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THE WRONG ANCESTORS

Lecture

JUNE 1943

WAR RELOCATION AUTHORITY

Washington, D. C.

Lecture brought up to date.....
June 1945.....

THE WRONG ANCESTORS

(Narrative to be illustrated by filmstrips. Each asterisk indicates when the next picture is to be thrown on the screen).

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This is the story of a group of people with the wrong ancestors--

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the story of people with Japanese names and faces and a desire to follow the American way of life. But because they lived in a strategic military area on the Pacific Coast, this way of life was interrupted, and they were evacuated as a group from their homes and placed in isolated communities farther inland.

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These are evacuees--all types, all ages. One hundred and ten thousand persons, about two-thirds of whom are American citizens because they were born in this country. Only a small portion of the American born have ever been outside of the boundaries of the United States. These people were not much different from the rest of America in their occupations and professions--in their cultural and economic levels.

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Before Pearl Harbor, they were occupied with the usual activities

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of home and family--business--school. About 45 per cent of them were farm people, some of them laborers, and some successful operators who

were able to send their children to college. Thousands lived in crowded colonies in West Coast cities.

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Then came the war--the danger of infiltration of Japanese agents or even invasion. The situation in the Pacific at that time was desperate.

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Time did not permit sorting the loyal from the disloyal. So, early in March, 1942, military authorities decided that in the interest of national security, all persons of Japanese ancestry would have to be

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excluded from the Pacific Coast area.

At first these people were free to settle where they liked out-

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side of the restricted zones. A few thousand moved--but feeling was high.

The public distrusted all Japanese--violence was threatened. As a result,

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voluntary evacuation was abandoned--and on March 29, 1942, an orderly,

protected system of evacuation was established by the Army. To care for

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the evacuees temporarily, the Army hurriedly prepared assembly centers

in the evacuated area at race tracks and fair grounds until more

permanent locations could be provided farther inland.

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One of the most important facts to remember about these people is that they are not accused of any acts or intentions against the security of the United States. Suspected people were arrested and given hearings and are now in internment camps or federal prisons. They are not in relocation centers.

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For the evacuees this was a period of upheaval. They had to dispose of their businesses, generally at great sacrifice. They had to

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give up their homes and prepare to begin a pioneer life that was not

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of their own choosing. But there was no resistance. Citizens and aliens alike accepted this move as one of their contributions to the war effort.

As soon as controlled evacuation was decided upon, the War

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Relocation Authority began to look for suitable locations for the new

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wartime cities which could house the evacuees. Ten sites were finally

chosen. With the exception of the Arkansas centers, they are in dry

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areas. But with irrigation, the soil is productive, making it possible

for the evacuees to produce food for their own needs.

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Barrack-type buildings were constructed under the supervision of

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the Army Engineer Corps. This typical building, covered with tar paper,

100 ft. long by 20 ft. wide, houses at least four families including

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about 25 persons. Twelve barracks are usually grouped into a "block"

and each block has a bath house and latrine, a mess hall, a recreation

hall, and a laundry room. There are no cooking facilities or running

water in the apartments.

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By August, 1942, the evacuation had been completed by train and

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bus. Evacuees who were handicapped were given necessary attention--

like this girl who was brought by ambulance.

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A bleak picture was presented to the evacuees on their arrival

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at the relocation centers. Dust, heat, and sagebrush. Here new arrivals

are taking their baggage to their apartments in a haze of dust. The

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government provided each evacuee with a cot, a straw-filled mattress

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and blankets, and for each apartment, a heating stove. But quarters

are cramped, and with the exception of food preparation, most home

activities must be carried on in one room.

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Food is served in mess halls, cafeteria style. Menus include both American and Japanese type food. The point rationing system applies to evacuees just as it does to other civilians, and the food cost is about 40 cents a day per person.

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Medical care is provided without charge and a hospital was included

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in the basic construction by the Army. Evacuees comprise most of the

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medical staff, including doctors, nurses, dentists, and nurses'aides.

But the chief medical officer and chief nurse are Civil Service appointees.

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Education through the high-school level is also provided by the government. Classes are held in barrack buildings. The equipment is sketchy and frequently improvised. But the curriculum meets the requirements of the state in which the center is located. About half the teachers are evacuees.

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The evacuees do most of the work in the relocation centers and are paid \$12, \$16, or \$19 a month plus a small clothing allowance. The largest single group of workers is engaged in the handling of food.

These include not only the chefs and cooks, but warehousemen, truck drivers, and so on. Under the supervision of appointed personnel,

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evacuees make up the police force, and the fire department. Few

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serious fires have occurred, thanks to the vigilance of the evacuees.

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Because WRA provides only basic needs, evacuees have developed many services of their own. They operate stores--personal service shops--and other types of consumer enterprises. These are run on a cooperative plan, and most of the business enterprises have been incorporated.

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Evacuees also work in the administrative offices, as secretaries,

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accountants, draftsmen, and so on. They operate and maintain motor equipment, trucks, tractors, and cars which are necessary in operating the centers.

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One of the major activities at the relocation centers is food

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production. Because much of the land was raw desert, sagebrush had to

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be cleared away and irrigation systems developed. In Arkansas, the land

had to be cleared of trees and drainage provided. With much of this

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preliminary work done by now, the evacuees will produce most of the

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vegetables, poultry, eggs, and meat animals that will be needed for their own food requirements.

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A natural impulse for the evacuees was to make living in the centers as nearly as possible like that in a normal community. Making homes out of single room compartments was the first step. WRA supplied materials for lining the walls, but the work was done by the evacuees. Their decorative skill extended even to the outside of the barracks,

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landscaping with native materials. Victory gardens provide extras for mess halls.

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Religious services of many faiths and denominations are held in the centers, and about half of the evacuees are Christian. This is

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a Christian sunrise service. Each center has its own newspaper-- in several cases printed, but usually mimeographed--done entirely by the

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evacuees. A form of community government has been developed with an elected council which has the right to enact regulations governing the conduct of the center residents, and a judicial commission which sits in judgment when the regulations are broken.

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Classes for adults are held in many subjects. Two of the most popular are American history, and among the older people, the English language. Most of the young people, of course, have been educated in

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American schools. Right now, vocational retraining courses are attracting

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many of those who plan to relocate outside the center. National organizations have active chapters in the centers--Boy Scouts, Girl Reserves, YMCA

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and YWCA. There are musical organizations, such as choral groups, some of which have presented successful concerts in neighboring towns. Many

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of the older people find relaxation in "Go", a complicated game resembling

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chess. And of course the social life of the community for the young people would not be complete without dances.

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Although equipment is meager, sports are popular. Football--basketball. At some centers evacuee teams played local teams in nearby communities. Baseball, too, is popular. And at the northern centers last winter, many evacuees had their first sight of snow--and their first mishap on skates.

But it is obvious that no matter how fully the evacuee's time is

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occupied, life in a relocation center cannot be called normal. The ordinary family and social controls are lacking, and the training and disciplining of children become extremely difficult. Nor is it easy to develop good

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Americans when they are denied the basic civil rights. Furthermore, the

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nation is losing thousands of man-hours every day as long as these people remain in relocation centers. For these reasons, the War Relocation Authority, with the approval of the War Department and the FBI, has been permitting and encouraging loyal evacuees to leave relocation centers.

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Ten thousand evacuees helped to harvest the sugar beet and potato crops in the Western states in the fall of 1942. Many of these workers were hired on a permanent basis and did not return to the centers.

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Under the supervision of the War Relocation Authority the resettlement program moved ahead, until more than 30,000 people were reestablished in private life in various parts of the country. The safety of the nation required that precautions be taken to keep dangerous or potentially dangers from being released. Each case was considered individually. The War Relocation Authority's own records on the evacuees;

and information in the hands of the federal intelligence agencies was given consideration.

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Finally on January 2nd., 1945 the Western Defense Command, the branch of the Army which originally ordered the evacuation, removed the blanket restrictions applying to the West Coast. At the same time certain persons of Japanese descent were individually excluded from the West Coast area. However, all others, including the great majority in the relocation centers may now go anywhere in the United States.

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To facilitate the process of relocation the War Relocation Authority has established field offices, both in the West Coast area and in other key cities throughout the country. Employers who want workers and evacuees who want jobs can get in touch with one another through these offices. Other government agencies and private groups are cooperating in the work of relocation.

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But we want to tell you about another group of young men who have relocated. In January 1943 the War Department announced the formation of

a combat team of Americans of Japanese ancestry.

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More than twelve hundred young men from the relocation centers, who were of the conviction that America was worth fighting for, volunteered for service.

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This was only the beginning. One year later the Army began again to induct citizens of Japanese ancestry through the regular Selective Service system, and now aliens are permitted to volunteer for Army service. I am sure you have all heard of the exploits of the One Hundredth Battalion and the 442nd Combat Team -- composed of Americans with Japanese faces -- fighting with honor in Italy and France. Including those from Hawaii and the mainland more than 13,000 have entered the ranks of Uncle Sam's Army.

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Others have taken their places again in communities outside the relocation centers * They are working in factories, in hospitals, in homes and in shops. * A great number are again on farms helping produce the food so vital to victory. * But there are still thousands in the

centers, with skills of many kinds. The War Relocation Authority plans to close all the centers as soon as these people can be relocated -- in communities where they will not be discriminated against -- because they have wrong ancestors.

The people of America -- individually and collectively -- will determine * how soon this can be accomplished. The American people will be able to help these men, women and children to find places in normal communities as self respecting, self supporting people -- contributing their share to our fight. * By accepting evacuees and giving them the opportunity to live normal lives, we, the American people, will make a long stride forward * in giving significance to the democratic way of life for which we are fighting.

~~But it is obvious that no matter how fully the evacuees~~

WRA - Film

"CHALLENGE TO DEMOCRACY"

(16 Millimeter Sound Film)

(BOTH IN COLOR AND IN BLACK-&-WHITE)

Following the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Secretary of War, after consultation with the commanding general of the Western Defense Command and other officials and agencies of the Government, authorized the evacuation of citizens of Japanese descent and Japanese aliens from the Pacific Coast. The objective was to evacuate the entire population of Japanese ancestry from the sensitive and threatened military area. It was a precautionary measure and carried no implications of individual disloyalty.

About 110,000 American citizens of Japanese ancestry and Japanese aliens were affected by the order. They were sent to relocation centers operated by the War Relocation Authority, a government agency created for the specific task of handling the evacuees and their properties.

On January 2, 1945 the military ordered the ban lifted. The decision to rescind the ban had been announced December 17, 1944, a day before the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in the Misuye Endo case that "....A citizen who is concedely loyal presents no problem of espionage or sabotage. Loyalty is a matter of the heart and mind and not of race, creed or color. He who is loyal is by definition not a spy or a saboteur...."

Lifting of the military ban meant that all loyal Japanese Americans and law-abiding Japanese aliens were free to return to the Pacific Coast if they so chose, just as they had been free, during the nearly three years they were banned from the Pacific Coast, to locate anywhere else in the United States.

The WRA has prepared a sound film of the story of the evacuees, the largest mass hegira in history, giving many cross-sections of the evacuation from the Pacific Coast, settling in camps, readjustment of lives of men, women and children, relocation in other sections of the country and the training of Japanese American soldiers, many of whom have already given their lives for our country, with 17,600 in United States Army uniforms.

The film, "Challenge to Democracy," is available to any group of 50 or more persons, clubs, church groups, fraternal, business and labor organizations.

There is no charge for use of the film. In some cases a sound projector with operator will be available. Because of the limited number of copies of the film, we would appreciate several tentative dates being furnished us.

If your organization is interested, write for "Challenge to Democracy" today. Address your request to:

"CHALLENGE TO DEMOCRACY"
War Relocation Authority
U.S. Department of the Interior
Room ~~255~~ 957
1031 So. Broadway
Los Angeles, California

Telephone PProspect 4711, Extension 740