

FROM CAMP TO COLLEGE

The Story of
Japanese American Student Relocation

"When the story of relocation is written and WRA's objective of emptying the relocation centers is achieved, we will be able to look back and say that the first impetus to resettlement out of the centers was provided by student relocation."

DILLON S. MYER, *Director,*

War Relocation Authority

NATIONAL JAPANESE AMERICAN
STUDENT RELOCATION COUNCIL

1201 CHESTNUT STREET ❁ Philadelphia 7, Pa.



Heart Mountain, the third largest city in Wyoming.

PIONEERING—AND REBUILT FAITH

The story of student relocation is a story of pioneering and of rebuilt faith. Most of the 3000 students who have gone from camp to college have gone to areas of the country where people of Japanese ancestry were almost unknown. As ambassadors for the entire Japanese American group, they have paved the way for others to follow. They have stimulated and encouraged their families to come and join them. Most important, perhaps, their pioneering has helped large sections of our population to acquire a new understanding of American principles and fair play. And in the process their faith in themselves and in their whole future in this country has been restored. Student relocation has given purpose to Japanese American valor on the battlefields of Italy and France, Burma and the Philippines. It has helped in a small way to redress the wrongs rising from a long history of racial discrimination and to bring closer the day when, in the words of Franklin D. Roosevelt, *"every loyal American citizen, regardless of his ancestry, shall have the opportunity to serve this country wherever his skills will make the greatest contribution."*

In the past two and a half years, some 3000 students of Japanese ancestry have found their way out of Assembly and Relocation Centers into more than 500 institutions of higher education all the way across the country. Except for the oncoming high school graduates, there are relatively few students of college calibre left in the Relocation Centers. Almost all of the 2500 students of Japanese ancestry enrolled on West Coast campuses at the time of Pearl Harbor have had an opportunity to continue their education. The fact, however, that 3000 have enrolled in the past two and a half years as compared with 2500 attending at the time of Pearl Harbor does not mean that more Japanese Americans are attending college during war time than were in college before the war, because many of the 3000 have volunteered for or have been drafted into the Armed Forces, have accepted jobs in war industries, have graduated, have married, or have left college for other reasons.

Of the 2000 boys and girls who graduated from the camp high schools in 1944, approximately 400 went to college, many of the boys among them squeezing in a

few months of higher education before their induction into the Army. Thus the percentage of Japanese Americans continuing their education in war time is about the same as the national percentage. Thanks to the efforts of colleges, churches, government agencies, student groups and a host of others, the Japanese Americans have not been permanently deprived by evacuation of an equal opportunity for higher education.

STUDENT RELOCATION BEGINS

In March of 1942, following the announcement of the Government's plans for evacuating all persons of Japanese ancestry from the West Coast war zones, many college people up and down the Coast became concerned about the 2500 young men and women of Japanese ancestry enrolled in colleges and universities in the military areas. Under the leadership of the YMCA-YWCA, the Pacific College Association, and such West Coast college presidents as Robert Gordon Sproul of the University of California, Lee Paul Sieg of the University of Washington, and Remsen Bird of Occidental, groups of educators, students, and church people quickly formed to try to arrange for the immediate transfer of as many nisei as possible to campuses east of the military areas. Letters were written to colleges and friends all over the country. Questionnaires were sent out. Students were interviewed. To co-ordinate this activity, a Student Relocation Committee was organized in Berkeley on March 21 and met weekly during the months of April and May. An appropriation was secured from the National YMCA-YWCA and an executive secretary hired.

At its first meeting the consensus of this West Coast committee was that evacuation was neither necessary nor expedient and that an appeal should be addressed to the authorities to alter its character from a wholesale removal of *all* persons of Japanese ancestry to a discriminating removal of potentially dangerous individuals. When this appeal failed, the committee began the work of determining which students would want to continue their education, what their needs were, and where in the east and midwest they might go. In all, about 75 students found their way east in those first frantic days of March and April 1942 before the *National Student Relocation Council* was organized.

THE STUDENT RELOCATION COUNCIL IS BORN

In early May, the director of the newly organized War Relocation Authority addressed a letter to the executive secretary of the American Friends Service Committee in Philadelphia, inviting him to call together all the various groups at work on the problem of student relocation and organize a national council to carry out the program. The Assistant Secretary of War, John J. McCloy, expressed his approval of the program: "*Anything that can legitimately be done to compensate loyal citizens of Japanese ancestry for the dislocation to which they have been subjected, by reason of military necessity, has our full approval.*"

Thus on May 29, 1942, in Chicago, the National Japanese American Student Relocation Council was born, with offices in Philadelphia, Seattle, Portland, Berkeley, and Los Angeles (later centralized in one office in Philadelphia). Its membership includes college presidents and deans, officers of college associations, representatives of leading

Protestant churches, Jews, Catholics, Quakers, and the Student YMCA and YWCA. Its costs of operation have been met by generous grants from the church boards and from two philanthropic foundations, one in New York and one in San Francisco.

THE FIRST YEAR'S WORK

Staffs of volunteers numbering as many as twenty or thirty persons went to work in the Council's various offices in 1942 and by the end of the summer could report 2,321 applications from students in Assembly and Relocation Centers and 152 students enrolled on new campuses. Some of the same factors that led to the removal of the nisei students from the West Coast tended at first to limit the number of colleges available to them in the east and midwest and to necessitate complicated procedures for leave clearance. It was not until the end of the year 1942 that the government procedures for clearing colleges and students became sufficiently well organized to permit any great flow of students from camp to college. Even in March of 1943, at the time the Council centralized all its offices in Philadelphia, there was a logjam in Washington of some 300 Student Relocation Council requests for leave clearance. By midsummer of 1943 the WRA part of the clearance procedures for students was functioning smoothly and has run smoothly ever since. On July 5, 1943, at the end of its first thirteen months of operation, the Council could report applications from 3,264 students in Assembly and Relocation Centers with more than 1000 students relocated on college campuses east of the West Coast military areas.

THE SECOND YEAR

During the Council's second year, not only were large numbers of former West Coast college students helped to relocate, but boys and girls graduating from the Project High Schools were encouraged to make and carry out plans for continuing their education. In each case the Council found a sizable volume of correspondence necessary—twenty-five letters per student on the average—as it stimulated students not to "lose-fight," counseled them as to their choice of school, secured their transcripts and letters of reference, made formal applications to the school finally chosen by the student, arranged with the governmental authorities for the clearance of the school and of the student, channeled the student's request for financial aid to sources of scholarship funds, helped the student to find part-time and between-term employment, and helped to arrange for his warm welcome on the campus and in the new community. Only in war time would so complex a procedure be necessary or tolerated.

By December 31, 1944, at the end of its first two and a half years the Council had received applications from a total of 4,594 students. Of these, the Council has found college acceptances for 3,597, the other thousand having lost interest as they went into the Army, married, found suitable permanent employment, or were taken care of otherwise. Acceptance at some school has been found for about 500 students who never actually enrolled, again because of the draft, employment, marriage, or because the college which had accepted them was prevented by military regulations from enrolling them. All this was accomplished at an administrative cost of only \$34 per student enrolled, or \$29 per student accepted.

During this second year, hospital schools of nursing began to welcome nisei in numbers, having learned from the pioneering of a few prominent schools in New

York, Philadelphia, and Chicago that the Japanese American girls make excellent nurses and that patient reaction is uniformly good. The Council knows definitely of 215 nisei enrolled as student nurses, 194 of them members of the United States Cadet Nurse Corps. It estimates that there are another 100 girls who have relocated into nursing training independently of the Council.

MILITARY REGULATIONS

As the months have gone by, the military regulations under which the Council has operated have become steadily more liberal. In the summer of 1942, the Council had difficulty securing from the Western Defense Command permission to enter the Assembly Centers for the purpose of distributing Student Relocation Questionnaires and interviewing prospective students. In the early summer of 1942 the military authorities in Washington felt that for security reasons no evacuee student should attend any college within twenty-five miles of a railroad terminus. This decision seemed so restrictive that there was some question as to whether it was worthwhile to go forward with the program at all. Fortunately, it was modified later in the summer to provide that the names of colleges which had accepted an evacuee could be submitted to the War Department for clearance. Clearances came through slowly even for the smaller schools not engaged in war work. The program was handicapped by the delays involved and by the fact that a college had first to accept an evacuee before it could be determined whether the War Department would approve its enrolling such students.

In January of 1944 the military authorities lowered the restrictions further by announcing that henceforth clearance of institutions would not be necessary and that except for certain "proscribed" colleges and universities engaged in work important to the war effort, evacuees could attend on an ordinary WRA clearance the schools which accepted them; for attendance at the "proscribed" institutions, the student would be required to secure a special Provost Marshal General's clearance.

On August 31, 1944, the War Department removed all restrictions on the attendance of students of Japanese ancestry at educational institutions. In the words of the telegram from the War Relocation Authority announcing the change in policy: "Students to be accepted at all schools on same basis as any others." Finally, on December 17, 1944, the War Department announced that all persons of Japanese ancestry not individually excluded were free as of January 2, 1945, to return to the West Coast. With the complete lifting of the military restrictions, there is now no security reason for any college or university rejecting the application of a student of Japanese ancestry.

WHAT COLLEGES HAVE ACCEPTED NISEI

Among the 550 institutions known to the Council to have accepted Japanese Americans during the past two and a half years are roughly one quarter of the accredited colleges and universities of the country, approximately one hundred hospital schools of nursing, a good many accredited small colleges, and some trade and vocational schools. Not many nisei have entered southern schools, although all but two of the southern states have accepted a few. Until recently none had relocated to West Coast institutions, except in the non-military areas of eastern Oregon and Washington. The majority have gone to the Rocky Mountain region, the middle west, and the northeast.

Among the large institutions which have welcomed nisei recently are Yale, Columbia, Harvard, Cornell, New York University, Vassar, Holyoke, Smith, Wellesley, the Uni-

versities of Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Chicago, Illinois, Nebraska, Missouri, Colorado, Utah, Texas, Iowa State, and Ohio State. Most of the smaller colleges throughout the east and midwest have cooperated warmly. Some of those which have been very popular with the nisei have had to set quotas, to be fair to all groups, but their quotas for Japanese Americans have been uniformly generous. At the present time there are more openings in all types of schools than there are students to fill them.

There is a tendency amongst the evacuees to prefer the large university to the small. On the West Coast they had ordinarily flocked to the state universities and sidestepped the smaller colleges. They often feel that for a member of a minority group, a degree from a university that is widely known has greater value. It has not been easy to persuade them that the eastern and midwestern small college has a great deal to offer a member of a minority group, that the warmth and compactness of the small campus provide greater possibilities for assimilation, and that standards in most such places are high. In a way it was fortunate that the military restrictions forced the first of the relocating students to attend small schools. Their success and happiness will help overcome the natural tendency of the oncoming nisei high school graduates to aim for the large state universities, now that they are available.

RELOCATED STUDENTS SUCCESSFUL

Almost all of the 3000 students who have relocated during the past two and a half years have done well as students and as ambassadors for Japanese Americans as a whole. Their scholastic abilities are indicated by a survey made among the first 500 to relocate which gave them a grade point average of 2.3 (B+) in their first year's work on the new campus. There have been many outstanding individual achievements. Lillian Ota, for example, while a senior at Wellesley, competed for graduate fellowships at Michigan, Yale, Rochester, Bryn Mawr and Smith and won all five of them. She is now working toward her Ph.D. at Yale and was recently awarded a prize of \$100 in books for being the best first-year graduate student in the department of history.

The number of elective honors won by nisei is a sign not only of their popularity and ability, but also of the warm welcome that has been shown them. An informal and incomplete list includes five presidents of student governments, seventeen class officers, five athletic offices, and many miscellaneous honors such as fraternity memberships and one "Most Charming Girl" and one "Most Popular Boy."

THE COUNCIL'S RELATIONSHIP TO WRA

The Council is a private and independent agency. It receives no funds from the Government. It does, however, cooperate closely with the War Relocation Authority, having come into existence at the request of that authority. One instance of this cooperation lies in the field of leave clearance. Until March, 1944, the Council maintained a Leave Department to assist the WRA and the students by collecting and transmitting the documents required for educational leave and for Provost Marshal General's clearance. As more and more of the students left the Centers on employment leaves to earn money in advance of registration and as the entire leave procedure came to function more and more smoothly, the Council dropped its Leave Department and now refers all departure problems to the Leave Officers in the Centers and in Washington.



"From camp . . .

At each Relocation Center, the Project Director designates some individual on the high school staff to act as Student Relocation Counselor. In her office are housed college catalogues and information about the work of student relocation which can be used in counseling and advising students. The Council has supplied each Counselor with informal and confidential notations about the status of all the institutions with which it has had correspondence—whether they welcome Japanese Americans, whether they report their communities friendly, and whether they now have nisei enrolled. This information is kept up to date through the circulation of a weekly NEWSHEET listing acceptances and rejections of students, offers of part-time employment and scholarships, and general admissions policies as they affect Japanese Americans.

Colleges and others interested in welcoming students can ask the Council to include an item in its NEWSHEET or can correspond directly with the Counselors by addressing the Student Relocation Counselor at the following high schools:

AMACHE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Granada Relocation Center
Amache, Colorado

MILES E. CARY HIGH SCHOOL

Colorado River Relocation Center
Poston II, Arizona

BUTTE HIGH SCHOOL

Gila River Relocation Center
Rivers, Arizona

PARKER VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL

Colorado River Relocation Center
Poston III, Arizona

CANAL HIGH SCHOOL

Gila River Relocation Center
Rivers, Arizona

POSTON I HIGH SCHOOL

Colorado River Relocation Center
Poston, Arizona

HEART MOUNTAIN HIGH SCHOOL

Heart Mountain Relocation Center
Heart Mountain, Wyoming

ROHWER CENTER HIGH SCHOOL

Rohwer Relocation Center
McGehee, Arkansas

HUNT HIGH SCHOOL

Minidoka Relocation Center
Hunt, Idaho

TOPAZ HIGH SCHOOL

Central Utah Relocation Center
Topaz, Utah

MANZANAR HIGH SCHOOL

Manzanar Relocation Center
Manzanar, California

TRI STATE HIGH SCHOOL

Tule Lake Relocation Center
Newell, California

OVERCOMING RELOCATION CENTER PSYCHOLOGY

The Council's most time-consuming and challenging task has been to try to overcome the apathy, apprehensiveness and misconceptions that are so often a part of Relocation Center life. In its correspondence with students it has therefore tried to be warm and human. Each boy and girl has been thought of as an individual person, worthy of careful thought and consideration. Qualified nisei have been brought from the Relocation Centers to serve on the Council's executive staff, counseling students by mail as to their choice of school and often as to their vocation. Colleges have been selected not *for* the student but *by* the student. The Council's Field Director has made four trips to the camps to meet with students individually and personally.

In the summer of 1944 the churches and agencies which make up the Council arranged for thirteen nisei college leaders to return to their home camps during their summer vacations. They made a real impact on Relocation Center psychology, stimulating not only student relocation but family relocation as well. They interviewed over 1200 people individually in their barrack rooms, both students and parents; they made speeches before 200 different groups; they joined in community activities of all kinds and talked with people informally. In the course of summarizing their work, they reported a growing apathy among young people still in the Centers, an increasing discounting of the value of a college education, and a paramount need among the oncoming high school graduates for financial aid and advice.



... to college."

REGARDING HIGH SCHOOL UNDERGRADUATES

The Council has thought long and deeply on its responsibility for assisting in the relocation of students still in high school. The Relocation Center high schools do well with wartime staffs and equipment, but, isolated as they are in huge all-Japanese camps, they can never offer the evacuees the kind of American education they need. It is the Council's judgment, however, that most evacuees of high school age should not relocate except to join or accompany members of their own families. To be sure, the Council has helped to place a number of outstanding high school undergraduates as scholarship students in eastern private boarding schools. These students have adjusted easily and have served as "ambassadors" to groups of American youngsters who might never have known Japanese Americans. But in general it has been the policy of the Council to avoid responsibility for relocating students of high school age. High school students who have come out with their own families have been cordially welcomed in almost all city high schools. There has been no particular difficulty about securing

acceptance in the public schools, and, where the relocating family is establishing a more or less permanent residence in the new community, there has been no problem of out-of-city fees.

THE COUNCIL'S PRESENT FUNCTIONS

By the fall of 1944, so many colleges were available to the evacuees and so many students had successfully relocated, that it seemed to the Council that the time had come for it to transfer to the Relocation Center high schools most of its responsibility for counseling students as to their choice of schools and assisting them to make applications to the schools of their choice. This transfer, which took effect in November, 1944, relieved the Council of much of its correspondence with students still in the camps and has made possible a drastic reduction in the size of its staff. The Council does, however, carry on a number of its former functions, and will continue to do so throughout 1945 at least, assuming that it receives continued financial support. Correspondence continues to flow in, at better than 150 letters a week, from students both in camp and outside, more than half of it from students seeking financial aid and advice. In answer to this stream of mail, the Council tries to help all students who are not now in Relocation Centers who ask its assistance and advice. It provides financial advice, allocates funds turned over to it by the World Student Service Fund and others, and channels requests for scholarship aid for all students, both those in the camps and those now relocated. It acts as a clearinghouse for information about colleges and issues its weekly *NEWS SHEET* to the Counselors in the Relocation Center high schools and elsewhere. It continues as a symbol of the nisei's rebuilt faith, in themselves and in their future in this country.

FINANCIAL ADVICE AND SCHOLARSHIP AID

Most of the relocated students have earned a large part of their expenses through part-time employment. Many have worked before enrolling at school. Of the 3000 relocated, only 741 have received grants through the Council. Some others have received aid direct from college, church and other sources independently of the Council, but the large majority have financed their continued education through self-help and family resources. Up to December 31, 1944, a total of \$188,972 in scholarship aid had been channeled through the Council, of which \$140,361 came from thirteen national church boards, \$34,971 from the World Student Service Fund, and \$13,640 from other sources. A few of the church boards have set aside a certain percentage of their funds for grants to Buddhists and students who are not members of any church. The funds from the World Student Service Fund and various miscellaneous sources which the Council itself has had the responsibility of disbursing have been the principal source of help to students who are not members of a Christian church.

Most requests from Japanese Americans for financial aid seek merely to meet the higher tuition costs evacuees have had to face as they came east to college. As a matter of fact, the average scholarship grant arranged through the Council—\$200 for one year—approximates the average cost of tuition in eastern and midwestern institutions. Seldom are the families of the students able to help very much. Their savings and former means of livelihood were hard hit by evacuation. Even when the head of the family relocates, it is usually some little time before he is in a position to help his children to finance their higher education. The position of most of the Japanese

Americans after graduation is such that the Student Relocation Council has opposed their borrowing money to finance their education and has suggested that all allocations to them be outright grants. Many evacuees after graduation will have to support parents whose economic security has been destroyed by evacuation. Many will be handicapped economically by their racial origin. In a very small and inadequate way, the scholarship funds channeled through the Council represent a partial repayment for the economic losses suffered through evacuation.

Aid for Japanese American students has come not only from the sources mentioned above, but also from funds raised in the Relocation Centers from the evacuee community itself. At Topaz, for example, \$3,196 was raised in 1943 and used to aid 31 graduates of the Topaz High School. In the words of the chairman of the fund, "We gave \$100 to each student to get started. It was not the amount of money they received, but it was the spirit of encouragement which was given to them that caused them to fight for higher education." For the camp high school graduates of 1945, five scholarship funds of more than \$1000 each are being raised at Heart Mountain, Topaz, Poston I, Poston III, and Amache. Relocated students themselves, as a gesture of appreciation and as an endorsement of the Council's continuing its service, organized a campaign in 1944, several hundred of them sending a dollar or two for the operating fund. These gifts serve to symbolize that the program is a joint enterprise of Americans of Japanese and Caucasian ancestry working together on a common problem.

The financial needs of the students now relocated and of the oncoming high school graduates will continue great in the foreseeable future. The students are willing to do their part, working three or four hours a day for room and board, dropping out in the summer months to earn money full time, and often winning competitive scholarships from the colleges where they have enrolled, but with the closing of the camps in 1945 and the inability of most families to provide any further financial support as the parents leave camp to make their way as best they can, many of the students will have to have cash grants if they are to start or continue their college education.



High school classroom in a Center.

RETURNING TO THE WEST COAST

In December of 1944 the War Department announced the lifting of the ban excluding all persons of Japanese ancestry from the military areas of the West Coast. For some time prior to that announcement it had been possible for individuals to return if they were able to secure special permission from the Western Defense Command. It was on one of these individual permits that Esther Takei, the first civilian student to return, reached Pasadena Junior College in September. Her arrival was heralded by press and radio up and down the Coast. The professional Jap haters shouted their protests. But the good people of Pasadena quietly accepted her, and the storm passed by. When the Council's Field Director visited Esther in December, he reported that she was as happy as any student he knew in the east or midwest, having experienced no personal hostility or discrimination but only friendliness and fair play.

While the Council believes that attitudes on the Coast are healthier now than they were at the time of evacuation, with many of the most outspoken Jap haters quieted and the friends of American principles and fair play far more articulate, still it hopes, for the sake of dispersal and better assimilation, that relatively few of the evacuees will return to the Coast. Those who still own income-producing property will presumably go back, but the others who must begin life over may find it wiser to begin in the east and middle west where prejudice against the Oriental is less pronounced. The Council therefore has not encouraged students to seek admission to West Coast colleges, although it has tried to spread word of the warm welcome an evacuee will find on almost every West Coast campus. With the opening of the spring terms, about 50 evacuee students are known to have returned, and all reports from and about them are favorable.

THE CLOSING OF THE CAMPS

The Government's decision to close all the camps during 1945 creates new problems for the Japanese American college students. As of March, 1945, more than 60,000 people remain in the Relocation Centers. Most of them are old people and children under age 18. Those in the middle age brackets have gone. The average age of the first generation men who remain in camp is 58 years. A 58 year old man, whose property and means of livelihood have disappeared in the evacuation, is faced with many difficulties as he prepares to leave the relative security of camp and goes out to face the storms of prejudice once more. He is generally without cash, except for the \$25 grant made to each evacuee who needs it on departure. He has no definite job, but will seek employment with the help of various government offices in the region to which he goes. He must find a place to live in a time of great housing shortages. He is old. He doesn't speak much English. He doesn't know much about America outside of California. His older sons are in the Army.

In circumstances like these—and they are typical—the head of the family often finds he must call his boy or girl home from college to help the family relocate. But the belief in education is strong. Many parents feel their children can help them more by remaining in school. The parents often tell their children that if they can finance their college expenses with no help from home, they will not be called away from college, but, instead, in many cases, the family will relocate to the neighborhood of the college to be near the student and near the student's contacts. It is these students

who are appealing to the Council for help. On the average they are able to earn all but \$100 to \$200 of the money they need. In order to have additional scholarship funds to help them, the Council, for the first time, is making a general appeal for funds, through the issuance of this booklet. It hopes that the friends of the students and the friends of their cause will find it possible to respond. Contributions can be directed to the National Japanese American Student Relocation Council at 1201 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia 7, Pennsylvania.

"One may say if we struggle through this interlude, we will find haven in the fact that we will emerge a stronger and wiser people. Strength, courage, and wisdom will not alone be enough for us to lead our fellow Japanese Americans through the dark days ahead, during which time many will become destitute and many without fortitude will degenerate into uselessness. What the outlook of the younger generation will be—Heaven only knows. Those of us who are able must seek the wisdom of education—education to lead, to enlighten, and to carve for ourselves, at this time, an impregnable niche in our America. In the future years, it must never be said that we have contributed nothing to the betterment of America. Action speaks louder than words; all I ask is a chance to play a part in the destiny of our country."

YUZURU SATO (while still in a Relocation Center).



All photo's courtesy of the War Relocation Authority

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