

THE FUTURE OF THE J.A.C.L.

~~It has been proposed that,~~ In view of the difficulty in finding members who are willing to devote the necessary time and effort to maintaining it,

~~proposals that~~ the New York Chapter of the J.A.C.L. be dissolved and its ~~present~~ members continue their membership in the J.A.C.L. directly with the national office in San Francisco. ~~It is probable that other chapters will eventually be faced with the same problem which now faces the chapter in New York.~~ ~~chapter has been inactive for several years.~~ ~~and Sansei~~ ~~It is probable that other chapters will eventually be faced with the same problem which now faces the chapter in New York.~~ ~~It~~ ~~is no secret that many Nisei~~ ~~have long been critical of J.A.C.L. policies~~ ~~and remain aloof to it.~~ ~~If the J.A.C.L. is to be permanently maintained~~ ~~as the one organization qualified to speak for all Nisei,~~ ~~a careful examination and correction of its shortcomings~~ ~~may be far more effective than~~ ~~repeatedly calling attention to~~ ~~repeated boasting of its past accomplishments.~~

The apparent thesis of the J.A.C.L.'s message to the public is that through J.A.C.L. leadership the Nisei conclusively demonstrated an inspiring loyalty to the United States. First, by cooperating with the U. S. Government when it perpetrated the Evacuation in 1942. Second, by ~~res-~~ ~~ponding eagerly~~ ~~to enter the U. S. Army directly from the concentration camps into which they had been placed.~~ ~~And third, by the outstanding war record of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team.~~ ~~The J.A.C.L. claims that as a result of the above incontestable demonstrations of Americanism, the organization through its lobbyist, Mike Masaoka, was able to persuade Congress to pass a number of laws aimed at reducing injustices to persons of Japanese ancestry in the United States.~~ ~~The J.A.C.L. further claims that because of this record of wisdom and accomplishment, the organization and its policies deserve the gratitude and support of all Nisei~~ ~~and can be depended upon to protect their interests in the future.~~

This story has never sounded quite right to many people and it has gone unchallenged too long. In effect, the J.A.C.L. has been and still is boasting of its success in following a policy of uncompromising appeasement

of the white-skinned majority in this country. The J.A.C.L. is still trying to trade on its record of all-out Uncle Tomism when that type of behavior is being scornfully rejected by even the American Negroes as inconsistent with human dignity.

Some J.A.C.L. members have expressed a feeling of neglect because no really important novel or motion picture has yet been ~~made~~ ^{produced about} their wartime experience of evacuation, internment, and later release. It is possible that truly able writers who have examined the record as set forth by the J.A.C.L. have been so ~~overcome~~ ^{shocked by} its ~~incentivity~~ ^{misinterpretation of the basic principles of Americanism} as to conclude that a story which ~~can draw the genuine understanding~~ ^{could receive the emotional rapport} and sympathy of the general public can not be constructed from it. The villainous tyrant in the form of the U. S. Government is there, but the direct defiance of and unyielding resistance to tyranny required of the role of hero among Americans is ~~missing~~ ^{completely}.

Let us summarize the story bluntly. When in early 1942 the War Department proposed the evacuation of all persons of Japanese ancestry from Pacific Coast areas, the intended victims expected the J.A.C.L. to put up a strong opposition in their behalf. As soon as ~~one bigoted general~~ ^{some ~~army~~ white} ~~made~~ ^{Army Officer made} the wholly ~~unjustified~~ ^{unsubstantiated} claim of "military necessity", however, the J.A.C.L. leaders not only ended all protest, but agreed to cooperate with the carrying out of this outrage against their own people.

This evidence of the J.A.C.L.'s willingness to become a doormat for white-skinned Americans proved to be only the beginning. After the innocent victims had been forced out of their homes and finally transferred to semi-permanent concentration camps in the desert areas of the West, the U. S. Government began an intensive campaign to induce the Nisei living in such camps to volunteer to fight in and for the very same Army which had placed and held them there. The response of the J.A.C.L. leaders was overwhelming approval and support of the Government's campaign. They

not only rushed to register themselves with the recruiting officer, but eagerly lent their efforts to persuading other Nisei to follow their example.

After the Government had exhausted this method of getting recruits, ~~from these concentration camps~~, it decided to apply the Draft Laws to all Nisei remaining in the ~~so-called "Relocation Centers"~~ ^{concentration camps}. Again, the approval of the J.A.C.L. leaders was loud and emphatic. This time, however, a

number of Nisei proudly refused to submit quietly to this additional outrage by the Government and ~~chose to go to Federal penitentiaries instead~~ ^{were convicted of resisting the draft and placed in Federal penitentiaries}.

^{These Nisei} They felt that as Americans, in view of the ^{illegal} ~~unjustified~~ ^{violation of} ~~Government violation of~~ practically all their rights as citizens, it was more honorable under the circumstances to wear the prison garb of a convict than to wear the uniform of a soldier of the U. S. Army....a view which would undoubtedly have been shared by Jefferson, Patrick Henry, Thomas Paine and other Founding Fathers of this nation. This brave, if futile, act in defense of basic American principles by even a small minority of Nisei was an unwelcome hindrance to the J.A.C.L. efforts to portray all Nisei as 200% Uncle Toms. The reaction of the J.A.C.L. leaders was a shockingly bitter tirade of denunciation which included a publicly made appeal to the authorities to inflict the ^{possible} maximum penalties on any Nisei who chose to defy the draft.

This almost incredible J.A.C.L. propensity for appeasement was first of all a total violation of the oldest of American political traditions which honors the defiance of any government when that government unjustly deprives a person of certain ^{"unalienable"} ~~basic human~~ rights. It was also a violation of the traditional Japanese pride in their cultural heritage and history and of their proud record of unbending belief in ~~being~~ the racial equals of any white peoples.

It is difficult to believe that all who volunteered or were drafted

~~from the concentration camps entered the Army to appease the white-skinned~~
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majority of Americans. Those who entered the armed forces from the "Relocation Centers" did so for many reasons which varied with each individual. Undoubtedly, one of these reasons was ~~freedom with~~ ^{a desire to escape} camp life. To imply, as the J.A.C.L. ~~does~~ ^{has}, that these Nisei soldiers were all heroes of appeasement amounts to a slander.

No one can ~~question the fact~~ ^{deny} that the great record of the Nisei soldiers in World War II is without parallel. Since the J.A.C.L. places so much stress on it, however, it deserves a few comments. Much of the heaviest fighting was done by the 100 Infantry Battalion when it was composed mostly of Nisei from Hawaii, long before the Nisei from the concentration camps were ~~drafted~~ ^{inducted}. ^{To refute} In ~~refuting~~ the white racist lie of inborn Nisei disloyalty, the record of the Hawaiian Nisei soldiers and Nisei from other parts of the United States (who had ~~never~~ ^{not} been ~~subjected to unjust~~ ^{stripped of their} ~~rights as citizens~~) ~~and internment~~ would have been enough. There was no need for Nisei from concentration camps to enter the Army in order to ~~refute~~ ^{disprove} the false charge. The only lasting effect of applying the Draft Laws to ~~persons~~ ^{warriors} in the "Relocation Centers" was the additional deaths of a number of young ~~Nisei~~ ^{Nisei} on foreign battlefields in place of the white-skinned Americans who otherwise would have constituted the casualties.

The J.A.C.L. has never been ~~modest in claiming~~ ^{reluctant to claim} credit for the improvement which has taken place in the economic, political, and social position of the Nisei in America since the end of World War II. Practically never mentioned by the J.A.C.L. spokesmen is the fact that the development of the Cold War with Russia and the re-emergence of Japan as the greatest industrial power in the Orient made it highly inconvenient for the U. S. Government to continue its former policies of treating persons of Japanese blood as being ~~somewhat~~ sub-human. The United States now needs the goodwill of the Japanese people. If these developments, completely outside of the control of the J.A.C.L., had not taken place, it is probable that the

lobbying efforts of the J.A.O.L. would have been substantially less rewarding. It is time that the J.A.O.L. abandon its insistence that the Nisei record of ~~eager-beaver~~ ^{shameless} Uncle Tomism is the chief cause of their post-World War II "acceptance" by the whites. The claim not only is of doubtful validity; it is increasingly inappropriate amid the present trends in public opinion. If continued, the claim will serve eventually to bring upon the Nisei the contempt and ridicule of other non-white minority groups in America.

Let us keep in mind, however, that
~~It is not the purpose of this article needlessly to take to task~~ the past leaders of the J.A.O.L. ~~They~~ can not be blamed for their apparent belief that the Japanese were really an inferior race and that the Nisei, therefore, were under some kind of obligation to "earn" better treatment from the white ^{a somewhat} ~~race, which controlled the United States.~~ ^{special} Some of the causes of this attitude go back in time for more than a hundred years. When ^{greed and insolence} ~~Yankee effrontery and greed~~ finally resulted in Perry's unlawful intrusion into Japanese coastal waters in 1853, the Japanese were forced to face up to the painful realization that their coastal defense shore batteries were hopelessly inadequate to deal with the modern guns on Western warships. This humiliating demonstration of the inability of the Tokugawa shogunate to protect Japanese soil from foreign intruders resulted in the overthrow of the feudal system by two southern clans. The young samurai who led the rebellion then dedicated themselves to placing Japan on an equal footing with the West in terms of naval and military power at the earliest possible date.

In order to speed the Westernization of Japan, her new leaders, ^e ~~particularly~~ during the Meiji period, did all in their power to eliminate hostility among the Japanese to Western ideas and methods. This propaganda campaign included flattering references to Englishmen and Americans in school text-books which held up some American presidents as

models of proper behavior. Many Issei brought up in Japan during ^{that} ~~this~~ period grew to adulthood with a very definite belief that whatever was Western was generally good. When they came to America, they were awed by the material ^{wealth} ~~superiority~~ which they saw everywhere ^{around} ~~about~~ them. The few educated Issei from samurai families had enough knowledge of Japanese history and culture to avoid the mistake of uncritical admiration of almost everything American, but the great majority of Issei from peasant ^{and lower-class} families did not.

Even without the pro-American bias on the part of their parents, it would have taken an unusually strong family background and temperament for a Nisei to be brought up in America during the ^{first half of the 20th century} ~~past 50 years~~ without acquiring an inferiority complex ^{to} ~~of~~ some ~~kind~~ ^{degree}. First, there was the all-pervading atmosphere of American contempt for non-white peoples which stemmed from the white-skinned American's long-successful oppression of Negroes and American Indians. Second, there was until the end of World War II a ^{an almost continuous} ~~ceaseless~~ barrage of the most ^{vile} ~~merciless~~ and ^{outrageous} ~~vicious~~ anti-Japanese propaganda from much of the American press, particularly in the Pacific Coast states. Third, there was the almost total ignoring or at best ^{condescending} ~~disparaging~~ treatment of Japanese history and culture in American schools and text-books. Fourth, there was the relative poverty of the Issei compared with the ^{conspicuous} ~~lordly~~ affluence of many whites. And last, but not least, there existed the racially restrictive real estate covenants which ^{in West Coast cities forced most} ~~prevented both~~ Issei and Nisei, regardless of economic ability, ^{to} ~~from~~ ^{live only in the slum areas.} ~~living in the better residential areas of towns and cities.~~

The J.A.C.L. can never be stronger than its own members and leaders. Any ^{real} ~~basic~~ improvement in its ^{effectiveness} ~~effectiveness~~ will depend upon first getting rid of the crippling inferiority complex which apparently burdens most of its ^{elder} members. As it is now ^{operated,} ~~constituted,~~ the J.A.C.L. can rarely attract to membership those Nisei who have always regarded themselves as being

the racial equals of any whites. The organization is scorned by the Nisei who defied the draft and went to Federal penitentiaries from the concentration camps. The League's mistaken line of propaganda continues to alienate the very kind of Nisei needed to give it the strength and backbone it sorely lacks.

Trying to become Americanized
developing their own sense of themselves
In seeking to improve their standing among other Americans, the majority of J.A.C.L. members ^{seem to} have made the tragic mistake of ~~simply~~ ^{adopting} accepting the adverse judgements ^{of Japan by} of whites who from both ignorance and prejudice were totally unqualified to recognize or appreciate the subtle greatness of Japanese civilization. It is time for the Nisei to cease being blinded by these false and worthless judgements and to learn to see the real value and worth of the culture to which they are inescapably related by birth.

The statement "once a Jap always a Jap" is truly applicable to the physical characteristics of the Nisei. For the Nisei who has no pride in the history and cultural attainments of the country of his parents, his yellow skin and slant eyes are badges of inferiority which he has been cursed to bear throughout his life....a sort of punishment for ^{not having} Original ^{been born white.} Sin. To compensate for this "handicap" he sometimes foolishly struggles to become a 200% American which, of course, is not being a true American at all.

The meaning of the J.A.C.L. motto "Better Americans in a Greater America" needs clarification for it to serve any useful purpose. The J.A.C.L. should give the fact that America is made up ^{of} ~~many~~ peoples and races from many lands the emphasis which it deserves. The true greatness of America comes from the contributions of all its component cultures. Its greatness is not the result of every new immigrant group making itself into the exact imitation of ^{Americans of} the original Anglo-Saxon ^{descent} people who first set foot on Plymouth Rock. A "Better American" should not be taken ^{by Nisei} to mean ^{a yellow carbon copy of a white} merely a yellow-skinned American who most closely apes the

~~W. H. S. P.~~
~~white-skinned American~~ It should mean any American of any ^{ethnic} color of skin,
~~group~~ ^{to the enrichment of} who is able to contribute ~~something to~~ American culture and
~~civilization~~ ^{civilization} to make America a better place for present and succeeding
generations to live in.

The Nisei thus far have in most cases ~~resolutely~~ turned their backs
on a unique opportunity to be truly "Better Americans". Many Western
intellectuals now recognize that the West desperately needs to learn many
of the teachings of the Orient. The headlong pursuit of sensual pleasures
and crass materialism which characterizes so much of American life needs
persons who can help to discipline and reduce its vulgarity. America needs
people who are sensitive to the beauties of nature instead of people who
arrogantly regard nature as something to be ^{"conquered"} ~~"conquered"~~. The nation needs
persons who can quietly but firmly live up to self-imposed duties instead
of people who ^{have forgotten} ~~scorn~~ their own duties and loudly bray for "rights". ^{This republic} ~~America~~
needs to rebuild a respect for the wisdom which comes with age instead of
the senseless worship of the fleeting pleasures of youth. ^{And its citizens need} ~~America needs~~
to learn to sit ^{often} ~~occasionally~~ in silent meditation to listen for the quiet
inner voice of God. All of these qualities and disciplines have long
constituted important aspects of Japan's culture which today is being
studied with ever increasing respect and earnestness by many peoples of
other races. Most Nisei, however, continue to remain hypnotized by the
cheap chromium plated ~~surface~~ glitter of the most materialistic aspects
of American civilization and ~~sometimes~~ try to imagine themselves to be
thus superior to even the ^{greatest} ~~finest~~ persons which Japan throughout her long
history was able to produce.

~~Some people have long felt that the J.A.C.L.'s "Pacific Citizen" is
in a way a disgrace to the Nisei. A stranger to this planet who read it
for the first time would be justified in concluding that the paper was
written by and for a people who only recently become civilized. The paper~~

would give him no reason to suspect that the Nisei are the descendants of a people with a long proud history of independence and accomplishment.

Even before World War II there was a fairly substantial number of books about Japan available in English which if widely read by Nisei could have helped to save them from their inferiority complex. Today, the list of excellent books in English available on almost every aspect of Japanese civilization is several times larger than before and there is almost no excuse for Nisei to remain imprisoned by feelings of inferiority which in the final analysis are based on ignorance and the resulting attempt to find happiness ^{from} by mistaken values. It is now readily possible for the Nisei to learn to see in the term "Japanese-American" a truer and prouder meaning which will benefit themselves, the J.A.C.L., and America.