UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN – EAU CLAIRE

THE SQUEAKY WHEEL: JAPANESE RACE RELATIONS ON THE WEST COAST AND LEGISLATION IN THE 1920S

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ABSTRACT

During the 1920s legislation was created in California that eliminated immigration from Japan. This Exclusion Clause in the 1924 Immigration Act was not fully supported by the population on the West Coast, where the vast majority of Japanese immigration occurred. Regarding the fruit industry in California, the logging industry in the northern part of the West Coast, and other social and religious interactions between Japanese and white Americans, the Exclusion Clause was not supported by the majority of the population. The passing of this legislation was due to a small, vocal, but politically influential group.

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In the last couple of decades, the study of Asian history has expanded dramatically. From 1991 to 2000, the number of books published equals the number of books published from 1961 to 1991.[1] And since then, even more books on the topic have appeared. This mirrors the Asian population explosion occurring in the United States.[2]

The presence of Japanese in America goes back centuries. Japanese people set foot on the east coast a full ten years before the Mayflower landed.[3] However, theirs was an accidental landing and no permanent colony was established. At the time, Japan was in a period of self-isolation. All that ended in 1848 when three black warships commanded by Commodore Matthew C. Perry entered Edo Bay[4] and demanded that Japan open its doors to American trade.[5]

Determined to capitalize on Asian nations, America also opened its doors to the immigration of laborers who would work at far cheaper wages. The first American industry to benefit from these immigrants was the sugar industry in Hawaii. Laborers from China, Japan, and the Philippines were common requests from sugar companies. They recruited laborers from

[1] Gary Okihiro, *The Columbia Guide to Asian American History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).
[2] Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore*, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1989), 5.
[3] US document
[4] Tokyo Bay. Edo was the name of Tokyo until 1864, when the shogunate ended and the Emperor moved his residency from Kyoto to Tokyo, making it the official capital of Japan.
[5] Takaki, *Strangers*, 23.

a multitude of countries to decrease the chance of organized strikes against the company for better wages and living conditions.[6]

As white American businessmen felt that one race was becoming too numerous, and therefore more likely to collaborate, other races were introduced. After the exclusion of Chinese immigration in 1882, Japanese immigrants were introduced to work in the fields of California.[7] As with the Chinese, as their numbers increased, legislation was introduced that excluded them from immigration to the United States.

In the beginning, the United States and Japan came to an accord regarding immigrants to the United States. Called the Gentleman's Agreement, Japan voluntarily agreed to limit Japanese men from coming to the United States. However, the wives and children of men already in the country would be allowed entry into the United States. This led to the phenomenon of picture brides, where a woman was married to a man living in the United States by proxy. She would then travel to the United States to be with her husband. It was this limited type of immigration that led to the introduction of further legislation aimed at the complete ban of Japanese immigration.

Exclusion Clause in the Immigration Act of 1924 lowered the percentage of immigration from Europe and prohibited all immigration from the Asiatic Barred Zone, of which the Japan, China, and the Philippines did not belong.[8] However, while this section did not ban Japanese, the Act additionally prohibited the immigration of any person who could not naturalize. Previous laws already disqualified anyone of Asian lineage from naturalizing. This addition to

[6] Ibid., 24-25.
[7] Ibid., 29.
[8] U.S. Department of the State, *The Immigration Act of 1924 (Johnson-Reed Act)*, The Office of Electronic Affairs, Online http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/time/id/87718.htm

the Act effectively barred any immigration from Asia, but it was clearly focused towards the Japanese since Chinese had already been denied the right to immigrate.[9]

While racism was most assuredly a factor in the creation and passing of this act, it was by no means the motivating factor. This is not to say, of course, that Asian Americans did not experience racism. It would be appalling to demean the struggles that Asian Americans faced in their journey to become a part of America's melting pot society. They experienced racism and prejudice that hurt them psychologically and physically. They were threatened with violence, and sometimes violence was perpetrated against them. They were spit upon and referred to in degrading terms. People picketed their businesses and destroyed their property. However, while Asian Americans experienced a great deal of racism and prejudice, it was at the hands of a relatively small minority of people and the negative sentiment was not shared by the majority of the population, even on the West Coast.

Since the exclusion legislation originated on the West Coast and since the vast majority of Japanese immigrants settle in that area, it is beneficial to concentrate on the opinions of people on the West Coast. In the case of the Exclusion Clause in the 1924 Immigration Act, it was a relatively small, yet vocal and influential group of people who pushed the legislation through while the general population on the West Coast, especially those who interacted with the Japanese on a regular basis, did not feel the same sort of animosity towards the Japanese.

[9] Ibid. Since the Philippines were a territory of the United States at this time its citizens were considered US nationals and could therefore travel into the country under different circumstances. The Immigration Act of 1924, therefore, did not affect them.

HISTORIOGRAPHY

There are a multitude of books that describe Asian immigration to the United States and the issues within the field. The definitive source on the topic is Ronald Takaki's book *Strangers from a Different Shore*, which is referenced in almost every book on Asian American history. This book covers all immigration to the United States from Asia, including Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Indian among others. Included in this book is not only the experiences of other people but pictures and experiences of Ronald Takaki and his family.[10]

In addition to Takaki's book, there is *Thinking Oriental* by Henry Yu who also uses his own experiences to relate the experiences of Asian Americans in the broader context of American society. His book describes the experiences of Asians in America throughout several decades. He also describes various facets of Asian immigration and the "Oriental Problem" during the 1920s through the works of sociologists.[11]

Additionally, Gary Okihiro's book *The Columbia Guide to Asian American History* illustrates the struggles of Asian Americans in a much different way: by using current controversies in the field of Asian studies. As with many other books, Okihiro's focus on the Japanese revolves around the treatment of Japanese Americans during World War II and the internment camps. With the bombing of Pearl Harbor by Japan, American attitudes towards Japanese spiraled into complete hatred of a race that most Americans had never actually encountered. Within the realm of history, there are many books that look at this aspect of

[10] Takaki, *Strangers*.
[11] Henry Yu, *Thinking Orientals: Migration, Contact, and Exoticism in Modern America*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

Japanese and American race relations, seemingly forgetting about the years that let up to World War II.[12]

There are, however, some book books on the strained relationships between the Japanese and the Americans before 1941. In *Pacific Estrangement*, Akira Iriye discusses the relationship between Japan and America from the late 1897 until 1911. In the book he discusses the various viewpoints of Americans and Japanese towards the issue of immigration and imperialistic expansion.[13]

The only book that relates directly to the Exclusion Clause of the 1924 Immigration Act was that of Izumi Hirobe who looks, not at the years leading up to the exclusion of the Japanese, but the movement following exclusion to get the Act overturned. This book gives an overview of how Americans attempted to promote good will towards the Japanese up to the Manchurian Incident and World War II.

While looking at these books, it is clear that there is a lack of interest in how the average American felt towards the Japanese before the passing of the Exclusion Clause in 1924. Was it the majority of people who called for the passing of the act? In order for such an act to be passed, it would take a majority of the vote from Congress; and, for most of the states immigration of the Japanese was not an issue. However, the Southern states were persuaded to vote for the bill due to Hiram Johnson's promise to convince a fellow senator to drop an anti-lynching bill.[14] However, there is a distinct difference between the actions of the government and the true feelings of a population. It is possible that a small group of influential people who speak out loudly and use underhanded tactics can skew the voice of the people.

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[12] Okihiro, *The Columbia Guide*.

[13] Akira Iriye. *Pacific Estrangement*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972).

[14] Izumi Hirobe. *Japanese Pride, American Prejudice: Modifying the Exclusion Clause of the 1924 Immigration Act.* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001).

While later atrocities against the Japanese overshadowed their exclusion, it is an important aspect of the relationships between the Japanese and white Americans. It has been attributed as a causal factor in World War II and should definitely be explored further to understand the complex relationships in future exchanges between America and Japan.

METHODOLOGY

It is difficult to gauge the honest opinions of people during that time period because those still alive would have been very young during this period and time and events may have distorted their feelings. However, during the 1920s the Institute of Social and Religious Research conducted a survey to assess actual relations. The Institute of Social and Religious Research existed from 1921 to 1934.[15] The Survey of Race Relations claimed to be dedicated to representing all interests and not advocate any policy, either for or against any Asian peoples. Nevertheless, the directors felt that the Survey would serve as a positive contrast to vigorous anti-Japanese campaigns.[16]

On the other hand, there were several groups at the time that opposed how the Survey was conducted. The American Legion immediately refused to participate in the Survey due to its association with George Gleason[17], a former secretary of the YMCA in Japan.[18] In the Grizzly Bear, a publication for the Native Sons of the Golden West, it warned its readers against the

[15] Eckard Toy, *Whose Frontier? The Survey of Race Relations on the Pacific Coast in the 1920s* Oregon Historical Quarterly Spring 2006 <http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/ohq/107.1/toy.html> (31 Mar. 2008).

[16] Ibid., 10.

[17] George Gleason lived and worked in Japan as a missionary for eighteen years. He actively protested against the exclusion of Japanese and worked to overturn the legislation after it was passed.

[18] George Gleason, *What Shall I think of Japan?* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1921), 1.

Survey and any participants.[19] The *Grizzly Bear* was the mouthpiece for the Native Sons of the Golden West (NSGW) and more often than not contained one or more anti-Asian articles.[20] The NSGW is not significant so much in the number of members that the organization had but the type of members. Among them was US Senators Hiram Johnson and James D Phelan, both of which also served in other major offices in California including Governor and mayor of San Francisco respectively.

Moreover, the Survey had difficulties convincing labor organizations of their neutrality and dedication to the representation of all sides. While some labor organizers were enthusiastic about participating in the survey, others refused to serve on committees.[21] This was likely due to the close relationships some of these organizations had with the NSGW and the American Legion.

Without the participation of the Labor Union and the American Legion, it is difficult to get a full understanding of objections and views that people had for Japanese immigration at that time. However, the membership of the American Legion of that time never exceeded 4,000 people.[22] But their status as veterans gave them a great deal of influence and made their voices seem all the louder.

Though the Survey is not without its flaws and the manner in which it was conducted definitely set out to influence future legislation, it is the best source for public opinion. Furthermore, the stories and interviews in the Survey are not without value. Newspapers at the time were frequently biased against Japanese Americans and were often run by members of the American Legion, NSGW, and Labor Union. So, while these groups may have refused to

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[19] Box 1, Papers of the Survey of Race Relations, Hoover Institution, Stanford University (henceforth PSRR). Reprint of an article that appeared in the Grizzly Bear with no date given.

[20] Hirobe, *Japanese Pride*, 16.

[21] Box 1, PSRR. Letter of resignation from Finance Committee of the Seattle Executive Committee.

[22] Hirobe, *Japanese Pride*, 17.

participate in the Survey, parts of their viewpoint are reflected in the newspaper articles of that time.

With this, a picture of the feelings of average people of that time period can be constructed. To create this image, many aspects of life during that time period needs to be looked at. There were two ways in which white Americans interacted with the Japanese: socially and occupationally. Both of these aspects help shape how white Americans viewed the Japanese just prior to the passing of the Exclusion Clause.

OCCUPATIONAL INTERACTIONS

There was a lot of strife between immigrants and white Americans. There was a variety of reasons why this aspect of life could have been the cause for negative perceptions of Japanese. Immigrant workers from all parts of the world have long been used to break up unions and strikes and Asian immigrants were no different.[23]

Japanese workers were brought into the United States six years after the exclusion of Chinese immigration.[24] In Hawaii, they were used as workers on sugar plantations. In California, their main niche was in agriculture as well. However, in California, they were used in fruit fields and canneries. In the northern part of the West Coast, where there is less demand for fruit workers, they were used as laborers in lumber mills. Each of these aspects revealed different concerns of white Americans and their reactions to the introduction of Japanese people in the workforce.

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[23] Takaki, 23.

[24] Ruth E. McKee, "Wartime Exile: The Exclusion of the Japanese Americans From the West Coast." Washington DC: United States Department of the Interior, 1946.

Agriculture

California was a major center for agricultural production during the 1920s. Due to the warm climate in the south, farmers were able to produce fruit and vegetables on a year-round instead of having an unproductive winter season as with the upper Midwest. Each type of agricultural production came with its own set of complications that would influence the need for labor. Additionally, it was the farmer that had the most interaction with Japanese people during this time period as the vast majority of Japanese in America were involved in various types of agriculture.[25]

An uneducated population was needed to provide cheap labor for farmers in mass food production. The most readily available source of cheap labor was found in new immigrants. Depending on the country from which they hailed, these immigrants were generally from the peasant class and could not read or write. These factors allowed farmers to take advantage of them and hire them for much lower than labors from the native population. Additionally, they are less likely to seek help or unionize.

This was also true of a large part of the Japanese population in California. On the other hand, with the Gentleman's Agreement[26], which practically eliminated the immigration of males to the United States, this uneducated population was shrinking. The second generation were born American citizens, fluent in English and educated alongside white school children of the time. This created an interesting atmosphere within communities regarding race. And, it was in

[25] Box 6, PSRR.

[26] The Gentleman's Agreement was an agreement between Japan and the United States in which Japan voluntarily limited the Japanese they would allow to immigrate to the United States to that of the family members of Japanese people already living in the United States.

the vital fruit industry in California that reflected the attitudes of white Americans towards the Japanese in the agricultural sphere.

While the total acreage that was farmed for the use of fruit production in the 1920s was relatively small, economically fruit was extremely important to California. Fruit and nut production in California consisted of 46.3 percent of the total value of agricultural production in 1919.[27]

The Japanese during this time period were intimately tied to the fruit industry in southern California. Their involvement in the fruit industry was complex as they were more than just laborers in the fields; they were also in the process of canning and growing. Even as the land reforms forbade native Japanese from owning land, many Japanese purchased or leased land in the names of their American born children.

Depending on the type of fruit produced, there were a variety of opinions on the Exclusion Clause of 1924. The various types of fruit that were produced and the variety in which they were produced determined the importance of a Japanese workforce. The more variety of fruits that were grown in a specific area, the more the fruit farmer needed laborers that were specialized in the harvesting of those types of fruit. The importance of having the workforce also influenced how white American farmers felt towards the Japanese. [28]

Unlike other types of agriculture, fruit production takes years to become productive and is a very difficult industry to start without taking substantial losses in the first years. Strawberries can take up to three years before the farmer can harvest a crop. Apple trees take

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[27] U.S. Bureau of the Census. *State Compendium California, Statistics of Population, Occupation, Agriculture, Irrigation, Drainage, Manufactures, and Mines and Quarries for the State, Counties and Cities.US*, Prepared by the Department of Commerce, Washington DC: Governement Pringting Office, 1920, 69. Electronic File. Additionally, fruits in this census data did not include cantaloupes, muskmelons, pumpkins, and tomatoes which are all considered in the vegetable category.,

[28] Box 1, PSRR. Interview with W. O. Davis, December 17, 1924.

years to grow into maturity and produce apples worth bringing into the market, the same for many other types of fruit. It was in this aspect of fruit farming that the Japanese were able to find their niche.

In these cases, the leasing of land was more productive for the owner than actually trying to grow and harvest crops on his own. If the owner leased the land, he would see immediate profit and would not have to take the loss in the early years of production. Additionally, continuing to lease the land even after it became profitable was beneficial to the landowner because he would still make a profit off the land without involving himself in the day to day operations of the farm. Moreover, bad years or natural disasters did not have the same impact on the landowner that it would have had on the farmer. The farmer did not have to concern himself with the organization of the harvest, hiring of help, preservation of the product, and complications with bringing the goods to market.

Additionally, those that did wish to run their farms and take on the hassles of farming felt that the Japanese were extremely beneficial. Some felt that the Japanese would always be content to labor in agriculture, whereas white Americans were being educated and would no longer be willing to do the hard work involved in farming.[29] This could be because while farming was an important industry for the Japanese, the fruit industry still remained mostly in the hands of white Americans.[30] However, there were still farmers that felt that no matter how much space there was there would never be enough room for everyone.

There were incidences, both successful and unsuccessful, of fruit farmers trying to break their reliance on Japanese workers. Some farmers tried to employ tourist laborers, or those people who would migrate from the cities seasonally for work on the fruit farms. However, these

[29] Ibid., W. O. Davis Interview.
[30] Box 6, PSRR.

people required just as much training in pruning, irrigating, and picking as any other worker. With that, it was much easier for this group of laborers to quit or opt to not return in subsequent seasons. If work became more prevalent in the cities, these workers were far more likely stay in the cities than work in the backbreaking labor on the farms. [31]

At certain times, fruit farmers tried to break the dependence on a Japanese workforce by trying to recruit local, white non-fruit farmers who were having financial difficulty due to bad crop yields. Attempts such as this were unsuccessful in Hamilton City, California.[32] Instead, local farmers did not want to supplement their income with manual labor; the fruit growers were forced to bring in Japanese laborers or risk loss.[33] While it was unsuccessful in Hamilton City, other places such as Maxwell found the tactic a great success and considered themselves free from independent laborers.[34] However, this tactic would have only been successful as long as the local farmers were not finding higher profits in devoting themselves completely to their own lands. As their farms became more profitable during highly productive seasons, there would be far less need to supplement income with labor on fruit farms and far more profit in devoting themselves to their own lands.

One aspect of fruit production found they could successfully remove any sort of outside labor: packing and canning. With added technology, less expensive women replaced skilled Japanese laborers in the packing and canning of fruits.[35]

On the other hand, Japanese laborers were seen as more reliable than other races during that time period. Stereotypes of certain races had a presence in the thought processes of people in the 1920s. Mexican workers were seen as lazy and unreliable. People from India were seen

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[31] Box 1, PSRR. Interview with W. O. Davis.
[32] Box 1, PSRR. Report on the conditions of Yuba and Maryville, CA.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid., Yuba and Maryville.

as unclean and, therefore, undesirable to have in a community.[36] However, Japanese people were seen as hard workers that wanted to do their job and merely be left alone to their own devices. This opinion of Japanese was ideal for employers who only wanted someone who would do their job well; however, it would prove problematic with the question of assimilation into American culture**.**

Logging

Immigrants played vital roles in the creation of the United States, especially as laborers in industrial fields. More often than not, it was immigrants that were given the least desirable and most dangerous jobs. The work was difficult and demanding, but there was no shortage of work and that meant a steady income. That income could have meant a better life for a family that had not yet immigrated or it could mean more opportunities for children living in this country.

As with other immigrants, Japanese people during the 1920s found opportunities as laborers. Many of the men that came over were uneducated and unable to fluently speak English. Often, these men would have families that they were supporting back in Japan and whatever wages were not spent on basic necessities was sent to their wives and children.

Japanese workers faced difficult conditions and more discrimination in these occupations than in agriculture. This was due to increased unionization in these field of work. The Japanese, and other immigrants as well, were brought in to break up strikes or as cheaper labor. While it is certain that the Japanese would have been more than willing to earn higher wages, communication issues made organization difficult. In the case of organized labor that is frequently unionized, it is difficult to tell if the discrimination against the Japanese was merely because of their race or if it was a reaction to the efforts of management to cut costs by hiring

[36] Ibid.

workers that would work for less. One area of labor that felt frustration with the idea of losing their jobs to lower paid workers was the logging industry.

Logging in the 1920s was a huge industry that attracted every kind of person imaginable. It was difficult work but the pay at the time was rewarding and work was fairly plentiful. It is then no surprise that Japanese people desired to become involved in the logging industry. Their involvement in this industry was, at first, the same as any other people. However, after several incidents, the tide turned against the Japanese in the logging industry.

However, in the case of logging, the animosity towards the Japanese seemed to stem from an economic standpoint rather than racial prejudices against the Japanese. Major animosity against the Japanese only started in certain areas, such as Lake Stevens. According to a resident of the town at the time, anti-Japanese sentiment arose when a mill owner by the name of Mr. Rucker hired twelve Japanese workers to run the chains, citing that he did not believe that white Americans would do the work nor would they stay on for an extended period of time. The town, in want of leadership, then called upon the Labor Temple to organize a union. Eventually, the community managed to scare the Japanese workers into leaving. In the mean time, with income coming from other endeavors, Mr. Rucker opted to not open the mill without the use of Japanese.[37]

On the surface, it appears that the people of Lake Stevens were united against the Japanese. However, this was not the case. According to a resident of the town, Mr. Mitchell, some residents pressured others into joining the union or risk public ridicule and loss of business.[38] While the twelve Japanese workers would have only been a small fraction of the

[37] Box 27. PSRR. Interview with Mr. Mitchell (pg 3-6).
[38] Ibid.

people who worked at the mill, there was a fear that their introduction would lead to more Japanese, who would also bring their families to the poor Lake Stevens.[39]

However, this sort of animosity seems to be limited to areas such as Lake Stevens area where Japanese workers were just beginning to be introduced to an area. There are many other areas where Japanese loggers had already become an essential part of the camps. In places such as the St. Paul and Tacoma Lumber Company in Washington, Japanese workers had the same amenities as white workers.[40] In an interview with the Japanese foreman, Mr. Matsui, he reported that there was no animosity between the Japanese workers and the white workers. Additionally, when outside unions wanted the company to fire all of the Japanese workers, the company resisted and none of the workers were fired.[41]

There were different opinions between white management. The mill foreman, Mr. Holmes, felt that the Japanese and the whites did not work well together; though he could not cite specific incidences.[42] While the manager, Mr. Rogers, reported that there had not been a complaint aside from "agitators, etc. and [they] are the very men who can't step in and take the Japs job."[43] Both men agreed that the Japanese laborers in their camp were excellent workers who diligently performed jobs that others were apprehensive at taking. The official stand from the company president, E.G. Griggs, was that while they were not planning on increasing the number of Japanese that were employed by the mill, any efforts to remove the men from their company would be met with resistance from white employees and managers.[44]

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[39] Box 28, PSRR. Interview with Mr. Grassberg
[40] Box 28, PSRR. Report on the St. Paul and Tacoma Lumber Co. after visitations June through August of 1924.
[41] Box 28, PSRR. Interview with Mr. Matsui.
[42] Box 28, PSRR. Interview with Mr. Holmes.
[43] Box 28, PSRR. Interview with Mr. Rogers.
[44] Box 28, PSRR. Letter from E.G. Griggs to Mr. R. L. Olson, August 19, 1924.

The incident at Lake Stevens was the exception of the time period, not the norm. In other camps, there was little spoken animosity towards Japanese.[45] Some camp management who came from areas that had not employed Japanese before attempted to change that fact and instead found that their own attitudes towards Japanese workers changed.[46] The closer that someone worked with Japanese people in the mills, the more positive the experiences and general perceptions were of Japanese people.

However, outside the company housing, where interactions were more limited, animosity occurred. Japanese people were not readily invited to white homes and to participate in social activities.[47] Business people would often feel torn between personal prejudices and good business sense.[48] Many businessmen and women of the time believed that a Japanese presence was good economically. Aside from the income received, no matter what color the source happened to be, it was also due to a belief that Japanese people paid either in cash or were far more reliable with their debt payment.[49]

With a few exceptions, white loggers received Japanese workers with very little animosity. It is clear that the push for anti-Japanese legislation movement did not come from within the camps. Additionally, those in the towns with the loudest complaints were those who were generally considered reprobates and were not qualified to work in the mills. Among the management, there were no complaints about Japanese workers. Advancement in the field also did not seem to be a concern of whites as well as there were Japanese men among the management. Mill owners liked having Japanese workers because they felt the work was far

[45] Box 28, PSRR. Interview with Rev. Gardner.
[46] Box 28, PSRR. Interview w/ Mr. Galbraith Jr.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Box 27, PSRR. Interview with Mr. Mitchell
[49] Ibid.

more reliable and, while many of the mills paid whites and Japanese the same wages, hiring Japanese was considered a cost-cutting move.

Using the given examples, it is clear that occupational interactions did not cause enough strife between white Americans on the West Coast and the Japanese people who worked with them. In the agricultural industry of California, they were seen as a benefit because they provided cheap labor. In the north, they were part of the logging industry which generally viewed them as hard working. Unlike in the fruit industry, the Japanese in the logging industry often worked for the same wages. Given that they were considered important in these areas, the most common areas in which they were employed, it is unlikely that there was support for the Exclusion Clause in the occupational area of life in the 1920s.

SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

The interactions between people on a social basis is the most accurate gauge of sincere attitudes toward the Japanese. The Japanese people on the west coast dealt socially with white Americans in a variety of spheres. Personal aspects brought out the best and the worst of people on West Coast.

Socially, there are several important aspects that shaped the way in which whites on the West Coast viewed the Japanese people. The interactions that caused the most contact between white Americans and the Japanese were religious and academic. Religious actions were more between adults, but children were certainly involved. Academic contact was between children, though adults were often involved.

Religion

Although the official religion in Japan at the time was Shinto, the main interactions in America were between Christians. In the case of the Japanese, it was the Christian missionaries and church leaders who were the staunchest supporters of the Japanese people's movements into California. They saw the Japanese as a flock to be converted, and many Japanese were successfully converted to Christianity. Christian missionaries brought back stories of Japanese civilization, which was just as industrialized and just as sophisticated as our own.

Yet, religion became a sticking point for some anti-Japanese supporters. While at certain times they would call the Japanese people "followers of the Mikado[50]," they would often try to suppress Japanese desires to become Christian, and therefore assimilated into United States culture. But it was not the majority of people who protested any aspirations of assimilation among the Japanese community.[51]

The belief of some white Americans towards Japanese religions were varied and at many times contradictory. The epitome of the contradiction was an incident between Christian Japanese and the white residents of the Sunset and Bronson streets neighborhoods.[52] The incident began when a Japanese minister purchased land in the area with the intent of setting up a church. Shortly thereafter, a group of people, both from the area and outside the area, began to protest the building of the church, seemingly egged on by one of the local newspapers.

The Hollywood Citizen was a newspaper that often printed anti-Japanese articles. While not as bad as some newspapers, it was clear from certain articles published on the topic of a

[50] Mikado references the aspect of the Meiji restoration that pushed for the revitalization of emperor worship. According to Japanese myth, the emperor was a direct descendant of the Sun Goddess, Amateratsu. Because of the introduction of Buddhism and its subsequent integration into the Tokugawa government, emperor worship was not a vital part of religion in Japan until the Meiji Restoration and the reintroduction of Shinto as the state religion.

[51] Box 1, PSRR. Reprint of a newspaper article that appeared in the Hollywood Citizen on April, 19, 1923.

[52] Box 1, PSRR. Reprint of a newspaper article that appeared in the Hollywood Citizen on April, 19, 1923.

Japanese church on Sunset that the newspaper was biased against Japanese people. However, what is less than clear, was whether or not the actual residents of that area felt the same way towards the Japanese.

At the time, Japanese nationals could not own land in the United States. Instead, the Japanese minister's wife, who was white, legally purchased the land for the church.[53] Two main newspapers in the area printed articles regarding the topic, The Hollywood Citizen and the Hollywood News. The Hollywood Citizen unmistakably took the side of the anti-Japanese protestors. The Hollywood News, on the other hand, seemed more neutral on the topic and reported more on the events and actions of the people than on the beliefs of the newspaper. However, other newspapers, such as the L.A. Examiner also reported on the conflict, though not as extensively.

The assembly of Japanese people in that area for the purpose of worship had been occurring long before this incident began. However, as the Japanese Christians who worshiped there became more organized, it was decided that they would unite as Presbyterians and build an actual house of worship.[54] It was reported that if the owner of the property had been informed that the land was to be used to host a Japanese church, the owner would have been reluctant to sell the property.[55] However, the owner had no such compunctions about selling the property, claiming "it made no difference to her as long as she got her money."[56] Additionally, when other

[53] Box 1, PSRR. Reprint of a newspaper article that appeared in the Hollywood News, January 9-10, 1924.
[54] Box 1, PSRR. Reprint of an article that appeared in the Hollywood News on May 2, 1923. "Japanese Church Situation is Explained."
[55] Box 1, PSRR. Reprint of an article that appeared in the Hollywood Citizen on April 19, 1923. "Invasion by Japs to be Protested."
[56] Box 1, PSRR. "Japanese Church Situation is Explained."

citizens of the area stood up for Japanese rights, the anti-Japanese element often threatened them, sometimes with violence and intimidation.[57]

There are contradictory numbers given to the actual number of residents that protested the Japanese movement into the Sunset area. While on April 24, 1923, the Hollywood News reported that a full 800 people showed up at a preliminary meeting, the L.A. Examiner reported that it was merely 200 people.[58] Additionally, people involved in pro-Japanese movements, report that while the mass meetings gave the feeling that the citizens were directly involved with the anti-Japanese activities, separate committees were actually responsible for actions carried out against the Japanese.[59] These actions included intimidation tactics against both the Japanese and any person who did business with the Japanese. To increase sympathy for the anti-Japanese sentiments, death threats against the officers of the anti-Japanese movement were created by the anti-Japanese movement members.[60] Additionally, anti-Japanese publications were created by people who later stated that they were not particularly against the Japanese people for the purpose of making money.[61]

As the struggle for the church continued, contractors were intimidated by using fake paperwork demanding cessation of the building. However, as the contractor discovered that the paperwork was, in fact, fake, the building was completed and the contractor, in turn, sued the attorney that served the fraudulent papers. [62]

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[57] Box 1, PSRR. "Denouncement of Intimidation." Report of the Presbyterian Church of Hollywood's public announcement of its position on the Japanese Presbyterian Church issue.

[58] Box 1, PSRR. Reprint of an article that appeared in the Hollywood News on April 24, 1923. "800 Residents of Hollywood Band in Body."

[59] Box 1, PSRR. Interview with Dr. E. S. Bickford by William C. Smith.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Box 1, PSRR. Interview with Rev. T. Horokoshi by William C. Smith.

However, the activities of the anti-Japanese committee clearly was not supported by all of Hollywood. The first president of the Hollywood Protective Association quit because his activities negatively affected his real estate business.

According to Dr. E. P. Ryland, the actual opposition to the church was not because it was a Japanese church, but the manner in which the business was conducted and general religious strife. Dr. Ryland felt that people in the area would have felt the same had the church been created by any other group of people.[63] Even anti-Asians felt that the incident regarding the Presbyterian church had less to do with the group that was building the church than the politics behind it.[64]

Academic

School life was a major part of early life in the United States. While in the 1920s compulsory education did not encompass high school aged children, it still affected children's lives in some of the same ways it does today. It was at school that children met their peers, made friends, and built relationships that could last throughout their lives. It was also a place where people could have had their first interactions with people of other races.

While it was more uncommon for poor families to extend their education beyond the compulsory point, educational interactions happened far beyond that of elementary and high school students. To look at the roles of education in the views of Japanese in the 1920s, one must look at interactions between both elementary students and high school students.

The first is very small children in grammar or elementary schools. There were several reasons why these interactions were completely different from any other sort of interaction at the

[63] Box 1, PSRR. Interview with Dr. E. P. Ryland by William C. Smith.
[64] Box 1, PSRR. Interviw with Dr. Stewart P. MacLennan by William C. Smith, March 11, 1924.

time. These interactions would be untainted by economics and communication factors. The Japanese children who attended elementary and grammar schools were generally fluent in English as most of them were either born in the United States or came when they were small.[65]

The other major educational interactions would have been between high school age students. The interactions between high school students were different for other reasons that the difference between elementary age students. Japanese students in this situations may or may not have spoken fluent English and been accustomed to American culture of the time.

However, given the impact of education on the minds of people, education is one of the most important aspects to look at when trying to determine the actual attitudes of white Americans towards Japanese people in the 1920s. Both high school students and elementary students' interactions shaped the beliefs regarding the Japanese, both in the 1920s and in the future.

While adults may act one way when they are discussing their own interactions with another race or culture, the true test of their beliefs and tolerance lies with what they allow their children to do and who they allow them to interact with. A parent my feel that doing business with the Japanese people is tolerable and even advantageous; however, they may feel differently about allowing their children to interact with the children of Japanese immigrants.

In the 1920s, Japanese children were regularly attending school with white children. There was probably multiple reasons why the Japanese were not segregated from white children to the extent that even African American and Chinese students had been. Different areas took different approaches to the situation and part of it was due to the inability and unwillingness to supply a different facility to a small number of children in a given community.

[65] There are some incidences when Japanese immigrants who were much older attended elementary schools to gain a basic education and to learn English, but these incidences were few as indicated by the 1920 census.

Additionally, there was a backlash against Japanese schools run by the Japanese community since many of these schools were taught in the Japanese language.[66] This was because white Americans were cautious of the motives behind any school not conducted in English. Moreover, language school conducted in languages aside from English were believed to encumber any attempt at the immigrant population from assimilating into American culture. Critics of these schools did not limit themselves to Japanese or even Asian language schools. The Supreme Court case that allowed for foreign language schools as long as public funding was not used involved a German language school.[67]

Japanese students that attended mostly white schools were in a unique position. Within the environment of school itself, there seemed to be very little discrimination against them, let alone hostile attitudes. Several incidences depict such interactions.

Regarding small children, there was very little inequity between the students. In the protective confines of school, Japanese students actively took part in school activities.[68] Indeed, when incidences of racism occurred outside the school, the children did not seem to understand why certain children were being singled out. This was the case for a small girl noted by Gale Seaman to George Gleason. In school, she was considered very popular and she was not singled out in school activities. In performances for students, teachers, and parents, the girl actively participated and there was no negative reactions to the girls participation. However, on a school trip the girl was unfairly singled out for her race and was not allowed to join her classmates in a public pool.[69]

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[66] Box 25, PSRR. Ken Ishikawa. "A Study of the Japanese Language Schools in California"
[67] Box 1, PSRR. Unknown. "Ruling Hits Ban of Japanese Schools." Examiner June 5, 1923.
[68] Box 1, PSRR. Memorandum from Gale Seaman to George Gleason. July 29, 1924.
[69] Ibid.

While the question of whether this demonstrates a strong anti-Japanese sentiment is difficult to determine. While the children and their parents did not seem to hold anti-Japanese attitudes towards the little girl, other people clearly did. What is not said is the reaction of the teacher in that situation, whether the little girl was made to sit on the side while the other children played in the pool or if all the children subsequently left the pool was not clear.

In another incident involving young children, a child played the role of George Washington in a school play. The play would have been largely ignored by the community if not for the interference of a decidedly anti-Japanese newspaper, the Star. While school officials were not certain who had told the Star of the play, they suspected that a certain child had relayed the news of the play to her father, a member of the American Legion.[70]

The Star reported that a small boy was given the role of George Washington above the protests of others in the school. However, further questioning of the teachers and students revealed that the Japanese boy was chosen by his peers to play George Washington for the simple reason that they believed he was the better actor. Clearly the child's parentage did not come into account with the children. Moreover, there was no objections from the teachers of the school at the time, though one later stated that she would not have allowed a non-white child to play the part.[71] The play went on as scheduled.

It was after the play that the Star showed up wanting to make a huge story out of what essentially amounted to an incident of no account. Indeed, when the Star called the school shortly after the program was finished, they were told that the program contained no special features.[72] Frankly, the Star was the only one at the time that considered a Japanese boy in the

[70] Box 27, PSRR. Report from Ruth H. Greiner on Fred Kosaka, Harrison Elementary School, and The Star of Seattle, WA.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid.

play as a special feature. Additionally, the principal reported that there were only a few negative responses from the parents of students attending the school.[73] The report of the incident also made a note to include perceptions from the Japanese in the area. While the Japanese resented the hypocrisy of stating they could not be assimilated and then condemning them when they had assimilated to American culture, they also conceded to the idea that it was the Star that was anti-Japanese and not Americans as a whole. Also, within the white community people stated their dissatisfaction of the commotion created by the Star over an unimportant issue.[74]

Older children were also in a unique situation. When children reached high school age, white students knew and generally accepted the Japanese students that had been together with them since elementary school. However, as with the elementary students, it seemed that vocal, outside elements were the instigators of discord among the student body.

On November 27, 1922, the Hollywood Daily Citizen reported that a Japanese boy had been elected student body president.[75] The report was slightly erroneous in that the boy in question was elected to the position of Commissioner of Boys' Welfare at the school, part of a group of twelve people who were elected to look after the affairs of the students at Le Comte Junior High in California. Nevertheless, a large majority of the student body elected the Japanese boy into office. Additionally, while there was no accusations of dishonesty in the voting process and the other candidate did not support the opposition of the Japanese student, the Hollywood Daily Citizen called for a recall of the student, stating that there was widespread dissatisfaction with a Japanese student being elected.

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[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Box 29, PSRR. Unknown. "Japanese Pupil Elected Student Body President at Le Comte Junior High School." November 27, 1922. Reprint.

Other newspapers did not report that there was widespread disappointment with the election results. It is clear from the headlines in the Hollywood Daily Citizen which read "Ask School Board to Oust Japanese Youth From Office" that the newspaper took a stand and was encouraging vocal outrage against the school.[76] There was no massive movement from the parents of students to remove the Japanese student from office. Teachers at the school maintained that since the student was elected by a large majority a recall was unwarranted.

The Hollywood News did report that there was a petition circulated by three students, however all efforts for large scale protests failed.[77] While the Hollywood Daily Citizen claimed that this was due to a lack of organization, they seemed to contradict that statement saying that students told those calling for the protest that they could strike the following two days, which were vacation days for the school.[78] Additionally, the petition was not brought to the attention of the principal, M. W. Chandler, indicating that it was not widely popular among the student body.[79] Also, the Los Angeles Examiner reported that it was a small minority group, tenacious in their opposition that forced Le Conte Junior High to abolish the entire student government system.[80]

Another occurrence in Washington was the appointment of a Japanese student to valedictorian. This occurred in April, 1924 at Franklin High School located in Seattle, Washington.[81] As with the elementary play, the Star seemed to attempt to instigate din among

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[76] Box 29, PSRR. Unknown. "Ask School Board to Oust Japanese Youth From Office" Hollywood Daily Citizen. November 29, 1922. Reprint.

[77] Box 29, PSRR. Unknown, "Japanese Yarn is Untrue, Says Principal." Hollywood News. November 28, 1922. Reprint.

[78] "Ask School Board"

[79] Box 29, PSRR. Unknown. "Japanese Boy Still Holding School Post." Los Angeles Times. November 29, 1922. Reprint.

[80] Box 29, PSRR. Unknown. "Fall of Nippon in High School." Los Angeles Examiner. December 16, 1922.

[81] Box 29, PSRR. Greiner, Ruth H. "The Japanese Valedictorian of Franklin High School" Box 25 File 32, pg 2.

the people of Seattle. The newspaper sent a reporter to cover the story. The student's picture was enlarged and captioned with the headline "Will Mr. Coolidge Listen?"[82] The report that followed condemned the valedictorian as being a "subject of Mikado" with loyalties outside of the United States and unworthy of addressing the graduating class, their parents, and the faculty of the school.[83]

It was reported that white Americans did not launch a massive protest against the student and swept the entire incident as propaganda for the Exclusion Clause that had just been introduced to Congress. In fact, it seemed that the general sentiment was against the Star stating that reporting the story in such a negative manner was a "dirty deal" against a student that earned the right to hold the position.[84] During the commencement speech itself it was reported that any negative outbursts could not be heard, either because they were drown out by the applause or because there was none.[85] The student himself also reported that the vast majority of students were supportive of his position as valedictorian.[86]

These examples clearly demonstrate that the general public was not the instigators in any anti-Japanese movements. In fact, it was a handful of newspapers that had previously made their positions on exclusion very clear that triggered any actions. Additionally, in all of the cases, the Japanese students were supported not only by the majority of their fellow students, but also by the community as a whole. There were no demonstrations reported regarding any of these instances.

Additionally, these examples show that there was not a widespread movement against the Japanese socially. It does demonstrate that there were small amounts of resistance to the

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[82] Box 29, PSRR. Unknown. "Will Mr. Coolidge Listen?" The Star. May 15, 1924. Box 25, File 32, pg 2.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Greiner, 4.
[85] "Japanese Yarn Untrue"
[86] Ibid.

Japanese presence on the West Coast. However, it also reveals that these pockets of people were not supported by the general population of these areas. While well organized and in influential positions, they did not gain large followings nor were they able to stage mass protests.

CONCLUSIONS

It is a fact that racism existed in the 1920s towards all Asian Americans. After legislation banned immigration from China, America turned towards Japan as a source of cheap labor. However, as cheap labor was brought in, the residents of the states they were brought to began to stir up trouble. Many workers feared that their jobs would be taken by these strangers who would work cheaper and longer than they could. It did not matter that the jobs that these new immigrants were taking were the jobs that the white Americans did not want in the first place.

Agriculturally, Japanese people were considered a valuable labor source and vital to the essential fruit industry. In other areas, the Japanese people were considered equally important. In logging, the majority of white Americans tolerated, if not approved of them. Many companies refused to fire Japanese workers. It was outside labor unions that incited frustration aimed at the Japanese workforce, often with no real affect.

Socially, the Japanese held a less secure position in the minds of Americans. It is clear that the children of Japanese immigrants were received well in school and by the community in general. Religiously, there was animosity towards the Japanese, but it was still on a very small scale compared to the overall population of the area.

It was small groups of vocal, sometimes violent, and influential people that pasted the Exclusion Clause to the Immigration Act of 1924 and shoved it through Congress on the pretense

that it was desired by the majority of people on the west coast. They used underhanded means such as intimidation and deception to convince others that exclusion was what was best for California and the United States. They bolstered their position with propaganda and fraudulent claims that made the Japanese population seem far more intimidating and threatening than it was in reality.

However, even then, the majority of the population did not buy into their rhetoric. In the cases of certain injustices against Japanese, the main body of people would, in fact, side with victim rather than the attackers, as was the case with the Japanese valedictorian. Other people realized that Japanese immigrants were needed as workers. While some did believe that the Japanese would be content to work for less than the standard, it was a myth perpetrated by the anti-Japanese movement that the Japanese enjoyed living in substandard conditions. Japanese workers did unionize and increase their standards of living. Yet, when they did, the anti-Japanese movement was there yet again to say that they were trying to take over the United States.

While the Japanese on the West coast experienced a great deal of racism and prejudice, it was at the hands of a relatively small minority of people and the negative sentiment was not shared by the majority. With the tactic used and the influence in Congress that the small minority of people had, on the other hand, they were able to push legislation through that barred all immigration from Japan to the United States.

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