


Chapter 6

JAPANESE AMERICANS

After 1946



The world and the nation had changed after World War II and so had the Japanese Americans. The United States had become one of the leading world powers along with the Soviet Union, so that there was an antagonism between capitalism and communism. The term "Cold War" was used to describe the tensions between the two powers.

The Japanese Americans were busy trying to reestablish themselves after the concentration camp experience. They entered a more open society; jobs were easier to obtain and the primary targets of racism were now African Americans—many of whom had migrated to places like California and taken over housing left vacant by the evacuees—and Mexicans, who had filled jobs in the agricultural sector. As a consequence, Japanese Americans were no longer the pariahs; in addition, the Japanese nation was now an important ally to contain the spread of communism. It is important to note that when Japan and the United States are on friendly terms, the perception and treatment of Japanese Americans becomes favorable.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a picture of the Japanese Americans through a presentation of generations and their effects on the ethnic community and family. It will also include a more thorough analysis of how redress came about.

U.S.-JAPANESE RELATIONS

U.S.-Japanese relations have affected and continue to affect the treatment and status of Japanese Americans. Although Japanese Americans have continuously stressed their American upbringing, it is still difficult for many Americans to differentiate between the Japanese, born and raised in Japan, and Japanese Americans, born and raised in the United States. It is still common for Nisei and Sansei to hear such remarks as "You speak English so well" and "You people make such wonderful cars." And when asked of one's origin, the answer of San Francisco is insufficient—the follow-up remark is "But where are you really from?" It is clear that the questioner would only be satisfied with an answer such as Tokyo.

It is therefore not surprising that the perceptions and treatment of Japanese Americans have been closely tied to relations between Japan and America. This was true in the early part of the century and has not changed. But there has been a change in the message. In the early 1900s, the basic message was that of inferiority—that Japan was an inferior nation with an inferior culture—the producer of shoddy goods and a second-class imitator. In the 1940s it was as an enemy nation—cunning, warlike, with a fanatical disregard for life. The next several decades saw Japan as an ally and a base for containing China and the Soviet Union—a democratic nation serving to control the spread of communism. The current picture is that of a fierce economic competitor, with the current term, "Japan bashing," indicating part of the American response.

Japanese Americans have lived through different eras. The most traumatic was the wartime incarceration; despite later monetary redress and a presidential apology, bitter memories persist a half century later. A number of violent episodes (discussed in Chapter 13) and the rise of other hate crimes are reminders that the prejudice that was a strong part of the early Japanese American experience unfortunately remains alive and all too well a century later.

THE ISSEI

The early Issei are a passing generation. Their migration took place prior to 1924; the majority were already young adults, so that today few remain. Survivors are in their late eighties and nineties; some have even passed the century mark. An analysis of the obituary column in the *Pacific Citizen* of May 21, 1993 indicates the following: Of the eight deaths of persons who were born in Japan (Issei), seven were over 90 years of age, with the average age at death being 90.8 years; of the twelve deaths of persons born in the

United States (Nisei), four were in their eighties, five were in their seventies and three were in their sixties, and the average age at death was 74.4 years.¹

What was once a young and vigorous group is now in its twilight years: The issues of aging are of the highest concern. Health needs, housing, social and family supports, long-term care, safety, and transportation are current concerns. Questions involving such matters as the placing of dependent elderly in institutions and the role of the family are new to the Japanese American community. The image of the Japanese family and community taking care of their own may limit assistance from mainstream organizations. It should be emphasized that most of the surviving Issei have limited English-speaking ability and may prefer ethnic foods and a cultural ambience, whereas older Nisei have different cultural characteristics.

The early Issei community served in what D. S. Massey labeled the "migration network."² Since the early immigrants arrived with little knowledge of the language and culture and were greeted with indifference and outright hostility, the Issei community was vitally important. The network included personal and family ties, village and *ken* (province) relationships, and the commonality of Japanese ancestry. The community provided a support system that enabled the immigrants to handle some of the emotional, social, and economic costs of migration. It was also able to provide assistance in terms of such basic needs as transportation, housing, and jobs, as well as social and recreational needs. Discrimination and segregation reinforced the ethnic enclaves, so that ethnic organizations, rather than organizations developed by the larger society, served the community. In general, the Issei community, even with internal divisions based on personalities, ideology, and the like, was a relative cohesive entity that provided organizations and services to meet most of the needs of its population.

After the Evacuation

The wartime evacuation, coupled with advancing age, hastened the Issei generation's loss of power. Leadership in the camps was deliberately kept out of the hands of Issei; release from the camps marked the closing stages of the traditional Issei community. In post-war America, housing was much more scattered, and job opportunities developed by the Issei were no longer important services to the Nisei. Jobs in the larger community, although not totally open to Nisei, were much more attractive than working for Issei businesses.

The major Issei organization, the Japanese Associations, were prominent until the late 1950s. Changes were inevitable—the Issei were aging, their quest for citizenship had been achieved, and the importance of supporting their type of organizations had diminished. Needs and priorities were different; Nisei, instead of following in the steps of their parents,

preferred to join their own ethnic organizations and groups in the larger community.

Goals

Although the goal of becoming a full-fledged American, including citizenship and active participation in the mainstream, may have appealed to some, most Issei felt that cultural differences and discrimination made such a goal unrealistic. Rather, if there was to be a move toward the mainstream, it would be made by their children, the Nisei. The phrase *kodomo no tame ni* (for the sake of the children) connotes sacrificing one's own life for the next generation.³ The opportunity to obtain citizenship in the 1950s came much too late in their lives to have a significant effect on becoming American, although many Issei studied diligently and became quite knowledgeable about the presidents, Congress, and other American institutions. Parents would often ask their children obscure questions about this or that aspect of the Constitution; however, the depth of their feelings about America rarely ran as deep as their feelings about the country of their birth.

But it would be too simple to imply that they ignored American models. Rather, the Issei developed a parallel community, especially in areas where their need for services would otherwise remain unmet because of discrimination. When hospitals erected racist barriers, the Japanese developed their own hospitals; when faced with other restrictions, they developed their own organizations. There were Issei doctors, businessmen, realtors, and the like, so that the Issei did not have to depend on mainstream organizations and services to satisfy their major needs.

Hence, most Issei did not aim at acculturation, integration, and assimilation; thus the majority were outside of the mainstream. However, the Issei developed their own relatively independent, self-sufficient communities, which retained traditional cultural modes. The lack of social problem behavior—crime, delinquency, mental illness, poverty, and dependence on welfare—are measures of the success of their structurally pluralistic model. Seen in the context of the racist, hostile, and punitive America that they faced throughout most of their lives, their adaptation was remarkable.

As the rapidly diminishing number of Issei survivors look back on their lives, they find much satisfaction in the lives of their children, many of whom have been outwardly more successful than they, and thus, in their view, worthy of their own sacrifices. They have also overcome the many racist barriers erected against them; citizenship, land ownership, and choices in housing are no longer barred to them. Even relations between Japan and America, with their ups and downs, are seen as more positive, and Issei admit that when they were in the World War II camps, they could not have anticipated these changes, even in their wildest dreams. The one

regret for some is that many of these changes came about much too late in their lives.

THE NISEI

The period during and after World War II can be viewed as the Nisei era. Before the war, most Nisei were too young to assume leadership, and those of employable age were hemmed in by racial discrimination. As one consequence, many were forced to work in ethnic jobs and in the ethnic community. Urban ethnic jobs meant gardening, working in ethnic shops and stores and in small business, relying on ethnic clientele. The stereotype of college-educated Nisei working in fruit stands was common; despair about the lack of opportunity, even for those with college degrees, was widespread. In rural areas, farming and farm employment provided opportunities.⁴

The World War II incarceration led to a change in the lives of the Nisei. Because so many of the Issei leaders were rounded up by the FBI and imprisoned, Nisei were thrust into leadership positions, often prematurely. In the segregated camps, ethnicity was no longer a mark of the outsider; Nisei competed with other Nisei for jobs behind the barbed wire fences, although the positions of authority were held by whites from the outside. Nisei could be foremen, truck drivers, teachers, firemen, and policemen ("internal security")—jobs which they could not hold on the outside—high schoolers could be student body leaders, athletic heroes, and play the leads in school plays.⁵

Those who were able to gain leave from the camps discovered a new world east of the Mississippi. Life in New York, Minneapolis, Chicago, and Cleveland had its share of hardships, but the barriers of racism that locked the Nisei out were not as high as in California. There were other pariah groups—blacks, Jews, and poor whites served as surrogate targets. Factory jobs were available, as well as positions more appropriate to their level of education and training. Some chose to spend their whole lives in these new environments in the Midwest and the East.

Nisei who volunteered for the army experienced new life experiences. Many went abroad for the first time and served as conquerors. After the war Nisei would not be content to limit themselves to pre-World War II occupations in the ethnic community.

Dramatic changes occurred in Hawaii. The children of the early recruits to plantation life had already broken away through opportunities in education; returning World War II veterans added to the impetus towards becoming a part of the Hawaiian mainstream. By 1954, Nisei veterans began to challenge the Republican majority in the legislature. Along with some Caucasian friends who had supported them during the hard times, they developed a powerful Democratic party group that eventually gained control

of the legislature as well as influential elective positions. Senator Daniel K. Inouye was one of the early leaders; others who served in the United States Congress included the late Spark Matsunaga and Patsy Mink. Another Japanese American, George Ariyoshi, served as Hawaii's governor in the 1980s.

The Nisei and Sansei continue to hold important positions in the state economy. Hawaii is no doubt the one state where Japanese ancestry is not viewed as a handicap in terms of social and occupational opportunities.

Camp Norms

One of the more intriguing and perhaps unanswerable questions deals with the effects of the concentration camp experience. Does life under incarceration prepare one for life on the outside after release? Life in the camps entailed dependence on the government for food, shelter, and clothing; breakup of family life; diminution of the power of the Issei; cynicism concerning concepts such as freedom and democracy; and the innumerable restrictions of camp life.

Much of what was learned in camps was different from the norms that guided pre-camp life, and would have proved inappropriate for life in a competitive society. Hard work, long hours, loyalty, and responsibility were difficult to maintain under camp conditions. One common response was "waste time," a phrase that covered a variety of situations, such as lack of dedication to the job and little extra effort. There was a tendency to "borrow" government property—lumber, coal, and other government supplies—among residents who had never "borrowed" before. There was a dependence on the government for the basic necessities of life: food, shelter, clothing, and jobs. The one saving grace of the period was that camp life was relatively short-lived, so that most of the dysfunctional norms were short lived and not internalized.

However, many of the norms and values that were a part of the Issei culture continued to be carried on by the Nisei. Concepts such as *amae* (the need to be loved), *enryo* (deferential behavior), and *shi-ka-ta-ga-nai* (acceptance, literally "it can't be helped"), remained familiar. Indirect, Japanese-style communication—as opposed to direct American-style communication—was also maintained.

A Different America

For the majority of the Nisei, in common with their Issei parents, release from the camps, which were closed in 1946, meant reestablishing themselves, no matter where they were. It meant extra work, overtime, multiple family workers, and multiple jobs per worker. Gardening was one temporary but popular occupation, even for those who did not possess the

necessary skills or talents. The G.I. Bill was important; education and hard work were finally beginning to bear fruit.

Although the Nisei had changed, reflecting both the camp experience and life away from the West Coast, important changes had also occurred in the dominant community. There was an increased liberalization of attitudes, behaviors, and laws concerning Asians. After 1952, immigration and naturalization laws were no longer exclusionary; legal discrimination in housing gradually disappeared; antimiscegenation legislation was overturned in California in 1948 and nationally by the Supreme Court in 1967. Occupations such as public school teaching began to open in the 1950s, and the stereotype of Nisei college graduates working at fruit stands became a distant memory. College degrees, always a part of Nisei expectations, began to lead to realistic career choices.⁶

Barriers in the social and recreational areas were more resistant to change. Although there was no longer segregation in swimming pools and other public facilities, most prestigious private organizations, such as country clubs, fraternities, and sororities, remained off limits. De facto housing discrimination began to be breached in the 1960s, which meant that Japanese Americans began to be much more geographically dispersed.

Pluralistic Nisei athletic and social organizations reemerged. The basketball leagues and social groups of the 1940s to 1960s were strikingly similar to those that had flourished from the 1930s to the evacuation. But there were also important differences. Whereas there was almost no chance to participate in the wider community prior to World War II, now individual Nisei could go out of the ethnic community. Social functions, such as Nisei conventions in the 1930s, were usually held at modest ethnic facilities, often at a local church, whereas post-war gatherings, especially in more recent times, have been at first-class venues. This change has sometimes brought complaints from old-timers who hark back to the old days, and complain about the high costs of recent conventions.

Nisei now discuss retirement, health issues, and how to understand the new generations. They generally keep a low profile, though some, such as Norman Mineta and Robert Matsui, gained prominence in politics, representing California in the U.S. House of Representatives. In June 2000, Mineta, then aged 68, was named Secretary of Commerce by President Clinton, the first Asian American to achieve cabinet rank. That they were elected and reelected from areas where the Japanese American population is well under 5 percent remains a source of wonder. Noriyuki "Pat" Morita has gained prominence through his roles in the *Karate Kid* movies.

The greatest Nisei contributions have been in everyday activities, often associated with the middle class and the Japanese culture, such as working hard, saving, raising children, low rates of crime and delinquency, and demonstrating good citizenship. The surviving Issei are surprised that the aging Nisei have become very much like them. Whereas at one time the

Nisei were castigated for irresponsible behavior—for becoming American too fast and being too materialistic—the Nisei now seem to reflect Issei values. And in common with perceptions of most generations when looking at the next group, the Nisei have reservations and doubts about the character and value systems of the Sansei.

In summary, the Nisei have lived through a wide variety of images. They were a "problem minority" in the 1930s, "quiet Americans" in the 1960s, a "model minority" in the 1970s, and now a mature group, ready for retirement.

THE SANSEI

The Sansei, or third generation era, begins in the 1970s, although by that time the generational references were beginning to lose their meaning. The relatively clear-cut generational differences that once characterized the Japanese American community have been eroded by new immigrants, the mixture of fourth- and fifth-generation Japanese Americans, and the influx of Japanese businessmen (most here for a temporary stay), students, and the ubiquitous Japanese tourists. A broader term, Nikkei (Japanese people), has become more popular, since it refers to Japanese Americans as a whole, rather than to specific generations.

The Sansei, the Yonsei, and the Gosei, or fourth and fifth generations, are the most "American" of any Japanese group; many of them have never faced overt discrimination, and some have never had close ethnic ties or ethnic friends. They flock to colleges and universities, eager for good jobs, especially in medicine, engineering, and law. Like many of their mainstream peers, they question the lifestyle and values of their parents but are the primary beneficiaries of the material success of the previous generation. Family life may now often include as many as four generations: Issei great-grandparents, Nisei grandparents, Sansei parents, and Yonsei children, although the number of Issei survivors diminishes with each passing year. Most of the old Japanese ways are also passing with the Issei; new input, new technology, and "modern American values" appear more comfortable for each new generation.

Questions raised by many Sansei that are difficult for many Nisei to answer relate to their behavior during the wartime evacuation. Why was there so little organized protest? What about litigation? Why did they go so meekly? For generations who grew up during the turbulent campus protests of the 1960s and 1970s, these questions are natural. And for the Nisei, the answers are also time related. They grew up in an era when dissent and overt protests by minority groups were rare. Further, the unequal power relationships, the wartime atmosphere, and the inexperienced leadership precluded any organized action. But because these issues were

seldom discussed in the homes—many Sansei students complain that verbal exchange, especially about personal matters, has not been a part of their family style—questions of this nature come as a surprise. Japanese American homes appear harmonious to outsiders, especially since areas of potential conflict are often carefully avoided.

Although there are more opportunities to interact with the mainstream community, many Sansei still prefer ethnic organizations. For example, although more fraternities and sororities now accept Asians, all-Asian fraternities and sororities also continue to flourish. The atmosphere and the activities are identical, except that one group features all Asian faces.

One of the more surprising survivals in the tide toward the mainstream is the continued existence of the Japanese athletic leagues. In the past the Nisei athletic teams (the most popular sport was basketball) served a definite need—social and recreational opportunities were limited—but by the time of the Sansei, ample opportunities were available outside of the ethnic community. Acculturation and integration have occurred, but in some places, such as Los Angeles, Sansei basketball and volleyball leagues continue. It is interesting to note that ethnic norms often come into play; for example, players who “hot dog,” shoot a lot and go for individual glory, are often controlled by their more team-oriented peers, who do not pass to them.⁷

Other ethnic activities also continue. The Nisei Week celebration in Los Angeles (which could probably be more accurately retitled as Nisei participation diminishes) has its counterparts in Hawaii, San Francisco, and other cities. One mainstream tradition, queen contests, are an integral part of these festivities—who will be the Nisei Week Queen, or Miss Cherry Blossom? But this bit of Americana raises some interesting questions. The contestants by now are Sansei and Yonsei, but with the rise of interracial marriage, the question is, must they be “full-blooded” Japanese? What about those who are of mixed parentage? And from a feminist perspective should there be such contests at all?

The new generations reflect the growing openness of American society. The ethnic community and family offer supportive frameworks, but opportunities, especially in terms of employment, are primarily in the dominant community. Gone are the Japanese gardeners, the “mom and pop” grocery stores, and other service occupations; perhaps other newer immigrant groups have taken them over. Sansei, like most other Americans, usually do not follow the trades of their parents, especially if they are low-status positions. And since the major occupations of many Nisei parents are in the professions, they have to earn their positions, rather than inherit them.

Sansei are more apt to reflect the ambience of their surrounding communities, rather than a strictly ethnic one. A Japanese American growing up in St. Louis will be more Missourian than Japanese, just as Sansei from Los

Angeles, Honolulu, and New York will reflect the culture of these cities. The testimonies of individual Sansei make this point clearly.

One Sansei grew up in Gardena, a suburb of Los Angeles, which is often referred to as the Japanese American city. With a population made up of about a quarter Japanese, Gardena has Japanese councilmen, a Japanese cable TV station, and numerous ethnic stores. She tells a story of growing up that reflects a strong ethnic culture. This Sansei grew up in a bilingual, bicultural background and was surrounded by Japanese Americans throughout her high school years. She dated only other Sansei, and she was part of the “in group” in high school—scholarship society, class officer, cheerleader. Culture shock for her was enrolling at UCLA, where there were so many non-Japanese.⁸

Conversely, another Sansei grew up in the only Japanese American family in a suburb of San Diego. Her only contact with other Japanese was through the ethnic church; her primary contacts, especially her close friends, were Caucasians. For her, culture shock was the large number of Asian Americans at UCLA.⁹ It is interesting to note that she now has a Sansei boyfriend, although her behavior and her expectations appear much more “American” than “Japanese American.”

A survey of students attending colleges and universities in the Los Angeles area shows a number of interesting findings.¹⁰ Although the bulk of respondents represented the Sansei generation, there were even responses from fifth- and sixth-generation Japanese Americans. Respondents still believed in such values as hard work, good education, family and community solidarity, and perseverance—values passed down from their Issei and Nisei heritage. Most of them represented a Yuppie outlook, but it should be noted that they also held part-time jobs while attending school. The majority came from materially affluent backgrounds and enjoyed good relationships with their parents. They felt most comfortable with other Asians and belonged to Asian organizations such as the Community Youth Council, the Nisei Athletic Union, the Orange County Sports Association, and the Crescent Bay Optimists. In spite of these continuing ethnic ties, they overwhelmingly believed in interracial dating and marriage. Therefore, there appears to be a continuity between the Japanese generations on certain values, but the belief in interracial marriage adds to the possible acceleration of assimilation as the future of the Sansei and subsequent generations.

But there remains one common factor that still shapes Japanese American experiences. It is that of visibility: No matter how acculturated or talented a Sansei may be, the physical features identify him or her as an ethnic. Show business provides an example of this dilemma. For Japanese and other Asian Americans, acting positions remain primarily as stereotypes. Roles for Japanese actors include the gardener, cook, the camera-carrying tourist, the enemy soldier—always with an accent. Female roles are a sexy geisha or a compliant, submissive, “confused about America” character.

The desired body type and physical image in America remains that of a Caucasian: It may take time and the continued introduction of new immigrants before the image of an American includes other models.

There are signs that the variable of visibility may be changing. As mentioned, both Norman Mineta of San Jose and Robert Matsui of Sacramento have been elected and reelected to the U.S. Congress in areas where the number of Asian American voters is negligible. Sansei are entering occupations and fields that were once considered closed, such as advertising, the performing arts, journalism, and broadcasting. They are also taking over the leadership positions in such ethnic organizations as the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL).

Nisei leaders sometimes appear just as reluctant as the old Issei used to be in giving up positions of power and authority; the accusation that the new generation wants things too quickly and easily, without "paying their dues," has a familiar ring. For example, an interview by a Sansei reporter with Dan Aoki, a World War II veteran and reputed "hatchet man" of the Governor Burns Democratic political machine of Hawaii, gives a flavor of one Nisei's attitude toward the Sansei.¹¹ Aoki complains that the Sansei take everything for granted. He grew up when children of immigrants were "poisoned" by the idea that *haoles* (whites) were superior and when the highest position for Nisei college students was bank teller or clerk. The World War II experiences transformed naive plantation kids, including himself, into belligerent ex-soldiers, fighting for their rightful place in Hawaiian society. His message was that the younger generations did not understand the struggles of the older and that things that came too easily were never fully appreciated. Many Sansei hear the same story from their Nisei parents, just as Nisei remember hearing a similar story from their Issei parents.

The most appropriate generalization concerning the Sansei deals with their heterogeneity. There are those who shop along Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills, concerned primarily with brand names, status, and upward mobility; there are activists and militants who have little use for material possessions; some serve in the armed forces; others participate in almost every endeavor open to Americans everywhere. But the majority choose the so-called safer professions, where visibility is not as important as the quality of their education and credentials.

Most Sansei have acculturated; there is a high degree of integration in terms of housing, education, and occupations. A great deal of marital assimilation is taking place (see Chapter 13). But there is also the retention of pluralistic structures, especially in areas with large Japanese (and other Asian) populations, such as Honolulu and Los Angeles. The major difference between the old ethnic community and the newer ones is that of voluntarism. In the old days, segregation was forced; in the current era, there are choices.

Perhaps this difference is an apt commentary on the changes that Japanese Americans have lived through.

RECENT EVENTS

Two events in the early 1990s, both occurring in the South where Japanese Americans are few in number, are related to the Japanese experience. One deals with JAP Road in Beaumont and Vidor, Texas. Efforts to have the sign changed by Tanamachi Nakata have met with growing resistance on the part of the local communities. She has received hate mail and comments concerning the deaths of Americans at Pearl Harbor. As the president of the Houston Chapter of the JACL, Betty Waki, pointed out, it is hard for people in California to recognize how isolated parts of the country are in relation to Japanese Americans.¹²

The second incident took place in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and involved Yoshihiro Hattori, a 16-year-old exchange student from Japan. A supermarket butcher, Rodney Peairs, mistaking the lad for a robber, shot and killed him. A jury found Peairs not guilty and spectators applauded the verdict. The trial received extensive coverage in Japan, and for Japanese Americans, it became a sobering reminder that although there is change, there are also areas where time seems to stand still.¹³

THE PASSAGE OF REDRESS

The most significant positive action for Japanese Americans in their short history in the United States was the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1988. The Act granted redress for the actions of the United States government during World War II and included a presidential apology and a cash payment of \$20,000. What was viewed as impossible became a reality in 1988; it should be recalled that the 1942 wartime incarceration was also viewed as impossible, so that Japanese Americans faced two "impossibles" that became realities.

THE KITANO-MAKI PROPER ALIGNMENT MODEL¹⁴

The Kitano-Maki proper alignment model (Table 6.1) was developed in order to answer three questions.

1. What were the variables that led to the incarceration during World War II (1942-1946)?

Table 6.1 Kitano-Maki Proper Alignment Model: Achieving the Impossible Dream

Years	History		Legislative Branch		Judicial Branch	Executive Branch
	Community	U.S. Society	Senate	House		
1987-88	+	N+	+	+	N+	+
1983-86	+	N+	N	N	N+	-
1979-82	N+	N+	N	N	N	N-
1970-78	N+	N	N+	N+	N	N+
1945-69	N	N	N	N	N	N
Pre-WWII/Exclusion/ Incarceration	-	-	-	-	-	-

2. Why did it take from 1946 to 1988 for the passage of redress?
3. What were the variables that led to the passage of redress in 1988?

The model indicates that a proper alignment of variables was necessary for the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1988. The variables are signified by either a plus (+), a minus (-), or neutral (N), with a plus (N+) or minus (N-). The proper alignment is achieved when there are all pluses (+), all neutral pluses (N+), or all minuses (-). The variables in our model are the ethnic community, the overall U.S. society, including the media and public opinion, and the legislative, judicial, and executive branches of government.

For example, the era prior to World War II and leading to the evacuation shows that all of the variables were lined up in a negative fashion. The ethnic community was divided by age and generation—the younger Nisei were U.S. citizens by birth, while the older Issei were aliens. In the mix were the Kibei, U.S. citizens by birth, but receiving much of their early socialization and education in Japan. There were differences by age, citizenship, acculturation, ethnic identity, and identification with Japan, so that the ethnic group did not present a cohesive front against the evacuation. The general public, led by the Hearst papers, was constantly bombarded with images of Japanese spies, Japanese treachery, and the “yellow peril.” The ethnic group had little access to the media, the mainstream, or to Congress. They were the primary target of racist attacks, which ranked them as inferior, with animal-like qualities, so that when President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 (EO9066) on February 19, 1942, it was a popular action supported by the mass media, the general public, the Congress, and the courts. There was no organized opposition, even from the ethnic community, so that there was a proper alignment of the variables (-----) for incarcerating the Japanese Americans, both citizens and aliens.

SCIENTIFIC RACISM

Social science explanations of race and culture in the early 1900s were racist and supported white supremacy. Social Darwinism claimed racial groups could be ranked on an evolutionary scale with Europeans the most advanced, followed by Asians and Blacks. Racial categories are influenced by evolution through inheritance and natural selection.¹⁵ Racial prejudice and discrimination were mechanisms that served to keep racial groups apart and protected the “superior races” from contamination from their “inferiors.” The image of Japan, as well as all Asians, was that of an inferior race, and analogies to animals, such as apes, monkeys, and spiders, were common. Since the immigrant Japanese and the American-born Nisei were considered racially Japanese, they were also viewed as inferior and were the targets of discrimination, including antimiscegenation laws, housing restrictions, and lack of equal opportunity.

Dower refers to a meeting of distinguished social scientists, psychiatrists, and Japan specialists who met under the auspices of the Institute of Pacific Relations in New York in December 1944 that attempted to understand the Japanese character structure. One generalization was that Japanese character structure and behavior was similar to that of the American adolescent. Talcott Parsons observed that Japanese found security by fitting into culturally defined patterns of group life, while Margaret Mead found that the conformity in American adolescents was a characteristic of all Japanese life. Terms such as primitive and mental and emotional instability were attributed to the Japanese enemy. The character structure of the Japanese was akin to the American gangster. There were also references to severe toilet training, small body size, and inferiority leading to aggressive behavior. One comment was that if the Japanese were three inches taller, Pearl Harbor would not have happened.¹⁶

Perhaps the most important generalization was that Japan was one nation with one will and one purpose. The perception was supported by Japanese propaganda which emphasized that it was a united nation with racial solidarity and the common purpose of defeating the enemy. This was translated into racial solidarity with one united purpose: to demonstrate their superiority over the West, with the society willing to die to achieve that purpose. Japanese Americans, presumably of the same race, were believed to be similarly motivated.

SUMMARY

The variables leading to the decision to incarcerate Japanese Americans were properly aligned in 1942. The division of the ethnic community, the mass media in favor of incarceration, and the history of anti-Japanese feelings—including the inability of many Americans to differentiate between Japan and Japanese Americans (which continues to the present day)—were aligned for incarceration. The Congress found anti-Japanese actions to be politically popular; the legal system had little problem, especially since much of the ethnic leadership were non-citizens, and President Roosevelt had other major concerns, such as winning a war, and could not be bothered with such a small, powerless minority. The concentration camp era was from 1942–1946.

Discussion about redress did not surface in the Japanese American community until 1970. The post-concentration camp period from 1945–1946 to 1970 was spent by most mainland Japanese Americans in reestablishing their economic and social lives. Actions toward redress were neutral (N). The newer generations were getting further education and developing their human capital, while the gradual opening up of the American society meant economic mobility, better housing, and a move toward the mainstream.

During the period from after World War II to 1970, there was a move of all of the variables in the model away from the minuses of 1942. The ethnic community was gaining in political sophistication, including the election of Senators Daniel K. Inouye and Spark M. Matsunaga from Hawaii, and Congressmen Norman Y. Mineta and Robert T. Matsui from California. Immigration restrictions became less racist, Issei gained naturalization privileges, antimiscegenation laws were overturned, and housing became more open. By 1988, there was a proper alignment of pluses (+ and N+) for the passage of the Civil Rights Act.

NOTES

1. *Pacific Citizen*, May 21, 1993, p. 8.
2. D. S. Massey, "Economic Development and International Migration in Comparative Perspective." *Population and Development Review* 14 (1988): 383–413.
3. Dennis Ogawa, *Kodomo No Tame Ni* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1978).
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