

JAPANESE AMERICAN STUDENT RELOCATION

An American Challenge

"... The principle on which this country was founded and by which it has always been governed is that Americanism is a matter of the mind and heart: Americanism is not, and never was, a matter of race or ancestry. A good American is one who is loyal to this country and to our creed of liberty and democracy. Every loyal American citizen should be given the opportunity to serve this country wherever his skills will make the greatest contribution . . ."

This public statement by President Roosevelt, given in support of the War Department's proposal to add to the number of loyal Americans of Japanese ancestry now serving in the armed forces of our country, strengthens the appeal to all Americans to cooperate with the Government in the readjustment of the seventy thousand Japanese Americans now in the relocation centers.

Important Minority Group

Of great importance in the winning of the war and the peace are the young men and women, Americans of Japanese descent. Of these approximately 2,500 were in college when the evacuation took place. This age group has a significant contribution to make—a contribution which is uniquely theirs because of the accident of birth. Goodwill evidenced towards loyal young Americans of Japanese ancestry may well have a conciliatory influence in the Orient and throughout the world as significant in the future as the use of the Boxer Indemnity fund to educate Chinese students has been in the past.

Education for Americans

When the war came, 110,000 persons of Japanese ancestry were evacuated from the state of California and the coastal regions of Washington and Oregon. Approximately 70,000 of this group are citizens of the United States; the rest have lived here for at least eighteen years, as all Japanese immigration to this country ceased in 1924. The War Relocation Authority is the agency established to administer the relocation centers and to deal with the problems created by the evacuation procedure. In the relocation centers the Government is setting up schools through the high school level, but is not able to provide higher education.

In May, 1942, the Director of the War Relocation Authority wrote a letter to Mr. Clarence E. Pickett which, together with a supporting letter from the Assistant Secretary of War, is reproduced in this folder. This letter was the impetus for the organization of the National Japanese American Student Relocation Council which was set up with the full approval of the War Department. The Council includes many eminent educators as well as representatives of all the major religious groups.

Opportunities and Achievements

By February 1, 1943, the Council was able to find relocation opportunities for over 1,100 students in about one hundred and twenty-five colleges located in thirty-seven different states. Reports from the colleges which have received students are highly commendatory. One institution writes:

"These young men and women have, so far as I have been able to observe, found themselves almost immediately acclimated to their new environment. Our own student body has received them most cordially and from all the evidence at hand have not had a single experience of an untoward nature. If these young people are as happy in their new surroundings as we are in having them come here, then we will have been more than justified in opening our doors to them."

Student comments are equally significant. One writes:

"To me it means more than just a college course; it means that I have been granted an opportunity for a new kind of life in which I can help give to my fellow schoolmates a better understanding of the Japanese American Nisei, and also become a better American."

These comments are typical of many.

A Letter from the War Relocation Authority

WAR RELOCATION AUTHORITY

WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

May 5, 1942

Mr. C. E. Pickett
American Friends Service Committee
20 South 12th Street
Philadelphia, Pa.

Dear Mr. Pickett:

The American Friends Service Committee can make a significant contribution to the program of the War Relocation Authority.

As you know, evacuation of Japanese aliens and American-citizen Japanese is now under way on the Pacific Coast. Most evacuees will move from the prohibited zone to relocation centers managed by WRA. At these centers we shall be able to provide for elementary and high school education. We cannot, of course, establish new universities.

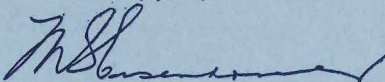
Many eminent educators have urged that university students in the prohibited zone be permitted to transfer to midwestern colleges and universities where they may continue their education. Certainly I agree that this would be desirable.

It is not feasible for the War Relocation Authority to undertake such a university program for American-citizen Japanese, but this is no way detracts from the desirability of such an accomplishment. Consequently, I should like to ask that you establish a committee which would aid you in formulating a set of policies and program. Such a program will involve the selection and certification of students at assembly or relocation centers, a phase of the task that must, of course, be handled by the Federal Government. It will involve transportation of students from the prohibited zone to a designated university, a function which I think may also be handled by WRA, just as it transports all evacuees from the prohibited zone to their war-duration homes. It involves the development of true understanding of this whole problem in many universities as a prerequisite to the students and faculty of those universities making arrangements for the reception of American-citizen Japanese. Finally, it involves either work opportunities or non-Federal funds for the support of students at the universities.

I should like to have you not only to bring together a committee to formulate a program but also to do the necessary follow-through work which will be necessary if this program is to be realized. Let me emphasize that the Federal Government for the protection of the students themselves and to re-assure the public will make individual examinations and give individual certifications. This, however, is only half of the matter. It is equally necessary to see to it that difficulties would not develop in the new locations to which the students would go.

I handed to Mr. Morris the roughest sort of suggested press release. I am anxious that some announcement be made early this week so that the people on the Coast who are concerned about this problem will not be completely discouraged.

Sincerely yours,



M. S. Eisenhower
Director



Procedure for Relocation

To set up and administer the machinery for these student transfers is a lengthy process. Colleges and universities are asked if they are interested in receiving these students. Next the War and Navy Departments must "clear" the college before it may receive evacuee students. Already approximately 400 colleges are on the cleared list and the number is growing.

Before the student leaves the relocation center a check on his individual record is made with the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Well begun — not half done

In addition to the students already accepted by the colleges, there are at present over 1,500 whom the office is seeking to place for the next semester or term. The routine

is established. We have the colleges and the students. From now on placements will be limited chiefly by the amount of scholarship funds available and by our ability to handle the volume of detailed work and correspondence.

At this point the call is to all America that is moved by this American problem. Much money is needed. These young men and women are from families that in their original living were equipped financially to send their children to college. The national crisis, not any deeds of the families, precipitated the upheaval. As a result, only a few families have been able to salvage enough to pay their children's fees. Education will not wait. If a generous and understanding America comes to the help of these young people, loyalties will be intensified and we shall avert a crop of bitterness among these young men and women who are the natural leaders of their generation.

The Council asks help, as much and as soon as possible. We turn to the colleges for tuition scholarships. We look to the Churches, especially the Home Mission Boards, and the National Commission on University Work. We appeal to individuals.

These college-age students have a significance out of all proportion to their numbers. They constitute an American challenge.

A Letter from the Assistant Secretary of War

WAR DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY
WASHINGTON, D. C.

May 21, 1942.

Mr. Clarence E. Pickett
American Friends Service Committee
20 South Twelfth Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

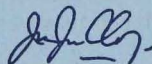
Dear Mr. Pickett:

Mr. M. S. Eisenhower, Director of War Relocation Authority, has sent me a copy of his letter of May 5th to you, regarding the working out of a program of university education for Japanese-American citizens who are now being evacuated from the Pacific Coast. He has suggested that you and your committee would find it helpful to receive from me an expression of approval of a properly conceived and carefully executed program in this respect.

Accordingly, I take pleasure in advising you that I am in complete sympathy with the suggestions made by Mr. Eisenhower in his letter to you of May 5th. Anything that can legitimately be done to compensate loyal citizens of Japanese ancestry for the dislocation to which they have been subjected, by reason of military necessity, has our full approval. In particular, the suggestion for the establishment of a committee of distinguished educators to work out a program of university education in other parts of the country for Japanese-American citizens evacuated from the Pacific Coast meets with my hearty approval.

I am happy to know that this committee is being formed under your sponsorship and that of the American Friends Service Committee.

Sincerely yours,



Assistant Secretary of War

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(Titles are given for identification only and in no way commit the institution to which the committee member belongs.)

National Japanese American Student Relocation Council
1201 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
