

Outcasts!

The Story of America's Treatment
of Her Japanese-American Minority

BY CALEB FOOTE



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Foreword

THE question naturally arises, Why is this booklet worth printing, when paper and time are both so precious? The answer is, Because it strikes a body blow to keep the Constitution valid for all, and takes square issue with those who would expurgate it for persons of Japanese descent. It is not an appeal for sympathy for the evacuees, but an argument for justice, and that is what the evacuees themselves want. Facts are arrayed about the whole gamut of evacuation and resettlement, but the emphasis on the deeper issues affecting our American democracy is the core of the booklet. Not the least impressive point about it is that it was written by a descendant of immigrants of three hundred years ago on behalf of immigrants of thirty or forty years ago. That it goes to press while the writer is serving a term in prison as a conscientious objector has no bearing on the validity of his argument, but it does show that he is ready to suffer for constitutional principles as he understands them.

These lines may be read by some citizens who think the Western Defense Command was fully justified in uprooting all West Coast residents of one racial group, without hearings or other due process, and by other citizens who think that, even if the action was unnecessary and legally questionable, nevertheless, it is treasonable to press the issue during a desperate war. But as Mr. Foote makes clear, it is because we profess to be fighting for the American Way that it would be hampering the war effort not to criticize a violation of that Way. For he quotes the Japanese propaganda as broadcasting to all Asia the stinging charge that the evacuation was "the most dastardly act ever carried out by a so-called Christian nation." That this charge is false does not erase the fact that the indiscriminate mass evacuation does give the Axis plausible ground for undermining the confidence of our colored allies in America's sincerity.

We have been hearing so much from the Dies Committee and others about subversive activities that it is in place to ask what "subversive" means. All would agree that it means to try to upset our government or the American Way. But if the American Way rests upon the hard-won rights proclaimed in the Bill of Rights and the Declaration of Independence, then are not those who would deny those rights to fellow citizens of whatever race the real subversives? The "patriots" who are trying to disfranchise or to keep in concentration camps some 100,000 persons who are as much entitled as the patriots themselves to the privileges of the American Way must be either ignorant of that Way or traitors to it. It is to be hoped that they, and many others, will read these pages with open mind and sensitive civic conscience.

GALEN M. FISHER.

PHOTO CREDITS

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The TYRANNY of a WORD

SHORTLY after Pearl Harbor, the *San Francisco Chronicle* said of the persons of Japanese ancestry in the state, "Americans called them Japanese, though the great majority of them had every right to be called Americans."

Here was a peculiar thing. American citizens were labeling certain other American citizens with the name that they also applied to their enemies. No newspaper or politician referred to citizens of German ancestry as "Germans," but almost every newspaper or politician used the word "Japs" when speaking of American citizens whose ancestors came from Japan.

The President of the University of Arizona, speaking of these American citizens, said, "We are at war, and these people are our enemies." A United States district attorney talked about loading up "our 127,000 Japs and shipping them back to Japan." Since Pearl Harbor, in the public mind, the word "Jap" had become synonymous with "enemy." Thus American citizens of Japanese ancestry had two strikes against them from the start. People no longer thought of them as the Americans they are. They have been victims of the tyranny of a word.

EVACUATION

Biography of a People

PERSONS of Japanese ancestry in the United States form a tiny minority. There are about a thousand of the rest of us to each one of them. Most of them were concentrated on the Pacific Coast, where some 112,000 had been living before the war, but even there they formed only about one per cent. of the Pacific Coast states' population. About two-thirds of them were American citizens, and of the Japanese aliens, who are aliens because we have denied them citizenship, two-thirds have been here at least seventeen years. One-quarter of the entire group are children under fifteen years of age. On the West Coast they had an extremely low delinquency rate, very few persons on relief, and a birth rate slightly lower than the average for the population as a whole.

The first Japanese to come to our shores, in the middle of the last century, were shipwrecked sailors or occasional stowaways. Aside from them, almost none came prior to 1884, as emigration from Japan was prohibited before that year. Hawaiian sugar interests were instrumental in starting the stream of Japanese across the Pacific, and between 1890 and 1910 their number in the United States rose from 2,039 to 72,157.

Arriving in California, these immigrants stepped almost immediately into anti-Oriental prejudice. The Chinese had preceded them, and had been subject to violent persecution both before and after passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act, in 1882. An attack upon fifteen Japanese cobblers in San Francisco in 1890 marked the beginning of an anti-Japanese prejudice that has been present in the life of the West ever since. By 1900 mass meetings were urging their exclusion and an attempt was made to segregate Japanese-American school children in San Francisco. The California legislature had before it

seventeen anti-Japanese bills in 1909, some of which failed only after Theodore Roosevelt's direct intervention. The Japanese Exclusion League and the economically motivated Anti-Jap Laundry League fanned race prejudice and obtained discriminatory "alien land laws" that prevented alien Japanese from owning or operating agricultural land. Although only 185 Japanese a year would have been admitted under the quota system, race-conscious Americans forced passage in 1924 of a clause barring any Japanese immigrants. The ambassadors of both nations resigned in protest against this action.

Feeling against those of Japanese ancestry did not die after the exclusion. In the thirties, mobs in Oregon and Arizona forced them out of homes and jobs; a "Committee of 1,000" in Southern California worked to boycott all things Japanese; the Hearst press blamed the nation's slow recovery from the depression on the Orientals. Like the Negro, Chinese, and Jew, the young Japanese-American has always had to buck irrational race prejudice, and it is against this sordid background that the unprecedented discrimination of the last two years has been brought about.

Reasons for the Evacuation

Four explanations have been advanced for the evacuation: military necessity, the protection of those evacuated, political and economic pressures, and racial prejudice. While the war continues, it will be impossible to give final evaluation of the relative significance of these explanations, for many of the facts necessary for such evaluation are either unavailable or have not been uncovered due to lack of adequate research. Nonetheless, there is already sufficient evidence to back up Roger Baldwin's assertion that "military necessity had less to do with their unprecedented treat-

Evacuation's Timetable

- December 7, 1941—Pearl Harbor.
- December 8, 1941—Attorney-General Biddle calls for tolerance in dealings with many Japanese here "of unquestioned loyalty."
- December 27, 1941—Japanese-Filipino trouble in Stockton, Calif.
- January 22, 1942—Congressman Ford (Calif.) urges total evacuation of all persons of Japanese ancestry.
- February 13, 1942—Pacific Coast Congressional group recommends evacuation.
- February 15, 1942—Fall of Singapore.
- February 19, 1942—President Roosevelt authorizes evacuation from military zones.
- February 23, 1942—Submarine shells California coast.
- March 2, 1942—General DeWitt orders evacuation from most of California, western Oregon and Washington, and southern Arizona. A few Germans, Italians, and other Caucasians were evacuated, but only the people of Japanese ancestry were moved en masse.
- March 18, 1942—War Relocation Authority established.
- March 24, 1942—First exclusion order under which those of Japanese ancestry were evacuated from a specific locality. Followed by 108 subsequent orders.
- March 29, 1942—"Voluntary evacuation" of people of Japanese ancestry from Pacific Coast area prohibited. Before this date 10,231 moved out of restricted area on their own initiative after Army and newspapers requested this.
- June 5, 1942—First evacuation completed. Subsequently the remaining parts of California were evacuated, this being completed August 7, 1942.
- Summer-Fall, 1942—Transfer of people from temporary, Army-controlled Assembly Centers to ten permanent inland Relocation Centers in seven Western states, under control of the WRA.

ment than race prejudice" — *Asia*, September, 1942.

Briefly, the justification of the evacuation as military necessity is as follows: the Pacific Coast Congressional delegation on February 13, 1942, recommended to the President "the immediate evacuation of all persons of Japanese lineage, and all others, aliens or citizens alike, whose presence shall be deemed dangerous or inimical to the defense of the United States, from all strategic areas." The wording is significant, suggesting immediate removal of those of Japanese lineage *as a racial group*, but asking treatment of others on the basis of danger. Six days later the President authorized military commanders designated by the secretary of war to establish military areas "from which any or all persons may be excluded." The result of this Executive Order was group exclusion of



By their industry and skill the Japanese-Americans were able to supply a large part of the West Coast's fruits and vegetables. Evacuation left these fertile fields untilled when food was badly needed, so that farmhands had to be imported from Mexico to work them

Americans of Japanese ancestry and, subsequently, a few Caucasian-American citizens, but the latter have been given individual hearings and have not been interned.

Protection against sabotage and fifth-columnism were the announced military reasons for the exclusion of those of Japanese ancestry. But there is cause to believe that these reasons did not give the total picture. Colonel Karl R. Bendetson,



Under armed guard, like criminals, American-born citizens were marched to the trains that carried them from their homes to crowded "assembly centers"

Western Defense Command assistant chief of staff, who directed the removal, in a San Francisco speech on May 20, 1942, said:

"The Japanese community presented a group with a high potential for action against the national interest." This statement shows the tendency of both Army and political groups incorrectly to label a group two-thirds of whom are American citizens as "Japanese," and to refer to a racial group as a "community," without regard for individual differences within that group. Such thinking is the basis of race prejudice. Furthermore, the statement itself is open to serious question. Bendetson never mentioned the experience in Hawaii, a more dangerous spot than the West Coast, with a far higher proportion of persons of Japanese ancestry. Instead of displaying a "high potential for action" against us, the Hawaiians of Japanese descent have, in the words of Lieutenant General Delos C. Emmons, Army commander there, "added materially to the strength of the Hawaiian area" and "have behaved themselves admirably under most trying conditions."

On April 13, 1943, Lieutenant General John L. DeWitt, the man who ordered the evacuation, told a House Committee: "It makes no difference whether the Japanese is theoretically a citizen. He is still a Japanese. Giving him a scrap of paper won't change him. I don't care what they do with the Japs so long as they don't send them back here. A Jap is a Jap."

Such statements lead clearly to the conclusion that racial prejudice played a large part in determining the "military necessity" of the evacuation. Racial thinking of this kind not only is inaccurate and unscientific, but it runs directly counter to President Roosevelt's statement, referring to Japanese-Americans, that "Americanism is a matter of the mind and heart; Americanism is not, and never was, a matter of race or ancestry."

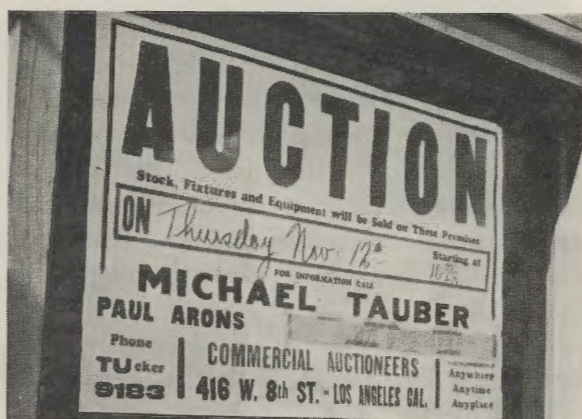
No one denies the need to protect the West Coast against unlawful acts of sabotage and fifth-columnism. Nor does anyone deny that this is primarily the responsibility of the Army. But if, as the evidence indicates, the Army acted because of racial prejudice, democracy loving Americans have the right and obligation to challenge that action.

How the Demand for Evacuation Developed

Two months before Pearl Harbor a significant statement was made by Jim Marshall in an article in the October 11, 1941, issue of *Collier's*. In case of war, he pointed out, there would be some demand in California for concentration camps for those of Japanese ancestry, but the Army, Navy, and FBI "opinion, based on intensive and continuous investigation, is that the situation is not dangerous and that, whatever happens, there is not likely to be any trouble. With this opinion

Soldiers with fixed bayonets symbolized our tragic lack of faith in the processes of democracy





Fortunate, wrote Oliver Goldsmith, is he who crowns a "youth of labor with an age of ease." Many an evacuee watched with stricken eyes as a lifetime of labor was crowned with financial ruin

West Coast newspapermen, in touch with the problem for years, agree almost unanimously."

Contrary to widely held beliefs, this attitude of calmness and tolerance dominated the early weeks of the war. The day after Pearl Harbor, Attorney-General Biddle declared:

"There are in the United States many persons of Japanese extraction whose loyalty to the country, even in the present emergency, is unquestioned. It would therefore be a serious mistake to take any action against these people"—*San Francisco Chronicle*, December 9, 1941.

Such pleas for tolerance were echoed by Governor Olson of California, General David P. Barrows, the presidents of the University of California, Stanford University, and Mills College, defense authorities, national and local churchmen, state government officials, and San Francisco's police chief.

The feeling back of this tolerance was not complacency, but a confidence in the ability of public officials, especially the FBI, to handle the situation. Thus by December 21, 1941, the FBI had taken into custody 1,460 Japanese aliens, with a three-man board being set up to hear the cases. (They also arrested 1,204 Germans and twenty-two Italians in this period.) Restrictions on aliens were slowly tightened as time went on. Early in January, 1942, their right to travel was restricted, and about the middle of the month all Axis aliens were ordered to register. At the end of the month, the Department of Justice ordered Axis aliens

out of vital West Coast areas, the FBI to handle the removal. These early restrictions applied to *all Axis aliens*; none applied to citizens of American birth.

Thus during the first weeks of the war the dominant tenor of news stories was for fairness and tolerance, restrictions applied equally to all enemy aliens, and *there was no mention of total evacuation!* If the military had sound reasons for it, they were not apparent nor put forward in the weeks immediately following Pearl Harbor. The first vehicle of anti-Japanese-American propaganda was the fifth-column rumor. In late December evacuees from Pearl Harbor were quoted in the press, telling the familiar fifth-column stories. These were given apparent authenticity by Navy Secretary Frank Knox's statement on December 30 that the attack was aided by the "most effective fifth-column activity since Norway." Despite Hawaiian Delegate King's denial on January 27, these slanderous stories ran unchecked until after the evacuation was ordered. Then official denials were made. Why Knox helped circulate these untrue rumors and why the government did not officially deny them earlier has never been explained.

Stories about mainland Japanese-Americans were also widespread. One in particular, quoted in Herb Caen's *Chronicle* column early in January, described the Japanese gardener who "snarls" to his white employer: "After the war you'll be cutting the lawn for me." Variations of this story ran up and down the Coast, and, typical of such

Many of the loved little possessions that make a home were heaped on the junk wagon when evacuation came



tales, details and locations changed. (I heard it as a true incident occurring in Oakland, San Francisco, San Jose, Santa Barbara, Beverley Hills, and Los Angeles.) But the basic story was always the same, and the Japanese always "snarled."

On January 22, 1942, Congressman Leland Ford of California launched the campaign "to move all Japanese, native born and alien, to concentration camps." It was quickly taken up, and pressures against these people increased. Los Angeles County dismissed its Japanese-American civil service employees, and the County Board of Supervisors urged evacuation. Hearst columnist Henry McLimore wrote on January 29:

"Why treat the Japs well here? They take the parking positions. They get ahead of you in the stamp line at the post office. They have their share of seats on the bus and streetcar lines. . . . I am for immediate removal of every Japanese on the West Coast to a point deep in the interior. I don't mean a nice part of the interior, either. . . . Let 'em be pinched, hurt, hungry, and dead up against it. . . . Personally I hate the Japanese. And that goes for all of them."

Following these leads, demands for evacuation of this tiny group of defenseless people spread like wildfire among political groups. During the last three days in January demands for evacuation came from the Los Angeles American Legion, the Alameda and Fresno County Boards of Supervisors, the Seattle American Legion, California "agricultural officials," and Pacific Coast congressmen. This continued in increasing volume until on February 16 the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported "a tidal wave of demands" for evacuation. But a *Chronicle* editorial also pointed out on February 6, 1942:

"The supposed 'hysteria' over enemy aliens and their descendants scarcely exists among the people themselves . . . the excitement is visible almost entirely in political and journalistic quarters. . . . They are seeking to capitalize on the supposed excitement of others, which is mostly a figment of their own imaginations."

Southern congressmen like Senator Stewart (Tenn.) and Representatives Rankin (Miss.) and Dies (Tex.) joined West Coast political groups

in this campaign. Thus the same coalition of Western and Southern political pressure which for more than sixty years has been violently anti-Oriental was responsible for the rising "demand" for evacuation. For them it was the logical culmination of decades of anti-Chinese and anti-Japanese agitation and legislation. With the willing help of some newspapers and radio commentators, they played upon the public fears that accompanied the fall of Bataan, Malaya, and Singapore by making the 112,000 Japanese-Americans their scapegoat.

The "Protection" Reason for Evacuation

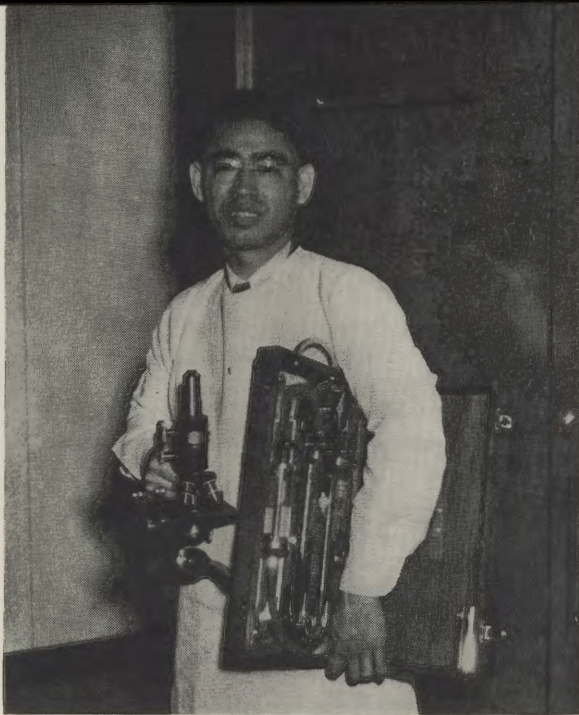
Floyd Schmoe, recently of the University of Washington, has pointed out the perversion of American justice involved in this idea of "protective custody":

"The reason for evacuation considered most valid by many persons is that of 'protective custody'—the Japanese must be taken into camps and guarded for their own protection. But what a breakdown of the Anglo-Saxon conception of justice in a democracy such thinking betokens. . . . The very words 'protective custody' (*Schutzhaft*) were 'made in Germany,' not here. How could it accord with American justice that if a man were dangerous to his neighbors they should be put into custody rather than he?"—*Fellowship*, July, 1942.

Moreover, the danger of violence to these people appears to have been greatly exaggerated. The

"Treacherous . . . faithless . . . depraved. . . ." The little boy on the right is one of those thus described by a West Coast hate-group. One-fourth of the evacuees are children under fifteen years of age





The evacuees included many farmers, gardeners, and domestic workers . . . included also physicians and surgeons

study of every story on the subject in two San Francisco newspapers reveals only seven instances of violence on the Pacific Coast between Pearl Harbor and the order for evacuation. Undoubtedly there were some unreported incidents, but the amount in any case is remarkably low considering a Japanese-American population of 112,000. The evidence indicates that most of the few murders were motivated by causes having nothing to do with the war.

Economic Pressures as a Cause of Evacuation

Racial prejudice and political pressure were dominant causes of evacuation, and Carey McWilliams, an authority on California economics, says that the pressures for evacuation "cut across ordinary economic alignments." Nonetheless, economic greed played a part. The Japanese-American group in California alone controlled farm acreage valued at some \$72,000,000; played a part in fishing; owned and operated many hotels, laundries, and restaurants; dominated Los Angeles fresh fruit and vegetable distribution, and captured some of the best bazaar trade in San Francisco's Chinatown. Their commercial interests along the Coast were valued at from \$55,000,000 to \$75,000,000.

It is known that economic groups which would gain by removal of this Japanese-American competition urged evacuation, and they probably were back of much of the political pressure. The Salinas Vegetable Growers Association, for example, is composed of white farmers and shippers in a valley where there was much Japanese-American farming. Its managing secretary, Austin E. Anson, was quoted in the *Saturday Evening Post* as declaring:

"We're charged with wanting to get rid of the Japs for selfish reasons. We might as well be honest. We do. It's a question of whether the white man lives on the Pacific Coast or the brown man . . . and we don't want them back when the war ends, either."

Reliable evidence on this phase of the evacuation is still not available. But it is estimated that the Japanese-Americans suffered a total loss of at least one-half of their resources on the Coast, and the total may be much higher. The groups who gained from their loss, and the individuals who have inherited their farms, homes, and businesses, create a special problem that will require careful handling as the urgent resettlement of Japanese-Americans outside the Centers progresses.

The Press and Evacuation

Newspaper pressure for evacuation increased steadily after January 24. Inflammatory headlines aroused the public, but they did not put in an appearance until more than six weeks after Pearl Harbor. A study of the demands for evacuation appearing in two San Francisco papers shows the significant fact that there was no mention of evacuation in December, and only two demands (both letters to the editor) before January 22. The real pressure came in February, most of it from political groups that have always been anti-Oriental. According to the San Francisco *Chronicle* and trained observers like Louis Fischer and Richard Neuberger, ace West Coast newspapermen, the public at large was not aroused. From church and school quarters, where the Japanese-Americans were known best, not one demand for evacuation was recorded by these newspapers.