

842628

[KHTA:2]/2

75

America's Japanese Problem

By Dr. HERBERT B. JOHNSON



1920

HERBERT B. JOHNSON
2634 Benvenue Street
Berkeley, Cal.

America's Japanese Problem

by HERBERT E. JOHNSON



HERBERT E. JOHNSON
2222 Belmont Street
Berkeley, Cal.

Prefatory Note

In view of the unjust initiative measure now being circulated for signatures, the following statement of facts is submitted to the consideration of my fellow citizens in California. This measure proposes:

1. To prohibit land ownership by Japanese.
2. To prohibit leasing of farm land by Japanese.
3. To prohibit the acquisition of real property by American-born Japanese minors, who are American citizens, under the guardianship of their parents.
4. To deprive the Japanese parents of their natural right to be the guardians to their minor sons or daughters owning real property.
5. To escheat real property to the state upon certain prima facie presumptions.
6. To prohibit the Japanese from taking any interest in any company or corporation owning real property.

In my judgment this proposed measure outrages the American sense of the square deal much more violently than it does injustice to our Japanese residents.

HERBERT B. JOHNSON.

Berkeley, June 15, 1920.

America's Japanese Problem

By DR. HERBERT B. JOHNSON

. The Interchurch World Movement of North America recently issued a Text Book outlining a discussion of some paramount national issues, including the race question, Christian Americanization, and free speech and national loyalty. The immediate need is stated as follows: "To discover the truth in the mass of misinformation, to keep methods of finding truth unobstructed by propaganda, and to give citizens facts to think about, opportunity for discussion and the crystallization of opinions, and then a chance to make these opinions operative." In outlining the extent of the problem, the pamphlet shows that we have 13,515,000 foreign-born in America, a large per cent of whom are as yet unnaturalized, and suggests that they must be assimilated, protected from exploitation and instructed in American ideals.

Not to exceed 100,000 of these are Japanese, including possibly 20,000 Japanese children born in Continental America, yet little effort has been made to assimilate them, protect them from exploitation, or instruct them in American ideals except as it has been done through our Japanese Missions. On the contrary, it has been almost constantly asserted in certain quarters that this is a white man's

country, that the Japanese are different and can not be assimilated, and that their presence here is a menace to our people and our institutions.

For nearly a decade and a half, through the press and in various ways, the citizens of the United States have been hearing of the menace connected with Japanese immigration to this country. The question has passed through various stages. It was first an immigration question, then a school question, then a land question, then a picture-bride question, and now it is a combination of all these. The increasing violent campaign, which has been carried on against the Japanese among us, has been largely based on misrepresentation, has tended to influence our citizens against them, and has been calculated to prejudice against us their children born in this country who are prospective American citizens, to make more difficult Christian work among them both here and across the Pacific, and to strain our traditional friendly relation with Japan. There has been a strong tendency to mix political questions across the sea with questions here which should be regarded as purely domestic. This has been both unnecessary and unjust, but it has been part of a deliberate plan to discredit the Japanese.

Mr. Will Irwin, in *Sunset Magazine* for December, 1919, has an illuminating article on "Age of Lies." While not referring specifically to the Japanese question, he shows how the propagandist attacks the foundation of public opinion, the object being the same—to slant, to bias, to color the news.

In the interest of truth and justice, we present the following facts which we believe to be authentic and accurate.

I. Japanese Immigration

The official reports of the United States Commissioner General of Immigration show the net increase from Japanese immigration to be comparatively small. For some years, after the adoption of the Gentlemen's Agreement in 1907, the departures equaled or exceeded the arrivals. The official figures for the fiscal years ended June 30, 1917, 1918, and 1919, are:

1917: Continental United States:

Admitted 9,159

Departed 6,581—Net 2,578.

Hawaii:

Admitted 4,129

Departed 2,581—Net 1,548

1918: Continental United States:

Admitted 11,143

Departed 7,691—Net 3,452

Hawaii:

Admitted 3,936

Departed 3,149—Net 387

1919: Continental United States:

Admitted 11,404

Departed 8,328—Net 3,076

Hawaii:

Admitted 3,500

Departed 2,905—Net 595.

Surely there is little menace in numbers.

The Commissioner General of Immigration has stated, in substance, that so far as restricting Japa-

nese laborers is concerned, the Gentlemen's Agreement has worked far more satisfactorily than the Chinese Exclusion Law ever operated in excluding the same class. This was confirmed last year (1918) in his Annual Report which included the report of the Commissioner of Immigration at Seattle, in part as follows:

"As heretofore, the Japanese arriving on the Pacific Coast are of the better class and are able, with few exceptions, to comply with all the provisions of the immigration law. There are but few violations of the agreement between the two countries regarding the issuance of passports to Japanese laborers."

II. Vital Statistics of California

Much has been made of the increase in births in California, but here again the numbers, after deducting the deaths, have been ignored. The official figures from the reports of the State Board of Health are as follows:

Births in California

1906—134	1912—1467
1907—221	1913—2215
1908—455	1914—2874
1909—682	1915—3342
1910—719	1916—3721
1911—995	1917—4108

This is an average of 1745 per year for the last twelve years, including 1917. I have been unable to obtain the figures for 1918 and 1919.

For the last year reported (1917), 1644 were born in cities of 5000 or over and 2464 in the country and in the smaller towns up to 5000.

The average Japanese deaths in California for the past seven years, 1912-1918, namely 650, is practically the average of the so-called picture brides arriving at the port of San Francisco for the same period.

The figures for births and deaths are from the reports of the State Board of Health and are given from 1906 to 1917, inclusive. The figures for the picture brides are since 1912 only, and are from the records of the Japanese Association of America which are unusually reliable.

Japanese Deaths in California

1906—384	1912—524
1907—517	1913—613
1908—431	1914—628
1909—450	1915—663
1910—440	1916—739
1911—472	1917—910

The average for twelve years is 564, and for the last seven years is 650.

III. The Picture Brides

The yearly average for the Japanese picture brides arriving in San Francisco for the past seven years (1912-1918) is 658, as the following table will show:

Japanese Picture Brides Arriving
in San Francisco

1912—879	1916—486
1913—625	1917—504
1914—768	1918—520
1915—823	

For a time, the Immigration authorities of this country required a marriage ceremony on arrival in the case of the so-called picture brides, but this was done away with about two years ago in view of the real nature of marriage in Japan. The registration of marriage being properly recorded in Japan after the necessary ceremonies, the wife comes to this country bearing the husband's name and directly from the home of the husband's parents. These women are, with very rare exceptions, healthy, well educated, and moral. They average high among the foreign-born mothers of this country.

Considerable notoriety has been given to the picture bride question of late in view of the action of the directors of the Japanese Association of America. While maintaining the legality of such marriage, the directors, in order to conform to the high ideals and customs of this country, some time ago adopted a resolution recommending the discontinuance of the custom. Considerable discussion followed among the Japanese residents in this country, which resulted in a recent general meeting of delegates from California, Colorado, Nevada, and Utah. Those who opposed the action of the directors of the Japanese Association did so as a protest, insisting that it is a matter to be settled between the governments of the United States and Japan, and

that a return to Japan for marriage involves great expense and is exceedingly difficult under present passport arrangements. Mr. George Shima, the president of the Association, is reported to have upheld the action of the directors, saying that the quickest way for the Japanese to cement their friendship with Americans is in conforming to the high ideals and customs of the country of their adoption. In furtherance of this position, the directors resigned in a body. The legality of the so-called picture marriage was not questioned. The whole question has been raised in this country largely as a result of a misunderstanding of the custom, and the whole marriage customs in Japan as well.

(After the above was written, that is, on December 17, 1919, the Japanese government announced that after February 25, 1920, the practice of so-called picture marriage would be stopped. In the meantime the Japanese Association of America, at a general meeting, also endorsed the action of the old directors by reelecting all of them.)

IV. The Present Number of Japanese in Continental America

An approximate estimate of the Japanese population in Continental United States is found in an article by Mr. M. Hanihara, former Consul General for Japan at San Francisco, appearing in the New York Evening Post, March 16, 1918. The estimate is given by consular jurisdictions and by sex as follows:

Seattle Consulate—	Male	Female	Total
(Including Washington, Montana, Alaska, and Idaho in part)	7,397	1,835	9,232

Portland Consulate—			
(Including Oregon, Wyoming, and Idaho in part)	4,497	906	5,403

San Francisco Consulate—			
(Including Colorado, Utah, Nevada and the northern part of California)	35,531	15,239	50,790

Los Angeles Consulate—			
(Including Arizona, New Mexico, and the southern part of California)	19,992	3,774	23,776

Chicago Consulate—			
(Including twenty States in the Central West and South)	2,131	250	2,381

New York Consulate—			
(Including the Eastern States)	2,552	246	2,798

It is possible that the number at present is a little larger than the above estimate. Of course, included in this number are 20,000 or more children born in this country who should be regarded as Americans rather than Japanese. Some method

should be adopted to determine what portion of these will claim American citizenship and who, if any, will declare their loyalty to Japan. It is remarkable with what unanimity they and their parents declare allegiance to the United States.

V. The Amount of Land Owned and Leased by Japanese in California.

Here we approach the crux of the whole question, particularly as, under certain circumstances, Japanese children born in America may own land in this country. A Japanese resident of Riverside County, long proprietor of a restaurant at Riverside, some time ago purchased a home in the interest of his American-born child, and the case went to the courts and was decided in his favor. It was appealed and is now awaiting decision in the Court of Appeals. It may go to the Supreme Court. It is significant that Governor Johnson, in his reply to Hon. Wm. J. Bryan, the Secretary of State, before he signed the Anti-alien Land Law of 1913, conceded the right of the Japanese in this country, under the treaty, to hold land for other than agricultural purposes. His language is:

"We assume that the right of the Japanese to own real property for the purposes described (in the treaty) is absolute in our state, and we seek to deal only with agricultural lands."

Yet an effort has been made to exclude the Japanese from buying homes even in the interest of their American-born children.

We are indebted to the Japanese Agricultural Association of California for recent investigations

showing the number and acreage of farms cultivated by Japanese in California under various methods. These are classified in seven districts. The summaries are as follows:

	1919	1913	Gain
Ownership acreage.	30,305	26,707	3,598
Tenant acreage . . .	336,724	205,983	130,741
			<hr/> 134,339
			Loss
Contract acreage . .	23,608	48,997	25,389
Total acreage . . .	<hr/> 390,637	<hr/> 281,687	<hr/> 108,950

The crops, in the order of their total values, last year were as follows: fruits, grapes, beans, greens, sugar beets, berries, rice, potatoes, seeds, cantaloupes, onions, cotton, tomatoes, asparagus, celery, hay, and cereals, corn, ornamental plants and flowers, miscellaneous. Berries averaged \$700 per acre and other produce from \$300 down to \$50, the grand total being \$53,375,720. The largest acreage was devoted to beans and then, in order, to sugar beets, grapes, fruits, potatoes, cotton, greens, rice, etc.

VI. Discrimination in the California Land Laws

While in our laws there is no technical discrimination against Japan, yet in the California Anti-alien Land Law of 1913 there is discrimination in intention and in fact.

There could have been no objection to a general anti-alien land law of universal application, such as

has been adopted by certain states and proposed by some of the representatives of this state.

In this connection it must be noted that the laws of Japan, as applied to foreigners, are much more liberal than our law. In the foreign settlements, formerly maintained in open ports, foreigners hold lease in perpetuity, which is, to all practical purposes, the same as ownership. In addition, foreigners in any part of Japan can lease land for fifty years in accordance with the provisions of the civil code of the country. Then, too, foreigners can own land anywhere in Japan if they organize a partnership or joint stock company, even though such partnership or company includes no Japanese interest.

While other Orientals are included in the California land law, the Chinese, for example, have less reason for complaint, as the campaign was not publicly centered upon them and their larger number of adult children of American birth makes the law less embarrassing and humiliating.

From the point of view of our own national welfare (we believe that) the various discriminatory measures proposed against the Japanese are unjustifiable and untenable. (We believe that.) It is the duty of all parents to provide for the wellbeing and education of their children. It is human instinct, an inherent desire, of all true fathers and mothers. Therefore, (recognize that) the purchase of real property by Japanese in the interest of their American-born children, who are American citizens and are going to live here, is not only legitimate but advisable. If we thwart them even in

this matter, we are going to create a generation, ill provided, ill educated, ill developed.

Equally unjustifiable is the proposal to absolutely prohibit the leasing of agricultural land by Japanese, thus compelling them to remain permanently in a status of wage laborer. If such a proposal were adopted, it would condemn the Japanese to a condition of life little better than that of serfdom or slavery. Ever since its foundation this Republic has stood for freedom, justice, and equality. The outstanding quality of the American people has been love of independence and liberty. We have always admired that spirit and have fostered and encouraged it. It is unthinkable that we should compromise that spirit and repudiate our traditional love of justice and equity in dealing with a law-abiding, enterprising, industrious, and progressive class of foreigners who have, in comparatively small numbers, come to live among us. Such a course is in contravention of the real spirit of our Constitution. In justice to our national tradition, our Constitution, our own community we must see to it that all residents of this country are given fair opportunity for progress and preferment, and to develop their natural abilities and attain their legitimate aspirations.