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UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
WAR RELOCATION AUTHORITY  
Tule Lake Center  
Newell, California

*Drayton*  
*Green*

FILES

Sample Interviews on the Lifting of the Ban

(The nine interviews appended indicate popular Nisei sentiment which has now crystallized in connection with the news of revocation of the exclusion orders. In reading them, a number of cautions should be kept in mind: (1) The group selected was in the classification of older Nisei or Kibei; (2) Their sentiments as here expressed were "public sentiments", not private opinions, since they were encouraged in the interviews to tell what they thought the older Nisei of their own age grouping, or even the Issei of the Center, thought of the possible effects of the Army revocation on Center attitudes and sentiments; (3) The same interviews, and interviews with other Nisei in our files, do not tally with the opinions of all of these persons as expressed privately to the Analyst. Some of them even harbored notions of themselves relocating. Thus, the interviews, ~~which~~ are representative of the more moderate, or "middle of the road" interviews in our files on this question.

The main theme which recurs almost uniformly throughout the interviews is the need for a separate policy for Tule Lake, and connected with this the shock occasioned by the intrusion of the relocation idea in what was formerly the "segregation center"



The interviews thus gear in with the present trend toward renunciation of citizenship at Tule Lake, and give the ideological back round for renunciation among Nisei: (a) The feeling of discrimination which dates back to evacuation time; (b) The fear of the outside; (c) the economic and psychological barriers to facing relocation; and (d) The decision to go abroad in the belief that "far fields are greener.")



UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
WAR RELOCATION AUTHORITY  
Tule Lake Center  
Newell, California

Community Analysis  
Section  
January 9, 1944 [53]

Interviews on the Lifting of the Ban: #1  
(Nisel; College Graduate; University of California; Economics  
and Engineering)

"With the Army action of lifting of the blanket exclusion orders for all persons of Japanese ancestry from the evacuated areas, a general policy for all relocation centers has been made public by the WRA which governs, as Dillon Myer, its director, has stated, "the final phase of the relocation program." To most of the residents at Tule Lake, the policy does not seem applicable, and a need of a separate policy for them is felt.

"The relocation program has been for those who were eligible for leave clearance and relocation. The opening of the evacuated areas for return and resettlement means only the increase in territory and wider choices in selecting communities in which to go to start anew. It does not in any way alter the eligibility for relocation, for if an individual was not considered qualified for relocation under the leave clearance procedure, his qualifications do not automatically change under the new Army ruling, any more than an inmate of an institution can be turned loose just because the fences surrounding the institution are torn down. Most of the residents at Tule Lake had either



been denied leave clearance or had disqualified themselves for leave clearance by word or act in the numerous hearings and registrations to which they had been subjected. Do they think now that the lifting of the exclusion orders "purified" them of their "sins"?

"The Army, or more specifically the Western Defense Command, has manifested the undesirability of the return of most of the younger men here at Tule Lake, the potential returnees, by arriving here almost immediately after the release of the news of the opening of the West Coast, with individual exclusion orders already made out and signed for them. The Eastern and the Southern Defense Commands collaborated with the Western Defense Command in these exclusion orders. The Midwest and the Rocky Mountain areas, not being within the jurisdiction of these commands, could not be included in these orders and so were omitted by them. Had they been under any one of these Commands, they say the exclusion orders would have, in all probability, covered them as well. The immediate action of distinguishing between the "black sheep" and the "white" proves to them that the Army considers the former to be inimical to the national defense insofar as the return to areas evacuated under past orders is concerned. These persons, so designated as "undesirables" when they faced west from the centers, cannot be "whitewashed" now and given a clean "bill of health" simply by performing an "about face" and facing the East and the "green pastures







beyond "at least to the limits of the Eastern Defense Command).

"Once upon a time, Tule Lake was called a "segregation center". If it were now placed in the same category as other centers and the same general policy made applicable to it, then, to what purpose was segregation. The mental anguish suffered in arriving at a decision to be set apart as a "pariah", the heartaches and the heartbreaks of the separation from friends and relatives, the dislocation from the smoothly established, daily functioning and routine of the center left behind, the hardship and discomforts endured in the migration to Tule Lake - are all these of no avail?

"The huge majority of the residents came to Tule Lake with the hope, expectation, and determination that their next step would be to Japan. They have no desire or intention of receiving "stop-over privileges" between here and the last stop. The experiences of evacuation, the ruthless uprooting of their lives, and the blasting of their economic foundations are so indelibly marked in their minds and memories that they have no faith nor confidence in a future in this country. No amount of persuasion or grants and assistance offers tempt them to shake off their determination of starting anew "somewhere in the Orient" where, at least, they face no handicaps of discrimination due to race or color. They came here to "sit it out" until







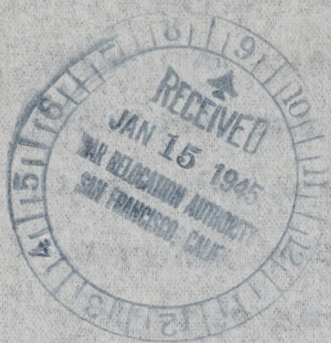
the first opportunity offered itself for their departure from this country. The lifting of the ban does not change this picture one bit. They are still here they say to "sit it out".

"Many of the Nisei refused to swear allegiance and loyalty to this country which could not be "loyal to them", its own citizens, at the time of their greatest need. They were arbitrarily adjudged "guilty" and thrown out in a supposed democracy where one is held innocent unless proven guilty. These violations of their rights as citizens, the Nisei had rammed down their throats and were made to swallow. The wound then was deep and painful, and the lifting of the ban now does not remove the ugly scar which still remains. For their "No" answer to the now famous Question No. 28, the Nisei were sent to Tule Lake.

"With the mass movements of center populations to separate "loyals" from "disloyals", with the well-engineered attendant publicity, the WRA was then able to combat the cries and the outbursts of "How do we know which ones are loyal and which ones are not?" of groups and organizations opposed to the relocation program. Tule Lake was designated the "segregation center" for the "disloyals" with no relocation program, and all non-eligibles for relocation were sent here. The opponents of the relocation program were thus effectively muzzled.

"If the segregation was made to promote public accept-

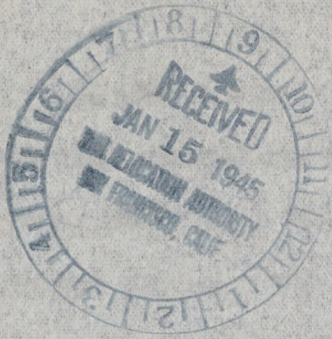






ance of the relocation program, as it seems to many, further to promote and aid "the final phase of the relocation program", segregation should be made to stand, and a definite policy governing Tule Lake as a "segregation center" should be made public immediately so that Mr. & Mrs. John Q. Pulic can be satisfied that the "disloyals" are still safe behind the "fence". To the residents, it will mean the clarification of their status, the dispelling of any doubts or the alleviation of any fears or qualms they may have through their interpretations of the broad, general policy of the WRA in regard to its liquidation program."







UNITED STATES  
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War Relocation Authority  
Tule Lake Center  
Newell, California

Community Analysis Section, January 11, 1945

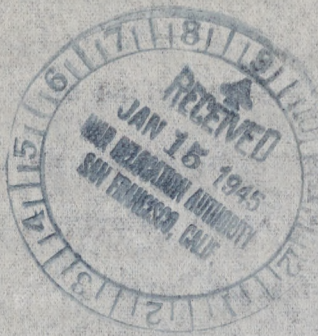
INTERVIEWS ON THE LIFTING OF THE BAN: #2  
(older Nisei, family man, well-read, and intelligent in reactions to center life; born Hawaii, but evacuated from the mainland.)

"With one grand stroke by the U. S. Army, all people of Japanese ancestry found themselves herded into barbed-wire enclosures called "centers." Before the echoes of evacuation had time to die away, the first exchange ship was arranged between the two warring nations and left with the diplomatic corps. Then the second exchange ship was arranged. Many thousands of evacuees were anxious to take that boat; many went as far as New York but could not make the trip because they found out at the last minute that they were on the substitute list. Repatriation was later made possible for the evacuees. The sudden announcement of revocation of the exclusion order by the Army will start still another movement of the evacuees.

"The authorities knew better than to assume that these thousands of applicants could be "sent home" on the limited space of the few exchange ships that might be arranged in the midst of war. Rather, people say it was a pretext on their part to find out how many Nisei were 'disloyal' in spite of their citizenship rights. As for the Issei, it should not be surprising if many wished to return to Japan inasmuch as the naturalization laws of America prohibited them from ever becoming citizens.

"Having processed and roughly ascertained the number of Nisei professing to be disloyal to U. S. A. by means of registration on Form 128 and by the repatriation and expatriation forms, the authorities decided upon a policy to re-evacuate these people into a center designated as a camp for disloyals only -- a segregation





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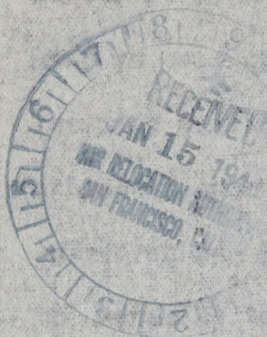


center. Tule Lake was the one selected.

"After segregation, the population of Tule Lake was made up of people who supposedly had one thought in mind, to return to Japan after the war and if possible even during the war. They were happy at the news that Japanese schools would be permitted at the residents' expense in the new center. The children, by their own choice, could attend Japanese school only or both the English and Japanese schools. This was a special privilege accorded the segregees and it was grand of the U. S. Government to take this broad view that the children should be given a chance to prepare themselves for life in Japan and the 'Japanese way of life'. In order to adjust to the new life what was most essential according to their point of view was to be able to read, write and speak Japanese. This was one of the main reasons why segregees, parents and children alike, thought that Tule Lake was to be "their home" for the duration of the war. They knew very well that they would be fenced in and would have to confine their activities within the barbed-wire enclosure of Tule Lake because they had expressed their desire to go back to Japan and become loyal subjects of the Emperor.

"To summarize, these segregees thought of themselves as the disloyal group of Japanese in America who would not pledge allegiance to America but whose loyalty remained with another nation present hostile to the U. S. A.; citizens of Japanese ancestry, the Nisei, openly indicated disloyalty to the U. S. A. The thought foremost in the minds of the vast majority of these people has been to return to Japan, the country of their supposed choice; and that it would be unwise on the part of America to draft such Nisei. It cannot and should not be expected, they say, that they would uphold the American principles and ideals as the lads of the 100th Infantry did; that the "excludes" could not be expected to work in most of the essential war industries in the same spirit as the loyal ones except as to earning a living.

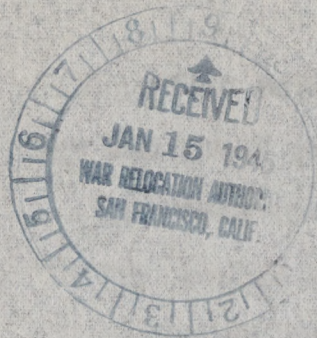






"special consideration they feel should be given to a group of people such as the residents of Tule Lake. The revocation of the Army Exclusion Order affects Tule Lake also. The government took pains to put through the sieve and to examine critically and minutely "the good" and "the bad", the desirables and the undesirables. Those so designated as belonging to the undesirable group they hold should be treated with special consideration. A special program and policy to govern them for the duration of the war would not be amiss."







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INTERVIEWS ON THE LIFTING OF THE BAN: #3  
( Nisei: College at U. of C.; evacuated from Berkeley)

"In September of 1943, when the WRA proclaimed the Tule Lake Center as the place where the disloyal Japanese were to be confined, most persons came here with the idea that they would remain in camp for the duration of the war and then be sent to Japan, or, if granted priority by the Japanese government, be repatriated to Japan during the war.

"Talk of the Army lifting the ban on the West Coast did not interest the people in Tule too much; however, when the exclusion was actually lifted and Tule Lake looked upon as just another relocation center uneasiness and doubt became prevalent in the minds of several residents.

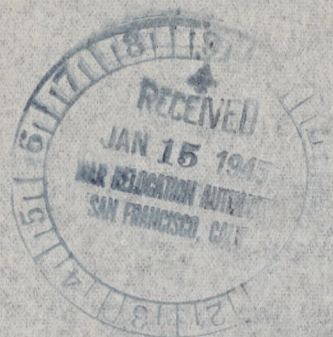
"When the Army started its interviews a couple of weeks back and it became evident that draft-age males and younger Issei (say below 50) were being called, asked a few questions, and then in most cases informed that they were excluded from the Western Defense, Eastern Defense and the Gulf of Mexico states, various questions disturbed the people. A few were, as follows:

"It may be that we are excluded from those areas, but we can be pushed out to the middle states."

"It seems that repatriating has no effect on the order, but we still are loyal to Japan."

"I don't understand this government. Does it want disloyal







Japanese to roam the country?"

"Just where do we stand?"

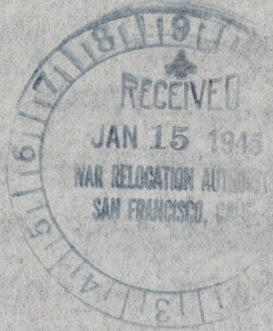
"Are they doing this to draft the men?"

"There is more worry among those who have not received a call to be interviewed. The people here are informed that those who are not called are on the "free list" or exempted and allowed to return to the West Coast at any time. However, many have not been thinking in these terms and they are concerned about the fact that although they signed papers asking to be repatriated they may be forced to leave. Then most certainly other plans will have to be made. Also, women over 18 are wondering why they were not questioned. After all, they were asked questions in everything up to now. Does this mean that there is a draft or manpower shortage?

"To ease at least the people's minds in Tule Lake, there should be a definite policy governing this camp; a policy which states whether repatriation does mean that one is disloyal and not allowed out of a center, or whether the segregation movement is a failure and that only a few will be allowed to return to Japan.

"It seems that most of the residents are still on the "fence," placed there not by our own doings but by the vague idea of the Government. Obviously, this government doesn't know what to do with us is what they are saying. If they excluded the repatriates and expatriates entirely from the United States, those in these categories would know exactly where they stand, but with the present policy everything is in turmoil."







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INTERVIEWS ON THE LIFTING OF THE BAN: #4  
(Interviewee is Nisei)

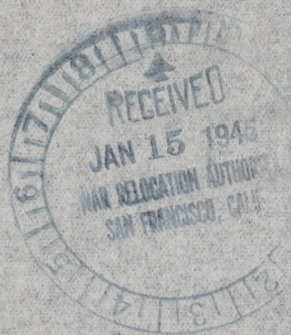
"The lifting of the West Coast Exclusion Law by the Army comes not as a fulfillment of a long cherished hope but as a profound shock to many center residents. When evacuation was ordered on grounds of military necessity, the majority, if not all of the Japanese on the West Coast, interpreted this whether rightly or wrongly as meaning war-duration.

"With this impression they made plans to stay in the centers for the duration. The Issei welcomed this, but the Nisei chafed under the restriction. When the leave clearance hearings were inaugurated, many Nisei took advantage of this and relocated to the Midwest, Rocky Mountain, and other regions. In most cases, younger brothers and sisters and parents were left behind. In a few cases, whole families were later reunited, but on the whole the relocatees were only able to find subsistence for themselves. When 'Questionnaire Form 128' had to be filled out, another physical division of the Japanese took place. Apparently, those who stayed in the other centers as a result chose the 'American way' of life. For them, the closing of the relocation center would seem to be a natural course, though a hard one. But to those who came to Tule Lake, it seems grossly unfair to classify them again in the same category as those in other centers. It was thought that segregation was going to settle once and for all who were going to be 'fenced up' for the duration. Since coming here to Tule Lake, along with those who had already taken the step, many mentally made the final break with this country by asking for repatriation or expatriation. The renunciation of citizenship bill is seen in the same light. Since it is currently believed that those who



renounce their citizenship will be the only ones who may be allowed to stay in this center, many are taking steps to do so. After stating flatly their disloyalty to the U. S., asking for repatriation, and furthermore, renouncing their citizenship, it would seem an unwise decision on the part of the WRA to end the story by closing this center which is exactly what most people fear. Though there would be no question of anything like sabotage from this group, should they be forced out, recrimination from the American public is their chief expectation. If the American public knew that avowed 'disloyal Japs' were being 'let loose' in the country, the whole Japanese resettlement problem would, they say, be jeopardized. When asked if Tule Lake should be classified with other centers, one segregationist replied, 'Tule Lake should be a refuge for repatriates'. Another added, 'because we are pro-Japanese'. Another stated, 'We have nothing to go back to. We're staking our future in Japan and we want nothing to do with this country.' This seems to be the temper of most residents at this time."







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INTERVIEW ON THE LIFTING OF THE BAN: #5  
(Kibel: U.C.L.A. graduate)

"The pertinent facts of the case are: The ten relocation centers including Tule Lake, were points of confinement for the Japanese-Evacuees removed from the Western Defense Zone in 1942. On Registration Day of March 1943, these people were compelled under a federal law to take a loyalty test. Those pledging allegiance to an alien government and non-committals were sent to Tule Lake Center, which was designated by the government for "disloyals." Shortly thereafter, legal procedures for expatriation and repatriation were effected. The very recent Nationality Renunciation Act passed by the Congress, is at present in the hearing-stages.

"These overt actions taken by the government point to an uncompromising conclusion that Tule Lake Center is a Segregation Center. No other conclusions can be drawn from the given facts. But in the event that in spite of these actions, the government deems Tule Lake a relocation center, we come to a strong conclusion. We have been human pawns - a sounding board if you please, to be tested and be teased. If this attitude is real, appalling as it may be, we are powerless. We can do nothing.

"Placing confidence in the belief that the government has integrity, I can list other elements that differentiate Tule Lake from the other centers. Immediately after the loyalty test, the disloyals were denied



leave permits from the center thus curtailing the last civil rights enjoyed by the evacuees. Very recently a number of Nisei were called for Selective Service from Tule Lake Center, and the judicial decree was to the effect that they, under the circumstances, were not liable to the laws of the Selective Service. This proved decisively that the Nisei in this camp are classed differently. Then too, the recent deportation of renouncers to Santa Fe, under the charges of dangerous enemy alien, by the Justice Department substantiates the theme through and through. If anything more were needed to convince the residents, the issuance of the exclusion notices by the Army shows that there is in this camp a special-status group.

"From the given facts one can arrive only at the inevitable - Tule Lake Center is different from the other centers. Call it a segregation center, excludee camp, segregation-relocation center, or just a hell-hole, but nothing else."







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INTERVIEW ON THE LIFTING OF THE BAN: #6  
(Nisei; originally a voluntary segregant)

"First of all Tule Lake is different from all the rest of the centers. Tule Lake is both a relocation and a segregation center. It has already been announced that other centers are going to close within a year but it is believed that Tule Lake is not. Therefore, the evacuees of other centers know where they stand. They can begin making their relocation plans, but for the majority of the people in Tule Lake, there is uncertainty and tension as to their future. They do not know what Tule Lake Center is. They do not know what to expect. Isn't WRA eventually going to fold up, they ask, if all other centers are going to close? What is going to happen to Tule Lake? Is it going under some other administration? What is going to happen to the excludées? Are they going to be pushed out to the Middlewest? Must repatriates relocate too? There are the questions the residents are asking.

"To answer questions such as these and many others, Tule Lake needs a special policy stating definitely just what is going to happen to the people here so they will know where they stand."





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Community Analysis Section, January 10, 1945

INTERVIEWS ON THE LIFTING OF THE BAN; #7  
(Kibei recently married to a Nisei, and here at Tule Lake with  
parents and siblings. Good insight, generally).

"The Tule Lake center should not be treated the same as other WRA centers because trouble would certainly arise if any attempt were made to close the Tule Lake center in line with recently announced WRA policy. The temper of the residents is different from other centers. This can be sensed in the expression heard immediately following segregation, 'We put our lives to the stake when we came up here.'"

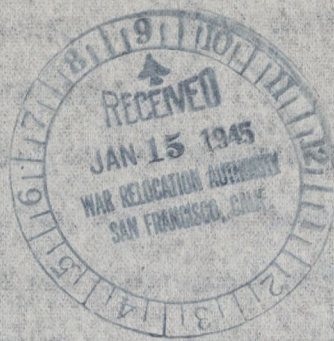
"Hearing and half believing such expressions, the segregee is under constant worry of retaliatory measures. In the face of this, he fancies himself in a position where he is at the complete mercy of the 'enemy.' In such a frame of mind, he will resist any attempt to throw him back into the stream of American life which he once repudiated.

"Some have already expressed the emotionalized conviction that it would be better if all were killed outright. 'If they're planning to make us relocate, they may as well bomb and blanket this camp with poison gas,' is an Issei statement. Even broken families and internment at Santa Fe is considered better by some than relocation.

"Trouble, they say, would focus undesirable attention on this 'final phrase' of the WRA program and aid enemy propaganda which finds enough to crow about already. After all, forced relocation of minority peoples was denounced not long ago as 'Axis' inhumanity.

"The people of Tule Lake were originally segregated with the understanding that they were persona non grata in the United States. They have been given a bad name







as admittedly disloyal Americans. The WRA may know privately that segregation was a failure, but the American public does not. They ask what if these maligned people were now thrown back into the American scene, where lynching and mob behavior are not unknown.

"Another argument is that relocation of Tule Lake Japanese would be unfair to the American Japanese who have accepted America as their home. The American public which has been told that the Tule Lake Japanese are disloyal Americans will have just that much more reason to suspect and discriminate against all American Japanese. Whichever way the war goes, unless peace and reason come soon, one side may resort to extreme measures in desperation and it will not be pretty to contemplate what may happen in that extremity. The Tule Lake Japanese say they are resigned to their fate, but the American Japanese are probably not so steeled.

"A change in policy now would show to many that the government didn't know what she was doing in one more instance. That's the way most of the residents are now talking."





TO THE EDITOR OF THE SEATTLE TIMES  
SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 14th inst. in relation to the matter of the proposed new bridge across the Puget Sound. I am sorry that I cannot give you a more definite answer at this time, but the matter is being considered by the Board of Public Works, and I am sure that you will understand the necessity of their taking time to consider the matter thoroughly. I am, however, sure that you will be satisfied with the result. Very respectfully,  
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Interviews on the Lifting of the Ban: #8  
(A Nisei; early repatriate -- from Jerome.)

"The majority of the Tule Lake residents are those who before segregation professed their indifference to the government of the United States and its policies, thereby admitting openly their loyalty to Japan. This all came after evacuation, but Tule Lake 'disloyals' who honestly expressed their desire to expatriate feel they should be segregated from those evacuees who wish to remain in this country: other disloyals who have taken the same procedure in different centers should, they say, come here for the welfare of the U.S. government and to satisfy the individual's request, making it a special excludee center for expatriates only.

"These are trying times. Never in the history of the United States has this country been in greater need of loyalty whether financially, morally or physically. Now at this crucial period when this country's very life is at stake, when every little thing counts, if anyone should admit his loyalty to a rival country, he should be promptly shipped out of this country if he requests it or segregated for the duration as detrimental to the country's war effort and its security.



"If this was one's home, his country, one would quit day dreaming, forget petty grudges, even overlook the prejudice and injustice done as so much water under the bridge. His country - his future is in the balance and only co-operation and co-ordination of every part of its machinery to its fullest capacity can be the only means of victory. You know:-- A friend in need is a friend indeed.

"This is the time to help if one had any loyal feeling. Fence sitting is out of question. People say, "At least one would know where he stands."

"If these disloyal elements were to be relocated by force, whether to the midwest or anywhere, they would not raise their hands against Japan even if they didn't harm this country, or more or less supported its war effort. They would become a very discouraged and discontented lot. They ask this country no more than to be given a chance to go to Japan. If this can be realized these people will remember the best of democracy and become America's future friends. If otherwise, the government would be breaking what people here say was the promise that they could face in the direction of the 'Japanese way'.

"One cannot change these inner thoughts which are now rooted, but eventually they will come out.

"The Tule Lake expatriates respect the U.S. government but have no desirable feeling towards it at present, but would take it as a privilege to become Japanese. Because that's where they would want to live, now that everything is washed up here."







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Community Analysis Section, January 11, 1945

INTERVIEWS ON THE LIFTING OF THE BAN: #9

(Nisei Informant)

"On February, 1942, an exclusion order was enforced by the Commanding General of the Western Defense area. All Japanese, both citizen and aliens were forced to evacuate from California, Oregon, Washington and Arizona. In these states, the Japanese were considered dangerous characters in time of war, even though they were citizens of this country. From the coastal areas, 110,000 Japanese were evacuated and of this group most were citizens of the United States. These people were herded into race track horse stables and into other camps surrounded by barb-wire. Then we were kept behind barb-wire fences without a charge or trial or a good reason. On what grounds can they keep us behind barb-wire fences for three years? The Constitution of the United States says that a person is innocent until proven guilty. If a person is to be detained by the law enforcing party, a charge must be brought against the detained person within ten days or the suspect must be released. When the constitution was written by the founders of this country, it was written so that it would be protection for all person who would live in this country, even though they were different in color and creed. The Constitution of this nation was written to be protected with our lives if necessary, but it was never written to be broken. As far as the Japanese residents are concerned, we believe that the constitution has been broken.

"Many innocent lives has been lost due to negligence when they put Japanese into these so-called camps. To give you a few example I come from Topaz, Utah. The 'Wakasa' case there is a good example of what we had to go







through. Mr. Wakasa, a bachelor of about 60 years old was walking within the camp's fence when he was shot near the boundary.

"Out of the ten WRA relocation camps, people were segregated to Tule Lake as disloyal to this country. Some have expatriated and renounced citizenship. These people say they are willing to die for Japan if necessary and now the government wants us all to relocate from Tule Lake. This idea of the government is fantastic, as they see it.

"The WRA would have to admit that evacuation was a mistake and the segregation was a failure. But if they close Tule Lake center and make us all get out, they will make the biggest mistake. Doesn't the international code say that we are to be kept in camp until a exchange boat can be arranged? People say it would be very foolish for the government to make us go out, because there are many Americans interned by the Japanese government and these people would be kicked out of the Japanese camps, in retaliation for moves made by this government. Therefore they argue that this government will receive the short end of the bargain. We can at least make a living if we are thrown out but if the Americans are thrown out by the Japanese government to make their own living in Japan, they will starve to death, because the Japanese people will have nothing to do with them. They say America owes it to the fighting men who were captured by the Japanese. Any blunder in the present grave problem will bring discomfort to the American soldiers and nationals, who are now in Japanese Internment camps. The government, they say, should also realize that we are the only recognized group which can be exchanged for American prisoners of war.

"If this government forces the Japanese to get out or relocate from Tule Lake, they will be making the biggest mistake. The people in this center have, many of them, lost faith in this government and wish to return to Japan."



