

From Internment to ‘Model Minority’: The Reintegration of Japanese
Americans in United States Society after World War Two

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Abstract of a Thesis

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Japanese Americans after World War Two faced a myriad of challenges and problems which did not disappear as quickly as the well-known "model minority" narrative would have us believe. This thesis is an attempt to present a more detailed exploration of Japanese American resettlement from August 1945 through 1958.

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The post war lives of Japanese Americans were complicated and unsettled. “Unemployment, vanished savings, anti-Japanese laws, [and] epithets scrawled upon the front fence” were just some of the challenges and hurdles Japanese Americans faced from the end of the war to the late 1950s.¹ Japanese Americans indeed faced a “maelstrom of problems” upon their return to the West Coast and their resettlement across the United States. The continuation of prejudice and problems for Japanese Americans contradicts the more well-known narrative of Japanese Americans lives after their internment as one of a “model minority”.

The “model minority” label originated in the 1960s, but often dictates the way historians tell Japanese American’s entire postwar story. While the internment story has been thoroughly examined, the period of the post-war resettlement has been wholly overlooked. When historians look at the years after the Second World War, Japanese American involvement in politics, Hawaiian statehood and Issei citizenship get most attention. Although these events are important parts of the Japanese American story, they do not fully convey the difficulties of their immediate post-war lives. Adjustment to life in their old homes along the West Coast and new homes in the East and Midwest was incredibly difficult for Japanese Americans. They and their families faced from the loss of most or all of their property, violence, and ongoing prejudice in service industries, housing, and employment. The following thesis presents the trials and struggles of Japanese Americans from 1945 to 1958. Japanese Americans faced significant prejudice and obstacles to economic and social security immediately after the end of the war in the

¹“Relocation Authorities Amazed by Splendid Reception Given Evacuees Returning to Oregon,” *Pacific Citizen*, February 14, 1946.

Pacific. These obstacles, rather than disappearing by the 1960s, changed from very public forms of discrimination to more subtle barriers to acceptance.

Despite recent improvements in the scholarship on the post-war Japanese American community in the United States, the years immediately following the war are still under-examined and frequently get lost between the drama of internment and the Japanese American emergence as the “model minority.” Even works that focus on post-war history often only cover the years of resettlement superficially. For example, surveys by authors Sucheng Chan, Cheryl L. Cole, Roger Daniels and Bill Hosokawa all devote scant attention to immediate post-war years.² Some more narrow studies look at certain cities or regions of the United States or issues such as housing and interracial relations, particularly between African Americans and Japanese Americans. For example, Charlotte Brooks, Jacalyn Harden, Scott Kurashige and Scott Tang, all address the interaction between Japanese Americans and African Americans.³ In addition, housing is a very well covered subject by these scholars. It is indeed difficult to discuss post-war Japanese Americans, and housing in particular without comparing them to other ethnic groups.

² These broad studies, often covering Asian Americans generally, are useful and often offer hints of a more detailed story, but do not help us understand the challenges and changes faced by the newly returned families. These works include Cheryl Cole’s *A History of the Japanese Community in Sacramento, 1883-1972*, Sucheng Chan’s *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History*, Roger Daniels’ *Asian America: Chinese and Japanese in the United States since 1850*, and Bill Hosokawa’s *Nisei: The Quiet Americans: The Story of a People*. Several of these works make assertions which support a more detailed story exists, but do not explore it themselves.

³ Charlotte Brooks and the Kurashige brother’s seem to be at the forefront of the newer studies on Japanese Americans in their works. Scott Tang’s dissertation similarly addresses race relations generally in San Francisco from 1940-1955. Charlotte Brooks’ 2002 Dissertation, “Ascending California’s Racial Hierarchy: Asian Americans, Housing, and Government, 1920-1955” and her article “In the Twilight Zone between Black and White: Japanese American Resettlement and Community in Chicago 1942-1945” are both useful but still limited. Scott and Lon Kurashige’s works *The Shifting Grounds of Race: Black and Japanese American in the Making of Multiethnic Los Angeles* and *Japanese American Celebration and Conflict: A History of Ethnic Identity and Festival in Los Angeles* take different avenues to explore a similar topic. Jacalyn Harden, like Brooks, looked at Japanese American and African American interactions in Chicago. However, her work is a sociological study and does not add much to the literature in this area.

However, interracial relations as the focus of the work should not come before an understanding of Japanese Americans as a distinct group. A narrative focusing on the unique history and experiences of Japanese Americans would only increase the value of interracial studies. Additionally, although housing is one of the best covered topics, it dominates the narrative to the point that other issues such as violence, discrimination, and joblessness are either neglected completely or only mentioned briefly. Two articles, one by Charlotte Brooks and the other by Kevin Allen Leonard do address Japanese Americans and resettlement specifically. In both, the information is much more detailed than in the larger works but are too limited in scope to present a full picture of the years between 1945 and 1960. When one begins to look at this broader time frame, it becomes clear that the challenges faced by Japanese Americans were immense indeed.⁴

This work seeks to tell the story of Japanese Americans as they returned to their homes or created new ones after August 1945. The primary source for most previous analysis of this subject is based, problematically, on the observations of non-Japanese Americans. For this study, in contrast, the primary source is the newspaper of the Japanese American Citizen's League, the *Pacific Citizen*. The *Pacific Citizen* was published in Salt Lake City, Utah during the war but in 1952 returned to its original publishing house in Los Angeles, California. The issues discussed in this newspaper are representative of the Japanese American experience as a whole. The Japanese American Citizens League prided itself on being involved in the successes and struggles of

⁴ Other works with similar limitations and problems that one might use as references for the current work on Japanese Americans after internment include the article referenced above, Kevin Allen Leonard's "Is This What We Fought For? Japanese Americans and Racism in California. The Impact of World War Two" and David O'Brien and Tom Fugita's overview *The Japanese American Experience*. Roger Daniels, although not addressing the post-war period specifically is also one of the most prolific scholars on Japanese Americans.

Japanese Americans throughout the war and afterward. Additionally, other limited news sources I reviewed echoed the same issues covered in the *Pacific Citizen* but in much less detail. Therefore, while the opinions expressed in the JACL mouthpiece cannot always be assumed to reflect those of the entire Japanese American community, the *Pacific Citizen*, does represent a valuable, and hitherto largely untapped, source of information to explore the lives of Japanese Americans from August 1945 through the 1950s. Although the end of the 1950s is a somewhat arbitrary cutoff date, the next decade presents new challenges and social frameworks which are different enough that they deserve to be addressed elsewhere at length. By looking at the postwar lives of Japanese Americans one can see that while their lives and circumstances did improve over time, they did not improve as quickly or as drastically as the predominant narrative suggests.

While the lives of Japanese Americans improved from the immediate post-war period to the end of the 1950s, many of the obstacles they had to overcome remained. The issues that Japanese Americans faced in the post-war period improved slowly in part because of their magnitude. Most noticeably, violence, non-violent discrimination and prejudice, and problems finding housing and jobs all became less apparent from August 1945 to the beginning of the 1960s. The organization of this thesis focuses on these issues thematically. However, there is also attention to the chronology and the length of time these problems remained a large part of Japanese American life. For example, violence and discrimination were worst immediately following the war and are therefore addressed first. Japanese Americans did continue to face non-violent discrimination but this discrimination did not remain as prevalent for them as prejudice in housing and employment. Because of housing and employment both impacted Japanese Americans in

similar ways and for a long time, they are addressed together, including a discussion of the state-level battle to establish a Fair Employment Practices Commission in California. In addition, I use the story of the fight for the FEPC in order to introduce some of the issues between Japanese Americans and other non-white groups. Although interracial relations are not the focus of this thesis, it is important to acknowledge the overlap between African Americans and Japanese Americans in particular. Additionally, this organization keeps the chronology of the story intact. The JACL did not bother to announce its position on other minorities until late in the 1950s, as the organization decided where the future for Japanese Americans was the brightest.

One of the best reflections of the difficulty of Japanese American life immediately after the war is the violence faced by Japanese Americans when they returned home, particularly to the West Coast. In almost all cases, reports on violence and discrimination reiterated that the “hoodlums” and “vigilantes” perpetrating various crimes represented a very small minority of public opinion.⁵ Despite these assurances, articles with guidelines on ways to avoid intolerance and reports of problems faced by returnees appear. Even U.S. Army Veterans were subject to this violence. The War Relocation Authority tried to improve public opinion of Japanese Americans by publicizing the heroics of these veterans. As mainly Caucasian Army officials traveled to promote the valor and patriotism of Japanese American troops in California communities, many Californians remained unreceptive. After one meeting an attendee told reporters that ““That fellow [Army Captain Crowley] is a damn liar. There wasn’t a single Jap in the American

⁵ Marquis Childs, “Washington Calling: How to Counteract Intolerance,” *Washington Post*, October 26, 1945.

Army.”⁶ The Army and the WRA worked together to try to resettle Japanese American veterans, but such efforts often resulted in violence. Just weeks after V-J Day, the attempt to resettle some Japanese American veterans in California “caused bitter demonstrations...Some Nisei were killed in armed encounters and the homes of several Japanese-American [veterans]...were burned.”⁷ A month later, the *Washington Post* found such problems were continuing.⁸

Placer County, California was notorious for its violent activity against Japanese Americans. It was the headquarters for the post-war anti-Nisei organization The California Preservation Society. The Society believed that “persons of Japanese ancestry should not be allowed return to the West Coast at the present time ‘for their own security and to forestall any differences between local people who disagree on the issue.’”⁹ The California “super-restrictionist” group, the Native Sons of the Golden West also fought against Japanese American return to the West Coast, and against any future immigration from Japan.¹⁰ The Native Sons very openly stated that their objection to continued “oriental immigration is because they are unassimilable—they cannot intermarry.”¹¹ Such organizations indicate that anti-Japanese sentiment and violence was not merely the work of isolated bigots.

⁶“Japanese Camps Closing in West: Except for ‘Disloyal’ Group, All Relocation Centers Should Be Cleared in December,” *New York Times*, October 21, 1945.

⁷“End Ban on Nisei on Pacific Coast- Army Promises Them the Same Treatment as Other Law-Abiding Citizens,” *New York Times*, September 5, 1945.

⁸ Marquis Childs, “Washington Calling: How to Counteract Intolerance,” *Washington Post*, October 26, 1945.

⁹“Anti-Nisei Group Will Organize in California,” *Pacific Citizen*, August 4, 1945.

¹⁰“Congressman Raps California Race-Baiters; Says Native Sons Are ‘Super Restrictionists,’” *Pacific Citizen*, September 1, 1945.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

Violence was a very important part of post-war life for Issei and Nisei. The largest number of violent attacks against Japanese Americans and their property happened immediately after the war. As the War Relocation Authority released families from internment camps, anti-Japanese sentiment flared, most visibly in California, Oregon and Washington.¹² Problems ranged from the destruction of headstones with Japanese American names to physical attacks on Issei and Nisei. In the worst incident, a wounded Nisei veteran who had just returned from war was beaten to death in the street in Stockton, California.¹³ Police arrested Leroy Bob, S.J. Johnson and Clarence Simmons for the murder of 35-year old George Yoshioka in December 1945. Police reported the motive was robbery but the time period, and the prevalence of anti-Nisei attitudes in Northern California. Strongly suggest that the violence was racially motivated. By April 1946, courts had sentenced Bob and Simmons to death in the gas chamber and life in prison respectively, suggesting at least in cases of murder, the authorities did not ignore anti-Japanese violence.¹⁴ On the West Coast, from August 13, 1945 through October 14, 1945 there were sixteen separate reported incidents of violence directed against Japanese Americans.¹⁵ In just September 1945 the incidents included the breaking of a Japanese-owned barbershop window in Watsonville, CA, the smashing of headstones with Japanese names on them in Hollister, CA, and the harassment of families in Sonoma County.

¹² This report also does not include the numbers from when the WRA allowed small numbers of Japanese Americans to move out of the camps for work. Violence associated many of these re-introductions as well.

¹³“Three Arrested in Murder of Nisei Veteran,” *Pacific Citizen*, December, 22 1945.

¹⁴“Youth, Charged with Murder of Wounded 442nd Veteran, Goes on Trial in Stockton”, *Pacific Citizen*, April 20, 1946 and Unknown author, “Johnson Sentenced to Life in Prison for Murder of Wounded Nisei Veteran”, *Pacific Citizen*, April 27, 1946. The third man was not mentioned in any of the later articles.

¹⁵ Bancroft Library reports, this number is based only one source-a list of reported incidents compiled by authorities all along the West Coast but mainly in California. Because this source is a list from authorities it obviously only accounts for problems that were reported.

One of the most common forms of harassment faced by returning families was arson. In Walnut Grove, CA the warehouse of a Japanese-American owned company was burned, as was the Japanese Association Hall and four other buildings.¹⁶ Authorities insisted the fires were accidental.¹⁷ The fire department speculated that vagrants who slept near or in these buildings may have begun them. Suspiciously all the buildings impacted were associated with Japanese American associations or businesses. On August 31, 1945 the home of the evacuated Saito family burned down. The fire happened the same day the Saito family planned to return home from the Heart Mountain Relocation Center.¹⁸ Despite the suspicious timing of the fire, Santa Clara county authorities insisted that the blaze was accidental.

The *Pacific Citizen* reported many fires and threats of fire in 1945 and 1946. Unidentified arsonists burned down the Sakamoto ranch house in September 1945. The Sakamoto's had four sons in the military, one of whom had just been killed in action.¹⁹ After the fire Placer County officials reported that they had received threats of arson from some community members. The warning told police that Japanese American ranch houses which white residents had lived in during the war would be "left in ashes" when the proper owners tried to reoccupy the homes.²⁰ "Anti-evacuee hoodlums" also burned the home of a 442nd Combat Regiment veteran and war amputee to the ground. One Nisei interviewed said that while his home was untouched, he knew that "other Japanese

¹⁶ Incident 107, August 26, 1945, Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkley.

¹⁷ Ibid. and Incident 108. August 26, 1945, Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkley.

¹⁸ Incident 110, August 31, 1945, Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkley.

¹⁹ "Coast Terrorists Burn, Attack Homes of GIs," *Pacific Citizen*, September 22, 1945.

²⁰ "Placer County Official Reports Threats Against Nisei Homes," *Pacific Citizen*, September 29, 1945. And incident 114, September 19, 1945, Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkley.

American homes ha[d] been ransacked and burned to the ground.”²¹ In Washington State, Tom Fujita lost his house to fire in October 1945. One of his neighbors said that four men set the fire and the bottle of kerosene police found supported the conclusion that the fire was intentional. In addition to private residences, Buddhist temples serving as temporary shelters for the many returnees with no place to move back to and were often targeted by arsonists. In San Francisco, unidentified persons threw two beer bottles and a lantern through the window of a Buddhist hostel housing 150 Japanese Americans “in an attempt of terrorism.”²² After this scare, the local police stationed a patrolman outside the temple all night and sporadically throughout the day. Similarly, in the first incident of violence in Pajaro County, in September 1945, two men the police could not identify threw flares at a Buddhist temple that returned-Japanese Americans used as temporary housing. Local police stated that “violence of any kind against Japanese Americans would not be tolerated and would be prosecuted to the full extent of the law.”²³ Fewer and fewer fires were reported by the end of 1946, but even as late as 1949, Americans showed their prejudice with arson. In Glendale, when neighbors found out that a Japanese-American family had bought a home there, the realtor received more than forty angry phone calls. The day before the family was to move in, the house burned down.²⁴

Fires, which bigots could light and run away from, often remained unsolved or were ruled “accidental.” Gunshots and projectiles into Japanese American homes were equally as common to show returnees how some West Coast residents felt about return.

²¹ “Placer County Official Reports Threats to Nisei Homes,” *Pacific Citizen*, September 29, 1945.

²² Incident 115, September 19, 1945, Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkley.

²³ Incident 120, September 24, 1945, Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkley, and “Flare Thrown at Hostel in Watsonville,” *Pacific Citizen*, September 29, 1945.

²⁴ “Mysterious Fire Razes Home For Rent to Nisei Family,” *Pacific Citizen*, July 30, 1949.

On September 13, 1945, Mrs. K. Imada woke up to several shots fired from a .45 pistol into her yard and home.²⁵ Three days later two men in a car fired shots into Japanese American homes in Centerville and Newark, California. The driver stated that his friend said that he wanted to “kill some Japs” that night and made the driver double back so he could shoot at the Newark home of Toshiaki Idota again. During the war, the shooter worked the Idota farm.²⁶ The assailant, Robert Franklin Hailey, was charged with two counts of assault with a deadly weapon and two counts of attempted murder.²⁷ He initially pled not guilty but changed his plea to guilty and in March 1946 the court sentenced him to a year in prison for both the shootings.²⁸ This incident provides a good example of a reason aside from simply racism that some West Coast residents resented Japanese American’s return—economics. When the Army removed Japanese Americans from the West Coast, businessmen, farmers and recipients of Japanese Americans belongings reaped the benefits of the rushed evacuation. Many West Coast residents never thought that the Japanese Americans would return and planned on using the property and businesses for their own livelihoods. The return of internees therefore created resentment among the Californian who had benefited from internment. In November 1946 unidentified assailants fired shots and threw rocks through the windows of a Nisei-owned nursery in Los Angeles as well, once again showing resentment for their return.²⁹

²⁵ Incident 111, September 13, 1945, Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkley.

²⁶ “Attempted Murder, Assault Charges Face Terrorists In Alameda County Shooting”, *Pacific Citizen*, September 29, 1945.

²⁷ “Hailey Faces Terror Charge As Trial Opens,” *Pacific Citizen*, January 26, 1946.

²⁸ “Hailey Sentenced to Year in Prison for Terrorist Acts,” *Pacific Citizen*, March 16, 1946.

²⁹ Untitled, *Pacific Citizen*, November 17, 1945.

Confrontations between returnees and local residents occurred to a lesser extent outside California as well. In Washington State, someone threw a rock through the front window of a home rented by a Nisei woman and her elderly mother. The Caucasian home owner had tried to avoid problems by asking her neighbors whether they had objections to Japanese American neighbors.³⁰ In November 1946, Chicago residents were shocked to have the first incident of violence on record towards Japanese Americans occur. John Yoshino had bricks thrown through the front windows of his family's home.³¹ Chicago's population of Japanese ancestry had increased exponentially as some Nisei left the camps and went east to escape Western hostility.³² The American's Veteran's Committee in Chicago announced that it would not accept violence in their community and that if it continued they would mobilize various community organizations to "stamp out this blight."³³

Despite the arrests and trials in some of these incidents, "it is the shocking truth that in cases of racial violence, apprehension of suspects is rare and their convictions almost unheard of."³⁴ Japanese Americans believed that the answer to this problem was more federal legislation, even though "often efforts by the federal government... are fought by local authorities who dislike encroachment upon their powers."³⁵ Japanese Americans consistently tried to work through political and legal channels to accomplish their goals. Whether they wanted fair housing, citizenship for the Issei, Hawaiian

³⁰ Incident September 24, 1945, Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley.

³¹"Chicago Mayor Receives AVC Report on Violence Against Family of Nisei War Veteran," *Pacific Citizen*, November 30, 1946.

³² Jaclyn Harden's book although not very thorough, does discuss the change in the Chicago population of Nisei. Many *Pacific Citizen* articles mention this change as well.

³³"Chicago Mayor Receives AVC Report on Violence Against Family of Nisei War Veteran," *Pacific Citizen*, November 30, 1946.

³⁴ Editorial, "Need for Civil Rights Legislation," *Pacific Citizen*, April 12, 1952.

³⁵Ibid.

statehood or better access to employment, as group they tried to fix problems affecting their community from a top down approach.

In addition to the shootings and physical violence, Japanese Americans also encountered many problems with non-violent discrimination. Prejudice expressed verbally or through refusal of service continued through the 1950s much longer than outright violence. After the war, licensing boards, service establishments, and clubs and service organizations refused their services and memberships to Japanese Americans. City and state officials, particularly in California, also continued to uphold racist laws and made resettlement difficult for returning families. In October 1945, the Los Angeles Board of Supervisors requested that Congress prevent 22,000 of the Japanese Americans released from internment camps from returning to Los Angeles. Los Angeles city officials continued to make it clear that returning Japanese Americans were not welcome. Issei in particular had a very difficult time after the war. Issei could not find jobs, often because of requirements like citizenship, which they could not do anything about. Different states had different laws about job requirements and different levels of enforcement as well, making it even more difficult for aging Issei to find work in their post-war communities.³⁶ In addition, many of the first generation immigrants felt that starting over was just too difficult.

About half of the 30,000 pre-war residents of Japanese ancestry returned to California after the war, and most of these settled in Los Angeles. Because of the Alien Land Law many Issei and their children had lost all their property, and could not buy new

³⁶ Herman I. Branse, "State Laws Barring Aliens from Professions and Occupations", *The Monthly Review*, March 1946, Folder: Brause, Herman I., Box 2, Entry 9 Washington Office Records: Documentary Files Magazine Clippings, Record Group 210 Records of the War Relocation Authority, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

land. California politicians passed the Alien Land Law in the 1920s to prevent Asian immigrants from owning land by prohibiting persons ineligible for citizenship from holding the title to a piece of land. As of September 1946, a survey reported that while discrimination against Japanese Americans had decreased, roughly a quarter of survey participants still questioned the loyalty of Japanese Americans.³⁷ The decrease in prejudice faced by Japanese Americans resulted from the end of the war, the exceptional fighting record of Japanese Americans, the efforts of the War Relocation Authority to make resettlement easier, and the efforts of some local communities, like Santa Cruz and Monterey, in circulating information about the contributions of Japanese Americans, laying the groundwork for more positive attitudes towards Japanese Americans.³⁸ Although several communities had success stories, many others did not accept Issei and Nisei back as easily. California in particular kept the Alien Land Law on the books until 1952, much longer than most other states.

By the end of the 1940s the Alien Land Law only affected Japanese Americans because they were the only ethnic group not eligible for naturalization.³⁹ Several other western states had Alien Land Laws but the state governments either repealed them earlier or did not enforce the laws very diligently.⁴⁰ Not only did California not repeal the law until 1952, in 1946 legislators tried to amend the law to make the restrictions on land

³⁷“Survey Finds Hostile Feelings To U.S. Japanese Decreasing, 25 Per Cent Still Believe Persons of Japanese Race Disloyal to United States,” *Pacific Citizen*, September 14, 1946.

³⁸Editorial, “Case History,” *Pacific Citizen*, January 26, 1946.

³⁹ Japanese remained the only group affected by the Alien Land Law this point. Chinese immigrants became eligible for citizenship with the 1943 repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act. Indians and Filipinos were able to naturalize after Congress passed the 1946 Luce-Celler Act. I do not know about Vietnamese or other Southeast Asian groups and assume that until after the Vietnam war their numbers were too small to have a real political impact.

⁴⁰ Oregon outlawed its Alien Land Law in March of 1949 according to a *Pacific Citizen* article from April 3, 1949; Utah repealed its Alien Land Law in 1949 as well.

ownership even tighter.⁴¹ Yet, for the first time in state history a proposition to tighten restrictions did not pass. In addition to efforts to strengthen the law, in 1946 California began enforcing the Alien Land Law more systematically than it ever had before. The state seized the land of many returning Nisei. Before the war, because Issei could not own property, they registered their land in the name of their citizen children. The escheat proceedings filed by the state sued for state seizure of the land. The claims filed argued that the land had been owned in violation of the Alien Land law because the Nisei children whose names were on the land deeds were too young to have actually been the owners. In January 1946, Fresno County got ready to begin fifteen new cases charging land owners with illegal ownership.⁴² All fifteen defendants were of Japanese ancestry. In February, the State Attorney General's Office filed fifty more suits to confiscate Japanese American land.⁴³ In March, the state seized another farm, this time in Coachella Valley.

This sort of state-sponsored discrimination made resettlement even more difficult for returning Japanese Americans. If a family made it back to where the government had evacuated them from, and if, once they got back, they still owned land, the fact that this land might now be seized by the state made reestablishment almost impossible.⁴⁴ As one writer put it

⁴¹Editorial, "Against the Racists," *Pacific Citizen*, August 10, 1946. Washington State did have its Alien Land Law until later than California; there was an article from October 10, 1958 which encouraged readers to start talking to people about the repeal of the land law there before the JACL began a public campaign to repeal the land law.

⁴²"Fresno County Ready to File Fifteen Cases Charging Illegal Ownership of Property by Nisei," *Pacific Citizen*, January 19, 1946.

⁴³"Old Law Is Instrument for Big California Land Grab," *Pacific Citizen*, February 2, 1946.

⁴⁴ Many evacuated families lost most or all of their land either officially or unofficially. For example, in April 1946, a Nisei soldier still serving Italy lost his land to California State government. The government seized his land because when his family was moved to the relocation camp, they were unable to make their payments, which up until that point they had made regularly and on-time.

it seems grossly unfair for...[California] to enter these suits at a time when the evacuees have just returned...and when most of the defendants...have depleted whatever resources they may been able to gather to use in their defense during almost four years in isolation, detention and relocation.⁴⁵

While the *Pacific Citizen* usually only brought up racism as the motivational force behind the law, a Selma, California paper suggested economics as an additional motivation. Why were California state officials suddenly interested in enforcing a law that was a quarter of century old, and the enforcement of which interfered with business, the Selma article asked? “Could it be possible that the increased value of farm land has anything to do with this development?”⁴⁶ Many of the suits did not get completed but the time and money spent on them prevented the re-establishment of business and farms for Japanese Americans in California.

Japanese Americans also faced problems with officials at lower state levels. In December 1945 the California State Attorney General filed the Sheriff of Nevada County with ‘malfeasance in office’ According to Attorney General Robert W. Kenny, not only had the Sherriff refused to protect persons of Japanese ancestry [who were trying to work on the railroad and facing problems], but he has taken an active part in fighting the employment of returned evacuees in Nevada County.⁴⁷

In January 1946, Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes came out in support of the State Attorney General and criticized any law enforcement officer who used his position to make resettlement more difficult for returning Japanese Americans.⁴⁸ Similarly, at the end of the year in December 1946 the Northern California JACL Regional Director Joe

⁴⁵ “Old Law is Instrument for Big California Land Grab,” *Pacific Citizen*, February 2, 1946.

⁴⁶ Editor Lowell C. Pratt, “‘Sudden Zeal’ of California Officials in Land Law Cases Questioned by Selma Paper,” *Pacific Citizen*, February 2, 1946.

⁴⁷, “California Attorney General Says Sheriff Attempted to Prevent Evacuee Employment,” *Pacific Citizen*, December 22, 1945.

⁴⁸ “Ickes Supports Kenny Action Criticizing Sheriff’s Activities,” *Pacific Citizen*, January 12, 1946.

Masaoka filed a protest against the California Highway patrol for discriminatory actions by some of their officers when stopping Japanese American drivers.⁴⁹

A related problem was that Japanese Americans and other minorities often had trouble getting auto insurance. Insurance companies denied policies to many minorities, particularly African Americans but also to Japanese Americans. Some companies allowed minorities to get contracts if they could somehow prove that they were a “good risk.”⁵⁰ If the minority customer actually got a policy, the company frequently charged them much higher rates than white customers.⁵¹ Japanese Americans were refused service completely at other business establishments well into the 1950s. In 1952 a Watsonville, California restaurant refused to wait on Nisei veteran James Yoshida because of his race.⁵² In 1955 the restaurant at an upscale Lake Tahoe, Nevada resort refused service to a group of customers of Japanese ancestry.⁵³ The manager, the manager said that his waitresses refused to serve Japanese Americans and that he could not force them to.⁵⁴

Liquor licenses provide another good example of discrimination faced by returning families. Many Issei and Nisei tried to restart pre-war businesses from before the war or begin new businesses to rebuild their savings and place in the community. In 1946, two attorneys brought charges against the California State Board of Equalization for discrimination, charging that the Board refused a Miss Masako a liquor license. A superior court judge ruled that the Board had the authority to refuse licenses to anyone,

⁴⁹ “Protest Filed On Bias Shown By Patrolmen,” *Pacific Citizen*, December 14, 1946. “Police and Race Relations,” *Pacific Citizen*, June 28, 1952.

⁵⁰ Editorial, “Minorities and Auto Insurance,” *Pacific Citizen*, May 21, 1949.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Editorial, “Watsonville Barber,” *Pacific Citizen*, December 26, 1952. Guest Editorial, “Man’s Inhumanity,” *Pacific Citizen*, December 26, 1952.

⁵³ Larry Tajiri, “Vagaries: Discrimination at Tahoe Resort,” *Pacific Citizen*, September 9, 1955.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

regardless of the reason.⁵⁵ As late as 1952, business license denials remained a problem for Japanese Americans. The State Licensing Board restored to a man named Obayashi's two business licenses, but denied a new permit to a Nisei veteran named Taenaka.⁵⁶ The Board said that they had "received a protest against re-issuance of the license to Taenaka" from his neighbors in Watts, who, the article implies, did not want a store owner of Japanese ancestry in their neighborhood.⁵⁷ Although some community groups and churches supported Taenaka, the Board told Taenaka that he "could have the permit if he moved to a 'more suitable' location."⁵⁸ The partial community support shows that the community environment for Japanese Americans had improved in some areas since the time immediately following the war but not in others. As late as 1958 "Oriental and Negro" morticians could not join the National Funeral Directors Association. They formally petitioned the California Association for the right to join the National group. The President of the National Organization said that "he [was] against the resolution [to allow Asian and African Americans in]. He said that it would cause a cleavage between funeral directors in the southern states and those in the rest of the country."⁵⁹ Despite this objection the resolution still passed. Support for Japanese Americans did not just appear at the local level either. Especially in the months after the war, government officials publicly supported Japanese Americans.

⁵⁵ "Suit Charges Bias Against State Agency," *Pacific Citizen*, August 31, 1946. The attorneys working on Miss Masako's case appealed this decision but the *Pacific Citizen* did not report the outcome.

⁵⁶ "California Agency Restores, Denies Liquor Sales Permits," *Pacific Citizen*, April 26, 1952.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ "Morticians ask lifting of race barrier," *Pacific Citizen*, June 13, 1958. This comment is also interesting because the Southern voting bloc in Congress was also cited as a large part of the reason the United States had not accepted Hawaii as state.

In August 1945, Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy personally expressed his outrage at the rejection of Nisei veteran Richard Naito for membership at the Spokane, Washington post of the Veteran's of Foreign Wars organization. *Pacific Citizen* Columnist Bill Hosokawa reported on the incident in his column in May 1946. "Such racism," Hosokawa wrote, "in the United States is inexcusable at any time. It is understandable in the light of wartime hysteria, but certainly not acceptable."⁶⁰ In January 1949 the CIO asked the state of New Jersey to cancel the National Bowling Congress' annual National Tournament because the Congress did not allow non-white players to join.⁶¹ In addition to actions discriminating against Japanese Americans, many returnees faced threats and verbal assaults at they resettled.

Threats must have been much more common than Japanese Americans reported as they reintegrated into American society. In Texas another Japanese American veteran faced intimidation when he tried to buy a piece of land. He was threatened to "stay away or there would be trouble" when he bought a farm near Tomball and began to move in with his family.⁶² The veteran reported the incident to the Houston press, pointing out that he had participated in the dangerous rescue of the Texas Lost Battalion.⁶³ In an incident in California, a woman asked a seven year-old boy if he was a "Jap." When the

⁶⁰ Bill Hosokawa, "From the Frying Pan: Some People Don't Know the War's Over," *Pacific Citizen*, May 25, 1946.

⁶¹ This was important because Japanese Americans were very involved in bowling. Sports are reported on in the PC often because they represented normalcy for Japanese Americans and a return to everyday life and community involvement. A September 27, 1952 article titled "The Nisei Wrote the Story" explained this phenomenon, saying that "in recent years there has been considerable stress on sports, a sign of normalcy."

⁶²"A Nisei Asks People of Texas: Is Prejudice Your Answer To the 442nd Combat Team?," *Pacific Citizen*, August 17, 1946.

⁶³ Ibid. The Lost Battalion was a Texas unit which was trapped during World War Two. The 442nd, all-Japanese American unit rescued the lost battalion, suffering more casualties from their own unit than the number of men they saved.

child replied no, because he was an American citizen, the woman yelled at the child insisting that he was a “Jap” and had just gotten back from a camp. She told the boy that “they should’ve kept you there. YOU’RE responsible for keeping my brother in the Army.”⁶⁴ Nonetheless, the author encouraged readers to return to California and wrote that this woman was the “exception, not the rule.”⁶⁵ This positive outcome was the most common kind of conclusion seen in reports on incidents of discrimination. Regardless of the outcome however, the fact that Japanese Americans faced so many negative and potentially dangerous situations when they returned home shows how little public opinion had changed since their internment.

Another venue for discrimination against Japanese Americans was in cemeteries. Problems with cemeteries refusing to sell plots to Japanese Americans began to occur frequently by 1949 as Issei continued to age and more remains of Nisei soldiers made it home. The problem first appeared in January 1949 when Chicago’s Mayor Kennelly’s Commission on Human Relations offered to help address the issue of burial discrimination in the Chicago area.⁶⁶ Only one cemetery in Chicago would sell plots to Japanese Americans. At the time *Pacific Citizen* published the article the cemetery had already sold all of them.⁶⁷ Many cemeteries, like neighborhoods, had restrictive covenants which prevented the selling of gravesites to minorities.⁶⁸ When one white woman offered to sell part of her personal plot to Japanese Americans, restrictive covenants prevented her from doing so. The covenant said that “no internment shall be

⁶⁴ Mary Oyama, “Report to the Nisei III: Home to California,” *Pacific Citizen*, August 18, 1945.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ “Chicago City Agency Will Fight Race Bias in Burials: Cemetery Discrimination Told By JACL Official at Meeting of Human Relations Council,” *Pacific Citizen*, January 8, 1949. Mayor Kenelly’s first name is not mentioned in the article.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

permitted except for the body... of a human being of the white or Caucasian race and proof that the deceased is of such race shall be presented to the satisfaction of the company.”⁶⁹ As a compromise, some cemeteries offered to sell segregated plots or offered to bury only Nisei veterans, but no one else.⁷⁰ Many cemeteries even refused this concession.

In March the focus on cemetery discrimination moved to Colorado. Crown Hill Cemetery refused to bury the remains of a Nisei veteran. According to the attorney for the cemetery, previous owners and shareholders handed down the policy to not bury non-whites there and therefore “the matter [was] beyond their control.”⁷¹ The attorney argued that because the State Supreme court had ruled that restrictive covenants were not illegal, if the cemetery ignored the racial restrictions established by their founders, the cemetery would open itself up to lawsuits. This argument ignored the 1948 U.S. Supreme Court ruling which said that restrictive covenants were unenforceable. Problems with burial sites persisted, as a brief article from 1958 showed. The story warned Japanese Americans in Chicago to beware of a man selling non-existent cemetery plots. The article warned that the man particularly preyed on Japanese Americans having a hard time finding places to bury their loved ones.⁷² The inability to bury aging relatives or family members killed in battle is another example of lingering anti-Japanese sentiment. Discrimination in burial created barriers which made normality for Japanese Americans even more difficult to find.

⁶⁹ “Chicago Civic Groups Seek Solution to Problem of Race Discrimination in Cemeteries,” *Pacific Citizen*, February 12, 1949.

⁷⁰ Ibid. and “Many Cemeteries in Chicago Continue Policy of Refusal to Bury Remains of Nisei War Dead,” *Pacific Citizen*, February 19, 1949.

⁷¹ “Discrimination to the Grave,” *Pacific Citizen*, March 26, 1949.

⁷² “Chicago JACL warns residents of slick agent peddling ‘cemetery lots for nothing,’” *Pacific Citizen*, December 5, 1958.

Another form of discrimination was bans on interracial marriage.⁷³ From 1949 through the end of 1958 interracial couples had to navigate laws in different states, which forbade interracial marriages in different states. For example, Stanley Nakano, an American citizen, had to postpone his wedding because, according to the Springfield, Missouri county clerk “we’re not allowed to issue a marriage license to member of the Oriental or Negro race when they’re planning to wed white persons”⁷⁴ Because none of the states around Missouri had laws against interracial marriage, the couple decided to go to Arkansas to get married. The inconsistency of marriage laws between states often caused confusion for couples who wanted to intermarry. In Georgia, the laws forbade intermarriage and cohabitation between whites and non-whites whether the couple got married in Georgia or not. The Georgia law applied to “all marriages solemnized in another state by parties intending at the time to reside in this State”⁷⁵ Minorities could intermarry with one another but not with Caucasians. The law also defined who counted as a Caucasian. A white person was someone “who had no discernable trace of either Negro, African, West Indian, Asiatic Indian, Mongolian, Japanese or Chinese blood in their veins.”⁷⁶ These laws were clearly created to “protect” white racial purity.

An especially interesting situation faced Japanese women who married African American men, usually soldiers who had served in Japan during or after World War Two. Described by one article as the “The Loneliest Brides in the U.S.,” these Japanese women carried a particularly difficult burden, even more so than Japanese Americans or other

⁷³ In my examples I will not be talking about war brides in any detail because that had a lot of other issues mixed in with the cultural problems of interracial marriage.

⁷⁴ “Missouri Law Bars Marriage Of Nisei Vet, Springfield Girl,” *Pacific Citizen*, November 5, 1949.

⁷⁵ “Georgia Marriage Laws Prohibit Interracial Residence in Some Cases,” *Pacific Citizen*, April 29, 1955.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

interracial couples.⁷⁷ Because Japanese brides were new to country, many of them did not speak English and or have any family nearby. Because they married African American men, both white and black society rejected them. As one Japanese bride said, because they were Japanese they did not fit into “Negro communities, and as the wives of Negroes, they are shunned in white communities. They...even found it difficult to remain friends with other Nipponese girls who married white soldiers.”⁷⁸ The Japanese wives of white soldiers had enough trouble fitting in to their new lives without befriending those women married to an even more stigmatized race.⁷⁹ Post-war white society outside the West Coast often identified Japanese Americans as “honorary whites” and most Japanese and Japanese Americans did not want to lose that status.⁸⁰ Because of this association with whites in some areas, Japanese brides married to African Americans had a hard time developing relationships with Japanese Americans because Japanese Americans identified more closely with Caucasians than with African Americans. Because of these cultural associations and stereotypes, Japanese brides of African American servicemen were isolated and their interactions were limited to the other women in their same situation. The article, however, ended on a the same optimistic note that the majority of articles about Japanese American hardship, saying that “all in all, the Japanese brides...face the future with fairly strong hopes...Most of them are conscientiously

⁷⁷ Oski Tanakawi, “The Loneliest Brides in the U.S.,” *Pacific Citizen*, April 8, 1955.

⁷⁸ Jaelyn Harden’s work *Double Cross: Japanese Americans in Black and White Chicago*, as well as a small number of *Pacific Citizen* articles cover the “whiteness” of Asian Americans when compared to other minority groups. Also more of the modern scholarship on multicultural issues involving Japanese Americans discusses their “in-between” racial status. A *Pacific Citizen* article from March 12, 1949 briefly discussed this fact as well, discussing specifically the status of Japanese Americans in the Deep South.

⁷⁹ Oski Tanakawi, “The Loneliest Brides in the U.S.,” *Pacific Citizen*, April 8, 1955.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

studying English...the key to understanding and sufficient happiness.”⁸¹ This optimism ignored the severe social problems facing these women.

By the end of the 1950s, laws preventing interracial marriage had been tested in the courts. In August of 1955, the JACL joined the groups testing whether states could actually legislate on interracial marriage. The JACL and others against interracial marriage laws posited that they violated the fourteenth amendment.⁸² A Chinese American man and his white fiancé from Virginia acted as the test case for the Supreme Court. In November, the Supreme Court refused to rule on the case because it felt that the couple’s relationship to the state of Virginia at the time of their marriage in North Carolina could not be adequately determined.⁸³ In December a Nevada court invalidated the state law against interracial marriage. The case the court ruled on was a Caucasian man suing the state for the right to marry his Japanese American fiancé.⁸⁴ It would take more than a decade for the Supreme Court to outlaw all such bans in its 1967 *Loving* decision.

The reactions to violence and discrimination of officials such as Harold Ickes, John J. McCloy and the California State Attorney General are important to note because of the support they showed for Japanese Americans. The continuing coverage of these problems is notable because it shows that officials and reporters from inside and out of the Japanese American community acknowledged ongoing problems. In April JACL representative Joe Masaoka reported to the San Francisco Mayor’s Committee on Human

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² “Interracial marriage issue on block,” *Pacific Citizen*, August 26, 1955. The Fourteenth Amendment reads “No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law...”

⁸³ “High Tribunal refuses rule miscegenation,” *Pacific Citizen*, November 18, 1955.

⁸⁴ “Interracial marriage issue on block,” *Pacific Citizen*, August 26, 1955.

Relations about the problems Japanese Americans still faced in employment, housing, business, insurance and even recreation opportunities.⁸⁵ Masaoka warned that there were many different ways of discriminating against people. He encouraged the Mayor and the city to acknowledge and eliminate the different tactics used to prevent Japanese Americans from buying a house or getting a job.⁸⁶ Similarly, Executive Director of the California Federation for Civic Unity, Richard Dettering, summarized his tour of Northern California towns. He reported that ““hundreds of thousands of good Americans in California can’t get jobs, homes, or service in public places merely because of their ancestry. And our public officials go on pretending there are no tensions.”⁸⁷ Despite this exceptional support and effort to increase awareness, Japanese Americans continued to face discrimination in areas like housing and employment.

Post-war housing presented a unique challenge to returning Japanese American families. Over time, as with the violence, housing challenges initially appeared as very public and immediate problems. However, over the years, obstacles in housing became more subtle. Through the end of the 1950s, reporters and spokesman discussed housing problems frequently. The first problem Japanese Americans had to cope with was that there was physically nowhere for them to live. Only about a year after the WRA allowed the first Japanese Americans back to the West Coast, and already roughly half of the 115,000 evacuated people had returned to California. There was not enough private housing for them and even temporary housing was limited. Nisei veterans said that “they have no fears about going back to their homes on the West Coast and in Hawaii, despite

⁸⁵ “Prejudice in San Francisco Against Nisei Group told in Report to Mayor Committee,” *Pacific Citizen*, April 30, 1949.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ “Civil Rights Called California’s Number One Problem by Official,” *Pacific Citizen*, May 14, 1949.

reports of discrimination against their relatives.”⁸⁸ Instead, their main concern was not having anywhere to live. Returning families lived in hostels or Buddhist temples as temporary shelters. The WRA also provided some temporary housing but many of the shelters had to be built and were not ready when Japanese Americans needed them. In Pittsburg, neighbors protested the construction of a hostel to house Japanese Americans, although it was built anyway.⁸⁹ In September 1945, Minneapolis announced the prospective opening of a hostel for Japanese Americans until they found jobs and housing.⁹⁰ A dormitory project in San Francisco released to the Federal Government made room for up to 800 returnees.⁹¹ In December, Nisei veterans in Los Angeles tried to set up their own housing project to help alleviate the housing problem without creating new Little Tokyo neighborhoods.⁹²

A large number of the cities that Japanese Americans moved to immediately faced housing shortages. In New York as early as August 30, 1945, the Vice-Chairman of the Japanese-Americans Resettlement Committee pointed out that the city needed to find more housing for the 1,700 Japanese Americans who had already chosen New York as their post-war home.⁹³ The next month, the head of the Brooklyn Resettlement

⁸⁸ “Hatred no Threat to Nisei Veterans: Discrimination Less a Problem than Houses to 442nd Heroes—Truman May Be at Farewell,” *New York Times*, July 6, 1946.

⁸⁹ “First Evacuee Families Occupy Disputed Hostel in Pittsburg,” *Pacific Citizen*, August 25, 1945.

⁹⁰ “Weigh Stassen’s Chances in 1948: Seek to Resettle Nisei in Minnesota,” *The Christian Century*, September 26, 1946, Folder The Christian Century Ex-Evacuee... Box 3, Entry 9 Washington Office Records Documentary Files, Magazine Clippings, Record Group 210, Records of the War Relocation Authority, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

⁹¹ “Dormitory Project Will House Evacuees In San Francisco Area,” *Pacific Citizen*, October 20, 1945.

⁹² “Return Nisei plane New Housing Project,” *Pacific Citizen*, December 1, 1945. This theme of avoiding new ethnic enclaves comes up sporadically for quite some time after the war. Japanese Americans and apparently community leaders felt that one of the reasons they had been singled out for persecution during the war was because they were not integrated into society enough. After the war one sees their efforts at integration clearly and also the fact that some Nisei, Bill Hosokawa, for example, occasionally commented that the evacuation was a good thing because it dispersed Japanese American across the country.

⁹³ “Japanese-Americans Need Lodgings Here,” *New York Times*, August 30, 1945.

Committee reiterated the need for returnee housing. He said that “we [the city government and its citizens] must be prepared to help them find adequate housing and employment... [they] are entitled to equal opportunities without discrimination and segregation.”⁹⁴ He also reported that landlords who had Japanese Americans tenants “recommend them most highly as quiet, industrious, honest, and responsible people.”⁹⁵ This endorsement was intended to decrease the number of objections to building housing for Japanese Americans. As in Pittsburg, public projects to create more housing often faced much more hostility than support.

In Burbank, the housing development faced objections from the city council, not just local residents. Because the WRA wanted to meet their goal of having the camps emptied by December of 1945, the housing it provided was often inadequate and depended on reluctant city governments like Burbank’s. The War Relocation Authority had provided some temporary barracks and wanted to use city property and trailers to add more room for returnees. City officials said that they did not want Japanese Americans housed on city property and that the barracks the government wanted to use were needed for other local projects. Officials maintained that their own pre-war population was welcome to return but that they did not want to become a post-war dumping ground for Japanese Americans.⁹⁶ City councilmen also worried that “the resettlement plan may overtax the school system, increase the housing shortage and cause racial disturbances.”⁹⁷

⁹⁴ “V-J Day hasn’t Lessened Nisei Readjustment Problems, Says Brooklyn Resettlement Head,” *Pacific Citizen*, September 15, 1945.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ “Burbank City Seeks to Bar Housing Plan,” *Pacific Citizen*, October 6, 1945.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

In a similar situation in May 1946, eight-hundred Japanese Americans ended up in a temporary housing camp in Winona that was not finished and lacked running water and places to eat. Columnist Bill Hosokawa wrote that “the failure of the government to provide for the return of these people in peace in the same, efficient, clockwork manner in which they were torn from their homes in wartime is an indictment of the nation.”⁹⁸ The role of the government in this housing situation was the crux of the problem. The government had created the situation that Japanese Americans found themselves in after the war, but did not put the necessary resources into making resettlement a smooth process. Japanese Americans had lost large amounts of property and savings. These economic losses, the wartime African American influx into the old Little Tokyo neighborhoods, and the rush to close to camps left Japanese American families trying to resettle in the face of immediate and overwhelming problems. Other non-white ethnic groups also had trouble finding housing after the war as well, but most of them had not lost their pre-war financial stability. To make matters worse, in 1946 the WRA decided to shut down the temporary housing by April 30th, leading to a flurry of concern about a “third evacuation.”⁹⁹

In Los Angeles, 508 Japanese American families living in temporary government housing faced eviction when the local WRA announced their plans to close the temporary projects.¹⁰⁰ The closure of these housing facilities meant that 2,100 Japanese Americans once again faced homelessness. Some of those 2,100 were from the Burbank area Winona Project. Officials told the 522 Winona tenants that they had to leave and find

⁹⁸ Bill Hosokawa, “From the Frying Pan: Winona Incident,” *Pacific Citizen*, May 25, 1946.

⁹⁹ “Two Thousand Returnees Still Living in Housing Projects,” *Pacific Citizen*, April 6, 1946.

¹⁰⁰ “New Evacuation Faces Residents In L.A. Area,” *Pacific Citizen*, March 16, 1946.

private housing or the government would move them to more temporary barracks-style housing outside Winona.¹⁰¹ Many of the residents worked near Burbank and lost their jobs because they could not get to back work. The families in Winona received a notice with only the date they needed to leave by, and no other information or assistance.¹⁰² A representative from a private welfare group seriously questioned the legality of the evacuation proceedings. He argued that a homeless group that size would have a huge negative impact on Los Angeles County and that “the callousness with which the eviction notices were written and served upon this timid group makes protest by all civic minded necessary.”¹⁰³ A local Los Angeles Church also provided advice to these Japanese Americans. The church told evacuees that no one could legally enter their homes without permission and the American Civil Liberties Union offered to take any cases where Japanese American civil rights were violated.¹⁰⁴ The other 1420 evacuees from thirty-two WRA Los Angeles hostels also needed to find new housing. The biggest problem overlooked by government officials responsible for the “third evacuation” was that Japanese Americans lived in overcrowded government housing because they could not find affordable private housing.¹⁰⁵ Unfortunately, the *Pacific Citizen* never reported on the resolution of this “third evacuation.” Less dramatic eviction dilemmas continued to come up for Japanese Americans into the 1950s.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰¹ “‘Third Evacuation’ Under Way For California Evacuees: Winona Project Residents Evicted as Others Face Loss Of Emergency Shelter,” *Pacific Citizen*, March 30, 1946.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ “Church Service Groups Rap ‘Third Evacuation’; Question Legality of Eviction Notices,” *Pacific Citizen*, April 6, 1946.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ “Los Angeles Officials Promise Aid to ‘Little Tokyo’ Evictees,” *Pacific Citizen*, April 16, 1949.

In 1949 Los Angeles decided to build a Civic Center which would require the destruction of housing predominantly occupied by minorities. At a city meeting in April Japanese American and African American representatives proposed a three point plan for the city to decrease the negative effects on the families living in the area selected for the Civic Center.¹⁰⁷ The plan suggested that first, the city provide “decent, low-rent housing...through a municipally financed public housing program” for people affected by the evictions; second, the construction for the civic center waited until the housing was completed and ready for occupation; and third, that the plans for housing begin immediately so that these requirements did not preclude the Civic Center’s timely completion.¹⁰⁸ In response, the Los Angeles Deputy Mayor Orvell R. Caldwell promised to “do everything within [the city’s] power to provide suitable housing for all displaced people.”¹⁰⁹ The Deputy Mayor followed this vague assurance with promises on behalf of the city. First, residence demolition would not start until March 1950; second, the city would not evict tenants unless “suitable” housing existed for them to move into and lastly that the mayor would ask the city council to “authorize the needs of the tenants.”¹¹⁰ This responsiveness by the city, at least in words, differs drastically from the reaction experienced by tenants in the Los Angeles housing units in 1946. Three years later, two Denver city council projects also required the eviction of many Japanese American families. In January, the Denver Housing Authority announced plans to build Curtis Park. This project would necessitate the relocation of 259 families, twenty-seven of which were Japanese American. The Denver Housing authority, however, promised that “not a tenant

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ “Seek Housing for Potential Evictees in Little Tokyo Area,” *Pacific Citizen*, April 9, 1949.

¹⁰⁹ “Los Angeles Officials Promise Aid to ‘Little Tokyo’ Evictees,” *Pacific Citizen*, April 16, 1949.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

would be evicted until and unless satisfactory substitute housing has been found.”¹¹¹

Three months later, forty Nisei veterans’ families faced eviction when the city wanted to build a golf course.¹¹² As the immediate influx of returnees slowed, problems with temporary housing lessened and discrimination in private housing became more pressing.

Even as Japanese Americans became able to afford better housing, they still had trouble buying homes in middle and upper-class neighborhoods. Discrimination and problems with realty boards or private sellers continued throughout the end of 1958. As early as September 1945, a report documented courts upholding racially restrictive covenants. In Dona Ana County, New Mexico, residents organized an official meeting to create an organization to prevent Japanese American farmers from settling there.¹¹³ After the meeting, participants sent out a petition which said that the signers “pledge[d] themselves not to sell property to American citizens of Japanese ancestry or to let it for sale with estate men who would sell it to a Japanese American.”¹¹⁴ Although not all discriminatory efforts were so publicly organized, real estate and private owners refused to work with Japanese Americans in many places. In June 1946 a Nisei veteran, Mr. Saito and his family were denied the sale of a Los Angeles home because of restrictive covenants. Two neighbors filed the injunction against the Saito’s taking possession of the home.¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ Homes of Nisei Affected by Denver Project,” *Pacific Citizen*, January 26, 1952.

¹¹²“40 Veterans, Families Face Eviction at Housing Project,” *Pacific Citizen*, March 8, 1952. No promises followed this potential eviction, as the article was announcing a meeting for those interested in discussing the matter.

¹¹³“New Mexico Farm Group Acts To Prevent Sales to Nisei,” *Pacific Citizen*, September 19, 1945.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ “Family of Nisei Serviceman Denied Right to Occupy Home in Restricted L.A. District,” *Pacific Citizen*, June 29, 1946.

The next month a housing project denied the Matsuo family's application for a home based on their racial background. Matsuo, also a veteran, said that

‘when I think of how the young Nisei fellows stood up [the older generation in the camps and joined the Army]...in order to fight for democratic rights as citizens, I feel we're almost obligated to see this through for the sake of the ones who did not come back.’¹¹⁶

This awareness of the well-being of Japanese Americans as a group attitude was common in Japanese culture and can be seen before the war as well. After the war, Japanese American activists often appealed to this sense of community and asked Nisei who did not want to report discrimination to think about other Issei and Nisei facing the same challenges.

Like violence and prejudice, housing problems did eventually improve. Unlike violence though, prejudice and refusals to sell to Japanese Americans, and problems with neighbors and realtors, did not disappear. Even notable legal successes like the 1948 the Supreme Court ruling that courts could not enforce restrictive covenants did not actually eliminate restrictive covenants or address the forms of unofficial enforcement. It also did not prevent racism “on the part of real estate dealers, banks, and other lending agencies.”¹¹⁷ However, Japanese Americans eventually began to receive public support for their efforts to move into new areas and buy homes and when neighbor's initially objected to their presence in the neighborhood, managed to acquire the home they wanted. In Des Moines, Iowa Nisei Nishimura faced threatening phone calls but also encountered an outpouring of support when he and his family moved into a

¹¹⁶ “AVC Members Picket Office of Real Estate Firm in Protest Against Restrictions,” *Pacific Citizen*, July 13, 1946.

¹¹⁷ “Racial Barriers in Housing,” *Pacific Citizen*, January 22, 1949.

predominantly white neighborhood.¹¹⁸ When the 29 year-old veteran and his wife initially went to buy the home they received “secret neighborhood pressure in the form of threatening phone calls.”¹¹⁹ The Nishimura’s originally canceled the sale but changed their minds when people from the neighborhood came and encouraged them to complete the sale and join the community. The Nishimura’s became convinced that “the great majority of the people of the suburban community wanted them as neighbors.”¹²⁰

In San Jose, California, another Nisei veteran decided to buy a home in spite of a petition which said that community members “protest the selling of a the home on Thornton Way to anyone who is not under a member of the white Caucasian race.”¹²¹ A week later the *Pacific Citizen* reported that they had retracted the petition saying that “it was all a mistake and that the 442nd veteran would be a welcome neighbor.” The neighbors further contended that “the petition was circulated without any knowledge of who the buyer was.”¹²² However, this retraction by the neighbors is a good example of how quickly some people backed down when their racism was publicized. The JACL supported the idea of defeating racism by making it public as well and in a follow up story, one columnist reminded readers that

Next to employment, housing is of utmost concern to each family... for every [such]... case, there must be many more that do not come to the public’s attention, because the family wants to avoid publicity and unpleasantness.¹²³

¹¹⁸ “Nisei Army Veteran Change Mind, Will Buy Des Moines Area Home Despite Protests,” *Pacific Citizen*, March 22, 1952.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid. And “Japanese American Couple Assured of Welcome by Neighbors in Iowa Community,” *Pacific Citizen*, March 29, 1952.

¹²¹ “Protest from neighbors doesn’t bother San Jose veteran buying a new home,” *Pacific Citizen*, October 10, 1952.

¹²² “Thornton Way residents withdraw protest selling house to Nisei,” *Pacific Citizen*, October 17, 1952.

¹²³ Editorial, “New Areas for Equality,” *Pacific Citizen*, October 31, 1952. This theme was also shown in a case in Minnesota, September 12, 1958.

Whether sales were successful or not, there was a consensus among Japanese American supporters that problems in housing needed to end before other social problems could be solved.

One argument against neighborhood integration was that minorities lowered home and property values when they arrived. In May 1952, the *Pacific Citizen* prominently featured a Federal Housing Administration statement that minorities did not depreciate property values. By contrast they paid more for their homes than Caucasians, and “their purchases often raise property values in California urban neighborhoods.”¹²⁴ The study concluded that “the FHA has learned, as a practical business matter, that non-white house buyers don’t threaten property values. Minority families are a good profitable market, especially in California.”¹²⁵ In spite of official reports to the contrary in 1955, the *Pacific Citizen* reported on a realtor who still argued that non-whites lowered property values. He reported that this result was the reason that his realty company did not to sell homes to non-whites. He said “this is a tract home. These people live eight feet apart. These people are not open-minded. If we had a colored or oriental family here, all hell would be raised.”¹²⁶ The point of the *Pacific Citizen* article was to show why housing discrimination was so difficult to eliminate. Realtors, neighbors, banks, building companies all took part in preventing Japanese Americans from renting or buying homes.

Columnists encouraged Japanese Americans to speak up about the problems they faced because “housing prejudice is a major obstacle confronting the integration of the American community. It is a roadblock against desegregation, in the schools and in the

¹²⁴ “Belief Non-white purchasers Depreciate Property Values called False by U.S. Agency,” *Pacific Citizen*, May 19, 1952.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Larry Tajiri, “Vagaries: Discrimination in Housing,” *Pacific Citizen*, August 26, 1955.

community as a whole.”¹²⁷ Through 1958 housing integration remained an issue. The difference by this time was that some people outside the activist community began to propose more egalitarian business practices. Articles about housing, complaints about realtors, banks, building companies and private owners continued through the end of 1958. Throughout the postwar years, Japanese Americans struggled to find communities that welcomed them. Strikingly similar to the problems faced when trying to find a home were those Japanese Americans faced when looking for employment. Despite the hope by some Japanese Americans that the American victory would lead to “a relaxation of the prejudice against them the war had engendered” and this would make job-searching easier, the ability to find, keep and succeed in a job shows the same pattern as violence and housing discrimination did after the war.¹²⁸ From worse to better, job discrimination still in many forms had not disappeared by the end of the 1950s.

One story about a Nisei mechanic winning the right to work in San Francisco gives insight into employment challenges. Additionally, the story’s headline, “Nisei Mechanic Wins Right to Work in San Francisco,” is misleading. Although Miyama earned the right to work, his fellow machinists still demanded his resignation the first day he showed up.¹²⁹ The article never explained how the situation was resolved, but did say that Miyama was only looking for work in San Francisco because he could not find a job in his hometown of Marysville, or Seattle or Spokane. In each city discrimination by either an employer or a labor union with racial restrictions prevented him from

¹²⁷ Larry Tajiri, “Vagaries: Housing Prejudice,” *Pacific Citizen*, September 30, 1955.

¹²⁸ “Peace is Welcome by 33in Nisei Group,” *New York Times*, August 15, 1945.

¹²⁹ “Nisei Mechanic Wins Right to Work in San Francisco,” *Pacific Citizen*, September 1, 1945.

working.¹³⁰ Not surprisingly, Japanese Americans were worse-off economically after the evacuation.¹³¹ Their decreased economic stability made problems with finding employment an even larger burden. Immediately following the end of the war, fellow workers went on strike, quite or threaten quite if an employer hired a Japanese American. Machinists on San Francisco's Municipal Railway threatened to strike to protest the railway hiring Japanese American workers in September 1945. In a move surprising in its support for minority rights, the Mayor came down to speak with the men who had threatened to strike. He told all the workers that "this man [the Nisei] is...entitled to his job... [because] the rights of an American citizen are not conditioned by his racial background."¹³² Allegedly, the Nisei arrived at work the next day without any more trouble.

In another incident, thirty-five workers at the Army and Consignment Depot quit their jobs when a Nisei employee was hired. Although they first said they quite because management should have hired a more experienced worker, they also added that "there are white Americans available."¹³³ Their claim that a more experienced worker was available was unjustified because the Nisei in question had more experience than most people. In November 1945 the Southern Pacific Railway refused to honor the request of notoriously anti-Japanese Placer County residents who asked that eight Nisei employees

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ "Report Japanese Worse Off Economically then Before Mass Evacuation," *Pacific Citizen*, October 1, 1949.

¹³² "Nisei Rights," *Washington Post*, August 31, 1945.

¹³³ "Protesting Workers Return To Work as Walkout Against Employment of Nisei Fails," *Pacific Citizen*, September 29, 1945 The "inexperienced" argument was also completely baseless because the Nisei hired had more experience than most people on the job. He had been an oiler for five years and had held a position with the Southern Pacific Railroad before that.

be fired.¹³⁴ Although the story was written and presented as a win for racial justice, titled “Southern Pacific Railroad Takes Stand Against Racial Intolerance in Placer County,” the subtitle of the article suggested that the firing the Nisei would have delayed GI trains.¹³⁵ Given the timing and context it is much more likely that business was the deciding factor in the outcome.

Japanese Americans’ first experience with employment discrimination usually came when they began looking for work. As one article put it, “Only gross immaturity would permit one to believe the Nisei are doing as well as any other ethnic group.”¹³⁶ Headlines such as “Returning Minority Veterans meet Discrimination no Jobs, Emergency Conference to be Held,” succinctly describe the problems faced by returnees.¹³⁷ In 1949, a study by the University of Washington showed that the job situation had improved since the end of the war but that “the hard-won gains so far made by Nisei in the United States must be held against some specific trends now casting their shadows.”¹³⁸ Some of these trends included: the inability of minorities to get past existing employment discrimination, their continuing placement in low-level positions and their inability to get promoted or hired out of those positions. The responsibility for these problems did not lie with the individuals who could not find the jobs, but rather with the government, employers, unions, other workers and the public.¹³⁹ In Redwood, California

¹³⁴ “Southern Pacific Railroad Takes Stand Against Racial Intolerance in Placer County,” *Pacific Citizen*, November 17, 1945.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ “Nisei and Employment: ‘Any Openings Today?’ As Any Nisei Knows, the Color Line is not an Imaginary Barrier for the Guy Looking for a Job,” *Pacific Citizen*, December 24, 1949.

¹³⁷ “Returning Minority Veterans Meet Discrimination no Jobs, Emergency Conference Told,” *Pacific Citizen*, April 13, 1946.

¹³⁸ Elmer R. Smith, “Jobs and Minorities: University of Washington Group Studies Employment Status of Japanese Americans in Seattle,” *Pacific Citizen*, March 12, 1949.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

a similar study looked at the causes of increasing rates of unemployment in their local minority population. The Redwood City Council began the study to look at why minority employment was ruled by a “last hired, first fired” principal.¹⁴⁰ Their investigation led them to create an agency which had the two main goals of first increasing the number of minorities working and second, to find those individuals jobs which utilized their skill level, training and experience.¹⁴¹ At the time, over 400 people had found jobs with the help of the Redwood agency.¹⁴²

Agencies like the Redwood group had to deal with many levels of discrimination to find jobs for minorities. Sometimes Japanese Americans had problems because of an employer’s blatant refusal to hire them, like Sagie Nishioka. In March/April 1952, the Oregon State Tax Commission rejected Mr. Nishioka for a job because of his ethnic background.¹⁴³ Employers also hurt Nisei’s chances of getting jobs by setting guidelines through employment agencies to exclude minority groups. In January 1958, the California State Assembly introduced legislation to ban racial and religious discrimination in private jobs. The laws sought to address employment agency’s practice of carrying out the racist requests of employers. Employers would sometimes put racial or religious restrictions in their requests for employees. Obviously, these restrictions made it so that racial and religious minorities were not even considered for some open jobs. Discrimination and refusals for jobs based on race or religion were already illegal in government jobs. The California Committee on Fair Employment Practices asked that a

¹⁴⁰ Editorial, “A City Meets a Challenge,” *Pacific Citizen*, October 23, 1949.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ “Report Job Refusal Not Nisei’s First Brush with Prejudice,” *Pacific Citizen*, April 5, 1952. The title of the article is a reference to the fact that Mr. Nishioka was also one of the men who’s name the Hood River American Legion took down during the war. At the time this happened he was in the hospital recovering from wounds received while serving.

law for private business follow suit, making it illegal for employment agencies to use forms with any information about race, religion, national origin or ethnicity on them, any marks or “codes” for those classifications or “to advertise or promote jobs with such restrictions.”¹⁴⁴ When the San Francisco Council for Civic Unity looked into employment bias, they also found that employers were the main culprits in perpetuating the cycle of minority unemployment and job level stagnation.¹⁴⁵

A story from a young Nisei mother reiterates several of these studies’ findings about the challenges a job search could hold. Flora, the author who recounted her own story, began her job search with more advantages than most minority women did. She had a recommendation from a white farm owner and was not married to a man in the military. Additionally, Flora did not want to take a bad job and have to quit soon after, spreading the stereotype of ““job-jumping Japs”” who, in the early days of relocation, earned the Nisei the reputation of being unreliable workers.”¹⁴⁶ Another lesson Flora quickly learned was that when she called to schedule interviews she should not mention her racial background. After about a month of searching, she found a good job with a positive work environment. Her employer did not tell Flora’s co-workers what her ancestry was and neither did Flora. She wrote that many of her coworkers assumed her ancestry was Chinese. By the time they found out she was Japanese-American, she had already shown them that she was a reliable co-worker. The moral of her story became

¹⁴⁴ “Ask a ban against discrimination by employment groups,” *Pacific Citizen*, January 3, 1958.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. The cycle created a problem not only because unemployment is bad for any society, but because it also meant that qualified people were not holding positions appropriate for their experience and knowledge because of race. Many Nisei worried about this because, although they were one of the most educated minority groups, they still faced the very real possibility of having to work in position far below what their education had prepared them for.

¹⁴⁶ John Kitasako, “Washington News-Letter: Nisei Reveals Experiences of Job-Hunting in Washington,” *Pacific Citizen*, November 17, 1945.

that Flora proved herself by hard work and personal effort, and found the job by not advertising her race. The article concluded by letting Nisei know that any of them could “overcome through their diligence and devotion, any possible objections... which might... arise in connection with racial extraction.”¹⁴⁷

More than in any other area, the idea of Japanese Americans proving their worth group came up repeatedly in the discussion about jobs. Many Japanese American community leaders encouraged the idea that if Nisei were given the chance to work, discrimination towards Japanese Americans would decrease. Some groups argued for integrated housing saying that it would decrease racism because Caucasians would see that “Oriental children are well-disciplined, Orientals gradually improve their property, and that Orientals mind their own business.” Articles about the Nisei at work echoed this sentiment saying that their work ethic and productivity spoke louder than words.¹⁴⁸ One example in which this prediction played out was on a farm in Wilson, Arkansas. On R.E. Wilson’s cotton farm, Japanese Americans, initially brought to Arkansas to ease the wartime labor shortage during the war, had so successfully farmed cotton that the owner hoped to hire many more of them and have his farm “become a haven for hundreds of Japanese who now find the welcome mat absent from the former West Coast homes.”¹⁴⁹ Japanese Americans continued to move to the Wilson farm after the war because of letters from friends and family encouraging them to live in the Midwest instead of going back to the West coast. JACL leaders and some columnists argued that dispersals like this were a positive result of the evacuation. They felt that the scattering of Japanese

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ G. Arlene Fukei, “Housing Situation in Seattle” in Budd Fukei’s column “Dateline Northwest”, *Pacific Citizen*, August 26, 1955.

¹⁴⁹ “Nisei Groups Move To The Cotton Fields,” *New York Times*, February 10, 1946.

Americans led not only to better feelings about Japanese Americans but also more job opportunities.¹⁵⁰ Aside from proving themselves as good workers and valuable employees, the establishment of a California Fair Employment Practices Commission in 1957 also helped decrease employment discrimination for racial and religious minorities..¹⁵¹

The fight to create a Fair Employment Practices Commission in California (FEPC) was lengthy and one in which the JACL actively participated. As early as 1946 the FEPC came up repeatedly in the discussion about employment discrimination. The JACL backed the creation of a FEPC because “if discrimination in employment can be eliminated, discrimination in other spheres of human relationship and activity can also be eliminated.”¹⁵² From 1946 until its passage in 1957, the FEPC repeatedly failed to make it through the California legislature. By March 1949 nine states had adopted FEPC laws. One supporter wrote that the successes of the existing FEP laws showed that different racial groups could successfully work together and upheld that “simple principle of justice- that any man, regardless of color or ancestry, should be hired for any job upon the basis of his ability” which “in actual practice is violated every hour of every day.”¹⁵³ Unfortunately, the California legislature once again prevented the passage of legislation for a FEPC the next month. In that same session, the House and Senate struck down bills that would have created a commission on political and economic equality, created a

¹⁵⁰ Larry Tajiri, “Nisei USA: New Post-War Jobs for Nisei,” *Pacific Citizen*, June 18, 1949.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² “National JACL Asks Passage of Act for Permanent FEPC,” *Pacific Citizen*, January 26, 1946.

¹⁵³ Editorial, “State Laws for Fair Employment,” *Pacific Citizen*, April 9, 1949.

group to study religious and racial discrimination in politics, and prohibited racial segregation in the California State Guard.¹⁵⁴

In October 1949, Los Angeles came within one vote of creating a FEP Council. Despite their frustration with the defeat of the bill, the JACL and other minority organizations felt optimistic that they had gotten so close to success managed to collaborate in order to do so.¹⁵⁵ In Washington State, which passed FEPC legislation in 1949, one editorialist argued that the mere existence of FEPC laws discouraged discrimination. All the FEPC did, the article explained, was give minorities the opportunity and responsibility to report discrimination. Just by creating this opportunity, incidents of discrimination decreased. As late as 1952 the Washington State Board Against Discrimination said that “job discrimination [in Washington] is more pronounced against persons of Japanese and Chinese ancestry than against Negroes.”¹⁵⁶ Giving minorities the option to report their problems was an important step towards decreasing discrimination. The long struggle in states like California to pass FEPC laws is yet another example of the endurance of employment discrimination. The obstacles created by discrimination remained in place for Japanese Americans for longer than more acute incidents of violence. And although Japanese Americans moved into better homes and jobs more quickly than other minorities, they still faced challenges based on their race.

¹⁵⁴ “California Legislature Stymies Move for State Commission On Fair Employment Practices,” *Pacific Citizen*, May 28, 1949.

¹⁵⁵ Editorial, “The Opponents of Fair Employment,” *Pacific Citizen*, October 1, 1949. The arguments used to defeat the legislation included fears of mongrolization, the fact the Commission did not need to exist because “this is a white man’s world”, and that the FEPC was actually promoted by the Kremlin and this its supporters were against Christianity. This was despite the fact that the organizations arguing for the FEPC passage included a number of different churches.

¹⁵⁶ “The Right to Work,” *Pacific Citizens*, March 1, 1952. Although this might have been due to many factors, such as a smaller Negro population, this is a significant comment because it is one of a kind and was made at a point when the traditional narrative fails to mention Japanese Americans still facing so many problems.

It is impossible to understand the Japanese-American experience in post-war years without discussing the intersections of their lives with those of other ethnic groups. African Americans and Japanese Americans in particular faced some similar challenges in the post-war years. In addition to shared experiences, Japanese Americans sometimes used comparisons to African Americans in order to conceptualize their place in the post-war world and this understanding of race helped shape how Japanese Americans interacted with other non-Caucasian groups. Japanese Americans and the Japanese American Citizen's League in particular vacillated in their opinions of other minorities, how much to get involved in discrimination issues not specific to Japanese Americans. On topics like housing and jobs, it was easy to address discrimination as a general problem.¹⁵⁷ However, similar challenges in the post-war period did not make interracial cooperation a given. In 1949 this issue came up in San Francisco. The multi cultural neighborhoods in San Francisco Bay provide one example. Although Japanese Americans, whites, and blacks all ate, owned businesses, sent their children to schools and shopped in the same areas, in reality the integration of the Bay area community "[was] as phony as that word 'cosmopolitan.'"¹⁵⁸ As happened in many of the larger West Coast cities, post-war Japanese Americans and African Americans vied for space after African Americans had moved into the old "Little Tokyo" neighborhoods to work during the internment. After the war "fresh from the relocation centers they [the

¹⁵⁷ The general discussions of discrimination often addressed ideas associated with the Cold War and how violations of Civil Rights at home affected how the rest of the world viewed Democracy as a whole. This was indeed a concern for Japanese Americans and an argument used for increased rights for themselves and other minorities. Cold War ideology and Civil Rights are linked and covered more comprehensively in Mary L. Dudziak's work *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy*, although she focuses almost exclusively on African Americans. International relations with Japan after the war and their impact on Japanese Americans' lives are much broader topics which I tried to tackle here.

¹⁵⁸ "Melting Pot at Slow Boil: Myths and Prejudice Belie Surface Calm of San Francisco's Interracial Crossroads," *Pacific Citizen*, December 24, 1949.

returnees] wanted the security of their old home, their stores and their old community.”¹⁵⁹

This combination of resettling and having to move into an area that African Americans had already settled in meant that in San Francisco, these two ethnic groups “tolerate[d] each other.”¹⁶⁰

To make matters worse, many Japanese Americans did not trust African Americans because the Japanese community had been the target of a post-war crime wave. Before racism could get too deep, community leaders from both groups intervened and spoke to their respective communities, pointing out that the criminals responsible for the crime wave victimized African Americans and Japanese American.¹⁶¹ One African American observer cited what seemed to be a larger trend in post-war Japanese American and black relations when he said “I suspect the attitude of the Japanese toward the Negro is one of contempt mixed with fear.”¹⁶² This combination came from different group experiences and ideas about how to deal with prejudice and discrimination. Additionally, educational differences, mutual distrust, and the fact that Japanese Americans seemed to hope “to align themselves with the majority group in [America]” added to interracial tensions.¹⁶³ The article warned Japanese Americans about the danger of forgetting the lessons of internment too quickly and forgetting what prejudice and anger towards another group could lead to. Japanese American did indeed hope to be identified with the dominant and therefore white culture. Outside the West Coast this association between Japanese Americans and white Americans was made clearly by white Americans as well.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

The conflation of Japanese Americans and whites began during the war in the Midwest and East as small numbers of Japanese Americans moved to areas like New York and Chicago to work. Local populations there began to identify Japanese Americans with whites more often than with other minorities. For example, in Ohio a co-worker scolded a Nisei hospital employee when she directed a new African American employee to eat where she did, with the white employees. The employee who corrected her said ““don’t you know those people aren’t supposed to eat with us? You’re considered white here. You ought to know better than what you did.””¹⁶⁴ In this case, the Nisei worker stood up against the unfairness of segregation and helped change hospital policy. However, the author recounting the story also pointed out that ““very few Nisei, it seems to us, are willing to stick their necks out to hold fast to their racial convictions.””¹⁶⁵ In fact, some Nisei were outright discriminatory themselves, despite their own experiences.

In February 1949, columnist Bill Hosokawa reported on a restaurant co-owned by a Nisei and Caucasian which refused service to Indians based on race. Hosokawa summed up the paradoxical nature of the discrimination, writing that it was strange to see a Japanese American, “[who] only a few years ago [was] the most hated, hounded and persecuted of Americans, now refusing service in a restaurant to a descendant of the original Americans.”¹⁶⁶ Given their recent internment, it might be logical that Japanese Americans did not want to be seen as “troublemakers” and had learned to discriminate against other groups in order to identify with mainstream American society. Most

¹⁶⁴ John Kitasako, “Washington News-Letter: Nisei Rebels Against Jim Crow, But Some Accept Prejudice,” *Pacific Citizen*, October 6, 1945.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ Bill Hosokawa, “From the Frying Pan: Something Incongruous,” *Pacific Citizen*, February 12, 1949.

Japanese Americans just wanted to fit in to their new communities without standing out for more than their hard work and patriotism- both carefully cultivated during and after the war.

The difference in how Japanese Americans and African Americans dealt with discrimination was sometimes discussed explicitly. A *Pacific Citizen* editorial created this comparison by retelling the stories of two families, the Sing Sheng family and the Gary family. The article covered the Asian American and African American families through both their experiences with housing discrimination.¹⁶⁷ In San Francisco, Sing Sheng wanted to buy a home in an all-white neighborhood. When the residents objected and voted 174 to 28 that they did not want him to move as a neighbor, he stopped his attempts to buy the home.¹⁶⁸ As news of the neighborhood's behavior spread, "a national wave of sympathy was aroused. Everywhere individuals, officials and organizations were provoked to condemnation of the racism exhibited in Southwood."¹⁶⁹ The article did not say whether this "wave of sympathy" led to the Sing Shengs getting the home, but it showed how much support the family received from strangers all over the country.

African American veteran Wilbur Gary, his wife, and their seven children also wanted to purchase a home in an all-white neighborhood. Threats against Gary and his family started the first night they moved into their new home. Someone burned a cross on his lawn, threw rocks at the house, a brick through his front window and an estimated 200

¹⁶⁷ Sing Sheng appears to be a Chinese name but the article does not specify the race of the individual. Whether Chinese or Japanese- American though, the article clearly uses this family as representative of the Japanese American attitude and approach.

¹⁶⁸ Editorial, "Sing Shengs and the Garys," *Pacific Citizen*, March 15, 1952.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

people gathered on his front lawn.¹⁷⁰ With the support of local ministers, local authorities, and law enforcement personnel, Gary turned down an offer to sell the house, and said that he and his family would stay in the home they purchased. He felt “the matter had already gone too far for him to back down from his position.”¹⁷¹ After that first night, with the support from local officials and twenty-one families who wrote a letter welcoming the Gary family to the neighborhood, no other incidents occurred and the Gary family settled peacefully into their new home.¹⁷²

Despite the fact that both families received an outpouring of public support for their plight, the editorialist criticized Sing Sheng’s response to prejudice. “It cannot be said,” wrote the editorialist, “that Sing Sheng lacked courage or belief in democracy. But this method cannot be recommended as a good way to fight an evil which causes injury to millions of Americans.” Because housing was the right of every American, it should never have been left up to a neighborhood vote. In addition, the national criticism and large-scale condemnation of the racist neighbors “forced them on the defensive. In having to explain and defend their position, they reinforced it.”¹⁷³ This comparison, and the author’s critique of the passivity of the Asian American family was interesting. As mentioned earlier, the internment led many Japanese Americans to avoid criticizing American society or protesting unfair treatment. The Post-war Japanese American leadership tried to emphasize Japanese American patriotism and their ability to make the best of any situation. They put most of their effort into making changes through existing

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

legislative and legal channels, and had much more success with in the 1950s than other minority groups.

Arguments about how vocal the Japanese American community should be at a grassroots level went back and forth internally. Part of this discussion involved how mixed up with other minority activist groups, like the NAACP, Japanese Americans and the JACL wanted to be. On some issues, like housing and employment, advocating for civil rights as a general concept was easy. In the case of school segregation, Nisei activists also quickly unified to fight against separate schools for non-white children. The National JACL President said

This is another instance in which the JACL will continue to work with other racial minority and civil rights organization in our winning fight to gain equality of state and opportunity for Americans of all races and ancestries.¹⁷⁴

It is important to note that the JACL took a clear stance on segregation and publicly announced its cooperation with other organizations. This cooperation came even though by 1955 Asian Americans did not have to worry about their children going to segregated schools. JACL Representative Mike Masaoka reminded *Pacific Citizen* readers that Japanese Americans had to fight for the rights of their children not long before the war when Northern California schools had denied fair education to their children. He told readers, “persons of Japanese ancestry have a real stake in the final verdict of the Supreme Court” on what integration means since the 1954 invalidation of the “separate but equal” clause.¹⁷⁵ President Roosevelt had to send the Secretary of Commerce and Labor out to California to deal with the situation. After this Federal intervention, the San

¹⁷⁴ “CL joins school segregation fight,” *Pacific Citizen*, November 28, 1952.

¹⁷⁵ Mike Masaoka, “Washington Newsletter: School Segregation Cases,” *Pacific Citizen*, April 22, 1955.

Francisco school board reversed its order for segregation. Because they had faced the same problem less than ten years earlier,

the long, hard fight against racial segregation in the public schools is the common cause of all this country, including us Nisei who so often now are prone to overlook the experiences of our own group in the recent past.¹⁷⁶

Despite participation as in the school segregation fight and entreaties from wartime advocates of Japanese American's rights, by 1958 the formal JACL organization had taken its stand on interracial participation. The JACL President briefly discussed the issue of whether the JACL should work closely with organizations like the NAACP. Saying that while the JACL would never "let expediency or outside pressure distort our sense of values," the organization could not "become so closely tied to other groups that she will be in danger of losing her independence of thought or action, or exceeding her resources."¹⁷⁷ The next month the JACL formally reiterated their position as helping Nisei first and foremost. Despite the excitement about how well Nisei and their families had integrated into different communities, the leaders of the JACL felt that they had to look out for their own first.¹⁷⁸ Decisions and public announcements like this help explain the distance between Japanese Americans and African Americans in the 1960s and 1970s.

The scholarship on Japanese American's post-war lives has improved considerably but, there are still many areas scholars need to explore further. An exploration of the American occupation of Japan after the war and its relationship to Japanese treatment in the United States would illuminate the Japanese American story. A

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ "President's Corner: JACL cannot be all things to all men," *Pacific Citizen*, February 14, 1958.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

more complex look at the internal conflicts and factions within the postwar Japanese American community would also be invaluable. Although the JACL is the dominant group presented in this work, many Nisei resented what they saw as its passivity in the face of continued racial injustice. Identifying and analyzing divisions within the Japanese-American community would add important details to this story.

Because of the notable educational and economic successes of Japanese Americans after their release from internment, scholars have largely ignored the discrimination and continuing racism they faced after World War Two. Examining Japanese Americans' resettlement between 1945 and 1958 has shown that while overt violence became less acceptable several years after the war, more subtle forms of racism grew more prevalent and were equally as harmful. But the lives of Japanese Americans did improve from the end of the war through the end of the 1950s. Prejudice decreased and Japanese Americans won significant legislative victories. Japanese Americans improved the places they lived, the jobs they could get, and the level of respect they received from others. Returnees lives did indeed improve over time, but slowly and not to the exclusion of continuing challenges. A more detailed exploration of these challenges, elaboration on the psychological, international and interracial aspects of the lives of Japanese Americans, are the next steps in this important historical story.

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