities for a livelihood in the center, there is an attitude on the part of many students of "education for what?"

There is a prevalent idea that one does not accomplish anything in school, that there is nothing to do in school. This is partly due to lack of text books and possibly to the lack of an organized curriculum suitable to the rather special environment of the center. Then again there is a lack of the competition which was felt back in California where the good name of the Japanese community had to be kept up through the good showing made by students in school. Frequently you will find special excuses being given for lack of attendance, such as cold weather or hard seats, but these are probably rationalizations of the more basic factors which have undermined the morals of the students and the faith of parents in the value of the education their children can gain in center schools.

Considering all these facts, it is not surprising to find that despite the good school record of the Japanese in California and despite the best efforts of the superintendents of education on the various projects, we find the school teachers faced with high rates of truancy and poor discipline and really difficult problems in regard to scholastic achievement and the development of a school spirit.

Added to these general problems present in all centers, there are special problems met on individual projects and by individual teachers. Among other things there is the problem of the attitudes and behavior of the teachers themselves. There are some of us who, through our understanding of the human trials and tribulations of relocation, tend to overflow with a sympathy akin to pity. No one likes to be pitied and certainly not the Japanese-Americans. Thus a teacher who is too emotional in her sympathies may create attitudes of resentment on the part of her pupils because they mistake her kind intentions for gratuitous pity. Then there is the other extreme of a teacher who seems to have no understanding whatsoever of what her pupils and their families have been through, a person perhaps tinged with racial bias who takes unsympathetic attitude toward her students. Such a teacher, as might be expected, is not likely to obtain good results in her school.



work. You may well ask what then is a teacher to do? All of us are human. How can we avoid the Scylla of over-sentimentality, and at the same time not strike up against the Charybdis of hard-heartedness?

In answer to this, all I can say is that most children, regardless of ancestry, once they get to know their teacher will forgive many errors if they are convinced that the teacher has some sympathetic understanding of their problems, and at the same time "knows his stuff" in regard to what he is teaching.

Teachers have a very important function in the ~~whole~~ WRA program. In addition to teaching their children, they are an essential group in carrying out the national program which is today emphasizing relocation.

People in the centers live isolated from the rest of America at war. Wild rumors of life outside due to a combination of ignorance and anxiety cause many to fear leaving the center. Widespread distrust of, and lack of faith in WRA is also in part due to ignorance of its aims and purposes. School teachers should know both the content and significance of new administrative instructions as they appear, such as, for instance, the new instruction on payment of transportation. They should know about events outside that are likely to effect the future of Japanese-Americans. By Japanese tradition the teacher is expected to know everything. To do his duty properly he should at least know accurately and fully, and on time, all the new developments concerning WRA and the future of relocation.

It is up to teachers to point their pupils' thinking away from past grievances forward to future hopes. This cannot be done by denying those grievances or by calling people ungrateful for not appreciating the kindness of a government that has placed them where they are, but it can be done by showing the people--students and parents alike--that hope lies ahead, that the shock of war which placed them in centers is being overcome with the new leave program, the lifting of the Army restrictions on volunteering, the removal of Poston and Gila from the restricted area. WRA, despite frequent local contradictions, does have one increasing purpose--to restore Japanese-Americans to full participation in American life.



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WAR RELOCATION AUTHORITY  
Washington, D. C.

To WRA Staff Members

The successful administration of the WRA program, especially in the Relocation Centers, will be dependent to a great extent upon an understanding of the cultural background of the Japanese people and their American children and grandchildren. John F. Embree, who recently has assumed responsibility for documentation of the WRA program, in the Office of Reports, has conducted studies in both Japan and Hawaii, and is recognized by his colleagues as being well qualified to report on Japanese race and culture. The accompanying notes on Dealing With Japanese Americans are commended to the attention of all WRA staff members. Additional notes of similar nature will be prepared from time to time.

*D. S. Meyer*  
Director

Attachment



October 1942

## DEALING WITH JAPANESE-AMERICANS

By John F. Embree  
Documents Section, Office of Reports

### 1. Race and Culture.

The only thing evacuees in relocation centers have in common is their ancestry, i.e., their race. Because of this fact both the evacuees and members of the WRA staff are likely to assume many things to be racial which are in actual fact not racial but cultural.

What is race anyway? The basic element in race is heredity. A number of people of the same ancestry may be termed a race. Pure races, that is, large numbers of people descended from the same stock, do not exist. All present-day groups of people such as Japanese, English, Germans, Americans, are of mixed racial stock. One consequence of this is that individuals of any so-called racial group differ greatly among themselves in regard to stature, hair form, skin color, head shape, etc. This means that race can only be considered on a statistical basis. Japanese, for instance, are on the average shorter, darker-skinned and more often round-headed than are Caucasians. But individual Japanese are often taller or lighter or more long-headed than individual Caucasians with whom they may be compared.

A look around any relocation center will demonstrate these points. Some Japanese you will notice to be rather short, but every now and then you will meet a tall man; some will have the characteristic straight black hair of the "Mongol" type, but others have wavy hair; some have an epicanthic fold on the inner part of the eye opening (which partly accounts for the so-called slant eye), but many do not. Observe your Japanese acquaintances closely and you will soon have to discard any mythical "Japanese type" you have built up in your mind.

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Physical features of parents are transmitted to their children, racial types persist through generations. But cultural traits are not inherited; they are acquired through learning and education.

Thus, a Japanese born in California grows up speaking English, something his cousin in Japan may never learn. And even though he



attends a Japanese language school, he will never learn to speak Japanese properly unless he goes to Japan to live. President Roosevelt is of Dutch descent, but he cannot discourse in Dutch. To understand his personality you must know his cultural background as an American brought up in eastern New York. Mr. Willkie is of German descent, but he does not speak German, and his culturally determined personality is typically American.

Psychologists and anthropologists have made many studies in regard to intelligence and race, and temperament and race. There is general agreement that as between the major "races" of man there is no positive evidence to show that a given individual of one race may not develop as far mentally as an individual of another, given the same cultural background. Similarly, in regard to temperament, it is culture rather than race that is the predominant factor. Thus, the "lazy" Negro of rural United States is not lazy because of race but because of social status; his cousin in Nigeria is a very energetic individual and one capable of complex political development and strong individual leadership. Similarly, Japanese in California are known to be hard-working, self-sacrificing people with strong family loyalties. These useful traits are not biological and there is a real danger of their disappearing soon under relocation center conditions. (Remember, the Crow and Blackfoot Indians whose cultures stressed individual initiative and personal bravery and what has happened to these brilliant warriors under Reservation conditions where all the old cultural values have been undermined and many are today lacking in individual initiative and possessed of a typical wards-of-the-government-outlook on life.)

The importance of culture in determining behavior may be seen further in the fact that frequently you will find a young Nisei to have a similar temperament and outlook on life as yourself in contrast to his father who may appear to you to be "very Japanese." Of course, under center conditions of life, the administrator, with his security and dominant social position will have so many advantages over any Nisei, insecure as to his future, and in a subservient social position, that the two are bound to look upon problems in the center from different points of view. This social and economic difference in position should always be remembered by a "Caucasian" administrator or teacher when trying to settle some problem with an evacuee.

To Summarize:

Race is hereditary and culture acquired. Races of man today are not "pure" and there is great variability in physical appearance and intelligence within any racial group. The all important factor in determining adult behavior is early education, i.e., the cultural background of an individual. Further, even in what is regarded as one culture (e.g. American) important differences in personality develop as a result



of growth in different regional areas and in different social levels of society.

## 2. Behavior Patterns as Found Among Issei and Some Others in Relocation Centers.

In order to deal successfully with any group of people it is well to know something about them. A friendly attitude goes a long way, but that is not enough, for good will without knowledge may result in more harm than good.

The older Japanese (Issei)\* have a number of fixed ways of living together and dealing with social situations about which it is useful to know.

### The Go-Between

First of all, no Japanese (and here is meant no persons of Japanese culture) likes to meet face to face with his social equal or superior in a situation that might cause embarrassment to the latter. Instead, a go-between is preferred, some common friend who will carry the message or conduct the negotiations. In this way, if the negotiations fall through or one party has to say "No," face-to-face embarrassment is avoided. The best known example of this is in marriage where the two families involved wish to inquire into one another's social backgrounds. This, of course, could lead to considerable embarrassment and so a go-between is very convenient. Even some Japanese-Americans who object to marriage arrangements by families do like to have a friend do the proposing, John Alden style.

Similarly, if an important business deal is being carried out, negotiations are often by means of a go-between.

On a relocation center, you may find that if some program or suggestion is not liked, no one will object at first but later through some third party you will hear that there is objection to it. This is the go-between system in operation. You may often get better results in work with older evacuees by working through a go-between than by working

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\*Much has been said of the differences between Issei, Kibei, and Nisei. On the whole it is safe to assume that older Issei are Japanese in culture and outlook and younger Nisei are American in culture and outlook. (If a Nisei is bitter and anti-administration in attitude, this is simply evidence that he is American and strongly resents his loss of liberty without trial.) The Kibei, Nisei who have been educated in Japan, have been much written of as a dangerous pro-Japanese element. Probably many Kibei are culturally Japanese, but by no means all. Furthermore, some Issei, born in Japan but educated in the United States, are American in point of view. So, while Issei, Kibei and Nisei are convenient terms of classification, it is worth remembering that generalizations concerning these groups are subject to many individual exceptions.



directly, since each of you can speak more freely and express your ideas more fully to a go-between without fear of hurting anyone's feelings than if you were dealing face to face.

### Sharing Responsibility

Another characteristic of older Japanese is a desire to avoid personal responsibility for something that may make him unpopular with his associates. As a result committees are more popular than chairmen. Further, any final decision for action by a committee is usually unanimous, thus making all members equally responsible for it. If people are dissatisfied with some aspect of project life, instead of using a single go-between, a committee may be chosen and that committee will wait upon some member of the staff with its complaints or proposals.

Where a single man must serve, as in the case of block representatives, he will probably either be unanimously nominated or men will rotate in office either by resignations or through having different men elected each election.

(For a comparison, note that in Japan while a certain body of men rule Japan through the years, those who are openly and formally responsible for government change frequently. No single man stands out as responsible for government for long at a time in the manner of Hitler or Mussolini.)

### Project Head's Position

As the man responsible for the whole community, the project head in each center has great authority and prestige -- an authority and prestige recognized by the older Japanese in the same way in which they recognize the authority of a village headman.

When a new policy is announced or anything affecting the whole center is inaugurated, it should be made by the project head himself. Furthermore, the project head should make it a point to from time to time meet with the people of the center (or of each camp where there is more than one in a center) in order to discuss new developments, answer questions and so make sure that people understand. Only in this way will the people believe what is said, because it comes from the highest authority. Talks of this sort by the project director should be as specific as possible -- if necessary deal with such seemingly minor but very real things as toilets, soap supply, food distribution, etc., if these questions are raised by the evacuees. Only the project head can effectively kill some rumors. Furthermore, this first-hand word from the highest authority should be given not once a year, but at least once a month. Such duties cannot be deputized. The project head, like the



village headman, is expected to be responsible for taking an active interest in the welfare of his community by traditional Japanese custom. (Resentment of questions implying criticism of administration is not, of course, the best means of answering them, or solving the underlying problems and anxieties that give rise to them.)

After a new policy has been explained by the project head to responsible evacuees involved, later discussions of it may be made by the appropriate division head.

### Modes of Employment

Employment problems form an important aspect of center life and need patient and personal attention by conscientious administrators. With Japanese (as indeed with any people), to simply ask for a turnout of 300 men on a work project is not likely to be successful. Instead, first the nature of the work must be considered, then a number of experienced evacuees contacted. To them the nature and purpose of the work must be explained. When they understand what it is all about, they can suggest the people to be employed on it, and make useful suggestions on carrying out the project. In this way a corps of workers with close rapport and good morale can be built up. If any change in conditions of work is made, this also should be carefully explained to and fully understood by the work leaders who can in turn explain it to their work crews.

Sitdowns, strikes and riots are not the result of cussedness, but are the results of misunderstandings and dissatisfactions; in the centers they are likely to be accentuated by anxieties, but the administrator who is careful to develop understanding by the evacuees of the programs he proposes to initiate probably will be favored with their cooperation.

### Anxieties

All evacuees in relocation centers have an uneasy feeling of insecurity that determines many of their actions. This insecurity is due to the war, and especially to the relocation program whereby families often had to move, not once but twice or three times, from, say, Berkeley to Zone Two, from Zone Two to an assembly center, from an assembly center to a relocation center. All of this in a few weeks or months. The newspapers carry stories of threats to deport Japanese after the war, threats to deprive Nisei of citizenship, threats to prevent the return of evacuees to California after the war.

WRA policy in the relocation center differs from WCCA policy, and this WRA policy itself has often changed since it was first established.



Small wonder, then, that an evacuee wonders "What next?" He is worried and insecure in regard to what will happen after the war, what will become of his children's manners and morals as a result of life in center barracks, with the common mess halls and lavatories; he is worried about tomorrow's food, tomorrow's health, tomorrow's children.

It is this basic insecurity and multitude of anxieties that cause so many alarmist rumors to fly through the centers and cause so many people to become apathetic toward work.

For the present, the best way to deal with this situation is for everyone from project head down to make sure that he understands and has explained clearly and definitely just what any new policy or new activity means in terms of life in the center. Furthermore, within his sphere of activity, each staff member should make every effort to know personally and well as many evacuees of as many social types as he can. Only in this way can some of the fears and rumors prevalent among the evacuees be brought to light and so killed off just as darkness-loving bacteria die when exposed to sunshine.

#### Food

In regard to food, any regular eating in common mess halls is unsatisfactory and the food is inevitably going to be criticized whether it is good or not. But it is important to realize the great importance of the slightest change in diet to the evacuees and that anything that even looks like unfair practice by the chefs and the chief steward is going to cause a great deal of dissatisfaction. Unless the chief steward has the confidence of his cooks who in turn have the respect of the blocks, food riots or strikes are going to occur sooner or later on the project.

Most of these last suggestions all add up to the same thing, a need for staff members to be well acquainted with evacuees with whom they are concerned so that they can observe any growth of a critical situation and deal with it on a personal basis and in a peaceful manner before it gets out of hand.

#### Evacuee Attitudes

There are certain attitudes among evacuees which are fairly common. First there is a tendency to take sides in the war, to be pro- or anti-axis. These two attitudes are often related to pro- and anti-project administration attitudes. Thus, the more successful the staff is in arousing the confidence of evacuees in its integrity, the more converts to the anti-axis group among evacuees.



On the whole older single men who are aliens and who have few ties in America are most likely to be pro-axis in any aggressive way such as criticising pro-American Nisei and telling them their American citizenship is useless.

Japanese born in this country but educated in Japan, especially for several years and since 1935 are, like the old bachelors, a group likely to actively favor Japan.

Parents of children who have made some success in American life are more likely to be neutral in action if not in attitude. Their loyalties are likely to be divided, since, up to December 7 at any rate, they realized that their children's future lay in America and America had given them a chance to rise in the world such as they would never have had in Japan.

Nisei, American born and American educated, are today of many attitudes. First there are the very pro-American. These people are easy to deal with but are often regarded as apple polishers and do not always have the respect of other evacuees, either Issei or Nisei. A large number are normal Americans who rather resent being transported and locked up just because their parents were born in Japan. A small minority are, like some Kibei, actively pro-axis.

On the whole most older married evacuees will cooperate with any reasonable program of center management since they want center conditions to be peaceful and to improve rather than deteriorate. However, it is too much to expect Japanese who could never become citizens to actively participate in programs to celebrate the Four Freedoms or Independence Day. A democracy of works rather than of words is what will be most effective in influencing their attitudes.

Among Nisei, due to inactivity, many problems are going to arise in connection with work, with self-government and with sex which have nothing to do with pro- or anti-axis attitudes, but if handled without human understanding may lead to anti-administration attitudes which because of center social conditions might soon be transferred to anti-American attitudes. This would be a tragedy for the individuals concerned and an indication of failure in the WRA.

To Summarize:

Older Japanese have a number of patterns of behavior, a knowledge of which is useful in project administration. First, there is the desire to avoid face-to-face embarrassment through the use of a go-between. Second, there is a desire to avoid personal responsibility (and so invoke censure against oneself) and a consequent tendency toward group responsibility and, in committees, unanimous decisions, and rotating office



holding. Thirdly, there is the tradition of accepting as true what the government head (in this case the project head) says in regard to government policy -- but to be a successful government head one must give out the policy personally and so accept responsibility for it.

Finally, in all dealings with evacuees it is well to be aware of the anxieties and attitudes which are prevalent in the center among all groups; and the need to become personally acquainted with these in order to lessen tensions that might lead to serious consequences.