

Difficulties of doing domestic work. attitudes  
expressed.

Charles Kikuchi  
Evacuation & Resettlement Study  
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CH-19  
Ayako Mori (pseud.)

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Walt Godfrey of American Friends Service Committee gave me a copy of this report. It is a reflection of employer's attitude toward the nisei domestic worker, indicating suspicion of this unknown group. On the otherhand, it reveals the anxieties and maladjustments of a young nisei girl who is doing housework for the first time.

The writer hopes to interview this individual at some length if it can be scheduled at a future date.

CH-19



MRS. KORTHAUER  
10532 S. Hoyne  
Cedarcrest 3059

MRS. KORTHAUER CALLED in answer to an advertisement placed in the paper by Ayako Mori. She said that there were no children in the home; there were four adults, Mrs. K., her husband, her invalid mother, and a nurse.

The nurse takes care of her own room and the mother's room. Mrs. K. takes care of her own room, and the girl would be expected to take care of her room and own private bath. She would be expected to do light housework in connection with the living room, dining room, and kitchen and some cooking, assisting Mrs. K.

It would supply room and board, carfare, and seven to ten dollars a week for incidental expenses.

9-11-43: ETSUKO SERA and SUMIYE YOSHIHARA went to see this lady. They like the place and Mrs. K. very much, but she could not use two of them. They decided to go elsewhere. Mrs. K. also said that she thought both of these girls were very nice, and she would have been glad to have had them if the proper arrangements could have been worked out.

9-13-43: ASAKA KUBO TOOK THE JOB. Mrs. K. called on the 20th after Asaka had been there for the week-end saying that she did not wish to keep her any longer.

A COMBINATION OF CIRCUMSTANCES SEEMED TO HAVE ENTERED INTO THE CASE: For one thing, Mrs. K. had written to some of her friends a week or so before hiring Asaka telling them that she was contemplating hiring a Japanese American. They hurriedly wrote back and told her by all means never to do that and that all Japanese Americans were cunning, sneaky and untrustworthy. In previous conversations Mrs. K. had always referred to Japanese Americans and not "Japs" as she did this time.

Then too, she said she visited her daughter-in-law who lived in the vicinity of 109th Street. The daughter-in-law told Mrs. K. that a policeman has stopped at her home and asked her if she had seen any of these "Japs" around. She told him that she had seen them passing her home several times but that that was all. The officer then informed her that they were keeping their eyes open for the "Japs" in that neighborhood since they were suspicious of them. "All of those 'Jap boys' act pretty fresh," he added.

Personally Mrs. K. said that she thought that Asaka seemed like a likable girl, but that she just could not be sure of her and thought that under such circumstances she had better leave.

SHE TOLD ME SOMETHING OF THE HISTORY OF ASAKA'S STAY WITH HER: When Asaka arrived, she said that she did a large washing, and she named specifically the number of blouses, sweater, stockings, and slips that she washed. This was Friday evening. She did not mind; it was all right, but it seemed like a big washing. I pointed out to her that perhaps that where Asaka had just been staying she had had neither the facilities or the time to do her washing and that



obviously such a situation would not happen again. On Saturday Asaka spent a good deal of time unpacking and Saturday evening she ironed "all night".

Mrs. K. reported that the nurse told her that Asaka also spent a good part of Saturday morning on the telephone while Mrs. K. was out shopping. She reported the exact number of conversations mentioning those with girls and those with boys. She also received a number of phone calls. Asaka was talking at the phone when Mrs. K. came in. She turned around acting quite surprised to see Mrs. K. and said, "Oh, you come in the back way." Mrs. K. said that Asaka had been sitting at the phone facing the front of the house. She felt that Asaka's remark was an indication that she would not have been on the phone if she had seen Mrs. K. coming. On Sunday the nurse also reported that Asaka made a number of calls while Mrs. K. was at church.

Mrs. K. also accused Asaka of going into her bedroom. That too was reported by the nurse, who said she got quite uneasy when Asaka went into Mrs. K's room and stayed there so long. Mrs. K. said that Asaka took some magazines from her room to look at them and was looking at them in the kitchen when Mrs. K. got home from church.

Mrs. K. also said that Asaka showed a great deal of interest in her living room furniture and looked under the ornaments of decoration to see where they were made, etc. Asaka mentioned particularly to Mrs. K. that there were more articles of Chinese oriental art in her room than Japanese.

Mrs. K. suggested that I call Asaka and ask her to come in to see me the next day. She told me what time in the evening to call since that happened to be Asaka's afternoon and evening off. She said that she would talk to her first to tell her that she had called me and that we had talked about the situation.

I was out late that evening and called Kerthauers about 10:45. Asaka had gone to bed, but Mrs. K. called her to the phone. I asked Asaka to come in to see me the next day and also questioned her as to whether Mrs. K. had spoken to her at all. Asaka said that she had not done so and she seemed puzzled as to why I wanted to see her. Not wishing to worry her any further, I told her no more of the details.

ASAKA CAME INTO THE OFFICE: Her story was quite different. In the first place she said that Mrs. K. had been very nice to her, and she had been puzzled as to why Mrs. K. had called me. She had worried about it all night and also dreamed about it. It came as a distinct shock to her to learn that Mrs. K. did not want her to stay any longer.

I asked her about the nurse, and she said that the nurse had also been very nice to her. She was German and was soon going to get her citizenship. She had helped her with the dishes a couple of times. All in all, she liked her very well.



With reference to the phone, Asaka admitted that she may have used it more than she should, but that she had not realized it, and Mrs. K. had not mentioned it to her at all. We discussed working out specific arrangements for the phone when living in a private home, so that there would not be any such question arising again. We discussed using the phone always as a time saver and as an instrument of specific use rather than as a social instrument. She agreed that she would be more careful of such matters in the future.

Asaka denied ever having been in Mrs. K.'s bedroom except when Mrs. K. had shown her through on the day that she had been out there for an interview. She said that she had taken a magazine from a table in the living room and was looking at it in the kitchen when Mrs. K. came home from church. She was quite certain in her own mind that that was perfectly all right.

With reference to the furniture, Asaka said that Mrs. K.'s house was very well furnished and that a good deal of it was of oriental origin. Her version of the story was that Mrs. K. questioned her extensively about the articles of ~~real~~ oriental art work, asking her which were Japanese and which were Chinese. She had some old tables which were carved with dragons and some were carved with cherry blossoms. Asaka knows something about oriental art work and pointed out to her which were Chinese and which were Japanese and what distinguished them. Mrs. K. seemed to be quite interested and Asaka went into considerable detail.

Asaka asked me whether Mrs. K. had said anything to me about religion. She said that Mrs. K. had asked her to go to church with her. "I guess I should have, shouldn't I, but I didn't. She asked me what my religion was and I told her that I was a Buddhist. She wanted to know what we believe and what we believe in. I told her that we do not think of Buddha as a god but as a person, and that our religious teachings tell us to do good to others and to believe in truth, justice, and what is right. She seemed to be quite angry about this. I felt that she did not like it at all. I wondered if she mentioned it to you?"

ASAKA AND I DISCUSSED ways in which she may have been in error and decided how we would avoid them in future jobs. We pointed out that when we were working in someone else's home it was necessary to do things according to the ways in which the family is accustomed, even though we may feel that our way is much better.

ASAKA LEFT MRS. KORTHAUERS the next day and went to the hostel. She was there one day after which she went to live with Mrs. Rubel of the Metropolitan Housing Authority.