



O California,
Dear California

Vol. 3

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O CALIFORNIA, DEAR CALIFORNIA

May is a memorable month for the Japanese evacuees. It was in this month, 1942, that most of us 110,000 law-abiding residents—both citizens and non-citizens—on the Pacific Coast, were uprooted from our homes and possessions, and made to start a new paternalistic life in the centers under the Stars and Stripes. For the past two full years Uncle Sam has been making a budget of more than \$50,000,000 a year, from the taxpayer's purse to take care of those industrious and loyal inhabitants. Lately, the boarders in the project have been conversing among themselves in the barrack apartments, mess halls, washing rooms and even in church, about the precious things of life in their former communities and seeking to formulate post-war plans.

Indeed, California is dear to us. For, the majority of us—about two-thirds—were born there. It was there that most of us were given opportunities of schooling and business. There we learned those noble ideals, principles, and the rights of men in the Declaration of Independence, and the Constitution. It was there that we established our own business and home, and shared in the free American way of life. / Also, it was there that we were blessed with the Christian fellowship, demonstrating the unity of human families based on the Universal Fatherhood of God. /

In truth, the state of the golden bear is dear to us. The Creator bestowed on her natural beauty and rich resources for his creatures therein. There the Indians enjoyed their days, followed by the Spanish-speaking people, English-speaking whites, and finally the Orientals. The area is larger than the British Isles and Holland combined. She has space enough and sufficient resources to take care of as many people as are in those two Western Democracies of Europe.

To this richly-blessed soil of California, the Japanese came first toward the end of the 19th century, climaxing in the year 1910 or thereabouts with nearly 120,000 souls. Part of them were from Hawaii, being induced to come by capitalists in the

mainland. Part came from Nippon directly. Most of them were ambitious young men. They were influenced by the American missionaries, educators and business men, and came for the aspirations of our democratic way of life. Hence, when they sighted the west coast, they felt they were in the Promised Land.

From the beginning, however, they had to go through uncommon hardships, sufferings and oppressions, because of race prejudice, selfish greed and politics. On account of their ethnical affinity with the Chinese, they were denied the privilege of becoming a citizen of the land. This deprived them of many blessings of American life. The yellow journals, economic competitors, narrow-minded nationalistic politicians and pseudo-patriots, stigmatized them with the so-called "ineligible aliens," and made them the target of groundless accusations, blames and persecutions, in order to further their self-seeking interests, motives and ambitions. All this culminated with the discriminating land law of 1924.

Yet, their pioneering spirit was not destroyed. They continued life's battle, with patience, courage and determination. They stressed the economic foundation and education of the children. When they knew that they could not become the citizens of the United States by naturalization, they put extraordinary efforts into the academic learning of their posterity by making them intelligent, desirable and respected constituents of their communities. Therefore, the percentage of high school and college graduates among the Nisei is higher than among the average Americans.

At the start of the present global struggle, both the Issei and Nisei attempted to do their part for the nation's war efforts through enlisting in the armed forces or enlisting in the production fronts. Hence, there were about 6,000 regular draftees prior to the mass evacuation, and they are now vindicating their loyalty in the fighting fronts. After the forced evacuation, all the Nisei were reclassified into 4-C, denying them the privilege to bear arms and defend their country and its democratic principles. This act disheartened them, and created in

them a doubt and suspicion about American democracy. But, still they kept faith in the ultimate triumph of justice and humanity, and remained loyal to the Flag, saying, "This is my country."

In the center, they participated in the works of the project, or in outside labor. They helped to harvest the sugar beet and other farm crops, and did their part for "Food-For-Victory" program. Then, when the army department adopted a new policy, by organizing the Nisei combat team, there were four times as many volunteers as was originally intended. Mr. Stimson, secretary of the army, wanted to have about 2,500, but, actually there were more than 11,000, both in Hawaii and in the continental United States. Today, they are proving their patriotism and the spirit of service in the fighting theaters under the 100th and 442nd battalions, and other divisions. It is widely known by now the kind of loyalty Sgt. Ben Kuroki exemplified for his dear country. Being born in Nebraska as a farm boy, he volunteered to the air corps, two days after Pearl Harbor, and fought in the first front lines in Africa and Europe. He carried his twenty-five commissions faithfully, and volunteered for five extra commissions. And as the result, he is decorated with two Distinguished Flying Crosses, and the Air Medal with four oak-leaf clusters, and other recognitions for his unselfish services for the land that gave him birth and the opportunities of free life.

The impending Japanese problem at present is that of their resettlement, that is, how shall these qualified evacuees return to normal life? The WRA knows by this time their cooperative and loyal attitude toward the nation's war efforts. The government agency, under the wise and far-sighted administration of Mr. Dillon Myer, has made a great effort to relocate them; and as the result already more than 25,000 have left the centers, and resumed their independent life as free persons in the outside communities. Yet, still the majority of the evacuees, especially those with adolescent children, are yearning to return to their homes on the West Coast when the trouble is over. It is natural for them to long for the towns where they had established

businesses, had homes, friends and other good things of life. However, unfortunately, there are unjust and un-American anti-Japanese movements which interfere with the Washington program of relocation.

What are the bases of these unfair and un-Christian behaviors? In the first place, it is due to race prejudice. It is regrettable that this base animalism still exists in this enlightened age. After all, human is human. Under the skin, all the families of man are alike. God created them out of one blood. It is true that during the last 500 years, the whites in Europe had their glorious, mechanical and imperialistic civilizations. This gave to some of them the false conception of "White supremacy." Yet, when we know the spiritual and artistic cultures of the Jews, Hindus, Chinese, Arabs, Japanese, and other races in Asia and Africa and the Americas, we cannot deny the truths that it is the matter of the individual, not the race, that differentiates men. It is the ideals, principles and institutions, not inherited, biological factors, that make distinctions—the distinctions of superiority and inferiority. The missionaries and others who have been in Japan, and the genuine and fair-minded Americans who know the Nipponese through actual contacts with them in this country, will testify that statements like "A Jap is a Jap," and "The Jap is a sub-human breed," etc., are not true. They cannot be justified before the righteous judgment of world-wide public opinion.

Often, the Japanese have been criticized for their lack of assimilation. People say, "Look at Little Tokio in Los Angeles. They are congested in their own community. They do not assimilate with other peoples." It is true that there was a Japanese business section in the largest metropolis of the Pacific Southwest. In the city of 1,350,000 people, however, there were not more than 25,000 Japanese at any one time. They were scattered all over the city. And the biggest district was the said "Little Tokio," whose population was about 8,000. Is this phenomenon peculiar to the Japanese? God forbid! It is a common trait of human nature. Look at the Jews, Italians, Irish, Negroes, Germans, French, Mexicans, Chinese and Scan-

dinavians in New York, Chicago, New Orleans, St. Louis, San Antonio, Los Angeles and San Francisco, and in other sizable cities. There have never been more than 140,000 Nipponese in the 48 States at any time, and no more than 8,000 in any one place. Yet when we compare this with 2,000,000 Hebrews in New York, 350,000 Negroes in Harlem, 500,000 Italians in Manhattan, 130,000 Mexicans in San Antonio and Los Angeles each, etc., it is not surprising to find a Japanese town of such proportion in a city of more than a million.

The formation of Japanese sections was necessitated to a certain extent by social discrimination. Because of their racial origin, they were excluded from the white residential districts. They could not buy property for living purposes, nor rent houses in a Caucasian neighborhood. This forced them to select the living quarter in an area wherever it was available, and adjust their family life to that vicinity.

There was another factor contributing to their congestion. It was economic reason. As we mentioned already, the Nisei—the Americans of Japanese blood—had received good educations. Many of them graduated from colleges and universities with honor and scholastic degrees. But, when they commenced to play life's battle as self-supporting individuals, the doors of employment were shut to them. This caused them to seek works in the limited fields of commerce and farming owned by the Issei, who do not understand English well. Therefore, it was advisable for the job-hunting Niseis to live in the neighborhoods of their bosses or business establishments and utilize their hours for the study of Japanese language, and associate with the Japanese people in order to succeed; and by God's help, to produce Burbanks, Noguchis, Fords, Franklins, and Beechers from their descendants in the days to come.

It is an undeniable fact that the Dutch, French, Germans, Danes, Swedes, Norwegians, and Belgians have been assimilating quicker than the Orientals, due to their closer racial relationship with the Anglo-Saxons. Yet, with a reasonable space of time, and good moral influences, the kinsfolk of Gandhi, Chiang Kai-Shek and Kagawa can be made into just as good

Americans as those of Latin, Teuton and Nordic origin. And if there were no anti-Oriental exclusion laws, neither discriminations—socially, economically and politicaly—the Americanization of those Asiatics would have been accomplished faster and with more satisfactory results.

The greatness and strength of America lies in its solidifying power. It takes all the racial and national characteristics of newcomers, and moulds them into a unique American way of life. Where do we find such human societies as we have here? Here we have the most heterogeneous population in the earth. In the old world, the peoples have been in constant struggle. But, when they came and settled under the Stars and Stripes, they became new creatures of good will and good neighbors. What makes them to be like this? It is due to the spirit of Americanism—the spirit of freedom, justice, equality and brotherhood. America has demonstrated the unity of humanity and the goodness of men's nature.

Economic competition has been another reason. The Japanese have antagonized others because of their industry. "Heck, we can't compete with those Japs! They work so hard—from sunrise till dark. Women, too. They pay high rent—too high. No, we can't—," say some white farmers and tenants. It is true that the Japanese are hard workers. But, it is not uncommon among the newcomers. Especially, people like the Nipponese, who work under such unfavorable circumstances—race prejudice, residential restrictions, citizenship denial, economic discrimination and the like—find it absolutely necessary to be industrious and thrifty, in order to survive and be free, independent persons. By the said discriminative laws of 1924, they were made to be unstable, and live in shacks. Yet, they are just like the rest of the decent, ambitious Americans. As their economic foundation became firm, they wanted to improve their living conditions, and fully enjoy the abundant life that only the United States can afford. Therefore, their standard of living in the years of the '30s was as modern, scientific and American as other citizens; the children even were proud of having social gatherings with the neighbors' youngsters and school friends in their own homes.

Today, the race-baiters, economic competitors, and other anti-Japanese groups, are arguing passionately against allowing the Nisei to return to their home states. But, I wonder why should they divert so much attention, energy, and treasury money on this issue, at this time? Do we not have more

grave and important tasks before us to achieve for all the families of men? Can we not solve this question justly and peaceably in the American way after the war?

Already, about half of the evacuees from the Golden State have resettled in the unrestricted regions. They are not likely to return to California even after the war is over. This includes repatriates and expatriates. This leaves about 45,000 Japanese in the relocation centers. Suppose all of them want to go back to their former districts? Is there no room for them in the land where Padre Junipero Serra and his fellow friars pioneered for brotherhood? Can the 8,000,000 Californians not accept this minority group and through the moral influences of justice, tolerance, and sympathetic understanding mould them into an integral part of our society? Have they not proved themselves in the past serviceable assets to our communities, instead of debits?

Now, we are on the threshold of a new Pacific civilization. It is about to emerge with a spirit of mutual understanding, respect, and interdependence. Through the cooperation of all the people bordering on this great peaceful waterway, this new era will be realized. And to that end, the Japanese in the west coast could make a great contribution. At present they are misunderstood, and mistreated. Yet, when the peoples of the world return again to reason, truth, and righteousness, then, injustice will be rectified, and they will be equitably treated, with a just evaluation of their services. The Japanese, prior to the opening by the Commander Perry, in 1854, had only three conflicts with the neighbors during 1500 years of their existence as an independent people. After they opened intercourse with China, about 350 A. D., twice they were attacked by the Celestial Empire; and once they attempted invasion on Korea. That was during the span of fifteen centuries. Let us compare this with the records of the European peoples for the same length of time.

After the invasion of Western culture, they were saturated with the European ideas and methods. This induced them to imitate European imperialisms also. They witnessed the neighboring peoples being exploited and made into colonies of the Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, French and British possessions. Russia was waiting her turn at the door. The Japanese were compelled to grant extraterritorial rights to those invaders. But, meantime, they discovered the estrangement diplomacy of the western powers. This helped them to play the game wisely, in

order to escape from their conquering intrigues; and they succeeded in preserving autonomy. During the past seventy years, the Japanese people have had more troubles with their neighbors, as the European materialistic and imperialistic civilization penetrated the Orient. The genuine Asiatic cultures are spiritual, philosophic, artistic and peaceful. Hence, the people reared under these principles, ideals and institutions cannot but be free, cooperative and peace-loving.

By Divine Providence, the United States came into being to exemplify human rights and well-being. The founding fathers paid a great price for that end. Today, 10,000,000 heroes and heroines are giving their lives for them everywhere in the earth. Therefore, let all of us, who appreciate the blessings of real American life—the life of freedom, justice, equality and brotherhood—dedicate ourselves to do the same, so that at last, all men—particularly the conquered, the exploited, the backward, the minorities—may share the same abundant life made possible by our unselfish services and sacrifice. Otherwise, our preaching will become like sounding brass, and our highest and noblest offerings of blood, cash and tears will be given in vain.

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