

FOR YOUR INFORMATION  
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# 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

1201 CHESTNUT STREET ● PHILADELPHIA 7, PA.

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## ***Ordeal by Relocation***

Both the public and the academic world have become interested in a group of young people on the West Coast, who two years ago were taken from their homes and their former schools and sent to Relocation Projects. Sudden and complete collapse of all that stood for real home life and college educational opportunity followed. 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.

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.

Even before that a group of college administrators and faculty leaders who had known and liked these Japanese American students joined with other Christ-

ian leaders to form the "West Coast Committee." This directing committee advised and guided a staff of young people who themselves had come rather recently out of college. They undertook with enthusiasm the varied tasks involved in getting these, their fellow American citizens, into colleges east of the West Coast Defense Area. In March 1943 the West Coast staff and records were moved to the East Coast. All activities of the Council have since then centered in the present office in Philadelphia.

### *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. 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 of those whose education was interrupted as well as for current graduates from the Project High School.

### *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. The usual procedure is for a student who would like to attend a given college to advise us of that fact, authorize us to assemble his credentials and to apply to that college

on his behalf. If the college accepts the student nothing further is required except in certain institutions having classified activities or contracts with the armed forces. In these latter cases the armed forces may require of the student a procedure similar to that required of one seeking employment in an industry essential to the war effort. The Council will cooperate with the student, the college and the military authorities in facilitating this procedure. Where this situation exists the college authorities should confer with the officer representing the contracting government agency on the campus.

### ***The Road Back to the Campus***

The Council has helped relocate more than two thousand four hundred students in colleges east of the West Coast area. Of these over two hundred are enrolled as student nurses, mostly in the United States Cadet Nurse Corps.

On an average it takes twenty-five letters from the Council per person concerned to place one student. Only in war time would so complex a procedure be necessary or tolerated. After the student's wishes are matched to a college he must get acceptance by that college or another which can meet his needs. The government must be satisfied of the student's financial position, his loyalty and must have assurance from college authorities that the student will not be molested in the community where he will reside, before he is allowed to leave the project.

### ***Self Help the Rule***

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. Aid may take the form of travel grants, reduced tuition, scholarships or part time employment. Most students have some resources. Some will earn scholarships. Most will need to work for board or room and hope for an opportunity to do so. Even after making the most of these aids some must seek also additional funds to meet the year's expenditures. Through the church, the World Student Service Fund and other organizations this Council has arranged grants in aid to Japanese American students amounting to \$106,766. Of this total \$17,521 came from the World Student Service Fund. Most of the balance came from national church organizations. Many of the churches have done a really fine job, and the total is a significant achievement.

## ***No Mass Migration***

The number of Japanese American students now in college approximates the number enrolled at the time of Pearl Harbor. It is not likely to increase. The drafting of Nisei men will reduce the numbers. But each year there are roughly 2000 students graduating from High Schools on the Projects. More than a third of these boys and girls would have gone on to higher education if there had been no evacuation. As students advance and specialize there will be a drift from the smaller schools toward the great graduate and professional schools.

It is thought wise to avoid "saturation" of any campus. Generally speaking, it is a good rule not to enroll "Nisei" students to exceed two per cent of the total student enrollment in any college.

## ***Campus Program***

If you propose to bring students of Japanese ancestry to your campus it is important that faculty, students and townspeople be acquainted with facts like the following: These students are native born American citizens with all the rights and obligations of Americans. Having been under observation by and checked with the federal security services for two years their loyalty and good character is sufficiently certified. The patriotism and loyalty of this group is evidenced by the record of the Nisei serving in the Armed Forces in Italy and the South Pacific. The college record of the Japanese American student is above the average all over the country. With 2400 in 441 colleges in 43 states there has been no serious difficulty at even one single point and generally only the happiest relationship. In a number of colleges Japanese American students have been elected to major campus offices. Where there are both Chinese and Japanese students on a campus, those of Chinese descent have no better friends than the "Nisei".

Once students arrive on the campus it is necessary only to treat them as you treat any new student. They may need help in finding living quarters or board and room jobs. They will need friendship.

## ***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."

Sincerely yours,

N. T.

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NOTE—An extensive bibliography can be secured from the War Relocation Authority.