

CHICAGO RESETTLEMENT

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A R E P O R T

Social Analysis Committee

of

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W H Y T H I S R E P O R T ?

ON THE EVE of their fifth year of residence in Chicago, many of the 20,000 Japanese American resettlers here have not yet found a world where they can feel at home.

Not only do they not feel at home here, but they are also beset by unwholesome influences that obstruct them from growing in that direction. Those same unwholesome influences may yet claim many more of them as social casualties in 1947.

The challenge now of the unfinished job of relocation is clear. Either the churches, social agencies, and community leadership act with imagination and foresight to provide competing social-recreational outlets for these people, or else we shall surrender them from the potentialities of constructive citizenship.

BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM

This is a summary report on a major social problem facing Japanese American resettlers in Chicago. It directly concerns 20,000 resettlers, but indirectly involves all Chicagoans.

By and large, Japanese Americans have made satisfactory adjustments to the economic life of Chicago. They have established themselves in many fields of endeavor. By comparison with their limited occupational distribution on the west coast, they have secured for themselves a much broader and more permanent base in Chicago. But generally their advances in making the most of expanded work opportunities have not been matched by their satisfying social adjustment. They do not feel at home in a city that, from the standpoint of wartime relocation, has been unequalled for its hospitality to west coast evacuees.

Among two general groupings are found people who socially are the least well-adjusted of Chicago resettlers: (1) young men and women in their teens and twenties, unmarried, and for the most part living here in Chicago without normal home environment or parental guidance and (2) Issei bachelors, men in their sixties and seventies without adequate means, who are potential indigents. Out of their ranks--especially from the younger group--have come the resettler cases of crime and delinquency of the past four years.

Social maladjustment is a real problem among these people, and causes for it can often be traced to two sources: (1) lack of wholesome social activities in forms that will attract their participation, and (2) undersirable housing.

THE LONG-RUN-NEED--GOOD HOUSING

From the standpoint of healthy social adjustment to their communities, resettlers occupy housing that is both good and bad. For the most part it is bad.

It is good where it spreads out through uncrowded residential sections of the city. This is true of about 25 per cent of the resettler population. It is bad where it is concentrated in overcrowded districts that ring the blight areas where crime rates are high. And this is true of about 75 per cent of the 20,000 or more resettlers.

Resettlers for the most part--especially those whose lack of social adjustment constitutes a major problem today--pay high rental for cramped quarters in antiquated and inferior units located in marginal (near slum) areas.

This situation exists despite the fact that, from 1943 through 1945, both private and government relocation agencies devoted personnel time and great energy in a program to minimize bad housing among resettlers. That some success was achieved is shown in the statistic that one-fourth of the resettler population is dispersed in standard residential areas throughout Chicago.

From the long-run point of view, promoting better housing conditions for these people may offer a partial solution to their social problems. But in the meantime?

THE IMMEDIATE NEED--WHOLESOME, ATTRACTIVE SOCIAL PROGRAM

Good or bad, the housing situation among resettlers is in part the result of a program that represented some collective action by interested agencies.

Where it has had the benefits of attention from the overall program, it tends to be good.

Unlike the problem of housing, the less tangible but infinitely more difficult and challenging problem of social adjustment by resettlers has gone untended. There has been no overall program, no collective effort by either government or private agencies to meet even the most urgent needs on a citywide basis.

Here are some evidences of the unwholesome influences to which socially maladjusted resettlers are particularly vulnerable in the national post-war pattern of increased delinquency:

- (1) On the basis of available statistics, crime and delinquency rates among Japanese Americans have increased over prewar levels.
- (2) In the past four years, at least 14 babies--and probably more--have been born out of wedlock to resettler young women; reports indicate also an increasing number of requests for abortions.
- (3) Prevalence of gambling, apparent disregard for social conventions, individual instances of immorality are reflected in cases on record with the Chicago Police Department.

Some of the spoilage is, unfortunately, beyond the power of any local agency or program to reclaim. Such is the case of one youth in his early twenties who became a member of a hold-up gang and is now serving life sentence in a federal penitentiary. Such is the case of two young people, relatively hardened individuals, arrested on suspicion of complicity in trafficking in vice. Such also is the case of another resettler an alleged sex maniac, still at large in the southside section of the city, accused in at least seven instances of having raped resettler young women, but against whom no police charges have yet been made for lack of plaintiffs among his victims.

But the very presence of these sources of criminal infection accentuates the community's general dereliction if we fail to provide more effective over-all recreational-social opportunities for resettlers.

Furthermore, a concerted move in the right direction might possibly save from the need of institutional care and treatment, a growing number of so-called borderline cases--frustrated individuals on the margins of neurotic and psychopathic behavior. These have come to the attention of social welfare agencies at an increasing rate during the past year. Often individual difficulties, aggravated by loneliness in a big city, characterize these cases, which are merely the extreme manifestations of the kind of problems that many Japanese Americans experience. Any over-all community program to be effective, it seems to us, might well be based upon an awareness of how acute this problem has already become.

WHAT SHOULD BE THE TREATMENT FOR THE PROBLEM?

The ultimate goal is for the Japanese Americans to become participating members of the Chicago citizenry. A realistic approach toward this objective is the development of well-integrated personalities. Following a traumatic experience such as the complete societal rejection symbolized by the evacuation and confinement in relocation centers, the sense of security and self-confidence of these people requires careful restoration. There is much social scientific evidence to indicate that well-integrated personalities do not exist unless there is identification with some social group. There is also good evidence that at present Japanese Americans, for the most part, find their only sense of security in their identification and association with the Japanese American group. If this present identification were suddenly removed, it would result in further personal disintegration. The responsibility, then, is for leadership to gradually transfer their sense of security in the Japanese American group to groups in the larger society.

Dillon S. Meyer, former national director of the War Relocation Authority, stated in a recent letter to the Chicago Resettlers Committee:

"Participation in ongoing community activities without attention to the false barrier of race is healthyIn my opinion, however, this should be an objective and not a fetish.

"Undoubtedly, there are many among the resettlers of past high school age whose intimate contacts with non-Japanese have been limited, and among those are some who may be ill at ease in a mixed group, so ill at ease, in fact, that insistence on mixed group affairs may serve to deprive them all well managed activity, and to drive them to the very types of recreation responsible for the condition you outline.

"It is the responsibility of leadership to understand the conditions with which it is dealing and to devise a program to meet real needs, without losing sight of its ultimate objective, which, in this case, is for Japanese Americans to develop into a full part in the life of the community. Such a program may well include all-Nisei groups, which if intelligently guided with the final objective always in mind, could contribute to the desired end."

Japanese Americans have not taken part in the ongoing activities of community recreational agencies, except for a most negligible number. On some occasions, organized Nisei and Issei groups have used available facilities at agencies such as the Olivet Institute and the Lawson YMCA. Where the few Nisei do participate in agency activities, it has almost invariably been the result of a Japanese American staff or volunteer worker's intensive effort. Even these activities have been specially designed for Nisei participation, though the mixed character of the activities has been deliberately fostered. (See Appendix A). In a survey conducted by the Division on Education and Recreation of the Council of Social Agencies in December of 1944 there is statistical evidence of the lack of Nisei participation in community agencies. ¹The same findings were reported in a survey of the Near North Side made by the Lower North Community Council of the Council of Social Agencies in the summer of 1946.

Resettler organizations have been able to provide recreational-social facilities for probably not more than a 1,000 persons. This included the various Protestant and Buddhist groups, the Japanese American Citizens League, the Chicago Resettlers Committee, the Nisei Catholic Youth Organization, that regularly or from time to time sponsor special activities for the Issei and Nisei. ²(See Appendix B.) Most Japanese Americans rely almost completely on commercial entertainment such as movies, which probably do little to fulfill the social needs of persons. Issei have taken virtually no part in activities that were not specifically for Issei or Nisei-Issei.

Facilities for regular meetings, parties, club rooms, and athletic activities can be made available. When the needs of Japanese Americans are carefully explained to the agencies, and more particularly the churches, it has been found that the owners of these facilities are eager to cooperate in opening their facilities and, in some instances, to even allow the Chicago Resettlers Committee to assume active responsibility for part of their premises. (See Appendix C.)

¹Council of Social Agencies, Committee on Minority Groups, Division on Education and Recreation, "Report On the Inquiry into the Relation of Agencies in the Division on Education and Recreation to Nisei in Chicago." May, 1945.

²Robert N. Cullium, Director, "Resettlement Study, Dept. of Interior, in a letter to Mrs. Ken Nishi, January 15, 1947.

With additional personnel the Chicago Resettlers Committee proposes:

1. To survey what type of social-recreational activities the people want through informal individual and group interviews and possibly bi-lingual questionnaires to a stratified random sample of the population.
2. To intensively explore the social-recreational resources of the community and interpret to agency leaders the particular needs of Japanese Americans.
3. To use every possible means to interpret these resources to the Japanese American population and to encourage their participation in ongoing activities: i.e. newspapers, organizational bulletins, announcements at group meetings such as at churches, bulletin board notices, etc.
4. To design a program of activities that would provide social-recreational outlets for Japanese Americans which serve the ultimate goal of participation in the larger community.

It is proposed that the following existing organizational machinery be used to facilitate the work of the Resettlers Committee.

1. THE COORDINATION COMMITTEE ON WELFARE SERVICES TO JAPANESE AMERICANS of the Council of Social Agencies, and more particularly the representatives from the recreation and education agencies, assist in the interpretation of the needs of Japanese Americans to agency leaders.
2. THE JAPANESE AMERICAN COUNCIL, a coordinating body of 17 Japanese American organizations, interpret to resettlers the recreational-social resources in the community and the program of activities specially designed to appeal to Issei and Nisei.

In addition to the liaison work between the agencies and the people, it is proposed that The Chicago Resettlers Committee engage in the following types of recreational projects:

1. A city-wide athletic union or council to coordinate and promote athletic activities, locate facilities, program tournaments, and advise in the setting up of teams. A division for juniors and also for girls would be established. The objective is to encourage clean competitive sports on a non-commercial basis.

2. Encourage and facilitate the formation of special interest groups under responsible guidance: i.e. Bridge club, golf group, forums, music appreciation group, Japanese language class, Red Cross home nursing course, etc.
3. Encourage and facilitate the formation of boys and girls groups in cooperation with organizations such as the Young Women's Christian Association, the Young Men's Christian Association, the Boy Scouts, the Girl Scouts, etc.
4. Sponsor recreational-educational activities for the Issei: i.e. English classes, civics and naturalization program, lectures, educational moving pictures, trips to places of interest in Chicago, and special interest groups for goh and shogi (Japanese games similar to chess and checkers) biwa (Japanese musical instrument), poetry, flower-arrangement, cooking, etc.

A special committee consisting of non-Japanese community leaders as well as Japanese Americans will periodically evaluate these activities in relation to the ultimate goal, for Japanese Americans to become full participating members of the Chicago citizenry.

In concluding this report, we wish to emphasize that unless the above-outlined program to provide for the social-recreational needs of Japanese Americans is vigorously carried forward without delay, the people will find the solution to their frustrations in unsupervised, psychologically isolating activities cut off from the matrix of the larger society.