

# CULTURAL CONFLICT



## THE ISSEI

The Japanese immigration to the United States is a recent one compared to other racial and national migrations to this country. The original settlers still make up a majority of the adult population of Japanese-Americans. Their youth, the period of cultural determination, was spent in Japan. Although they rather quickly adjusted themselves economically, became useful and law-abiding members of society, they did not greatly change their cultural pattern. They retained their language, their religion, their manners, and other parts of their social heritage. This is not unlike other immigrant groups but became even more ingrown because of certain other factors. The Japanese culture was more divergent from the predominating Western culture, and then legal and social discrimination on the West coast caused them to cluster together for mutual aid and for social intercourse. Evacuation into relocation centers has further narrowed the American contacts for these older people and will add to the difficulty of cultural adaptation to American life.

## THE NISEI

The younger generation, the nisei, is a product of two cultures: their home background and their American environment. For the great majority, the American culture is the stronger influence. Their education, their occupational contacts, their recreation all incline in that direction. As they mature, they realize that their chances for happiness and success in this country are increased by the extent of their adjustment to it. In fact, in their anxiety to be American, they tend to throw overboard some of the fine elements of Japanese culture.

The cultural difference between generations naturally creates some dissension, although the Japanese quality of parental loyalty which has been instilled by home training prevents the gap from becoming too wide. Life in a relocation camp has been especially hard on the nisei from a cultural standpoint. It has sharpened some of the differences and made the conflict more overt. Then too, they have been thrown into intense contact with more Japanese background when most of them were struggling to free themselves from it. Also they had to give up the occupations and contacts that were helping them to a more complete Americanization. What is even harder to overcome is the brand, "Japanese", which has been put on them by the mass evacuation and the war psychosis when they rightly considered themselves Americans. It has been an important factor in turning the faces of some away from America; it has disheartened others; but to the great majority, after temporary discouragement, it has been a challenge to prove their real Americanism.

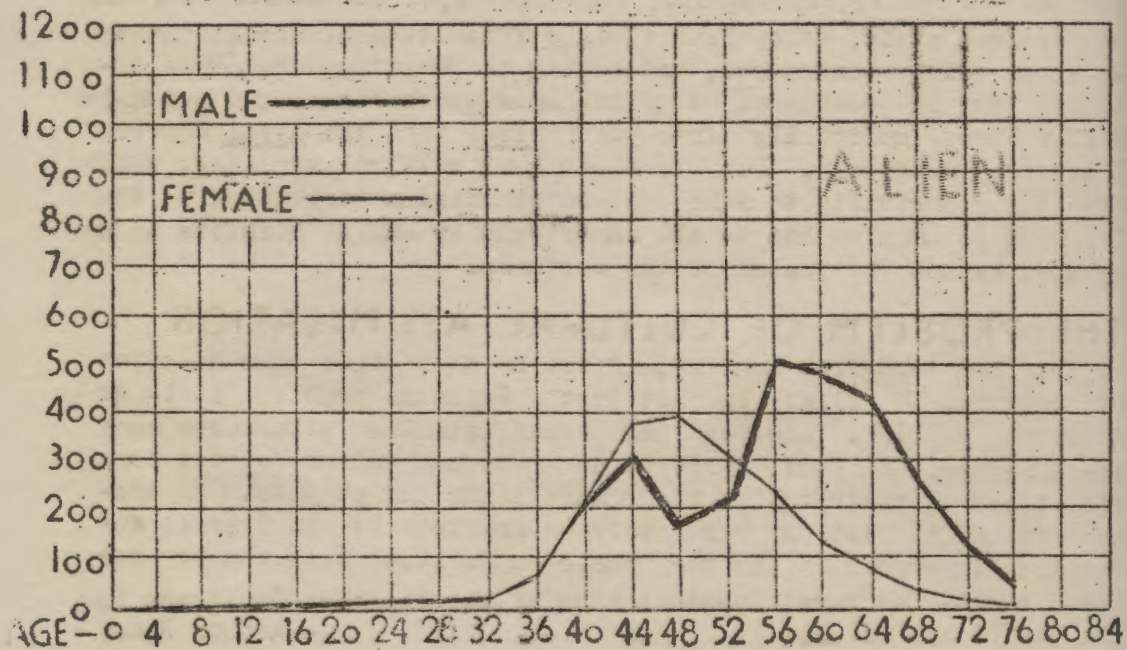
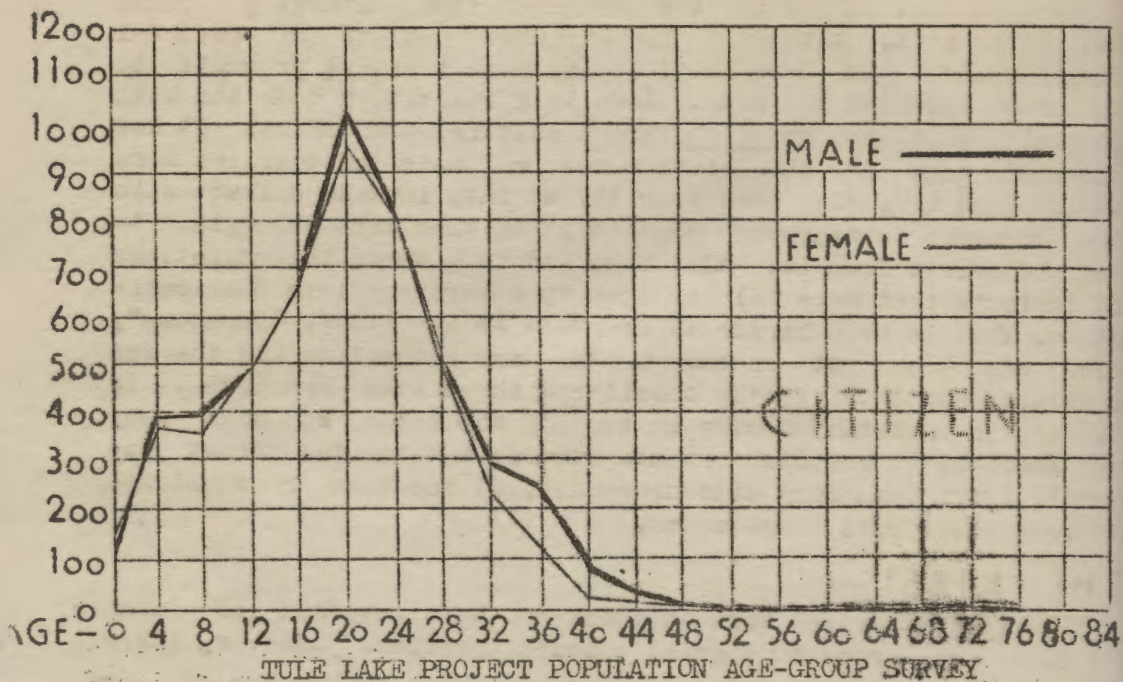
## THE KIBEI

The kibei, American born Japanese who have returned to Japan for education, present a special cultural problem. However, their numbers are relatively small. Depending upon the number of years of foreign study, they find their difficulties of adjustment to American culture increased, and during the war they are especially apt to be confused. They are American citizens and yet may differ more culturally from the nisei than the nisei do from Caucasian Americans. Due to their dual cultural training, they have the opportunity to make an outstanding contribution to the Japanese in America and to all Americans by making possible to a greater extent the fusion of the cultures.

## THE PROBLEM OF CULTURAL ASSIMILATION

From the foregoing summary, it can be seen that this question of cultural conflict is not just a Japanese problem; it is an American problem. America has faced similar situations many times before. In fact, there is no American culture except as a rich blend of contribution from many lands and peoples. We cannot afford to let a war involving American ideals distort our thinking in regard to the very basis upon which this country has been built. Cultural assimilation of the Japanese-Americans is the job of all of us.

--Arthur Ramey



# • OUR FOREIGN PARENTS •

There are two terms in Japanese that are used to distinguish the American-born from the Japan-born Japanese in America. We who were born and reared in this country are called nisei, meaning second generation. Though we may not differ appreciably in our outward appearance, our attitude toward many things is as different as are black and white. Our parents, the issei, trained from birth in their life at home, school, and work, in the age-old customs of Japan, frequently cannot understand the nisei who were born and raised in America much as are other boys and girls in this country.

The most noticeable difference is in our speech, for the languages of Japan and America are so dissimilar that fluency in both tongues is quite uncommon; and because language is of utmost importance in the transmission of ideas, the inability to use a common language is perhaps the most formidable cultural barrier between the issei and nisei. We try to correct the English diction and grammar of our parents, but with very poor results. Our parents in turn often send us to Japanese language schools hoping that the schools might succeed in giving us fluency in their language, but most of us, despite several years of schooling, seldom learn to use Japanese with facility. People often remark in their conversations, "I can't find words to express what I feel and think," and this is literally the case between issei and nisei in their everyday life! The army intelligence school, in trying to find instructors among the nisei, learned to their surprise that few if any of them could read or write the Japanese language.

The barriers exist not only in language but in many other customs, and they are only slowly removed. Twenty years ago, the issei considered the American form of ballroom dancing a most undesirable form of recreation. "Imagine, a young man's arm encircled about your daughter's waist, and in public too!" Such comments were frequently heard among parents. But occasionally some of the more daring young nisei would sponsor a dance, perhaps once on Fourth of July and again on New Year's Eve, and these events would be well attended by dance-loving boys and girls who

would always arrive "stag", and return home "stag". However, after every "affair" the local Japanese papers would strongly reprimand the wild nisei in their editorials.

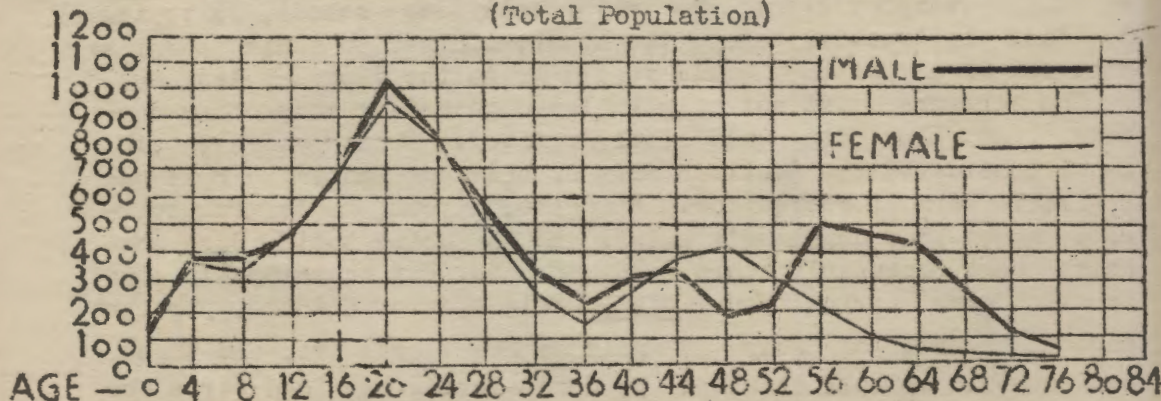
Within ten years we saw the sons and daughters of these same editors on the dance floor; another two years and we saw their parents on the floor.

### "GO - BETWEEN"

Can't you imagine, then, the issei parents' dismay at requests from young people for simple weddings without expensive wedding gowns, elaborate banquets, and "go-betweens". Among Japanese these things are considered indispensable to the well conducted wedding, and especially does this attitude hold with regard to the "go-between".

In Japan when a young lady reaches the ripe age of say eighteen without an offer of marriage, or a son is discovered to have grown as old as twenty-three without having found a suitable mate, the worried parents call in their closest friend and asks him to do something about the situation. Does he know of some young lady or youth from the same prefecture as themselves (and this is quite important), with a similar educational background, without any known hereditary illnesses? Of course, the girl should know how to cook and sew, know her manners, and show evidence of making a good mother; the young man should be respectable, have at least enough for a dowry, and preferably be a little bright.

TUPE LAKE POPULATION AGE-GROUP SURVEY  
(Total Population)



So with all these instructions which he already knows from past experience, the go-between inquires about until he meets another person on the same mission. Only for the opposite sex. Now they compare notes, and if everything seems all right, the parents are told the good news. A meeting is arranged for the young couple where the prospective bride and groom meet for the first time, or it should better be said that they are present in the same room for the first time, for the blushing young lady never raises her head and the bashful young man looks at everything but the object upon whom he is to pass approval. The well-bred children usually agree to marry the choice of their parents and go-between, and strange as it may seem, such marriages often prove more lasting than our "love at first sight" type of union.

## NISEI BREAK AWAY

A few nisei first broke away from this old custom. Now we hear of courthouse marriages and even of elopements, and without any eye-brow raising or fainting parents.

But if there are these cultural conflicts, these barriers to mutual understanding, we also come to realize that our parents are just as human as anyone else, and that we can understand them as human beings. If our parents show parental concern over our welfare, we can understand that the impulse towards concern for us is not different from the parental impulse anywhere else. If they show us kindness in little deeds from day to day, we can see that kindness is not substantially different from kindness anywhere else. It is on this common ground that cultural conflicts are compromised and gradually disappear.

## FOR A HIGHER CULTURE

Because the average of issei is not about 50 to 55 years, it will not be long before the issei generation disappears. The cultural conflicts may then no longer exist, but the significant things of life which the issei convey to us will remain. If there are things which we may think strange or wrong in Japanese culture, there is also much that it has to offer in its calm and quiet way. It would be well for us nisei if we might inherit their love of beauty in simple things and learn their patience. If we should combine and temper these virtues with those of our American background, I feel that a higher culture would evolve.

--Nobu Naito

# "The Heart and Mind"

## ARE NISEI LOYAL TO U.S.?

Pick at random any cross-section of 110,000 people in the United States. You will find men, women, children of varying kinds and occupations, some aliens, most citizens, the greatest majority loyal, some luke-warm, a few actively disloyal. Those of Japanese ancestry in the United States are such a group. No one doubts some of them may be passively or actively pro-Japanese. The Justice Department has interned 1,974 such suspected individuals for the duration, along with 1,448 Germans and 210 Italians.

But for the groups as a whole, "the loyalty of the overwhelming majority...has not been seriously questioned by informed persons." So states the Director of the Department of Justice's Alien Enemy Control Unit. The Congressional Committee investigating National Defense Migration, headed by Representative John Tolson, after hearing all sides, corroborates this: "We cannot doubt, and everyone is agreed, that the majority of Japanese citizens and aliens are loyal to this country." The War Relocation Authority's former director, Milton S. Eisenhower, brother of the United Nations' commander in North Africa, reports:

"I have visited with many people, some of them technical experts in whom I have confidence. I would say that from 80 to 85 per cent of the nisei, who are American-born citizens of Japanese descent and who have never been out of the United States, are loyal to the United States." (June 15, 1942)

Many persons, such as race-baiting Congressmen Martin Dies, Leland Ford and John Rankin, or sincere citizens misled by racial propaganda, have questioned the loyalty of the Americans of Japanese descent. But against their ill-informed opinion is the word of President Roosevelt; Secretary of War Stimson; the War Relocation Authority's present director, Dillion S. Myer; James C. Baker, Bishop of the Methodist Church for the California Area;

Lieutenant General Delos C. Emmons, commanding general, Hawaiian Department, U.S. Army; the editors of Time; Ray Lyman Wilbur; chancellor of Stanford University; W. C. ("Tom") Sawyer, former national vice-commander of the American Legion; August Vollmer, noted criminologist and professor of police administration at the Universities of Chicago and California; Monroe E. Deutsch, vice-president and provost at University of California; John Dewey, philosopher; Professor Reinhold Niebuhr of Union Theological Seminary; Chester Rowell, distinguished San Francisco newspaperman; Frederick J. Koster, chairman, San Francisco Chapter of the Red Cross. All these and many more testify to the loyalty of the typical American-Japanese.

A United Press dispatch of April 23, 1943 reports that "according to WRA tabulations, 95 per cent of the total Japanese-American population is loyal to this country. A number are working in war industries, including two in factories making bomb sights and others in airplane plants. Thousands of American-Japanese are serving in the armed forces; more thousands are now being recruited. The commander of a battalion of these soldiers reports:

"I've never had more whole-hearted, serious-minded co-operation from any troops."

The War Department says this is typical, and a War Department statement adds: Americans of Japanese blood...are wanted because the government and the army are convinced of their loyalty." One hundred seventy-five are already on special missions in the South Pacific, mainly as interpreters. Others are fighting in that area, in infantry companies in North Africa, or behind the guns of bombing planes. Three have been decorated. (These figures are as April 22, 1943.)

## EFFECT OF EVACUATION ON NISEI

Just how loyal are the nisei, is, I suspect, an interrogation which has long been in your minds. Due to the unpardonable deeds committed by a few of the nisei the good reputation of the nisei has been somewhat stigmatized. Thus, it is quite easy to discern why the integrity and the faithfulness of the nisei as a whole have been questioned.

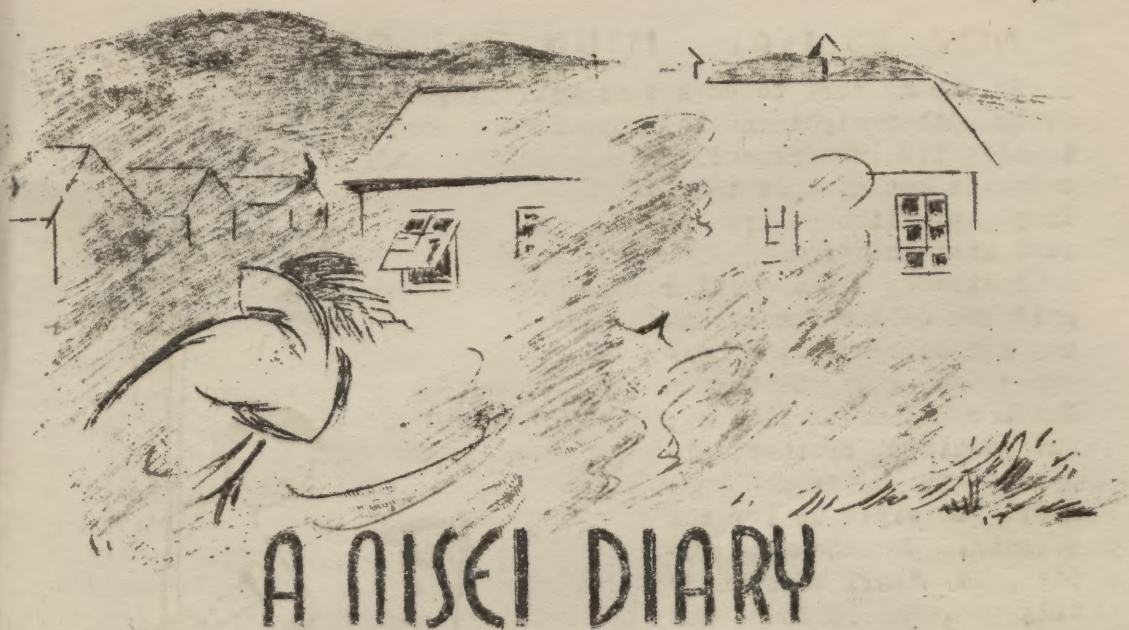
Just what per cent of the nisei are loyal and what per cent

are disloyal is a question which I can not accurately answer. However, I am fully convinced that the vast majority of the nisei are staunch Americans, steadfastly and unmistakably loyal to this nation which has given them and their parents so much. You may inquire--what about the other nisei--those who are disloyal? I would answer that question in this way. It is, undeniably, true that as the result of this war a great change does exist in the hearts of a number of nisei. That a number of nisei have lost faith in America is, also, true. It would be wrong to assume, however, that these nisei became disloyal because they were in sympathy with the Japanese scheme of world conquest; or that these nisei have given their allegiance to the land of their ancestors instead of to the country of their birth. It would be folly for me to assume that hidden in the deep recesses of the hearts of those who have lost faith in democracy were seeds of Anti-Americanism that needed only the element of war for the seeds to blossom. No, the war was not the stimulus which prompted many of the nisei to lose their faith, if not permanently, at least, temporarily in the goodness of American way of living, and in democracy. No, the war was not responsible for the change of hearts, for the loss of faith and love of country. No, the stimulus was the evacuation.

It was the evacuation which unjustly herded the nisei into camps without trial and without justice that prompted many to question whether this sort of thing was actually democracy in action. It was the strange likeness to the Nazi technique that made many wonder whither goeth democracy. The evacuation was a cruel, malevolent thing, utterly unnecessary. In its wake of economic ruin, the evacuation committed the very dastardly crime of changing many loyal, good Americans into apathetic, bitter, questionable Americans. It would be well to remember that the thing which caused many to become disloyal was not the innate predilection for Nipponism, for there is no such predilection existing among the nisei. The cause was the evacuation.

I, honestly, believe that these wayward children of America can be brought back to the fold again. I feel that you can do much in the restoration of the faith of those, THE DISILLUSIONED, by redeeming that which was lost through the evacuation. It can be done through kindness, good-will, absence of racial discrimination, and the perfecting of democracy to see the real democracy practiced.

--Frank Hijikata



## A NISEI DIARY

This is a year's retrospect of my life in this relocation center. It may be a narration common to typical nisei-off-the-street; a brief sketch of how hereacted to the incredible new environment on the barren, dust-caked enclosure with thousands of slant-eyed Americans like himself.

I was born in Sacramento, California 23 years ago. My father is a Japanese immigrant who worked in the fruit orchards as a farm laborer. I was sent to school with Chinese kids, Negro kids, Portuguese kids, blonde kids and kids of all colors and nationalities. As I grew older, I became conscious of my race and my social contact became more and more confined with people of my own race.

My father scraped enough money to send me to University of California. There, my future outlook was a dilemma. I changed my course frequently to fit the narrow pattern of nisei's economic status.

Evacuation came as a relief to my post-graduate worries, but its effect was a death-blow to any aspiration I may have had. I'm looking ahead to resettlement with a mixed feeling of hope and doubt.

It was my turn to cook tonight. We're having hamburger almost every other night and the guys in the dorm are starting to kick. Feeding five hungry college boys is not an easy task. They eat like bears and fuss like mules.

Yesterday Mrs. Miller paid me a dollar for cleaning her basement, and I figured on going to Campus Theater to see a picture, but Sumio's brother, Albert, came up from Sacramento to visit us for the weekend. We made some coffee and "bull sessioned" till one. Al said he was still working in the country pruning grapes. It's a pity, a brilliant graduate in engineering like him couldn't get a decent job simply because he is a "Jap".

I went to bed wondering what I was doing in college. Maybe it was because I didn't have anything to do after high school. But someone said college was a sound investment.



## DEC. 3, 1942 "HASHING"

University's Bureau of Occupation called me up and asked me if I wanted to "hash" at a Phi Gamma banquet party tonight. The fraternity was inviting a neighboring sorority over. They were willing to pay me 50 cents an hour plus dinner and carfare. I needed the money badly, so I took the job. Why is my father so late with my monthly allowances? (Oh well, I can't ask too much of