

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
WAR RELOCATION AUTHORITY  
Tule Lake Center  
Newell, California

~~Mr. Best~~ RR13  
Mr. Schmidt

Community Analysis Section -- April 26, 1944

INTERVIEW ON PROBLEM OF THE NISEI  
(The subject wrote up his own interview)

All right so we don't "belong" here in California. We're artificial Americans, and counterfeit Japanese. This does not mean that we can retain our status as political and geographical Americans in a new and shocking social environment as a sort of bona fide gift-offer from the political democracy of the country. To---with the Americans because we don't want to be American in the vague sense of hysterical public opinion. To---with the too restrictive elder generation, because we do not have a whole-hearted interest in becoming Japanese. We are here in Tule Lake, where others in the same boat are being born, working, marrying, dying, struggling. And all the advantages of a bad bargain with fate lie in the direction of staying "put".

The older generation subtly take advantage of the authority they can gain by pointing out our difficulty in understanding and adjusting ourselves to Japanese customs. They provoke or encourage a lifelong attempt to become Japanese, but subtly point out and know well that any real adjustment is practically impossible except for a few. The better adjusted Issei are always hanging over our heads the

crime of never being able to become fully Japanese. It is much like the Indian Nirvana, whose attainment is held forth as the final goal, but the punishment for the crime of trying to attain that perfect spiritual state is violence and brutality causing the end of many who seek in vain. Its practical application by religious authorities is readily seen as a parallel in the older generations' actions. In this way, they can make young people try and try, and they like to see them conform.

But the situation is the same on the other hand. In so far as the Caucasians are concerned, immigrant, emigrant or American, it is the same technique of encouraging us to become "Americans" in the most vague sense. At the same time, it is pointed out to us, the newer generation, that we are unclassed, and unassimilable; the inevitability of our never being able to become Americans. Encouraged by one group, discouraged by many smaller separate groups, the age group of Japanese to which we belong have not quite grasped that these are common motives, to frustrate all others except themselves, they hope. Bewildered, puzzled, the young people never had a clear idea that their Americanism was only a foible, a Nirvana, ready-made for Caucasian practicabilities.

So in a rough sense we were suckers for both. The absolute advantage does not belong to the newer Japanese. It never did. The parents are less likely to treat us unkindly. Many of them, if not all, at one time or another worked for, and hoped <sup>for</sup> our ambitions and

progress. But Caucasians in the sphere of influence in whatever relations they may have had with us, were more corruptible, and vitiating. In a hundred ways we're the moral support of those who want to help the Japanese, the conscientious worker, but our gains are nothing. Who could fail to realize, then, the advantage offered in our position? Who could remain for long refraining from taking advantage of our plight? Even the parents were susceptible to some degree of banking on the youth. Their promises, among the Caucasian Americans, brought reprisals from hysterical people when fulfillment was urged. Only a small part of our trouble was the selfish ends of the older generation. We are yet in the impressionable state, and we move toward the Issei, beginning to repeat the pattern over again.

When do we realize our unique position...its advantages not its faults, to sweep all before us with everything to gain, merely by announcing parental independence, the desire for our rights, and forswearing American theories of racial indoctrinations. Then only will we be free of the absolute disadvantage in politico-economic strata.

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
WAR RELOCATION AUTHORITY  
Tule Lake Center  
Newell, California

~~Mr. Best~~ RRB  
Mr. Schmidt

Community Analysis Section - April 20, 1944

EMOTIONAL REPRESSION IN A WAR RELOCATION AUTHORITY CENTER

(The following remarks are taken from a series of interviews with different people. Most of the material on this topic, however, comes from a single individual. The report is therefore a composite interview or a running account with the main reliance on the insight of one individual.)

Major Effects of Communal Existence

"In order to study or analyze the cause and effect of individual or group behavior in a restricted camp, like Tule Lake, I maintain that the most logical and fundamental basis from which to approach this subject would be from the standpoint of emotion or psychology. Frequently residents in talking to personnel mention 'the Japanese psychology'. This phrase is used so often, I am afraid, that the personnel do not understand what it means. But it means just what the words say. The feelings and emotional reactions of the people govern their responses. All people think emotionally to a certain extent. In a center, where the life is regimented, and all people are subject to the same living conditions and see and hear pretty much the same things, the emotional reactions are very important. The psychology then becomes group psychology and when the residents refer to it as such, they are pointing out a most commonplace truism.

"If you stood on a corner of Times Square, they say, you would see humanity from every walk of life. Tule Lake isn't Times Square, but the center by its very nature has brought together a variety of people with divergent backgrounds. Some were formerly farmers, some fishermen or carpenters or businessmen -- 'rich man, poor man, and thief'. (You notice that there never were beggars in this unique group.) While center life is so regimented that it levels out many of these differences, it is still true that there is a variety of personality in the center with its conflicting views on life, religion, traditional values, and habits. Thus the analytic description of such a community cannot be entirely on the general plane. The people are all individuals. What I mean is that in living together so closely in a tightly knit communal existence, each individual produces an effect on the mass and is in turn affected by it. When a pebble is cast into a pool of water, the ripples soon envelop the entire pond. The people are individuals, but their lives are tied in with community existence. The Japanese community always was close to the individual and the family on the outside.

"Let's give an example. A father of a family who is a habitual gambler and drinker has lost his life's savings in a gambling house; he returns home, and in a fit of rage and exasperation, scolds the children on the slightest pretext. The family may lose in status, the children become remorseful and detached from the community (juvenile delinquency) and the family may be ignored by the community so that they congregate in a circle of their own. In a normal community these effects would not be public property, particularly in a big city. But here, the rumor and

gossip turns on a huge sums won by a gambling clique or the lawlessness involved in delinquency. In much the same way a stage performance, an incident at school, a discussion in the mess halls, or something seen at the canteens or at the administration buildings becomes public property. Each individual unit is tied in with the closely integrated social pattern, and a whole is affected by the activity of the parts just as the individual's action eddies out throughout the community 'pond' by means of the ever-present grapevine.

"Then, too, Japanese society and etiquette are formalized to a degree anyway. In a center, as the days and months pass in the same restricted scene, there is a great need for emotional outlets. People who are not working will feel this especially. Or else, a community without activities will affect individuals. No matter how perfect any type of administration may be -- and we are very far from that situation -- there are always some fights and strikes and ruffled feelings. What is necessary to this kind of psychology in a restricted atmosphere is to be able to reach within its individual's, or within the Japanese cultural values and to live according to these desires within the farthest reach of the limit set by W. R. A. rules. A doctor can prevent T. B. or any other disease of mankind, but he cannot completely cure it or rule it out of existence. Administrations could likewise prevent, to a certain degree, the excitations of emotion rising to the surface; but they cannot rule out of court the basis for the affliction. If people feel emotionally suppressed, you have to allow everything possible to relieve that suppression.

"The months following an incident are, from this point of view, just times of relaxation and recuperation. I am talking from the evacuee's point of view in general, for it doesn't matter at all whether they're adherents of status quo or anti-status quo; the fact remains that any incident when brought on by a group of radicals or pressure boys has a basic kind of background, the same from case to case and center to center. They are aimed at administration. The wound may heal later but the scar remains, -- eternally to remind the evacuees that they had, according to their thinking, been persecuted. The pressure just doesn't come out of the clear blue sky. It has its basis in the feelings of the people.

"Let's look back in time to the first days of evacuation about two years ago. These Japanese in the center had experienced untold hardships, emotionally, physically, and economically. They were uprooted from normal life with a single sweep of the pen. They were evacuated on a mass scale hitherto unprecedented in American history. They felt the blow doubly because it was aimed at no other group than the Japanese alone. If the whole coast had been evacuated of all peoples, it would have been different. On arrival in the Assembly centers and later in the Relocation centers, they had to adjust themselves to new ways which certainly were not the American way of life. If you want to know the background for bitter attitudes toward hakujins, you have them here. At the same time the attitude toward their fellow 'inmates' was largely influenced at this early stage, the result being a

'psychological pose', if you want to put it that way, of unity and solidarity with their fellows.

"The innate social habits of the Yamato people through all their traditions and customs, make them think as a group, move collectively, and be held responsible for their motives or actions by the ever watchful community about them. These social patterns were transplanted from Japan to America, and every single one of these patterns is most evident at Tule Lake. The Issei especially understand these social backgrounds and hold firm to this philosophy; they have succeeded in part in transmitting these beliefs and practices to the next generation. The Kibei, likewise, have good understanding of the traditional values through their training and education abroad.

"At Tule Lake the residents wish to hold more firmly to these things and the policy of running the center like a relocation center adds to the feeling of repression. Hence there is a desire felt here and there to have the center run by some other agency -- the Justice Department, the Army, or some special set-up. If there were some move to welcome Japanese culture beyond the level of the Language Schools, this feeling wouldn't be so strong."

#### Mass Hysteria and Mass Emotionalism

"We hear a great deal about the desirability of exercising control over the emotions. The implication is that we should suppress emotions or that the intellect should dominate the behavior even though the emotion is present. But emotion, in a center like this, is a form of behavior.



Therefore, if it is undesirable, the only remedy is the development of an organized kind of response in the situation and the elimination of emotion thereby. If one lived in the center, it wouldn't take long to realize that in many instances this is a very hard thing to do. Thus, at the death of an only child in the center hospital, a parent could easily resolve his grief by turning to some definite kind of activity to take his mind off it. The development of interest in Japanese cultural things, like art, religion or some personal hobby could become a substitute activity for the emotion of grief. Or one could try to bury himself in some kind of work on the project. In reality, this is a method of avoiding the original emotional situation; but some people actually exhibit this kind of behavior so that as a result their behavior is socially acceptable -- and this may be the most advantageous course to take. Actually, most people find it hard to think in those terms. As in the case of the Tule Lake hospital, many people were inclined to find an outlet by ascribing calamities to their loved ones to a certain unpopular physician there. When one cannot make a direct adjustment to the situation, they can give another motive sufficient attention, and it becomes a substitute goal. But the problem here is that outlets are so few. In a way, it is the duty and responsibility of the W. R. A. administration to supply the necessary equipment and facilities for this kind of outlet, that is toward the attainment of this substitute goal.

"The lack of outlets, like community activities, is one reason for people getting to the boiling point. Yet there is still another. In the center, there is little privacy and consequently individualism is discouraged and one's inclination veers toward the crowd or mob psychology. It goes back to the fact that any response in the human being is bound to be emotional. The names for emotions usually refer to the character of the stimulating situation and to the final outcome of this in the behavior of the individual. Thus, fear refers to the dangerous or supposedly dangerous situations. Anger refers to something like it, but the reaction is one of attack. In many situations such as the forced evacuation and the experience of being dominated at bayonet point, the individual is bound to react to these situations. Even after a demonstration or incident, when the crisis is passed, the emotional reactions dominate. As a matter of fact, after the alarming situation is over, the emotions are bound to pile up. After people went to the Assembly centers, after they came to the Relocation centers, and after some of them moved again, there was a great piling up of repressed emotions.

"Active, eager-for-life youngsters, between the ages of 16 to 21 have especially a hard time as there is not enough to occupy them and as the materials and opportunities are not provided for by the W. R. A. Even without having to live so closely together, the average youth has a conflict at this time, or a conflicting experience. Today after two years of confinement, the more active and intelligent personalities tend to arrive at this stage 'of having a difficult time' far earlier

than the dull-minded ones. We can observe these cases of tension every day. Their nerves are on edge and the slightest insult or rebuke reacts strongly on them; even a small joke is taken adversely.

"Everyone has his petty individual jealousies and personal enmities. Many try to enforce their will or idea on others and to gain personal prominence even at the cost of criticism by associates. Often good leadership hangs back because of this. And at the same time many so-called leaders in politics are slightly in this category. There is the natural desire to gain public recognition. When this happens, certain figures become almost transfigured in the mass mind, as a stationary statue he once saw would be in a child's mind. During a crisis, personalities who parade themselves constantly before the public gaze are apt to be like this. Leaders are looked up to. Each discomfort the populace suffers, such as shortage of jobs or no clothing allowance for the unemployed, or criticism of food, or undependable service in wood or coal deliveries, or the countless other discomforts pertaining to camp life all multiply and gather weight. It only mortifies people more to associate all this with the inability of public figures and leaders to better the people's lot. At the same time, once the final break occurs, the leaders can become very unpopular. That is another reason why good leadership doesn't want to come forward. The soul of the mob is fickle. Then, through personal enmities and jealousies, the crowd clamors for another personality to step into the lime-light. Even though the leaders of the recent 'pressure group' realized from past experience at other centers that

demonstrations didn't succeed in bringing the right results, still the sentiment will be like a dam that breaks and naturally the demonstration is again the symbol of repression -- the W. R. A. administration. Some people even play with the mass mind because they were formerly neglected, or lost out at another center, or there wasn't enough room at the top for so many liminaries. So the slightest pretext is seized upon to organize a huge demonstration against the despised 'ketos'. The mass emotionalism and mass hysteria of a demonstration allows an outlet for the diverse, dissatisfied elements of the community and this outlet for the suppressed emotions helps explain Tule Lake recently.

"The past leaders lose their influence at this stage for the mass mind is crude and they reason that these leaders are partially, if not wholly, responsible for their troubles. In the center, it is just like when the depression struck in America. President Hoover was blamed for every grievance in the country. This was due to a time of mass emotionalism. It laid the responsibility of the depression on a convenient figure, in this case Mr. Hoover. You probably remember how the American people called the hobo towns that grew up near the slums 'Hoovervilles'. They blamed him for everything under the sun that didn't function rightly. Maybe he had something to do with it, but he certainly didn't control the financial structure of the nation. The big capitalistic monopolies probably didn't mind this kind of propaganda which directed the flood of public indignation against one man who wasn't solely responsible. If the mass mind reacts this way in a normal community, how much greater

must the populace react against leaders in a crisis, a crisis in a square mile bounded by a fence.

"Let's take the example of Mr. X. For a while he was a popular and a very well qualified leader in one of the sections here. When the people arrived from all the centers, they weren't settled down, and they didn't like this center at all. You could hear the rumblings of the eruption. As the noise grew, Mr. X began to lose his influence in his group. Public opinion was getting on the band wagon. Mass emotionalism ran pretty high. The wave of unrest was beginning to be a storm, and you couldn't hear much other opinion above its roar. I think Mr. X slipped; he coveted a position of greater leadership and desperately tried to regain his former prestige and influence. He didn't have any quarrels with any of the groups. Rather, he tried to bring people together again, but the eyes of the crowd were directed toward new stars that came across the horizon. The new stars were the new symbol of leadership. All the oppressed people's hopes and their hitherto suppressed indignation rose to the surface -- against the hated W. R. A. administration. Now Mr. X decided that if he were to regain public acclaim, he had to find himself at least part of the time on the band wagon. He certainly didn't see eye to eye with the 'pressure boys'. He wasn't radical in his tastes. Very cautiously he peeked over the fence. He first peeked a little then he got up on the fence and wobbled a bit, and in fact people gossiped that he was playing both ends against the middle. These rumors came

back to him so in order to quiet the gossips, he leaned over a little more toward the radical landscape and eventually went over too far. They grabbed him on the other side. When the Army picked on him, he found himself intellectually towering above his fellow inmates. Mr. X is an extrovert and likes to be a leader. When he found himself with the other incongruous leaders in the 'jail', he was very disillusioned because whoever heard of a group of leaders that succeeded in living harmoniously. The Japanese are not used to too many leaders. Too many means disintegration, with each unit and its leader competing for the spot-light. But as I say, the mass mind is vain and when they turn away from the leaders, they make them pay a price for their vanity. The case of Mr. X is typical of the countless other leaders in the camp. In their vanity, they don't realize that there is no real government here and that way they are bound to be caught between the wishes of the administration and the wishes of the people.

"The same causes of the upset condition of the people could be mentioned here. The close proximity of the rooms in the thin-walled barracks cause many tiny inconveniences. The block facilities -- public latrines, the gulping mess halls and the monotony of the same identical starry-eyed faces day after day in the same block become irksome in people's minds. Some even aren't smart enough to realize it, but little drops of water on a hard rock day after day wear away the surface and make a huge hole. So with human beings -- the little nervous discomforts and emotional tensions accumulate. That is why the

little things in life at Tule Lake take on the importance of bigger things. Little mole-hills look like huge mountains. All the grievances, strikes, fights, demonstrations, and incidents that occur periodically in camp life are the manifestations of a release for emotional repression and the mass mind. It matters not whether the object of their hatred, or the person that they pounce on with a two by four is a proven inu or a stool pidgeon. The slightest pretext is seized upon as an excusable assault. Therefore, the person who does perform the act of striking the suspected inu and the victim is not the person to be apprehended and questioned with ridiculous jurisprudence. The act itself was not perpetrated under normal conditions, hence the underlying cause is to blame, not the person who did it.

"Fighting is usually looked upon as a characteristic anger response, but one may fight for the sheer pleasure of fighting, or because it is a part of one's code. A Judo fighter who 'loses his head', through either fear or anger, is almost certain to lose the fight as well. Anger is closely allied to fear in that both arise in response to danger. If we can deal with our enemies effectively, by either avoiding them or overcoming them, there is little occasion for emotion. If we cannot avoid them, we may have to fight them.

"The deflection of the sex drive among the young people in camp, to objects or aims of a non-sexual and socially useful character is essential here. For example, the young woman who cannot marry the man she loves may become an over jealous charity worker, or she may devote her life to the care of other members of her family.

"He is a wise leader indeed who at the precise psychological moment gathers together the diverse parties of malcontents and employs the valued inimitable clannish characteristics of the Japanese towards a demonstration or strike against the W. R. A. administration.

"This youthful generation here in camp are not all going to Japan, many will remain in this country. Like the Italian second generation from the East Side of New York who with sub-machine guns and revolvers distinguished themselves in the underworld and cost America many innocent lives, destruction of property, millions of dollars to apprehend, and the burden of supporting the penitentiaries -- the lesson of the new generation breaking away from the old should be well remembered. The Italian second-generation was not any credit to the American way of education and social environment. As a sponge when held in hand tightly is held down, but when the fingers are abruptly opened, jumps up into the air out of control, so the Japanese second generation here in camp are gradually breaking away from the old Japanese customs. The influence of their fathers are waning for their fathers cannot keep pace with their children's American education. On the surface it appears as if the second generation is veering towards Japanese customs mentally and spiritually. But, this view is erroneous. When an average nisei studies at the Japanese schools, he is very bored and does not learn any Japanese. The ones who do learn are in the minority of the Nisei. The clashing of western and eastern cultures in a nisei's mind is appalling and the result is tremendous emotional upheaval, because he has not had



adequate learning and background in either of the two cultures. One observes in camp today young teen age boys swearing in shameful terms, -- even at play the air is blue with profanity. They have no respect towards their parents. This situation is the manifestation of greater upheavals to come, for it is not the good side of either American or Japanese culture. The responsible men in the W. R. A. employee could have prevented the young generation from going astray by providing the adequate means and facilities for the various hobbies, sports, and avocations -- but did not do so. In the days to come when these youth have returned to a normal life and become a problem for America by emulating the Italian boys -- then I hope these responsible men in the W. R. A. will be able to sleep with a clear conscience."

How Mass Emotions May Be Satisfied In Constructive Fashion

" I wish to stress the fact here, that not only in the mess halls but everywhere in camp, the customary polite etiquettes that are so characteristic of the Yamato race have and are gradually disappearing here. Some sort of campaign co-ordinated through the newspaper, at shibais, at schools, through Community Activities, through Parent Teachers Associations, through posters put up in each block at conspicuous places -- publicizing the virtues of the old Japanese etiquette -- would aid in eradicating the bad practices now prevailing in this center. The campaign should emphasize and accentuate the idea that it is for the good of the evacuees and that the good behavior of the adults will ultimately influence the younger generation, thus contributing towards the upbringing of better

citizens for either country, Japan or America. It should also emphasize the fact that true Japanese are and have always been living traditionally and culturally under an etiquette that is both honorable and respectful. It should also remind the evacuees that they are of the Isle of Shikishima, and that Yamato Damashii is etiquette and etiquette is Yamato Damashii (means "true Japanese spirit"). From the birth of a Samurai his upbringing, his education, his very life even unto the culmination of Hara-Kiri is elaborate Etiquette. Especially in a camp where the Japanese have chosen their future to be in Japan, they should be told that they must be real Japanese; therefore, they should at least attempt to conform to the ways of their ancestors. If this was emphasized I am quite sure that the politeness campaign would aid vastly in the uplifting of morale here in camp. So that the energies of the evacuees will not be directed into adverse channels, this policy should be adopted even by the Administration and actively applied in this camp.

"Japanese etiquette in its original purpose was to impel the individual to learn to suppress his emotion. Consequently, a person's facial features brought up strictly under this creed would have an expression of passive resistance to life's sorrows. Whereas a person raised under a freer and more individualistic environment has an expression of being eager for life so that his reflexes react sharply against any oppression, and even in sorrow tend to be optimistic, the true Japanese manners are different. Hence, a more rigid observance of Japanese etiquette would aid in keeping the morale of the evacuees on

an even keel, -- and prevent their being over-expressive of emotionalism. It should be stressed that the Japanese, especially the Nisei, should learn to conduct themselves according to Japanese etiquette, for when they go to Japan they will be handicapped by their ignorance on this matter. These people are selfish as all peoples are; if they realize it is for their own good, they will co-operate and be glad to do so.

"The W. R. A. in carrying out any program in camp should propound this thought throughout, and also work along this line if they sincerely desire the full and spontaneous co-operation of the Japanese evacuees.

"Unlinked events, matters not concerned with the people's interests, and abstract ideals become crystallized in the mass mind -- in past incidents. Why? Because the W. R. A. persisted in applying occidental psychology unto Japanese minds. When the 'pressure groups' gained influence in camp, the only intangible force they could utilize against the foreign Ketos was Yamato Damashii. It stands to reason therefore that if the W. R. A. actively understood and applied this Japanese spirit towards the Japanese, the malcontent elements of the camp would not have any esprit de corps to fall back on and employ towards their own selfish interests. Many of us here are destined to remain here for a long time. I earnestly implore the W. R. A. officials to take heed of this suggestion. It will in the long run pay benefits to the W. R. A. as well as keep the evacuees happy and contented.

"W. R. A. can make a distinction between cultural and political consciousness. There is no sense in subjectively turning up one's nose

at popular Japanese values. The people here know Japanese customs, etiquette, language, food, and dress. Encouragement of these activities will satisfy the populace who before have always been made to feel that 'being Japanese' was wrong. The Japanese are a proud people. As I began by saying, they are not beggars. They came here to prove that. They should be respected for their good points and not condemned for taking an honest stand. If you are brought up to understand one society, you are at home in it. These people should be made to feel at home in Tule Lake-- as long as that time lasts.

"Administration is the centers is always too subjective. Judo is condemned, Kibei are confusingly talked of. The W. R. A. does not understand the Japanese people. Here they ought to make Judoists the police force. If people are ever seen getting into trouble, -- why then give them something to occupy them. Give those people some real responsibility."