

FROM FRANK CHIN THE AUTHOR OF "BORN IN THE USA: JAPANESE AMERICA 1889-1947"

CHARACTERS

NARRATOR- an objective voice

ANONYMOUS-Young Nisei author who favors whites over Japanese

JOE KURIHARA-An older Hawaiian Nisei. A veteran of WWI, who considered himself a patriot. Witnessed the Evacuation from Terminal Island, joined the JACL. He quit the JACL when he learned that they supported the Evacuation and Internment.

NARRATOR

## *Tule Lake Interlude.*

**Tule Lake, California. War Relocation Authority, 1942.**

**ANONYMOUS.<sup>1</sup>**  
**"A Nisei Diary."**

ANONYMOUS

December 3, 1942. "Hashing":

Why is my father so late with my monthly allowances? (Oh, well, I can't ask too much of him. I feel like a parasite living off the money he sweated on the asparagus field.)...Gad, the banquet was swank! The coeds came with their boyfriends in breathtaking evening gowns, perfuming the whole place. We served the entree in a dimly lighted dining hall and they ate luxuriously...  
 ...The girls were tall, slim and extremely beautiful. In the kitchen, plenty of untouched and perfectly good foods were dumped into the garbage and thrown away. I took a piece of pie and some slices of roast beef home to the gang...Gee, I wish I was born a "Hakujin" and able to live in a fraternity.

March 5, 1942, "I told you so":

"I told you so!" Old man Kawashima leered at me, baring his ugly yellow teeth. The weasled old issei wiped his nose with his hand and brushed it on his only khaki trousers which he wore invariably even in town.

"You *nisei* are a weak spineless bunch," he chided. "You boast about your citizenship, your rights and loyalty but look what

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<sup>1</sup> Anonymous identifies himself as an editor of the Tule Lake internee newspaper, *the Tulean Despatch*.. In the work of this and the others writing in this collection of internee articles, essays and diaries celebrating the first anniversary of Tule Lake's opening, the influence of sociologist and JACL theorist Shotaro Frank Miyamoto is reflected in the Nisei contempt for the Issei, and the Miyamoto-esque argument that the Issei brought on and deserved all the white racism and the camps because they refused to cast off their Japanese ways and be assimilated.

happens. The government is going to throw you into internment camps with the rest of us like sheep and cattles, and you still talk about faith in American democracy. Why do you keep on kidding yourself?"

I wanted to tell the old fossil to lay a brick egg, but I sulked away with my soul half-crying, half-weeping because I wanted so much to keep faith. I see no logic in having to surrender my freedom in a country which I sincerely believe to be fighting for the same freedom. Why are we *nisei* so helpless?

NARRATOR  
**JOE KURIHARA**  
VETERAN FROM HAWAII

Joe Kurihara was a Hawaiian born Nisei, WWI vet and author of a patriotic newspaper column. He joined the JACL thinking they were formed to fight the Evacuation and Internment, Joe Kurihara discovered he was wrong and wrote:

JOE KURIHARA

Truly it was my intention to fight this evacuation. On the night of my return to Los Angeles from San Diego was the second meeting which the Citizens Federation of Southern California (sponsored by JACL) held to discuss evacuation. I attend it with a firm determination to fight to the bitter end. I found the goose was already cooked. The Field Secretary of the JACL instead of reporting what actually transpired at a meeting they had had with General DeWitt just tried to intimidate the Nisei to comply with the evacuation by stories of threats he claimed to have received from various parts of the state.

I felt sick at the result. They'd accomplished not a thing. All they did was to meet General DeWitt and be told what to do. These boys claiming to be the leaders of the Nisei were a bunch of spineless Americans. Here I decided to fight them and crush them in whatever camp I happened to find them I vowed that they would never again be permitted to disgrace the name of the Nisei as long as I was about. (THE SPOILAGE, Thomas & Nishimoto. 1969)

NARRATOR

He was fisherman, licensed navigator, and captain. He was a veteran. He had proven his loyalty, according to the JACL standard of proving loyalty. Unlike the JACL he was opposed to the evacuation. When he evacuated to Manzanar Relocation Center he spoke his mind against the JACL, against their the All Camp Meeting, of November 1942, against the evacuation of people from their homes, in order to draft the men. He was a natural leader.

Joe Kurihara gathered audiences of a thousand, or more, at Manzanar, against camp and against the JACL. After the Manzanar Riot of December 6 and 7, 1942, and the beating JACL delegates to the JACL National Convention, Kurihara was removed to the now notorious, Tule Lake, based on accusations that he was one of the masked men that beat up the JACL's Fred Tayama, and a leader the riot. Joe Kurihara, was accused of leading a resistance movement at Tule Lake and was sent Leupp.

At Tule Lake, he came under the sway of the Dorothy Swaine Thomas, of the University of California's, Japanese Evacuation Research Project, and provided information, including, the above about his life.

He wrote so passionately about his Americanism, and the errors of the government handling of the evacuation, one wonders why he didn't take the issue to court. Instead, at Tule Lake, he gave up his U.S. Citizenship.

He wrote to Miss Yoshiko Hosoi, from an isolation camp, in Leupp, Arizona, July 5, 1942:

JOE KURIHARA

I, Joseph Y. Kurihara, one of the oldest members of the Nisei Second Generation of Japanese Ancestry, do hereby take the liberty of expressing my views in respect to the treatment administered to the Niseis by the Government of the United States. Frankly speaking without prejudices, the Government of the United States has committed one of the greatest errors since the founding of this great nation, and without question the greatest injustice against one of its Citizens. May I ask what reparation the Government is considering to right the wrong? I believe the Government is fully aware of the error it has committed. Will it admit the wrong and compensate the Niseis for the injustice, or will it white-wash the fault of the Administration by pigeon-holing the issue? This is excusable error and this discriminative injustice has caused the Niseis to change their mind.

The uninformed public may question and wonder as to who is responsible for the Niseis change of mind. If it is posted with the trend of events which took place since 1900, more so since the out

break of the present war, if need not look back very far. Even myopics can readily see and point his accusing (sic) fingers at the guilty party or parties..

The denouncing phrase, "Once a Jap always a Jap. The only good Jap is a dead Jap" has been repeatedly stated that today, even Japanese who strain their brains to converse in English may be heard uttering it with contempt.

Now why can't the Americans be just a little broadminded? Is it any fault of ours because we bear the features of the Japanese? Are we to be discriminated and condemn because we happened to be of Japanese blood without a fair trial? What is there that justifies the Americans to hate the Japanese so revoltingly? Is this hate that of today or yesterday, or even yesteryear? No! Personally, I know it is not that of today or yesterday or even yesteryear.

It is the hate of yesteryear of two score and ten years which sprouted immediately following the defeat of China, then know (sic) to the Western World as the "Sleeping Lion." It became greatly intensified in 1900 and double more so since the defeat of the Russian Bear (1905-06) which was then one of the greatest military powers of the world.

The pitied Japan has surprised the World Thru the Victory over China and then she has paralyzed the world with fear thru the Victory over Russia. Her phenominal(sic) military successes have forced the World to grant her a just place among the families of nations.

Rising so rapidly from a Feudal State into one of the greatest of the first class powers has created suspicion and jealousy among those who professed friendship prior to their victories. Therefore, the intense persecution the Japanese have suffered for half a century has come not thru her untiring industries, but thru "Fear, Hatred, and Jealousy." This fear, hatred and jealousy was characterized into a nightmare under the vicious title of "Yellow Peril."

This horrible dream of Yellow Peril was persistingly pounded into the minds of the Anglo-Saxon people at the slightest provocation, thereby indelibly imprinting in their mind, the hatred of the Japanese people. To soothe the fueling of hatred and jealousy, the insinuating word "Jap or Japs" came into birth and gained popularity most

disgustingly since. Today many people use it as a common word to indicate the Japanese without the bitterness attached, but other than those who use it without malice, it commands the same ugly intentions embodied in it as was originally used. We Japanese know it and broad-minded as we are, we resent it. "This word alone is responsible to a great extent, not speaking of the law prohibiting intermarriage in Pacific Coast States, for the non-assimilation of the Japanese with the Caucasians. Regardless of this unpleasant feeling many of us were true to this country at the outbreak of the War between Japan and the United States I can state without exaggeration the majority of the Japanese-Americans were ready to bear arms and fight for the preservation of American Democracy.

We Japanese boys and girls were taught in Japanese Schools to be true to the country to which we owe our living. This the Japanese Government stresses by reminding us "*Kaku on.*" With such thought in mind I have willingly fought for this country to such thoughts in mind I have willingly fought for this country to save Democracy in the first World War, and I was willing and ready to do my share in this war. This sincere desire to help prosecute this war to victory was demonstrated in my application for a position as a Navigator to Navigate the Bombers cross the Continent to New York from San Diego, and thence over the sea to England. This application was made sometime during the month of January at the Employment Department of the Consolidated Air Corporation. Much to my disappointment, I was very cleverly refused. Instead of informing me like a man to man, he avoided the painful issue by requesting me to come every day and see if there was an opening. Suspecting what he meant I asked him why was it necessary for me to call every day in person when others are being notified to report for work? The person in charge was unable to answer with the exception that if I wanted a job I just call and see if there is an opening.

It doesn't make sense when others have been and are being notified. I know of boys who applied for work, one as Navigator of a Bomber and the other as Radio Operator. They were notified to report for work. If they can be notified over the phone, why wasn't I?

Because I was a Jap. My credentials as master of ship, and the

Certificate of Honorable Discharge from the United States Army were stated. But they were of no value. Instead a secret police was detailed after me as I left that office. The land lady also told me that two intelligence officers were investigating me and have gone thru my room. This gave me the first repulsive feeling which has taken root and grew with bitter experiences mounting from day to day.

Losing all hope of obtaining satisfactory work at San Diego, I then went to Terminal Island to see if the California Ship Building Company has anything along my profession. Here I was very gently told that I would not enjoy working if I was given a job. The fellow workmen will discriminate and make it very unpleasant. There were two Japanese boys working at the time who the Company thinks will be forced to quit through unjust discrimination by fellow workers. To make it easier for them, they were put on night shift. Though they were good welders and the Company did want to retain them, they finally left their work.

To my knowledge there were several Japanese-American Diesel Engineers operating out of San Diego on the Tuna Clippers. They were certified engineers with License. But they were flatly refused by the machinists Union of America Federation of Labor solely thru discrimination. Such is the ways of even a labor Union where equal right and protection should have been tantamount.

Now, if it is not the hiring department, then it is the fellow workers and the labor union. May I ask are the Americans such narrow minded people? To me they do not seem so but somehow they must be. What could be the cause? I couldn't think of anything but the vicious propaganda that was mercilessly printed in all the leading chronicles of the Metropolis poisoning the minds and rerousing the animosities planted within their hearts during the past half a century.

General DeWitt frightened beyond hope by the whirlwind successes of the Japanese military might and driven desperate by the hysterical cries of the office seeking petty politicians have finally issued a proclamation, there by realising the Constitutional rights of the Japanese-American citizens. Probably we, the smallest of the minority group were not worthy of consideration. We were nobodies. Our desire to serve and prove our loyalty was denied even

by the Army. Able bodied Japanese boys were classed 4-D. (sic) Those in the Army were sent back into civilian life without an Honorable Discharge. In the face of these incontestable proofs to do our part we were classed unloyal.

Assembly Centers were erected at great expenses to the Government. Citizens and non-citizens alike, 110,000 of them were corralled like bunch of sheep in godforsaken corrals and were made wards of the Government overnight. They were the most prosperous industrious, and law abiding residents of the country, but just because they happened to be Japs, they were thrown out of their homes as if they were mere chattles. (sic) After completely uprooting them economically and made them peniless (sic) and destitute, they were obliged to work for mere pittence of \$16.00 A Month.

What he writes seems designed to rouse the Nisei reader to action. But what action?

After corralling us like a bunch of sheep in a hellish country, did the government treated us like citizens? NO! We were like aliens regardless of our rights. Yet when we are needed, we are told because you are citizens of the United States, you must do everything in your power to help defeat the Axis. To claim us as citizens of the United States after corralling us with aliens and treat us as aliens, is an insult to our intelligence.

He begs the question US Citizenship, and alternatively and being treated as aliens:

Responsible government officials further tells us to be loyal, and to enjoy our rights as American citizens, we must be ready to die for the country we must show our loyalty. If such is the case, why are the veterans corralled like the rest of us in the camps? Have they not proven their loyalty already?

NARRATOR

He seems to have described JACL and the government's side of the question. His question marks seem to point out flaws in that point view. Instead of urging his readers to band together, and find a sympathetic lawyer to present his case as citizen-veteran against the camps, he reacts personally. The JACL and the government acted against him out of spite, and he is

"spited."

JOE KURIHARA

Now, who wouldn't be spited? I for one will not forgive. This Government of the United States as long as I live. I have sworn Severence of my allegiance to the Government of the United States and became 100 per cent pro-Japanese. I am today every proud of being a Japanese. There is nothing for any one of us to be ashamed of being a Jap. To be born a Jap is the greatest blessing God had bestowed upon us. To live as Jap is the greatest pride we can enjoy in life. And to die as Jap under the protection of the Japanese Flag which has weathered through many National storms without a defeat for 2600 years is the greatest honor a man can ever hope to cherish. Such is my opinion today, and such will be my opinion tomorrow. Who made me so?

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