

# They Work for Victory



**The Story of Japanese Americans  
and the War Effort**

Respectfully Dedicated  
to the Memory of  
FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT



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"Americanism is not, and never was, a matter of race or ancestry.

"Every loyal American citizen should be given the opportunity to serve this country wherever his skills will make the greatest contribution — whether it be in the

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—from a speech by Franklin D. Roosevelt.



Photo by Elisofon

BALLERINA SONO OSATO WITH SCULPTOR ISAMU NOGUCHI



# WHO AND WHAT ARE THE NISEI?

**NISEI: Second generation of Japanese in America, or, American citizens of Japanese ancestry.**

A decade ago the term "Nisei" was virtually unknown in the American vocabulary. Today it is coming into common usage and doubtless future editions of dictionaries will carry the word and its definition.

Though specifically it means "second generation" Japanese Americans, the term is more commonly applied to all persons of Japanese ancestry in this country, and it will probably be used to designate Americans of Japanese descent of the third and fourth generations, or so long as such a designation is needed. It is the hope of the Nisei themselves, however, that in the future such racial identification will become unnecessary and that they will be called simply "Americans."

A cross section of the Nisei would reveal a representative American group.

There would be a few who have achieved national fame like Sono Osato, star of the ballet and the New York musical, "On Your Toes," and Isamu Noguchi, sculptor-designer. There would be a group of young scientists and artists who have not yet achieved national reputation for their work but have in their fields performed creditably and often brilliantly. Among these would be Dr. Henry Tsuchiya who, at the University of Minnesota, has been directing experimental studies on sulfa drug research and has carried on chemo-therapeutic studies in work which must at the present time be regarded as confidential; Dr. Eben Takamine, doing important war work on a new process for the production of penicillin; Dr. William T. Takahashi, 1944 Guggenheim fellow, working in virus reproduction at Rochester University; Aiko Tashiro, pianist and teacher at Bennington College in Vermont; Dr. Edward Hashimoto, associate professor at the University of Utah; and Min Yamasaki, architect and designer.

But the great majority of the Nisei, like the great majority of Americans everywhere, are everyday people working at everyday jobs. They are farmers, domestics, small business men and workers. Some are professional men, others work with their hands. They are dentists, newspapermen, fieldhands and lawyers, and politically they are Democrats and Republicans in approximately the same ratio as the rest of the voting public.

Like all Americans, they lived normal, busy lives

until Pearl Harbor broke suddenly and devastatingly on December 7, 1941.

Because the Nisei were racially identified with the enemy Japanese, they were subjected to a test of patriotism and loyalty never before demanded of Americans.

Within a few months of the start of war, all persons of Japanese ancestry were evacuated from the coastal areas of California, Washington and Oregon and parts of Arizona to relocation centers within the interior. One hundred and twelve thousand people were thus moved, and of these some seventy thousand were Nisei, or American citizens. The rest were their alien parents, most of whom had spent upwards of twenty years in these United States.

The centers were huge, sprawling camps in desert wastelands of the western and southern states. Barbed wire fences enclosed the living and working areas, and armed sentries patrolled by night and day.

Under a program of relocation the Nisei were allowed to move from these camps to any part of the United States save those areas from which they were evacuated. Despite the difficulties of making this new move, thirty thousand Nisei did manage by the end of 1944 to relocate to midwestern and eastern states, and large numbers of them went into farming and war work.

Thousands more were called directly into the Army, and blue service stars went up rapidly in the barrack windows of the relocation centers.

But even within the centers the work for an American victory continued. War bond drives, Red Cross work, the production of camouflage nets for the U. S. Army and the making of plane models for Navy training courses were some of the direct war contributions coming out of these desert camps. The Nisei were proving that despite the barbed wire and the armed sentries, they could and would prove their loyalty to the country in which they were born.

On December 17, 1944, that loyalty was vindicated. The Army on that day announced the reopening of the West Coast and the end of the evacuation.

The Nisei had shown by loyal and courageous Army service overseas and by honest, earnest efforts at home that their loyalty was wholly American.

This is the story and a recounting of that loyalty.



## These Are The Faces Of The Nisei

Teacher, draughtsman, soda jerk and scientist—these are the faces of the Nisei.

They are of every walk of life, they are of every religion. They are rich and poor, famous and unknown. They are the children of immigrants, but they are also the sons and daughters of Americans, and some of them are:

TEACHER MILDRED SASAKI, shown here working at the Day Care Nursery and School, conducted by the Board of Education in Cincinnati, Ohio. A specialist in nursery and kindergarten work, Miss Sasaki's help is invaluable in caring for the pre-school children of war workers.

Photo by Iwasaki for WRA

NURSE HELEN MURAKAMI, general duty nurse employed at the Lutheran Hospital, Omaha, Nebraska. Twenty-five years of age, Miss Murakami is a graduate of the University of Washington in Seattle and trained for three years at the Providence Hospital in that city. She also served for three years as a general duty nurse at the Sutter Hospital, Sacramento, California.

Photo by Iwasaki for WRA





STUDENT YANAKO WATANABE, major in arts and sciences at the University of Buffalo, New York. She is shown here studying at the Buffalo YWCA residence.

Photo by Iwasaki for WRA

SODA JERK VIRGINIA MATSUMOTO, daughter of a World War I veteran, goes on duty at the Gumbo Inn, Chesterfield, Missouri.

Photo by Iwasaki for WRA

ARTIST TOM INADA, animator in the New York City studios of a movie cartoon producer.

Photo by Parker for WRA

MECHANIC SHO TAKAHASHI, former student of mechanical engineering at the University of California at Los Angeles, maintaining machinery in a Chicago greenhouse.

Photo by Parker for WRA

SCIENTIST DR. WILLIAM TAKAHASHI, Guggenheim fellow, 1944, working in a laboratory at the University of Rochester, Rochester, N. Y.

ENGINEER EUGENE E. KOMO, graduate of the University of California, checking machinery used to mark gun ammunition at the Superior Type Company, Chicago.

Photo by Parker for WRA



"the ranks of our armed forces"



You are always thinking of your country before yourselves. You have never complained through your long periods in the line. You have written a brilliant chapter in the history of the fighting men of America. You are always ready to close with the enemy, and you have always defeated him. The 34th Division is proud of you, the Fifth Army is proud of you, and the whole United States is proud of you.

—Lieut.-Gen. Mark Clark in a message to his Japanese American soldiers.

Photo by U. S. Army Signal Corps

THERE WAS RAIN, SNOW, AND THE GERMAN ENEMY ON THE WESTERN FRONT





# JAPANESE AMERICANS IN KHAKI

ALL ALONG THE WESTERN FRONT men talked of the "Lost Battalion."

For five days 270 infantrymen of the 141st Regiment of the 36th Division had been trapped behind German lines near Bruyeres. They had no food, medical supplies or means of communication. Their water supply was a swampy mudhole, and when death came to the severely wounded, prayers were spoken over their bodies in whispers so that the enemy would not hear.

The whole surrounding countryside had been thoroughly mined, and the Germans held strong roadblocks all around.

On the sixth day American planes were able to drop food and supplies, but after dive-bombing, they flew off again into the sullen French skies.

It was the eighth day of isolation when one of their lookouts sighted a soldier in American uniform making his cautious way toward their slip trenches. The uniform was worn by a Japanese American, Pfc. Mutt Sakumoto.

The "Lost Battalion" had been saved, and the first men to reach it were members of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, an all-Japanese American unit. For this action twenty-nine Nisei soldiers were decorated, and posthumous decorations were awarded eight others who died in effecting the rescue.

The story of Japanese American men in uniform has been a story of dramatic bravery. Eighteen thousand of them, proud of the uniforms they wear, are today proving to the world that they will live and fight—and if necessary, die—for the country of their birth.

They come from city and village, farm and factory, and thousands came from the relocation centers to which they were evacuated. Almost one thousand designate as their home the relocation center at Poston, Arizona, and the huge service billboard at the Minidoka center in Idaho has recently acquired two new wings to accommodate all the new names as their owners marched off to U. S. army camps.

## The Purple Heart Battalion

The first all-Japanese American unit was the 100th Infantry Battalion, composed of Japanese American servicemen from the Hawaiian Islands. Former members of the territorial guard, they were sent in 1942 to Camp McCoy, Wisconsin, for training, and then to Camp Shelby, Mississippi.

They trained like demons, these men of the 100th. They had lost friends and relatives in the attack on

Pearl Harbor that fateful 7th of December, 1941. They had participated in the defense of their homeland that day, and some of them had died in that defense. One of their comrades, Private Torao Migita, had been one of the first American soldiers to fall at Schofield Barracks when the Japanese planes flew overhead. The first Japanese officer taken prisoner that day was captured by two of their men, and the first Japanese submarine was taken by a patrol of Japanese American soldiers led by Pfc. Thomas Higa.

So these Japanese Americans of the 100th Battalion went into action aching for revenge. Had they had their way, they would have faced the Japanese enemy, but the Army decreed otherwise.

They went into action in Italy on September 2, 1943, and within months their exploits became legends that spread through the American troops abroad, that were repeated on the continent and were caught up hungrily by the people at home in the Hawaiian Islands.

They landed at Salerno and then inch by inch they fought their way up the Italian boot. It was bloody fighting all the way. There were days of fast moving when objectives came into sight and defenses crumbled before them. But there were more days when the going was slow, tough and hard.

They crossed the Volturno—three times in all. Twice they fought their way over, twice they were beaten back. But the third time they stayed. They launched the first infantry attack against Cassino, spearheading the American move against this city. They participated in battles at Benevento and Santa Maria Oliveto, and they captured San Michele.

By the end of 1943, 96 of them had been killed, 221 wounded. The casualties marked a one-third loss in this unit of 1000 fighting men.

By July, 1944, they were well up the Italian boot. On July 19, led by Lieutenant General Mark W. Clark, they led the way into Livorno, and on the 27th of that month Gen. Clark bestowed upon them a distinguished unit citation. It was at this time that Gen. Clark said to the members of the 100th: "Your record in battle has been marked by one outstanding achievement after another. You are always thinking of your country before yourselves. You have never complained through your long periods in the line. You have written a brilliant chapter in the history of America's fighting men."

The unit had been awarded 900 Purple Hearts, four Distinguished Service Crosses, 36 Silver Stars and 21 Bronze Stars within its first six months in the line. Its record had been written in blood, and the 100th Infantry





The Minidoka Relocation Center proudly presents its Military Honor Roll. Standing is Masako Fujii, Wac volunteer from Minidoka.

Battalion was thereafter known as "The Purple Heart Battalion."

Within the months following, the men of this single battalion added new honors to their star-studded record of battle. By March, 1945, this record included 1547 Purple Hearts, 21 Distinguished Service Crosses, seven Soldier's Medals, six Legions of Merit, 73 Silver Stars, 96 Bronze Stars, 16 Division Citations, two awards from the Italian government and the War Department Distinguished Unit Citation.

The infantrymen of the 100th had come a long way from the sandy beaches of Hawaii and the West Coast.

### "Go For Broke"

If, early in 1943, there were still some doubt as to the loyalty of the Japanese American soldier, it was not shared by the War Department. In January it announced the recruiting of Japanese American volunteers for a new unit, the 442nd Combat Team.

The announcement brought a clearcut indication of the sympathies of young Nisei. In Hawaii local draft

boards were swamped by 10,000 eager volunteers. "This is the chance I've been waiting for," said Christian Nakama as he volunteered. "As Americans we're entitled to get a crack at Tojo, Hitler and Mussolini."

Fifteen hundred young men from the relocation centers signed up with recruiting teams. Four brothers—Chet, Howard, Kenny and Ted Sakura volunteered at the Minidoka relocation center, and to their mother, Mrs. Misa Sakura, Secretary of War Henry Stimson wrote: "I am sure that you are proud of your sons who have willingly taken their places in the defense of their country."

The 442nd went into training in the lush pine growths of Mississippi and the swampy grounds of Louisiana. Volunteers all, they were imbued by a fighting faith and fervor that spurred them on, even during their early training days. They adopted as their slogan, "Go For Broke." They had put all their eggs in one basket.

They went overseas in June, 1944, and at this time the 100th Infantry Battalion was officially made a part of the 442nd. Their first action was with the Fifth Army in its drive on Livorno. They went into battle with vigor, and in four days they charged fifty miles.

From the first they were subjected to the most intense front-line fighting in the Italian theater. In the