



How to Help Japanese American Student Relocation

“This is our contribution to our country—to face this manfully and cheerfully and make something out of it—in spite of it.”

*A Voice from
the Projects.*

NATIONAL JAPANESE AMERICAN
STUDENT RELOCATION COUNCIL

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SEPTEMBER 30, 1943



Ordeal by Relocation

Both the public and the academic world have become interested in a group of young people on the West Coast, who, with their families, now over a year and a half ago were taken from their homes and their former schools and sent to Relocation Projects, where there was sudden and complete collapse of all that stood for real home life and American college educational opportunity, and where certain constitutional rights pledged to every American citizen were unavoidably curtailed.

Americans of Good Will

More and more, colleges and universities throughout the land, stirred into a sense of individual responsibility, have asked the question, "Where can we learn more about this problem?" And then, inevitably they want to know, "What can we do to help?" This pamphlet is an attempt to answer in brief form these two questions.

A concise summary of various aspects of the relocation of Japanese Americans may be found in four most informative and accurate articles in the magazine *Common Ground*, Summer, 1943. Especially interesting is the article by Robert O'Brien, assistant dean of the University of Washington in Seattle, who was for six months director of the National Japanese American Student Relocation Council.

A Common Task for Church and College

The agencies which have been working in connection with the relocation of Japanese American students are first and foremost, the War Relocation Authority, which is the federal government agency in full charge, and second, this Council, which is made up of representatives of Jews, Roman Catholics, Lutherans, various Protestant groups and the Friends, together with other leaders in the academic world and interested officials of related government agencies.

During the latter half of 1942 a branch of this Council in San Francisco carried most of the actual work of placing students in the colleges. This "West Coast Committee" was composed of leading faculty people from the Coast Colleges who had known and liked their Japanese students before the removal to the Projects. A group of young people who had come rather recently out of college gave themselves with enthusiasm to the varied tasks involved in getting these, their fellow American citizens, into colleges east of the West Coast Defense Area. In March 1943, all the activities of the Council were centered in the present office in Philadelphia.

In the spring of 1942 Milton S. Eisenhower, then head of the War Relocation Authority, had asked the American Friends Service Committee to organize the

work of getting the students on the Projects into colleges. They wisely enlisted religious people of all faiths, including leaders in education, to constitute the Council, which thus was controlled by no single segment of the population. Most of the churches, especially those which had had missionaries in Japan, sent representatives to visit the evacuees in the Projects. The Y.M.C.A., the Y.W.C.A., as well as others did likewise. The various articles listed at the end of this pamphlet give more information about the various aspects of their work.

Scars of the Ordeal

Anti-Japanese discrimination in the United States is a subject much discussed in the current literature of the last year. At the present time it is quite impossible to appraise the economic damage done to our fellow citizens and the Japanese aliens by the evacuation. All sorts of property was liquidated with heavy losses; the going concern value of businesses and professional practices was destroyed; and the personal good will which most of the Japanese Americans and their parents enjoyed has been greatly reduced.

The psychological effect is likewise difficult to appraise. Broadly speaking, those of American birth have taken the shock surprisingly well. If you can imagine what it would mean to you, born an American citizen, to be required to leave your home and your accustomed occupation and move into a desert part of the country, where you were placed behind barbed wire, guarded by armed men and obliged to live on a communal basis without family privacy and under constant barrage of racial prejudice and misrepresentation by the press, you can form your own opinion of how this process might affect American citizens of Japanese ancestry. The gratifying thing is that most of them have come through with fine loyalty and courage.

The greatest hardships are the lack of privacy and the stigma of segregation on the grounds of race, or, even more, the absence of any important activity and opportunity to move toward one great goal. To get out and go to college is the solution for some two thousand whose education was interrupted.

The Colleges and the Council

It is now the general practice of colleges to clear with this Council in all matters relating to students who have been on the Projects. Students who have never been through the process of enforced relocation may make their own arrangements with any college without restriction. The usual procedure is for some student who would like to attend a given college to advise us of that fact, send us his credentials and authorize us to submit his name to the college for acceptance. If the college indicates a willingness to accept the student, the next step is for the college to

fill out a questionnaire indicating willingness to receive the student, giving reasonable assurance of community acceptance, and return the questionnaire to us. We then submit the name of the college to the War Relocation Authority in Washington, and in due time the college may be "cleared" by the Army and Navy to receive students from the Projects. The college may then freely admit students released from the Projects.

The Road Back to the Campus

The Council has relocated sixteen hundred students from the Projects in colleges east of the West Coast area. It is astonishing what is necessary to relocate one student. Only in war time would such a complex process be necessary or tolerated. There is the necessity first, of securing acceptance at a suitable college which is on the cleared list, and second, of getting proper government clearance and approval before the student is allowed to leave the Project. For the most part, the great universities and graduate schools are excluded, but there are smaller colleges which have excellent facilities for undergraduate work where these students are permitted to go and are welcome. A third hurdle is community acceptance. Before a college can be cleared, it is necessary to secure evidence that the people of the community will not make the situation intolerable for any student who might be sent to that city.

Self Help the Rule

Finances are also important, often involving provision for travel, scholarship funds, tuition scholarships, part time employment, etc. How far it is necessary to obtain financial help depends on the needs and potential academic success of the individual student. This Council, acting as the agent for the churches, the World Student Service Fund and other organizations, disbursed during the past academic year for scholarship aids about \$70,000. Of the total, \$14,000 came through the World Student Service Fund. Some of the churches have done a really fine job, and the total is a significant achievement. Your church may be able to supply you with a report.

Undisturbed, most of these students or their families would have had sufficient funds for college expenses. Now that few of the families are in a position to earn money and established businesses have been disrupted, the amounts of money available are smaller. Many students have a little money, \$200 or \$300, or can get that amount from family or friends, but most of them will be required to work for board and room. If they succeed in getting a scholarship and a grant of \$150 or \$200, the total is then usually sufficient to cover books, living expenses and incidental expenses. Since the number of students already in colleges and those who desire to enter this autumn approaches two thousand, the total amount required may approach a quarter of a million dollars.

No Mass Migration

It is difficult to say just how many are seeking relocation in colleges. There are another thousand in the Projects who have the academic qualifications and have the desire to do undergraduate or graduate work. In addition, there have been seven or eight hundred students graduated from the high schools on the Projects this year. Most of them would like to go to college if possible.

It is thought wise to avoid sending any considerable number to a single school. Generally speaking, it is a rule not to send "nisei" students to exceed two per cent of the student enrollment. On this basis it is easy to figure out how many of the two thousand or so might wish to enter any particular college.

For students whose only purpose is to get a general college course there is no lack of opportunities. Even in this field there may yet be a shortage of opportunity. Therefore a study is being made of accredited colleges and institutions where students who wish to graduate from one of the great universities might take their freshman or sophomore year, with the confident expectation that they could transfer their credits to a larger university without much loss.

Campus Program

If you wish to bring Japanese American students to your campus, one of the first steps is to secure what is called "community acceptance" in the college community. Material on the national aspects of the problem, the essential Americanism and high character of the students is the best sort of material to use in the college paper. The understanding and collaboration of an official of the college is needed. Efforts should be made to acquaint the church leaders, the college authorities and the best people in the community of such facts as the following: sixteen hundred students have already been placed in colleges, in none of these have students had any serious trouble, two-thirds of the students now in college have a grade point average of 2.4 or better on a possible 3. basis, and the upper third run pretty close to Phi Beta Kappa average. In a number of colleges Japanese American students have been elected to important campus offices. Where there are both Chinese and Japanese students on the campus, those of Chinese descent have no better friends than the "nisei".

Relocation a Government Policy

When evacuation was adopted to solve a difficult social and military problem, many in government and in private life were greatly concerned. Now that it is an accomplished fact, the War Relocation Authority is fully supported by other government agencies in a determined effort to minimize the harm that has been done to good American citizens. When any nation deprives a minority of its citizens of their constitutional rights, it thereby jeopardizes the rights of other

minorities and so progressively the rights of the whole nation. Hitler began with the Jews, went on to the Roman Catholics, and the Lutherans did not escape. The War Relocation Authority has issued pamphlets setting forth the government's attitude toward rehabilitation of Japanese Americans in the national life. The policy is enlightened, practicable and should be pressed forward as rapidly as possible. American citizens of Japanese antecedents should not be segregated, but be encouraged to merge in the life of the nation. This is urgent.

A "Nisei" Speaks

"Dear Fellow Student:

"I am a Japanese American and appreciate deeply the fact that you and the Student Christian Movement are planning to take definite steps in the program of relocating Japanese American students.

"You asked 'how students can put Japanese Americans at ease . . .', and I wish to state frankly whatever helpful suggestions I may have.

"The question immediately brought to my mind this answer—Consider us as you would any other American student on the campus. Within and without the classroom help us to become one of your group. We like to take part in student organization activities; 'to go out' for various team sports; to take part in class discussions; to help 'put out' the paper; to lend our efforts to a school charity drive; or to participate in any other type of work, educational or social activity in which we can forget racial differences and go forward together as 'students of Podunk Tech.' To be encouraged by you 'to put in our two-bit's worth in bull sessions' or 'to plan together with you the Varsity Club freshman initiation for next week' will do much to dispel outward uneasiness and hesitancy on our part and at the same time it will help fulfill our inner desire to become 'one of the gang' at Podunk.

"We feel so much more at ease to walk down the street together with you than just by ourselves, to mingle with you at the dinner table than to confine ourselves in a dim corner of the dining hall, to attend a social function with you in a group rather than to go just by ourselves; they all help to remove that uneasy feeling of self-consciousness and diminish the psychological thought that we are the objects of long and curiosity-filled stares.

"If some of these ideas can be actively carried out, it is my feeling that we can rid ourselves of our 'racial complex', which I personally believe is now the greatest cause of our feeling of uneasiness. These thoughts constitute only 'one man's opinions,' but if I may be of further help, please let me know.

"Best wishes to you and council in your important work."

Sincerely yours,

N. T.

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Note.—The War Relocation Authority can supply a Bibliography.