

Ethnic Solidarity

The Settling of Japanese America

During his visit to California in the 1920s, a young Japanese man from Hawaii was shocked by the pervasiveness and intensity of anti-Japanese hostility. He had heard "various rumors" about the terrible ways whites treated the Japanese there. "But I didn't realize the true situation until I had a personal experience," the Nisei said. "In one instance, I went to a barber shop to get my hair trimmed. On entering the shop, one of the barbers approached me and asked for my nationality. I answered that I was Japanese, and as soon as he heard that I was of the yellow race, he drove me out of the place as if he were driving away a cat or a dog."¹

This Nisei had come from a vastly different place. In Hawaii, Japanese were needed as laborers, and they had been incorporated by the planters in a paternalistic racial hierarchy. A large white working class did not exist in the islands; in fact, most of the people in the islands were Asian and the Japanese alone represented 43 percent of the population. Their problems and difficulties were related mainly to their conditions as laborers. They were generally confined to the wage-earning plantation work force; possibilities for self-employment in shopkeeping and small farming were limited. The plantations operated retail stores for food, clothing, and other provisions, and most of the arable lands in the islands were owned by the government and the "Big Five" corporations. Aware they could not effectively advance themselves through individualism and small business, Japanese tended to emphasize a class strategy of unionization, politics, and collective action.

On the mainland, however, Japanese faced a fundamentally

different "necessity." As our Japanese youth discovered in California, here he was a member of a racial minority. Altogether, Asians were extremely few compared to whites, and the Japanese — the largest Asian group — totaled only 2 percent of the California population. While agricultural and railroad employers of Japanese laborers were willing to include Japanese in subordinate economic and social roles, whites generally scorned their very presence and white workers waged hostile and sometimes even violent campaigns to keep the Japanese out of the labor market. Ethnicity more than class tended to determine social relations on the mainland. The Japanese found certain possibilities that existed to a greater extent on the American continent than in Hawaii — the presence of economic niches for small shopkeeping and the availability of land for small farming. Consequently theirs would be a different path — ethnic solidarity and ethnic enterprise.²

Japanese ethnic solidarity — a shared identity as countrymen and common cultural values — contributed to the establishment of the Issei ethnic economy, which in turn provided an economic basis for ethnic cohesiveness. But both their ethnicity and their economy developed within an American context of what Edna Bonacich terms "ethnic antagonism." Racial exclusionism defined the Japanese as "strangers" and pushed the Issei into a defensive Japanese ethnicity and group self-reliance. Denied access to employment in the industrial and trade labor market, many Issei entered entrepreneurial activity, turning to self-employment as shopkeepers and farmers. "When I was in Japan, I was an apprentice to a carpenter," explained an Issei, "but in America at that time the carpenters' union wouldn't admit me, so I became a farmer." Thus the Issei developed a separate Japanese economy and community, making America a society of greater cultural diversity. But the very success of the Japanese in enterprise further aroused waves of exclusionist agitation, and their very withdrawal into their self-contained ethnic communities for survival and protection reinforced hostile claims of their unassimilability and their condition as "strangers."³

Ethnic Enterprise

Eight years after the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, there were only 2,039 Japanese on the U.S. mainland. But within two decades, the Japanese had surpassed the Chinese in number — 72,257 to 71,531. Twenty years later, while the Chinese population had remained virtually constant, the Japanese had nearly doubled to 138,834. They

were concentrated in the Pacific Coast states, especially California, where 42 percent of the total continental Japanese population lived in 1900, and 70 percent thirty years later. By 1930, the Japanese were almost evenly divided between Issei, or first generation, and Nisei, second generation. Approximately 40 percent of the Japanese migrants had made America their permanent home, and together with their children they were ushering Japanese America into the *teiji* — the era of settlement.

Like the Chinese before them, the Japanese immigrants experienced racial discrimination. In fact, they inherited much of the resentment and prejudice that had been directed against the Chinese. Sometimes the Issei were even called "chinks." As a young boy, Minoru Iino attended a grammar school where his white classmates looked at him with curiosity. "Some of them asked me to talk in Chinese, not realizing that I was Japanese," he recalled. "When I talked Japanese, they all laughed." When he walked home from school, Iino was asked by the white boys to make "Chop-Suey" for them, and heard them singing, "Ching ching chinaman chopped off his tail."⁴

But the newcomers were usually viewed and treated as a distinct group. Racist curses repeatedly stung their ears: "Jap Go Home," "Goddamn Jap!" "Yellow Jap!" "Dirty Jap!" Ugly graffiti assaulted their eyes at railroad stations and in toilets: "Japs Go Away!" "Fire the Japs!" On the street corners of Santa Monica Boulevard and Sunset Boulevard in Los Angeles, scribbles on the sidewalks threatened: "Japs, we do not want you." Outside of a small town in the San Joaquin Valley, a sign on the highway warned: "No More Japs Wanted Here." The term "Jap" was so commonplace it was even used unwittingly. "Attorney Morton, who was one of my acquaintances," remembered Chohhei Nishikata, "said, 'Hello, Jap,' or 'Hello, Mr. Jap,' in a friendly way whenever he saw us. Intellectual though he was, he didn't know that 'Jap' was not the correct word."⁵

But discrimination went beyond words. "People even spit on Japanese in the streets," Jubei Kono told an interviewer years later. "In fact, I myself, was spit upon more than a few times." "There was so much anti-Japanese feeling in those days!" exclaimed Choichi Nitra. "They called us 'japs' and threw things at us. When I made a trip to Marysville to look for land, someone threw rocks." Entering barbershops operated by whites, Japanese were told: "We don't cut animal's hair." When the newcomers tried to rent or buy houses, they were turned down by realtors who explained: "If Japanese live

around here, then the price of the land will go down." At theaters, Japanese were often refused admittance or seated in a segregated section. "I went to a theatre on Third Avenue with my wife and friends," an Issei recalled. "We were all led up to the second balcony with the Blacks." In the cities, they were pelted with stones and snowballs, and their businesses were vandalized — their store windows smashed and the sidewalks in front smeared with horse manure. In the country, Japanese labor camps were time and again attacked by whites, and Japanese-owned barns became targets for arson.

*For a little while
Encountering a person
Who was anti-Japanese,
I rubbed against a spirit
Out of harmony with mine.*⁶

At times it was difficult for them to restrain their rage. "They called us 'Japs,' so we kicked them, and they ran away," growled Minejiro Shibata. "Whenever the whites looked down on me, I got really mad. . . . They must have thought of us as something like dogs." Victims of racial slurs in school, Japanese children sometimes lost their tempers. "During recess the white children all gathered round me and bullied me, calling out 'Jap! Jap!'" remembered Yoshito Kawachi. "I got to the point where I couldn't stand it any more, so I bought candy and gave it out little by little to those who were friendly. After a while everybody started shaking hands with me — all except two girls who persisted in being hard on me. Finally my patience broke and I hit them one day."⁷

The Japanese on the mainland experienced not only more intense racial discrimination but also a more impersonal labor structure than their counterparts in Hawaii. During the early decades, most mainland Japanese were located in migratory labor; in 1909, there were 40,000 in agriculture, 10,000 in railroads, and 4,000 in canneries. Unlike plantation workers, they did not have a direct relationship with their employers: Japanese labor contractors, *keiyakunin*, operated as intermediaries between laborers and employers. They functioned as employment agents, recruiting laborers in the port cities, transporting them to the work sites in the country, and negotiating wages and labor conditions. They charged a fee or commission, to be deducted from wages. Contractor Kumamoto Hifume, for example, collected ten cents from the \$1.10 daily wage of each

worker he had recruited for the Northern Pacific Railroad. A contractor with a work force of a thousand men would have a lucrative income. A supplier of labor to employers, contractors also served as foremen or field bosses: they supervised the workers, translated instructions, and disbursed wages.⁸

Japanese workers found that their employers had virtually no interest in their welfare. The labor contract arrangement and the migratory nature of work precluded paternalism and employer responsibility. Constantly moving from field to field and carrying blankets for bedding, migratory farm laborers were called *buranke-katsugi* — persons who shouldered blankets. They did not live in permanent camps where they could build stable communities: they were literally here today and gone tomorrow. Constantly shuttled from one construction site to another, railroad workers lived in box-cars, sleeping in double-decked bunks. "We slept in the freight cars, suffering a lot from troops of bedbugs. In order to protect ourselves from these despicable insects we each made a big sleeping sack out of cotton cloth, crawled in with our comforter and blanket, and then pulled the string tight at the top to close up the sack." Japanese cannery workers were shipped from the West Coast to Alaska then sent back after the fishing season.⁹

In the valleys during the summer, farm workers felt the hot wind blowing against their perspiring bodies as the temperature went up to 120 degrees and the field became as "hot as though it were paved with hot iron boards." In the mountains during the winter, railroad workers were whipped by frigid winds. "In winter . . . the temperature went down to 20 degrees below freezing," they recalled. "Because of the severe cold, our excrement froze immediately when we went to the toilet outside the tent." They tried to fight off the weather by singing:

*A railroad worker —
That's me!
I am great.
Yes, I am a railroad worker.*

*Complaining:
"It is too hot!"
"It is too cold!"
"It rains too often!"
"It snows too much!"
They all ran off.*

*I alone remained.
I am a railroad worker!*¹⁰

But the laborers were usually too tired to sing. Loading eight-foot ties onto freight cars from 7:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M. every day was enough to make railroad workers "gri their teeth" and "scream." The square logs bit into their shoulders, leaving them in a "greasy sweat." In Alaska, Japanese cannery workers had to race furiously and frantically against the machinery. After the boats brought in the catch of salmon, conveyor belts carried as many as two hundred salmon per minute up to the deck. The men, holding hooks in both hands, had to sort this churning multitude of huge fish and did not have a single second to relax. The cannery workers suffered from a particular problem — the "Alaskan smell," "a nasal cocktail of rotten fish, salt, sweat and filth." They would strip to the skin, throw away their work clothes, and scrub themselves thoroughly in the shower. Still the smell "wouldn't come off, as if it had penetrated to their very guts." Bathed in dusty sweat, farm laborers worked in the fields from dawn to dusk, harvesting the crops and hoeing the weeds, row after row, their bodies constantly bent. They cursed the compression of their lives:

*All my living days
Gripped tightly and pressed into
That old hoe handle!*¹¹

They also swore at the tasteless food and monotonous diet. Japanese farm laborers "drank river water brought in by irrigation ditches. When they felt hungry, they devoured fresh grapes. If they ate supper, it consisted of flour dumplings in a soup seasoned with salt." Railroad workers also ate dumpling soup, called *suion*. "For breakfast and for supper we ate dumpling soup, and for lunch we had baked dumplings," said Kumaichi Horike. "Since we didn't have real soy sauce, we used home-made sauce concocted from burned flour, plus sugar, salt and water — a strange mixture indeed."

*Sticky dumpling soup
And immigrant episodes,
Mixed into a stew!*

Many suffered from malnutrition and night blindness due to their poor diets. At the end of the month, after payday, the railroad workers would leave their mountain camps and travel to town. There they

bought bourbon at one or two dollars a bottle, canned salmon, and rice. Homesick for Japanese food, the hungry men made "extravagant" rice balls covered with slices of salmon and gleefully consumed their improvised sushi.¹²

Getting drunk on cheap whiskey, the workers sang the songs of Japan and talked about home. Sometimes homesickness overwhelmed them. "After a while I finally became night-blind," a railroad worker recounted sadly. "I couldn't see things in the evening, so I quit working earlier than other people. One day I was standing in front of a shack, alone and lonely, I saw a woman approaching along the railroad from a distance. I felt it was strange and gazed at her, and discovered that the woman was my dear old grandma in my hometown. 'Oh, grandma!' Shouting, I ran toward her — but suddenly she disappeared. I was seized with a sharp homesickness, and in the middle of that wasteland I wept out loud."¹³

During their hours of leisure, Japanese laborers had little to do but gamble. A 1902 labor handbook warned them: "As a laborer in the countryside, you will toil from dawn to dusk with only shots of whiskey and cigarettes to enjoy. Beware of gambling! Why did you leave your home and cross the wide Pacific to endure hardships in this foreign land? It was of course to enrich your family and benefit the homeland. Then, why try to forget your long days of toil by gambling?" But the workers had to do something to pass the time, to help them forget. And they might, they hoped, even strike it rich. They retreated to Japanese pool halls, which seemed to be ubiquitous — forty-one in San Francisco, twenty-one in Sacramento, nineteen in Fresno, and thirty-five in Los Angeles in 1912. To find female companionship, lonely men went to Japanese bar-restaurants where *shakuyu* (barmaids) served them familiar foods and spoke Japanese with charm and traditional deference.¹⁴

Perhaps we should stay in the city, the men wondered, and find work there. But work in the city was also demanding and exhausting. Restaurant worker Tadashi Yamaguchi remembered how he had to wake up at four o'clock in the morning in order to start the wood fire for the stove. "I began to serve guests at 6 A.M. At 11 A.M. when the chief cook prepared dinner, I was in charge of the pantry and arranged the salad orders. My work was finished at 8 P.M." Describing the daily labor and life of laundry workers, Tsuruyo Takami of Spokane detailed her long day: "My husband was running the Rainier Laundry. . . . At noon I had to prepare a meal for twelve. The employees worked from 8 A.M. to 5 P.M., but I began to fix the dinner

at 5 P.M., cooking for five or six persons, and then after that I started my night work. The difficult ironing and pressing was left for me. . . . Frequently I had to work till twelve or one o'clock. Not only I, but all the ladies engaged in the laundry business had the same duties."¹⁵

In the cities, a separate Japanese economy of hotels, boarding houses, restaurants, shops, stores, and pool halls quickly sprang up to meet the immigrants' needs. In the *Nihonmachi*, or Little Tokyo section, Japanese could feel comfortable among compatriots while avoiding racial discrimination from white-owned businesses. There they could also make connections for employment. Newly arrived immigrants could stay at a hotel or boarding house where labor contractors helped them find employment outside of the city. The owner of three boarding houses and the Tamura Hotel in San Francisco, Tamura Tokunosuke provided lodging to Japanese immigrants and supplied laborers to contractors at the rate of three dollars per worker.¹⁶

By 1909, according to the Immigration Commission, there were between 3,000 and 3,500 Japanese-owned establishments in the western states, most of them in major cities like San Francisco, Seattle, Los Angeles, and Sacramento. In its survey of 2,277 Japanese businesses, the commission found that 337 were hotels and boarding houses, 381 restaurants, 187 barbershops, 136 poolrooms, 136 tailor houses, 124 provision and supply stores, 97 laundries, and 105 shoe shops. This Japanese ethnic economy created jobs, especially for some 12,000 service workers.¹⁷

The formation of the Japanese urban economy was sudden and extensive. Between 1900 and 1909, the number of Japanese businesses jumped from ninety to 545 in San Francisco and from fifty-six to 473 in Los Angeles. By 1910, a sizable ethnic economy existed to service the Japanese community. There were 3,000 establishments and 68,150 Japanese in the western states — a ratio of one business per twenty-two persons. Generally the businesses were small in scale. In California in 1909, of the 2,548 enterprises, only sixty-four were owned by corporations and 550 by partnerships, while 1,934 represented individual proprietors. Fifty-eight percent of the establishments had capital investments of less than a thousand dollars each, and 55 percent of the proprietors operated their businesses without hired help.¹⁸

Japanese ethnic enterprise in America also included large-scale businesses. Masajiro Furuya was considered a top businessman

among Japanese on the Pacific Coast. Born in 1863, Furuya received a teacher's credential and served in the military for three years. In 1890 he arrived in Seattle, where he worked as a tailor; two years later, he opened a tailor shop and grocery store. His business expanded rapidly as more and more Japanese immigrants came to the Northwest. His grocery store became a department store where Japanese customers could find ethnic foods such as sake and tofu as well as Japanese art. Furuya established branch stores in Portland and Tacoma, a post office, a labor supply agency, and the Japanese Commercial Bank.

Furuya was able to pay his Japanese workers low wages, for they were unable to find employment in white-owned companies. He organized a small army of traveling salesmen, dressing them in the "Furuya style" dark blue suits and sending them into the back country to take orders. "The job of travelling salesmen for Furuya wasn't easy," said Chieto Morita. "As a salesman I travelled about in a truck in Washington, Idaho, Montana, North Dakota and Wyoming with loads of goods. . . . I travelled among roundhouses, sawmills, railroad sections and gangs where Japanese worked, to get orders."¹⁹

As an employer, Furuya imposed strict discipline on his workers and expected loyalty from them. " 'Captain' Furuya always taught us 'to be honest,' " one of his employees said years later. "I always lived up to his teaching. I am truly grateful to my deceased master." Another "Furuya man" recalled how every morning in the office they had a *hibi no chikara* (inspirational meeting). After he had gathered his fifty employees around him, Furuya instructed them to cultivate the Christian faith and to convey Christian love to the customers. His relationship to his workers was parental; in fact, he lodged many of them in his boarding house, where they occupied the floor below Furuya and his family. His men remembered him as a joyless and stern businessman: "Mr. Furuya had never seen movies, plays or baseball in all his life. . . . There were no vacations or Sundays off for Mr. Furuya, so he gave no vacation to the employees." "Every time he came around in the office, we felt stiff, as if a military officer had come to inspect. Such was Mr. Furuya; but he had one bad habit. While talking with others, he picked his nose and made a ball of it with his thumb and little finger, and flipped it away. They called it 'Mr. Furuya's snot-shot.' "²⁰

As a businessman, Furuya was in the right place at the right time, possibly in more ways than one. The expansion of his ethnic enterprise into a little empire required a considerable amount of

investment capital, and one account of its origin became widely known in the community. "It was an accepted opinion among us in the Japanese community," an Issei revealed, "that Furuya's success was attributable to Japanese prostitutes' money which had been entrusted to him." They worked, it was said, in three "pink hotels" on King Street in Seattle, and they asked Furuya to keep the money for them in the safe in his tailor shop. "But the women lived in such a precarious trade, and also, some of them may have died or moved away under certain circumstances without requesting the money back. As a result, Furuya, they say, made big money out of it."²¹

The Furuya Company was part of a growing service economy that paralleled increasing Japanese participation in agriculture. In the late 1880s, Issei had been employed initially as farm laborers in the Vaca Valley of California and on farms near Tacoma in Washington. Increasingly, as they left the railroads, mines, and lumber mills, Japanese immigrants entered agricultural employment — the apple orchards in Washington, the hop fields in Oregon, the vineyards and fruit farms in California, and the beet fields in Idaho, Utah, and Colorado. But they did not want to remain field laborers. By 1909, significantly, 6,000 Japanese had become farmers.²²

The Japanese farmers had "practically all risen from the ranks of common laborers," the Immigration Commission observed in 1909. "Of 490 for whom personal data were secured, 10 upon their arrival in this country engaged in business for themselves and 18 became farmers, while 259 found employment as farm laborers, 103 as railroad laborers, 4 as laborers in sawmills, 54 as domestic servants, and 42 in other occupations." Most of the Japanese immigrants had been farmers in Japan. For centuries their families had cultivated small plots, irrigating the land and relying on intensive labor to make it yield harvests. Becoming a farmer in America was a fervent dream.²³

To obtain land to farm, the Japanese utilized four methods — contract, share, lease, and ownership. In 1910, for example, of the total Japanese farm acreage, 37,898 acres were under contract, 50,400 under share, 89,464 under lease, and 16,980 under ownership. The contract system was a simple arrangement: the farmer agreed to plant and harvest a crop for a set amount to be paid by the landowner when the crop was sold. The share system involved greater risks as well as the possibility of greater remuneration; where the contract farmer was in effect paid a wage, the share farmer received a certain percentage of the crop's profit. The contract and share systems enabled Japanese immigrants to raise themselves from

field laborers to farmers, even though they did not have the capital. Under both arrangements, the landowner provided the tools, seed, fertilizer, and everything else necessary for the production of the crop; the Japanese farmer, in turn, was responsible for the labor. In order to feed himself and his workers, he purchased supplies on credit from storekeepers and merchants. After the crop was harvested and sold, the farmer then paid off his expenses — his wages owed to his laborers and his bills owed to his mercantile creditors. Under the lease arrangement, the Japanese farmer rented the land; he assumed full responsibility for all the expenses for the crop and paid the landowner rent. He could secure capital or interest-based loans from brokers and shippers and could be advanced provisions by merchants by agreeing to pay 10 to 20 percent higher prices for the goods he purchased. At the end of the season, if he harvested a bountiful crop and received a good price for it, he would then pay his rent and clear his debts. The goal of Japanese farmers under the three systems was to accumulate enough capital to purchase land.²⁴

But what enabled them to become farmers so rapidly was their timely entry into agriculture. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, industrialization and urbanization led to increased demands for fresh produce in the cities. The development of irrigation in California at this time opened the way for intensive agriculture and the shift from grain crops to fruit and vegetable production. Between 1879 and 1909, the value of crops representing intensive agriculture skyrocketed from only 4 percent to 50 percent of all crops grown in California. This tremendous expansion occurred under the stimulus of new market possibilities for fruit distribution created by two extremely important technological achievements — the completion of the national railroad lines and the invention of the refrigerator car. After 1880 the refrigerator car, observed historian Gerald Nash, generated a complicated chain of events, placing the lucrative eastern markets within reach of California fruit growers for the first time in history.²⁵

Many of the fruit and vegetable farmers were Japanese. They concentrated on short-term crops like berries and truck vegetables. As early as 1910, they produced 70 percent of California's strawberries, and by 1940 they grew 95 percent of the state's fresh snap beans, 67 percent of its fresh tomatoes, 95 percent of its spring and summer celery, 44 percent of its onions, and 40 percent of its fresh green peas. Based on intensive cultivation, Japanese agriculture grew rapidly and flourished. In California, the Japanese owned or leased

twenty-nine farms with a total of 4,698 acres in 1900. Within five years, the total acreage had jumped to 61,858 and increased again to 194,742 by 1910. Ten years later, the Japanese controlled a total of 458,056 acres.

As Japanese men entered farming, many sent for their wives or picture brides. The women found their new homes were often crude "huts" with oil lamps for light, boards nailed together with legs for tables, and straw-filled canvases for beds. Chiyo Hisayasu found a single house in the middle of the fields. "It was a dilapidated hovel said to have been a hunter's cabin. There was only one room, in which there were three beds." Her husband shared the tiny house with a young boy and an older man. They had stretched a thick rope across the room and hung clothes on it to make a kind of temporary curtain for the newlyweds. "What an inappropriate life for a bride and groom!" she later exclaimed. Another Issei wife described her house as a "shack" with "one room, barren, with one wooden bed and a cook-stove — nothing else. The wind blew in with a weird whistle through the cracks in the board walls."²⁶

The workday on the farm was long and demanding. Stooped over the rows, husbands and wives worked side by side in the fields, their hands in constant motion as they felt the early-morning sun warm their backs and later the chilly air of dusk. Remembering the pace and punishment of farm work, Yoshiko Ueda said: "I got up at 4:30 A.M. and after preparing breakfast I went to the fields. I went with my husband to do jobs such as picking potatoes and sacking onions. Since I worked apace with ruffians I was tired out and limp as a rag, and when I went to the toilet I couldn't stoop down. Coming back from the fields, the first thing I had to do was start the fire [to cook dinner]." Ueda worked so hard she became extremely thin. "At one time I got down to 85 pounds, though my normal weight had been 150."

*Both my hands grimy,
Unable to wipe away
The sweat from my brow,
Using one arm as towel —
That I was . . . working . . . working.*²⁷

Women had double duty — field work and housework. "I got up before dawn with my husband and picked tomatoes in the greenhouse," Kimiko Ono recounted. "At around 6:30 A.M. I prepared breakfast, awakened the children, and all the family sat down at the

breakfast table together. Then my husband took the tomatoes to Pike Market. I watered the plants in the greenhouses, taking the children along with me. . . . My husband came back at about 7 P.M. and I worked with him for a while, then we had dinner and put the children to bed. Then I sorted the tomatoes which I had picked in the morning and put them into boxes. When I was finally through with the boxing, it was midnight — if I finished early — or 1:30 A.M. if I did not."

*Face black from the sun
Even though creamed and powdered,
No lighter for that!*²⁸

Issei women divided their time into *hatarite ita*, or working, and *asondoru*, or keeping house. Often Issei women complained about their husbands as "Meiji men": "We worked from morning till night, blackened by the sun. My husband was a Meiji man; he didn't even glance at the house work or child care. No matter how busy I was, he would never change a diaper." "Since my husband was a 'Meiji man,' he didn't split firewood [in the morning] and help me as white husbands do." After working in the greenhouse and taking care of children all day, "I did miscellaneous chores until about midnight. However tired I was, the 'Meiji man' wouldn't let me sleep before him." A woman captured in poetry the feeling of numbing exhaustion many Issei sisters experienced:

*Vexed beyond my strength,
I wept. And then the wind came
Drying up all tears.*²⁹

Over the years, Issei men and women converted marginal lands like the hog wallow lands in the San Joaquin Valley, the dusty lands in the Sacramento Valley, and the desert lands in the Imperial Valley into lush and profitable agricultural fields and orchards. "Much of what you called willow forests then," farmer S. Nitta proudly told an interviewer in 1924, "Japanese took that land, cleared it and made it fine farming land." In 1920 the agricultural production of Japanese farms was valued at \$67 million — approximately 10 percent of the total value of California's crops. A year later, in his report to Governor William Stephens, Colonel John P. Irish, president of the California Delta Association, described the Japanese triumph:

They [the Californians] had seen the Japanese convert the barren land like that at Florin and Livingston into productive and prof-

itable fields, orchards and vineyards, by the persistence and intelligence of their industry. They had seen the hardpan and goose lands in the Sacramento Valley, gray and black with our two destructive alkalis, cursed with barrenness like the fig tree of Bethany, and not worth paying taxes on, until [K.] Ikura, the Japanese, decided that those lands would raise rice. After years of persistent toil, enduring heartbreaking losses and disappointments, he conquered that rebellious soil and raised the first commercial crop of rice in California.³⁰

One of the most successful Japanese farmers was Kimji Ushijima, better known as George Shima. After arriving in 1887, he worked initially as a potato picker in the San Joaquin Valley and then became a labor contractor, supplying Japanese workers to white farmers. Shima wanted to become a farmer himself and began by leasing fifteen acres. To expand his operations, he leased and purchased undeveloped swamplands in the delta; diking and draining his lands, he converted them into fertile farmlands. He rapidly expanded his farming operations near Stockton and used a fleet of a dozen steamboats, barges, tugboats, and launches, bearing the name "Shima," to transport his potato crops from Stockton to San Francisco. By 1912, Shima controlled 10,000 acres of potatoes valued at half a million dollars and was regarded as a Japanese Horatio Alger. Describing his smart business practice of selling crops when prices were high and storing them when prices were low, the *San Francisco Chronicle* praised Shima as a model: his success "pointed to the opportunities here to anybody with pluck and intelligence." Wealth did not immunize Shima from racism, however. When he purchased a house in an attractive residential section close to the university in Berkeley, he was told to move to an "Oriental" neighborhood by protesters led by a classics professor. The local newspapers announced: "Jap Invades Fashionable Quarters" and "Yellow Peril in College Town." But Shima refused to move. Raising his family in Berkeley, he had his children educated at the best colleges in the country — Vassar, Harvard, and Stanford. Widely known as "the Potato King," Shima had an estate worth \$15 million when he died in 1926. His pallbearers included David Starr Jordan, the chancellor of Stanford University, and James Rolph, Jr., the mayor of San Francisco. Two years before his death, Shima told an interviewer that he had lived in this country so long he felt "more at home here than in Japan."³¹

The development of agriculture was central to the emergence of the Japanese ethnic economy. In 1925, approximately 25,000 out

of 53,884 gainfully employed Japanese — 46 percent of the total — were engaged in agriculture. Most Japanese farmers were small operators, their farms usually under forty-nine acres. As truck farmers, they sold their crops to local markets in cities like Los Angeles, Sacramento, Fresno, and San Francisco. In the Los Angeles City Market in 1909, for example, 120 of the 180 produce stalls were owned by Japanese. As Japanese agriculture became important economically, it reinforced the development of the urban Japanese ethnic economy. Farmers relied on urban businessmen for their labor supply, capital, and provisions, and in turn, shopkeepers and produce distributors in cities received fruit and vegetables from the farmers.

The success of this Japanese-immigrant economy reflected the effectiveness of Japanese ethnic solidarity and the mutual-support systems they had developed in America. Japanese farmers belonged to *kenjinkai*, prefectural- (*ken*) based social associations (*ka*). A *kenjinkai* brought its members or people (*jin*) together for social activities such as annual picnics; more importantly, it provided a network of social relations buttressing economic cooperation and assistance for employment, housing, and credit. Frequently Issei farmers from the same *kenjinkai* formed a credit-rotating association, or *tanomoshi*, to pool resources and make capital available to individuals for initial investments on equipment and land. Farmers organized cooperatives — *kobai kumiai* for purchasing bulk foods and *sango kumiai* for marketing their crops. Farmers' associations, or *nogyo kumiai*, assisted members in renting and purchasing lands, settling disputes between tenants and landlords, obtaining supplies, disseminating information about agricultural techniques and produce prices, and selling crops in the city markets. The principle of group cooperation was embedded in Japanese culture. *Tanomu* denoted "dependable" and conveyed the sense of trust and honor that buttressed the cooperative-credit system. A *kumi* in Japan was a hamlet or neighborhood, signifying community and cohesiveness. An Issei farmer explained the idea of cooperation to his son: "If you hold *hashi* [chopsticks] individually, you can certainly break them all, but if you put them together, why you can't break a bunch of *hashi*. And so, like that, as a family we should stick together, but also as a community we should be sticking together."³²

The very entry of the Japanese into agriculture, while drawing from their ancestral culture for success, transformed them from sojourning *dekasegimin* to settlers. The experience of Riichi Satow was the story of many fellow Issei farmers. He had leased a ranch outside

of Sacramento and started growing strawberries. The harvest for the first year was "just stupendous," he said, and the harvest for the following year was again "wonderful." The yield was some 2,200 crates, and each crate sold for \$2.25. "We hired only two workers during the picking time, and my brother and I did all the rest of the work. With the money from the harvest, about three thousand dollars, I bought this place and moved in. About that time I began to think of settling down in this country permanently. I was convinced that settling down here was a must."³³

"Live permanently here, remain on the soil," many told themselves.

*Resolved to become
The soil of the foreign land,
I settle down.*

Japanese farmers were raising not only crops but also children, the Nisei born in America, and they began to feel a deeper connection to the land they cultivated.

*America — where
My three sons grow lustily —
More than a wayside stop.*

But their decision to remain here, to make their home in this foreign land, evoked ambivalence and memory:

*Past dream spent chasing
Rabbits — one called "Go Home!"
The other, "Stay here!"*

*Once decided to stay,
In America I dream of
My old native town!³⁴*

Ethnic solidarity and agricultural enterprise enabled many Japanese immigrants to establish themselves, and as successful settlers they believed Issei could even become accepted in American society. This was the hopeful vision of Abiko Kyutaro. His mother had died giving birth to him in 1865, and Abiko was raised by his grandparents. When he was fourteen years old, he ran away to Tokyo, where he was converted to Christianity. Separated from his family, Abiko lacked the normal ties binding him to Japan. Feeling his "am-

bitions were stifled" in Japan, Abiko departed for America. In 1885 he arrived in San Francisco, with only a dollar in his pocket. While Abiko did menial jobs to make ends meet, he attended school and then enrolled in the University of California but did not complete his degree. By the early 1890s, Japanese immigrants were beginning to arrive in increasing numbers, and Abiko saw opportunity in the service enterprises. During the 1890s, he operated several different businesses including a restaurant and a laundry, and he began publishing a newspaper, the *Nichibei Shimbun*. Fluent in English and familiar with business, Abiko became a labor contractor and one of the founders of the Japanese American Industrial Corporation. His company, organized in 1902, quickly became one of the largest labor-contracting agencies in California, supplying Japanese labor to agriculture, mining, and railroads.³⁵

A thoughtful man, Abiko worried about the future of the Japanese in America. They were coming as dekaseginin, and he believed that this mentality was the source of their problems. As sojourners, Japanese seemed to be driven by a single purpose — to make money and return to Japan as soon as possible. Thinking they would be here only temporarily, Issei did not seem to care about their shabby living conditions and their indiscrete behavior, which included drinking, gambling, and carousing with prostitutes. Neither did the dekaseginin feel a desire or a responsibility to contribute to American society. The sojourner identity, in turn, was contributing to the anti-Japanese exclusionist movement, for it confirmed hostile claims of their foreignness and unassimilability.

As dekaseginin, Issei were placing an albatross around their own necks, Abiko argued; but they should cast it away and strive to become settlers. They should abandon their life-style of bunkhouses and gambling houses and try to live respectfully, worthy of acceptance in American society. Issei should bring their wives and families to America and seek to become naturalized citizens. Abiko personally set an example for his teaching: in 1909 he returned to Japan to marry Yonako and brought his bride to his new homeland. But, Abiko believed, Japanese immigrants had to do more than establish families here. They had to develop economic and social stakes through farming. A student of American history and culture, Abiko was aware of the significance of agricultural land ownership in this country. Farming represented the path for the transformation of many Europeans from immigrants to Americans. A practical man,

Abiko was certain his fellow Japanese were ably suited to become Americans through agriculture, for most of them had been farmers or had come from farming families in the old country.

The realization of a Japanese-American community rooted in agriculture became Abiko's crusade. His newspaper, the *Nichibei Shimbun*, became the voice of his vision. The name of his newspaper, or *shimbun*, announced its perspective: *Nichi* for Japan and *Bei* for America. In the pages of this leading Japanese daily, Abiko proclaimed his message — *dochaku eijn*, settlement on land and permanent residency: Go into farming, own land, be productive, put down roots in America. Abiko also published the *Nichibei Nenkan*, the *Japanese American Yearbook*. A detailed record of Japanese agricultural holdings in California, his publication listed the names of all farmers, their form of land tenure, their acreage holdings, and their crop specialties. To assist potential farmers, the yearbook included examples of share and lease agreements and information about the cost of purchasing land and operating farms.³⁶

An activist, Abiko took his crusade beyond words. He decided to create an actual model of his ideal Japanese farming community. In 1906, he founded the American Land and Produce Company. His company purchased 3,200 acres of undeveloped desert land near Livingston in the San Joaquin Valley, and the land was parceled into forty-acre lots and sold to Japanese farmers. "We believe that the Japanese must settle permanently with their countrymen on large pieces of land if they are to succeed in America," Abiko's company announced in an advertisement. "Those wishing to take advantage of this opportunity for success are welcome to visit one of our offices." The settlement was called the Yamato Colony. *Yamato*, the ancient name for Japan, was to be a "new Japan," Abiko's "city upon a hill" in the San Joaquin Valley of California.³⁷

A handful of Issei pioneers responded to the invitation in 1907 and moved to the desolate site, where they were greeted by clouds of fine sand blown by the wind. Their actions told their purpose: the colonists settled as families and planted a variety of fruit trees and grapes — a long-term crop requiring four seasons to mature. They planted eucalyptus trees around their houses to shield them from the 110-degree summer heat and to break the force of the valley winds. Significantly, the pioneers chose a site for a cemetery. "If there was to be a permanent colony," pioneer Seinosuke Okuye wrote in his diary in 1907, "the spot for the cemetery should be chosen from the beginning." Abiko's faithful followers had left the graves of their

ancestors behind in Japan and they were planning to stay, literally to become one with the soil of their adopted land.³⁸

The nearby Merced River had been dammed and the Yamato colonists constructed a system of irrigation canals and ditches to tap this life-giving supply of water. While visiting Yosemite, the source of the Merced River, Okuye was struck by the breathtaking beauty of the Sierra Nevada Mountains, with their colossal white granite half domes reaching toward the heavens like cathedrals. There he experienced a moment of epiphany: "When I saw the magnificent scenery of Yosemite I felt as though I had been given a sign." The Yamato colonists irrigated the parched land, and by 1910, they had planted 1,064 acres of grapes, 507 acres of fruit trees, one hundred acres of alfalfa, and five hundred acres of hay. "In the eleven years since the Japanese founded their colony," reported the *San Francisco Chronicle* in 1918, "fruit shipments from Livingston have increased from nothing in 1906 to 260 carloads in 1917." By then, the Yamato Colony was home for forty-two Issei farmers, all with families. They were owners of the land, mixing their labor with the soil and becoming Americans.

*A wasted grassland
Turned to fertile fields by sweat
Of cultivation:
But I, made dry and fallow
By tolerating insults.*

Fertile fields moistened by sweat, Abiko hoped, would bring respect to the Japanese and an end to the insults directed against them as "strangers"; lands transformed would trumpet Japanese dreams of settlement in America.³⁹

The Exclusionist Basis of Ethnicity

By the time Japanese immigrants began coming to the United States, they could see what had happened to the Chinese: the presence of Chinese in the manufacturing and trades occupations had provoked stormy protests from white workers and led to exclusionary laws and the immigrant retreat into Chinese ethnic enclaves. Initially, Issei laborers, like the Chinese immigrants before them, tried to pursue employment opportunities in the general economy. In 1890, fifteen Japanese workers began producing shoes for a white manufacturer in San Francisco; they then lost their jobs because of pressure from the Boot and Shoemakers' White Labor League. Driven out of shoe

manufacturing, the Japanese workers adopted a strategy designed to avoid ethnic antagonism in the labor market. They withdrew from shoe production and specialized instead in shoe repairing, where they would not be competing with white laborers. But the Japanese shoemakers did not clearly understand the problem they faced: white workers resented not only Japanese competition but their very presence in America. This message was conveyed to the Issei during the 1903 strike in Oxnard, California.

Japanese farm laborers were first employed in the sugar-beet industry of Oxnard in 1899. Within three years, there were nine Japanese labor contractors supplying workers to farmers in the area. In 1902, a group of Oxnard businessmen, including the presidents of the Bank of Oxnard and Bank of A. Levy and the manager of the American Sugar Beet Company, organized a new labor contracting company, the Western Agricultural Contracting Company. Its purpose was to undercut the independent Japanese labor contractors while at the same time lowering labor costs. Within a year, the WACC had gained control of approximately 90 percent of the contracting business. Under the WACC, workers suffered severe reductions in wages as the piecework rate for thinning beets dropped from five dollars to \$3.75 per acre.

In response to the WACC and wage cuts, five hundred Japanese and two hundred Mexican agricultural laborers organized the Japanese-Mexican Labor Association in February, 1903. The association elected Kosaburo Baba as president, Y. Yamaguchi as secretary of the Japanese branch, and J. M. Lizarras as secretary of the Mexican branch. At the meetings of the JMLA, discussions were conducted in both Spanish and Japanese, with English serving as a common language for both groups. For the first time in the history of California, two minority groups had come together to form a union. Demanding the right of independent labor contractors to contract directly with the growers, the JMLA led twelve hundred workers—90 percent of the labor force—out on strike in early March.

The leadership of the JMLA defined the struggle in broad class terms. In a statement written jointly by Yamaguchi and Lizarras, the union declared: "Many of us have family, were born in the country, and are lawfully seeking to protect the only property that we have—our labor. It is just as necessary for the welfare of the valley that we get a decent living wage, as it is that the machines in the great sugar factory be properly oiled—if the machines stop, the wealth of the valley stops, and likewise if the laborers are not given a decent wage,

they too, must stop work and the whole people of this country suffer with them." The strike was effective. The WACC had only sixty men under contract. The farmers saw that the JMLA controlled the labor they needed, and a settlement was reached by the end of the month: the WACC agreed to cancel all existing contracts, except one, and farmers agreed to pay union laborers a piecework rate of five dollars an acre for thinning beets. The JMLA had emerged as a victorious and powerful force for organizing farm laborers.⁴⁰

The strike seized the attention of American labor and raised two fundamental questions of policy: should the American labor movement organize farm workers, and should it admit racial minorities into its ranks? In its support for the JMLA and the strike, the Los Angeles County Council of Labor answered both questions affirmatively. Organized labor on the Pacific Coast must seize this opportunity to organize agricultural laborers, the council declared, for the most effective method of protecting American workers and their standard of living was by the universal organization of all workers. The Council specifically called for the inclusion of the Japanese: "While we are utterly opposed to the unrestricted immigration of the various Oriental races, we heartily favor the thorough organization of those now here, and believe that the fact that men are able to do our work when we strike is sufficient reason why they should be organized, regardless of race or color."⁴¹

A very significant moment in the history of organized labor had occurred. Here was an opportunity to bring together workers of different ethnicities on the basis of class solidarity. The Mexican secretary of the JMLA, J. M. Lizarras realized this, and petitioned the American Federation of Labor to charter his organization as the Sugar Beet Farm Laborers' Union of Oxnard. But this movement to build interracial unity was suddenly thwarted. Samuel Gompers, the president of the federation, agreed to issue a charter to Lizarras only on one condition: "Your union will under no circumstance accept membership of any Chinese or Japanese." Gompers's requirement was racist and contradicted the very principles of the Oxnard strike. Refusing the charter, Lizarras protested:

We beg to say in reply that our Japanese brothers here were the first to recognize the importance of cooperating and uniting in demanding a fair wage scale. . . . In the past we have counseled, fought and lived on very short rations with our Japanese brothers, and toiled with them in the fields, and they have been uniformly kind and considerate. We would be false to them and to

ourselves and to the cause of unionism if we now accepted privileges for ourselves which are not accorded to them. . . . We will refuse any other kind of charter, except one which will wipe out race prejudice and recognize our fellow workers as being as good as ourselves. I am ordered by the Mexican union to write this letter to you and they fully approve its words.⁴²

The JMLA stood by its principles, but without the AFL charter and the general support of organized labor, the Japanese and Mexican union passed out of existence within a few years. Tragically for the American labor movement, Gompers had drawn a color line for Asians. Earlier he had led the movement against the Chinese. Again, in 1903, under Gompers's leadership, the American Federation of Labor turned away from the possibility of class solidarity. A year after the Oxnard strike, the AFL called for amending the Chinese Exclusion Act and extending the prohibition to the Japanese. The *American Federationist*, its official publication, explained the reasons why organized labor in America needed to be racially exclusionary. White workers, including ignorant ones and the newcomers from southern and eastern Europe, possessed qualities enabling them to join and contribute to the labor movement. They could be taught the fundamentals of unionism and would stand shoulder to shoulder with faithful workers. But, the *American Federationist* argued, Japanese immigrants lacked this capacity. They did not share the white workers' "God," their "hopes, their ambitions, their love of this country." Unable to be "assimilated," the Japanese could not become "union men." Carrying to America a different culture and coming here only to make money, they would remain "strangers."⁴³

Meanwhile, in San Francisco, which had been the storm center of the anti-Chinese agitation, white workers had already initiated a political campaign for Japanese exclusion. Demanding the renewal of the Chinese Exclusion Act, scheduled to expire in 1902, white workers assembled at a mass meeting and urged Congress to extend the ban to the Japanese. The Japanese peril, they anxiously stated in their resolution, was uniquely threatening to white labor. Unlike the Chinese, the Japanese had a particular "virtue" — their "partial adoption of American customs" — that made them "more dangerous" than the Chinese had been as "competitors." The protest in San Francisco soon had reverberations in Sacramento. In his 1901 message to the legislature, Governor Henry Gage warned that the unrestricted immigration of Japanese laborers constituted a "men-

ace" to American labor similar to the earlier "peril from Chinese labor." Under Governor Gage's leadership, the legislature sent Congress a memorial requesting legislation for Japanese exclusion. Four years later, white workers formed the Asiatic Exclusion League. "The Caucasian and Asiatic races are unassimilable," they stated in their constitution. "The preservation of the Caucasian race upon American soil . . . necessitates the adoption of all possible measures to prevent or minimize the immigration of Asiatics to America." Meanwhile, newspapers like the *San Francisco Chronicle* and patriotic organizations like the *Native Sons of the Golden West* joined the anti-Japanese exclusionist clamor. "Would you like your daughter to marry a Japanese?" asked the *Native Sons* in their publication, the *Grizzly Bear*. "If not, demand that your representative in the Legislature vote for segregation of whites and Asiatics in the public schools."⁴⁴

Washington seemed unresponsive to the pleas from California, but suddenly, the federal government was forced to address the issue of Japanese immigration. On October 11, 1906, the San Francisco Board of Education directed school principals to send "all Chinese, Japanese and Korean children to the Oriental School." This segregation decision sent political waves across the Pacific. The government of Japan quickly sent a protest to Washington, angrily claiming that the school board action violated a treaty provision guaranteeing Japanese children in the United States equal educational opportunities.⁴⁵

The action of the school board precipitated an international crisis. President Theodore Roosevelt had respect as well as concern for Japan's military power. Japan had demonstrated "feats of heroism" in the war against Russia in 1905, and he was determined to treat Japan with "scrupulous courtesy and friendliness." Anxious to avoid a confrontation between the United States and Japan, Roosevelt scolded the school board for the segregation of Japanese children: "The cry against them is simply nonsense." In a letter to Secretary of State Elihu Root, he complained about how "our people wantonly and foolishly insulted the Japanese in San Francisco." To protect the Japanese against mob violence, federal troops had been deployed in the city. "As you know we now have plenty of troops in the neighborhood of San Francisco, so that in the event of riot we can interfere effectively should the State and municipal authorities be unwilling or unable to afford the protection which we are bound to give the

Japanese." In his December 1906 message to Congress, President Roosevelt urged his fellow Americans to accept the Japanese immigrants:

Here and there a most unworthy feeling has manifested itself toward the Japanese — the feeling that has been shown in shutting them out from the common schools of San Francisco and mutterings against them in one or two other places because of their inefficiency as workers. To shut them out from the public schools is a wicked absurdity. . . . I ask fair treatment for the Japanese as I would ask fair treatment for Germans or Englishmen, Frenchmen, Russians, or Italians.⁴⁶

But President Roosevelt's concern for the Japanese in San Francisco was merely strategic, shrouding for the moment his personal racial attitudes. American expansionism in the past, he had written in 1894, had enabled the "white race" to keep the "best portions of the New World's surface." The incorporation of Hawaii into the United States prompted Roosevelt to criticize the planters there for importing massive numbers of Japanese laborers. The newly acquired islands, Roosevelt argued, should be "filled" with a "white population" representing "American civilization." Committed to the preservation of America as "a heritage for the white people," Roosevelt personally favored the restriction of Japanese immigration. After he left the presidency and was no longer responsible for maintaining peaceful relations between the United States and Japan, Roosevelt became increasingly shrill in his advocacy of Japanese exclusion. "To permit the Japanese to come in large numbers into this country," he argued, "would be to cause a race problem and invite and insure a race contest." Japanese and whites represented "wholly different types of civilization." While both civilizations were "equally high," they represented thousands of years of separate lines of development, and the mixing together of peoples from the "culminating points of two such lines of divergent cultural development would be fraught with peril."⁴⁷

Seeking to resolve the school controversy in San Francisco and to reduce international tensions, President Roosevelt invited Mayor Eugene Schmitz and the members of the school board to Washington. The compromise reached by President Roosevelt and the San Francisco officials revealed the purpose behind the segregation order. Actually it seemed hardly necessary to place Japanese students in the "Oriental School," for there were only ninety-three of them. The real

and larger agenda of the school board's action was Japanese exclusion. The strategy, seeking to create an incident and force Washington's hand, worked. Emerging from their discussions with the president, the officials stated: "We have every reason to believe that the administration now shares, and that it will share, our way of looking at the problem, and that the result we desire — the cessation of the immigration of Japanese laborers, skilled or unskilled, to this country, will be speedily achieved." Satisfied by assurances from the president, the school board members returned to San Francisco and rescinded the segregation order, "excepting in so far as it applied to Chinese and Korean children." President Roosevelt, in turn, issued an executive order prohibiting the remigration of Japanese immigrants from Hawaii to the mainland and also entered into negotiations with Japan to limit Japanese immigration. Under the terms of the 1908 Gentlemen's Agreement, Roosevelt extracted an understanding that Japan would not permit the emigration of laborers to the United States.⁴⁸

The school board controversy intensified anti-Japanese hatred and violence. "The persecutions became intolerable," a Japanese laundry operator said. "My drivers were constantly attacked on the highway, my place of business defiled by rotten eggs and fruit; windows were smashed several times. . . . The miscreants are generally young men, 17 or 18 years old."

*Immigrant records —
Now and then a bloody page
Indicates the pain!*⁴⁹

While the Japanese were hurt by the violence and vandalism of hoodlums in the streets, they suffered even more from the actions of legislators in Sacramento. In 1907, the California legislature began discussions on a bill designed to deny landownership to Japanese immigrants. The bill was introduced repeatedly in sessions of the legislature and became law in 1913. Support for the anti-Japanese legislation was overwhelming — thirty-five to two in the Senate and seventy-two to three in the Assembly. While the law did not specifically refer to the Japanese, it was aimed at them, declaring unlawful the ownership of "real property" by "aliens ineligible to citizenship." The law also stipulated that such aliens would be allowed to lease agricultural land for terms of no longer than three years.⁵⁰

The supporters of the alien land law freely acknowledged its racial intent. Referring to what had happened in Hawaii, where Asian

immigrants had become a majority of the population, Fresno *Republican* editor Chester Rowell wrote to Governor Hiram Johnson: "The law must be passed ultimately, if California is not to be Hawaiianized." State Attorney General Ulysses S. Webb explained that the legislative restriction targeting the Japanese was based on a concern for "race undesirability." The law sought to limit their presence by curtailing their privileges, he continued, for they would not come in large numbers and stay if they could not acquire land.⁵¹

Urging the legislature to pass the legislation, a California farmer described the Japanese threat:

Near my home is an eighty-acre tract of as fine land as there is in California. On that tract lives a Japanese. With that Japanese lives a white woman. In that woman's arms is a baby. What is that baby? It isn't Japanese. It isn't white. I'll tell you what that baby is. It is a germ of the mightiest problem that ever faced this state; a problem that will make the black problem of the South look white. All about us the Asiatics are gaining a foothold.

The concern of many exclusionists was not so much miscegenation as settlement. As Japanese immigrants became landholders, they increasingly became settlers — immigrants with families. The 1908 Gentlemen's Agreement contained a loophole for the entry of picture brides and other family members. "As soon as a Jap can produce a lease," the *Sacramento Bee* warned, "he is entitled to a wife. He sends a copy of his lease back home and gets a picture bride and they increase like rats. Florin [a valley farming town] is producing 85 American-born Japs a year." Seeking reelection a few years later, Senator James Phelan put it more bluntly when he campaigned on the slogan "Keep California White." (Issei farmers responded by saying, "Keep California green.")⁵²

The legislative proscription provoked angry protests from the Japanese government and the immigrant community. The Issei denounced it as the "height of discriminatory treatment," for it accorded the people of a first-rate power "worse treatment than people of third-rate southern and eastern European nations living in the United States." But they lacked political power to protect themselves against the unfair law. Feeling their hope of permanent settlement in America had been shattered, many Issei farmers were forced to organize their lives and work around three-year leases. Aware they could not stay in one place, they concentrated on short-term crops.

Issei farmers were also reluctant to make long-term investments for houses and buildings on their lands. Shortly after the passage of the act, journalist Kiyoshi Kawakami asked an Issei farmer why he did not build a modest farmhouse on his property. "Because the place doesn't belong to us," the farmer answered. "We are just tenants and our term of lease is never longer than a year or two. And, besides, you know what the labor unions at San Francisco and the politicians at Sacramento are talking about us year in year out. We may have to get out any time. . . . We don't know what is going to become of us next year." The farmer calculated it would be "foolish" to invest his "hard-earned" money in housing, like "dumping" the money "in the mud!"⁵³

But Japanese farmers found loopholes in the 1913 law. They were able to own and lease land under the names of their American-born children. "If you wanted to lease or own land for any purpose," recalled I. K. Ishimatsu of San Jose, "you had to use your children's name. . . . A set of books had to be set up for inspection by the state authorities in order to prove that you were an employee working for a wage." Japanese farmers also operated their farms through land corporations in which they held a substantial but minor financial interest. "I bought the land under the name of a corporation," a farmer explained, "because Issei couldn't buy land at that time. The land registration was then switched from the corporation's into our children's names when they came of age. That's how we handled this matter, and I continued growing strawberries." The names of many Issei corporations reflected their hopes — Grace Farm, Truth Farm, Peace Farm, Eden Farm, and Lucky Farm. Seven years after the 1913 law, Japanese farmers had increased their lands under lease from 155,488 to 192,150 acres and their lands under ownership from 26,707 to 74,769 acres.⁵⁴

Japanese farmers soon found themselves facing new and tighter restrictions. Under a 1920 law, aliens ineligible to citizenship were not even allowed to lease agricultural land nor to acquire agricultural land under the names of native-born minors or stock in any corporation owning real property. Three years later, the law was amended, making it illegal for aliens ineligible to citizenship to "acquire, possess, enjoy, use, cultivate, occupy, and transfer real property." "Because of the Alien Land Law," an Issei stated, "there were many who changed their occupations, swallowing their tears." The tighter law, combined with the post-World War I agricultural depression, led to

a drop in Japanese landholdings: between 1920 and 1925, Japanese-owned lands declined from 74,769 to 41,898 acres and Japanese-leased lands from 192,150 to 76,397 acres.⁵⁵

To circumvent the laws, many farmers entered into unwritten arrangements with white landlords. The farmer would actually lease the land but would appear to serve as a salaried manager. An Issei recounted how eight Japanese farmers in town "made arrangements with their children or friends who were citizens and obtained white sponsors in order to run their farms legally. But a couple of them were exposed for violation of the Land Law and their land was confiscated by the State. Really, every farmer lived in fear and trembling. . . . We were all walking a tightrope."⁵⁶

Issei farmers also evaded the law by "borrowing the names" of American citizens. L. M. Landsborough, for example, purchased six lots of land for Japanese farmers with the deeds in his name, and Carl Lindsay held one share out of the twenty-three sold by the Tanji brothers in the Yamato Colony. One of the three directors of the Yamato Produce and Land Company was Guy Calden, a San Francisco lawyer who specialized in the laws affecting the Japanese. Kazuo Miyamoto, a U.S. citizen born in Hawaii, was a senior at Stanford when a distant relative offered to pay his expenses for medical school in exchange for leasing farmland under his name. "Nobody could have planned anything more convenient at such an opportune time," remarked Miyamoto, who went on to graduate from medical school. An Issei farmer explained how many fellow farmers used this practice: "I asked a Nisei nearby to be the nominal owner of the land, and pretended that I worked for the boy. I presume about 80% or 90% of the Japanese farmers in the Auburn district quietly went about their business in this way." But he realized that all of them would be helpless if the law were strictly applied. "It was truly nerve-wracking to live under this heavy pressure of wondering and waiting." An Issei woman said that her son was the nominal owner of the family's farm: "Every time some kind of difficulty arose, we had to pay a lawyer's fee to go through the legal process. I was in dire distress on account of the lawyer's fee. Every day was insecure like this, and whenever we had unfamiliar white visitors, I was scared to death suspecting that they might have come to investigate our land."⁵⁷

California's alien land laws threatened to turn the immigrant's dream of settlement into a chimera. An Issei from Santa Paula, California, called the land law a "death sentence" for the Japanese. Similar laws were also enacted in Washington, Arizona, Oregon,

Idaho, Nebraska, Texas, Kansas, Louisiana, Montana, New Mexico, Minnesota, and Missouri.⁵⁸

The restrictive land laws were based on the ineligibility of the Japanese to naturalized citizenship. Actually, however, their status related to citizenship was not completely clear. The 1790 law granted naturalized citizenship to "white" immigrants only, and the 1882 law restricting Chinese immigration had withheld this privilege from the Chinese. But the laws did not specifically exclude Japanese, and consequently, several hundred Japanese immigrants were able to secure citizenship in the lower federal courts. This practice came to an end in 1906 when the U.S. Attorney General ordered the federal courts to deny naturalized citizenship to Japanese aliens. But the Attorney General's action only sharpened the discussion over citizenship for the Japanese. In his 1906 annual message to Congress, President Roosevelt tried to resolve the issue by recommending legislation to extend naturalized citizenship to Japanese immigrants.⁵⁹

The California alien land act underscored the necessity of citizenship. Newspapers like the *Nichibei Shimbun* and the *Shin Sekai* editorialized that the acquisition of naturalization rights would be "the basic solution" to the harsh and unfair 1913 law. But the naturalization issue involved the larger question of the immigrant's assimilability into American society. "The Japanese are intensely distinct and self-conscious as a race and nation," charged the *Review of Reviews* in 1913. "Those who come here, come as Japanese. They have no thought of becoming Americans." But Issei settlers realized Japanese eligibility to naturalized citizenship could concretely refute such false perceptions and open the way for Japanese immigrants to be transformed from unwanted strangers to welcomed settlers. "Foreign people living within our jurisdiction with no hope of becoming American citizens, constitute a floating unstable element in our national existence," wrote Issei journalist Kiyoshi Kawakami in 1914. "When [Americans] single out aliens of a certain race or nationality as objects of discrimination in the matter of naturalization [they] fix upon them the odium of inferiority and thus instill in their hearts a feeling of resentment." Viewed with contempt and suspicion, Japanese immigrants reciprocated with disdain. "The remedy is obvious," argued Kawakami. "Open the doors of citizenship to them, encourage them to become worthy members of the commonwealth, and their hearts will glow with hope and they will strive to prove their right and fitness to become American citizens."⁶⁰

But the naturalization issue only stirred fears of Japanese im-

migration, which in turn precluded the possibility for the Issei to gain citizenship. The two questions were suddenly separated from each other in 1921: in the "Ladies' Agreement," Japan barred the emigration of picture brides and virtually ended Japanese immigration to America. This new development, explained Kiichi Kanzaki of the Japanese Association of America, meant that Japanese immigration was really nothing for Americans to worry about anymore. The problem was how to make the Japanese already here an integral part of American society. The only way to make certain they would not remain a foreign and isolated group would be to grant them American citizenship.⁶¹

In 1922, the U.S. Supreme Court decided the question of Japanese eligibility to citizenship in the *Ozawa* case. Determined to prove his right and fitness for citizenship, Takao Ozawa had filed an application for U.S. citizenship on October 14, 1914. Ozawa was confident he was qualified. After arriving here as a student in 1894, he had graduated from high school in Berkeley, California, and had attended the University of California for three years. He then moved to Honolulu, where he worked for an American company and settled down to raise a family. After his application was denied, Ozawa challenged the rejection in the U.S. District Court for the Territory of Hawaii in 1916. But the court ruled that Ozawa was not eligible for naturalized citizenship. The petitioner was, the court declared, "in every way eminently qualified under the statutes to become an American citizen," "except" one — he was not white.⁶²

Six years later, the case went before the Supreme Court. Ozawa informed the Court that he was a person of good character. Honest and industrious, he did not drink liquor, smoke, or gamble. More importantly, "at heart" he was "a true American." He did not have any connection with the government of Japan or with any Japanese churches, schools, or organizations. His family belonged to an American church and his children attended an American school. He spoke the "American [English] language" at home so that his children could not speak Japanese. He even chose for a wife a woman educated in American schools instead of one educated in Japan. Loyal to the United States, Ozawa stated he was indebted to "our Uncle Sam" for the opportunity the country had given him. But Ozawa lost his petition: Ozawa was not entitled to naturalized citizenship, the Supreme Court held, because he was "clearly" "not Caucasian." Commenting on the Court's decision, the *Shin Sekai* expressed the rage

and disappointment of the Japanese community: "The slim hope that we had entertained . . . has been shattered completely."⁶³

An even more devastating development soon occurred. In 1924, Congress enacted a general immigration law that included a provision prohibiting the entry of aliens ineligible to citizenship. Although they had not been named explicitly, the Japanese had been singled out for special discriminatory treatment, for the Chinese and Asian Indians had already been excluded by other legislation. "This new law is very unjust," observed Chinese immigrant Andrew Kan in 1924. "This law I think really made for Japanese, but they are afraid to say only Japanese, because Japan is a very strong nation, might make great deal of trouble. So they have to include Chinese, too, but it is not necessary for the Chinese, because they have [the Chinese exclusion] law." But the anti-Japanese exclusionists did not hesitate to state explicitly the law's purpose. In his testimony to Congress shortly before its passage, V. S. McClatchy of California declared: "Of all races ineligible to citizenship, the Japanese are the least assimilable and the most dangerous to this country. . . . With great pride of race, they have no idea of assimilating in the sense of amalgamation. They do not come to this country with any desire or any intent to lose their racial or national identity. They come here specifically and professedly for the purpose of colonizing and establishing here permanently the proud Yamato race. They never cease to be Japanese."⁶⁴

Actually the exclusionist provision for the Japanese was totally unnecessary. The 1924 law provided for immigration based on nationality quotas: the number of immigrants to be admitted annually was limited to 2 percent of the foreign-born individuals of each nationality residing in the United States in 1890. At that time, there were only 2,039 Japanese in this country. Two percent would have been only forty, and for its quota, Japan would have been entitled only to the minimum allowance of one hundred immigrants. In 1920, the Japanese "colony" that supposedly threatened McClatchy's America actually amounted to no more than one hundredth of one percent of the U.S. population.

In an editorial on the 1924 law, the *Rafu Shinpo* of Los Angeles scolded the lawmakers for betraying America's own ideals and dishonoring its best tradition. The Congress had "planted the seeds" of possible future "cataclysmic racial strife," the newspaper warned, by "branding" the Japanese people as inferior. In a "Message from Japan to America," the *Japan Times and Mail* made a distinction between

restriction and discrimination: if the immigration law had excluded all immigration or had placed Japan on the same basis as other nations, Japan would not have resented it. "But Japan does resent a clause that, while not mentioning Japanese specifically, affects Japanese alone of all the races . . . and stamps Japanese as of an inferior race." When R. Ode, a Japanese foreman at a lumber company, was asked by an interviewer in 1924 what he thought about the new exclusion law, he exploded: "That's not right. It's all right if they treat all countries like that, but just Japan, that's not right." Due to the unjust law, many Issei protested, the Japanese were "no longer men but dogs."⁶⁵

The 1924 restriction seemed to complete a cycle. The Issei had initially come as sojourners and had kept their cultural and national ties to Japan. "Necessity," the usual difficulties and circumstances of trying to start new lives in America, encouraged them to promote intragroup cooperation and assistance. But, as they began to settle here, they encountered racism that drove them into ethnic enclaves and strengthened their sense of ethnic solidarity. They were scorned as "strangers from a different shore"; unlike European immigrants, the "Japs," as Robert E. Park put it in 1913, did not have "the right color." Rejected and isolated, Issei came to rely heavily on one another as Japanese in order to survive — to find employment, invest in shops and farms, and protect themselves against an antagonistic white society. The very cohesiveness of the Japanese refueled reactions against "diversity" and confirmed hostile claims of Japanese unassimilability. Reacting to the exclusionist agitation of the larger society, Issei turned inward, sheltering themselves in their separate ethnic communities.⁶⁶

"The Japanese cannot say," an Issei admitted, "they are not clannish. But if they have become more so . . . it is because of restraint, economic deprivation, social ostracism, and political discrimination." Condemning the new law as discrimination based on race, the Japanese government explained the reasons for the Japanese reluctance to assimilate: "The process of assimilation can thrive only in a genial atmosphere of just and equitable treatment. Its natural growth is bound to be hampered under such a pressure of invidious discriminations as that to which Japanese residents in some states of the American Union have been subjected, at law and in practice, for nearly twenty years. It seems hardly fair to complain of the failure of foreign elements to merge in a community, while the community chooses to keep them apart from the rest of its membership." Spurned

by the larger society, Japanese immigrants had retreated into their own communities, and whites were now blaming the victims of racial discrimination for being "strangers."⁶⁷

Waves of despair and anger swept through Japanese-immigrant communities. The Issei had come all the way to America, and scanning the land here, they had seen the deserts, the sagebrush, and the "sand in the windy air." They had been told "nobody could transform it." But, inspired by the liminality of the place, the pioneers had moistened the land with their sweat and had "turned these wide wilderness fields into fertile land," "fresh green rows of strawberries reaching as far as the eye could see." My, what extravagance, they could whisper to themselves. They felt an earned ebullience, a sense of satisfaction as they gazed upon the earth, pregnant with crops. Kneeling to the ground, they lovingly rubbed the dirt between their calloused fingers. Issei lives "decorated the land" as "history." But, after the Ozawa decision and the 1924 immigration act, their lives seemed to be coming to "nothing." Over thirty years of hard work were "ending darkly," their accomplishments inconsequential, their fields runs for melancholy ruminations. Alone Issei would sip their bitter sake, mumbling into their cups:

*America . . . once
A dream of hope and longings,
Now a life of tears.*

One immigrant concentrated all of his deep interior grief in poetry:

*Issei's common past —
Gritting of one's teeth
Against exclusion.*⁶⁸

Dispirited by prejudice and "so much of dark side of life" in America, a few Issei decided to return to Japan. Some reacted to the setbacks by sobbing, "*shikatanai*" ("it cannot be helped") and facing their situation stoically. Perhaps, they thought, they were destined to look back in sorrow at their achievements, their very success decreeing their exclusion. They withdrew into a world of mute despair, saying they were "pioneers" and therefore had to "suffer the hardships." Others also gave up trying to become Americans but did so bitterly. "We try hard to be American but Americans always say you always Japanese," one of them explained in anger. "Irish become American and all time talk about Ireland; Italians become Americans even if do all time like in Italy; but Japanese can never be anything

but Jap." He felt the Japanese had been denied the equality of opportunity offered to immigrants from Europe. "I know I am not wanted," he continued. "No use try to be American, we all have to go back to Japan some day."⁶⁹

But other Issei refused to let "necessity" dictate their future and to sigh "*shikatanai*," sealing their disappointment in tongues of stone and shrouding their rage behind curtains of silence. They knew the dream of America should have delivered more, for they were no longer dekasegin and they spoke loudly of their expectations and their rights. "We live here," declared George Shima, a farmer and president of the Japanese Association of America. "We have cast our lot with California. Our interest is here, and our fortune is irrevocably wedded to the state in which we have been privileged to toil and make a modest contribution to the development of its resources." More importantly, many Issei had in fact become Americans. "We have unconsciously adapted ourselves to the ideals and manners and customs of our adopted country, and we no longer entertain the slightest desire to return to our native country." We have "drifted farther and farther away from the traditions and ideas" of Japan, and "our sons and daughters do not know them at all. They do not care to know them. They regard America as their home."⁷⁰

The 1924 law was a turning point in the lives of the Issei generation. They saw the handwriting on the wall: they had no future in their adopted land, except through their children — the Nisei. The Issei could see they had been doomed to be foreigners forever, their dreams destroyed and their sweat soaked up in an expanse called America. Denied land ownership and citizenship, the Issei placed their "only one hope left" in their American-born children.

*Hope for my children
Helps me endure much from it,
This alien land.*

Like the carp, which they admired for its inner strength and intrepid spirit, the immigrants had swum against the currents of adversity; still, struggling upstream and climbing waterfalls in search of a calm pool where Japanese might live peacefully in America, they found themselves driven backward.⁷¹

Hyphenated Americans: The Nisei Generation

But theirs had been a life of constant struggle, *ganbatte*. And many Issei became even more determined to help their children succeed.

Through the Nisei, the parents hoped, Japanese would no longer be forced to be "strangers" in America. English speaking and educated in American schools, the second-generation Japanese would be "ambassadors" for the Issei. They would teach white Americans about the culture of Japan and the hopes and history of the immigrant generation. As "intermediaries," they would "interpret" the East to the West and the West to the East. "I think it is very good idea for Orientals and Occidentals to meet and exchange the good customs in each," explained Issei farmer S. Nitta. "It is good for the people of different races to know each other. Now the Japanese do not look like Americans, their face is a different color, their hair is different, and maybe we do not have so nice an appearance." But if whites were taught about the Japanese and their culture, they would treat them with tolerance. The Nisei would be the "bridge" (*kakehashi*) to the larger society.⁷²

Issei tried to give the second generation strength and confidence for their mission by teaching them the Japanese principles of *ko* (duty to parent), *giri* (mutual obligation), *on* (ascriptive obligation), and *gamanzuyoi* (strength and endurance). The Nisei must be taught the "precious records" of the "truth," the "history" of the "aches and pains and exclusion."

*My son, remember!
Your parents struggled fiercely
To build their life work
Under the stigma, "Immigrant!"*

Their children were Americans by birth, free from the dark mark, and the Issei hoped the next generation would be able to secure the dignity and the equality of opportunity denied to them.⁷³

The immigrants worked hard and saved their money in order to send their children to college so that they would not be "inferior to Americans." They stressed the need for the Nisei to excel in education, for it would be the key to overcoming the "handicap" of discrimination and "the racial mark of the Mongolian face." "You are American citizens," Issei reminded their children time and again as though repeating a litany. "You have an opportunity your parents never had. Go to school and study. Don't miss that opportunity when it comes." Education would give the second generation access to employment opportunities denied to the immigrants. The parents were willing to give up their own comforts, even necessities, for the education of their children, for the future of the Nisei generation.

"*Kodomo no tami ni*," they whispered in their hearts, "for the sake of the children."

*Working together
Making effort faithfully
Till they all grow up.*

*Alien hardships
Made bearable by the hope
I hold for my children.⁷⁴*

Representing a rapidly growing group within the Japanese community, the Nisei constituted 27 percent of the mainland Japanese population in 1920 and a majority, or 52 percent, ten years later. By 1940, on the eve of World War II, 63 percent of the community were Nisei. As a result of the abrupt 1908 cessation of immigration of Japanese men, the age gap between the two generations was wider than usual. In 1930, the average age of the Nisei was ten, compared to forty-two for Issei men and thirty-five for Issei women. A significant proportion of Nisei grew up in families where their parents were farmers or shopkeepers. In 1930, sizable percentages of the Issei population were self-employed — 47 percent in northern California, 79 percent in southern California, 55 percent in Washington, and 48 percent in Oregon.⁷⁵

The Nisei had their own peculiar view of the world. They spoke to each other in English and to their parents in Japanese. "My father only spoke Japanese," recalled Noriko Bridges. "One day, when I was young, I had been with a boy and didn't come home for lunch. My father asked me what Roy and I had been doing. 'We were fucking,' I replied in English, thinking he wouldn't understand what I said. Suddenly his face turned white. I felt betrayed. He knew more English than he had been letting on." But if some Issei did know only a little English, most Nisei possessed a very limited knowledge of Japanese. "Nisei spoke poor Japanese," said Frank Miyamoto. "We could only talk about everyday things with our parents. While Nisei picked up some Japanese culture, they didn't understand Japanese concepts the way Issei understood them." Language was a barrier between parents and their children, and second-generation Japanese had difficulty grasping the subtleties and the finer points of their ancestral culture.⁷⁶

The Nisei always seemed to feel their "twoness" — as both Japanese and American. Their lives and their identities were bitur-

cated between the land of their parents and the land of their birth, folk stories about the peach boy Momotaro and children's tales about Jack and the Beanstalk, the Japanese love songs their mothers sang in the kitchen and the popular songs they heard on the radio, the summer *obon* dances and the weekend jitterbug dances, Japanese New Year's Day and Christmas, the annual *kenjinkai* picnics and high-school outings, banzai to the emperor's health and the pledge of allegiance to the flag of the United States. Their foods reflected both cultures: even at home they ate *tsukemono* (Japanese pickled vegetables) and *udon* noodles as well as dill pickles and spaghetti. "My children no like Japanese food," Mrs. J. Nakashima of Seattle said. "I only fix it about every other Sunday, and the children say, 'Oh mama. You going fix it in Japanese way?' They all time want American food." Nisei names reflected their dual identities. Many changed, shortened, or Americanized their Japanese first names — for example, from Makoto to Mac, Isamu to Sam, and Chiyoji to George. They also gave themselves English translations of their Japanese names such as Lily for Yuriko, Violet for Sumire, and Victor for Katsu ("victory"). Others simply gave themselves or one another American names and they became Marie, Thomas, Doris, Ralph. "My parents named me Futaye, but when I was a teenager I took an American name," said Betty Yamaguchi. "I also gave my sister Nobuy the name Grace when she was eight years old." Many Nisei had two names — their Japanese names at home and their American names in school and on the playground.⁷⁷

The second generation learned about America at school and Japan at home. "My lessons at school taught me about the lives and character of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Abraham Lincoln," recalled Togo Tanaka, "but at home my father taught me *Shushin*, the Japanese code of ethics, and he instilled in me the values of honor, loyalty, service, and obligation that had been taught to him by his forebearers in Japan." Most Nisei attended two schools — American school and Japanese-language school, and their educational experience seemed to split their culture and personality. "At Bailey Gatzert School I was a jumping, screaming, roustabout Yankee," wrote a Nisei describing herself as a student. "But Nihon Gakko [Japanese school] was so different from grammar school I found myself switching my personality back and forth daily like a chameleon. . . . I suddenly became a modest, faltering, earnest little Japanese girl with a small, timid voice."⁷⁸

Something deep and dividing was developing within the con-

sciousness of the Nisei. They were like Ichiro, the protagonist in John Okada's novel *No-No Boy*. "There was a time when I was your son," Ichiro says to himself, trying to describe his relation to his mother and to figure out who he is:

There was a time that I no longer remember when you used to smile a mother's smile and tell me stories about gallant and fierce warriors who protected their lords with blades of shining steel and about the old woman who found a peach in the stream and took it home and, when her husband split it in half, a husky little boy tumbled out to fill their hearts with boundless joy. I was that boy in the peach and you were the old woman and we were Japanese with Japanese feelings and Japanese pride and Japanese thoughts because it was all right then to be Japanese and feel and think all the things that Japanese do even if we lived in America. Then there came a time when I was only half Japanese because one is not born in America and raised in America and taught in America and one does not speak and swear and drink and smoke and play and fight and see and hear in America among Americans in American streets without becoming American and loving it.⁷⁹

What sharpened the edges of the duality Nisei experienced was the condition of their parents as "strangers" in America. Forced to be aliens forever in their adopted country, many Issei parents retained their ties to Japan. They registered their children as citizens of Japan. In 1926, in the Pacific Coast and Rocky Mountain states, 84 percent of the Nisei were registered as Japanese nationals; by 1940 over 50 percent of the Nisei in the United States had Japanese citizenship. They were literally citizens of two countries — American by birth and Japanese by registration. Actually, although it was not commonly known, thousands of American-born children of European-immigrant parents were also dual citizens. But Issei parents wanted their children to have dual citizenship for a special reason: they were afraid they might be forced to return to their homeland and wanted to be able to take their children with them. They also worried about the difficult future of racial discrimination their children faced here and wanted to give their children the option of moving to Japan. Many parents actually sent their children to Japan to be educated and to learn Japanese ways. Called *kibei*, these second-generation Japanese lived in Japan for several years and then returned to America. Fearful that Nisei would be forced to seek employment in Japan, immigrants sent their children to Japanese-language schools in Amer-

ica. "I am going to encourage him to learn the Japanese language," Yamato Ichihashi said describing the education planned for his six-year-old son, "so that he can to go Japan if he meets too many obstacles here." Nisei Togo Tanaka remembered his father saying, "Spend more time studying Japanese. If you have any ability, there is no future for you in this country."⁸⁰

But most Issei parents saw America as their new home and Japan as a fallback, a potential refuge for the Nisei if the situation became intolerable. The immigrants wanted their children to study hard and learn English, the language representing a key to their acceptance in the *hakujin* (white) society as well as a means to livelihood. They were told repeatedly by their parents: "If I could only speak English like you, I would have amounted to something." Their parents urged them to try their best to be the head of the class, insisting they study at home daily. "I studied hard because I felt it was the thing to do," a Nisei explained. "It was important to succeed in school. I enjoyed seeing those A's on my report card, but a big part of the pleasure came in seeing how pleased my parents were. I guess you might say I worked for good grades because it made my parents happy."⁸¹

Seiko, success, could be achieved through education. "We Nisei were told over and over about the importance of school and education — how knowledge in one's mind could never be taken away and that learning could be the ladder toward success and security and equality," remembered Yori Wada, who would later be appointed a regent of the University of California. In the 1920s a survey of Nisei found that although 65 percent of the Japanese in California lived on farms, less than 10 percent of the Japanese children reported that they intended to stay there. Through education, many Nisei hoped they would be able to advance beyond their parents economically and socially. "Why do I want to go to college?" one of them said. "Because I don't want to get stuck on the farm. I don't want to spend my life in stoop labor like my folks." The Nisei drive to succeed was fueled by the equality of opportunity denied to their parents.⁸²

But citizenship and education, the second generation soon discovered, did not immunize them from racial discrimination. Like their immigrant parents, they, too, were regarded as strangers. They, too, were forced to sit in segregated sections in theaters and refused service by white barbers. "White barbers wouldn't cut my hair," recalled Fred Korematsu, who grew up in San Leandro, California. "So I went to a Japanese barber, but the line was long. There were

about twelve Japanese ahead of me." The Nisei were also told to "go back" to Japan and called "Japs." A white teacher at the Los Feliz Elementary School in Hollywood referred to a six-year-old Nisei student as "that Jap boy." Walking home from school, Japanese children were often attacked by stone-throwing white boys. Nisei winced when they were asked: "You speak English well; how long have you been in this country?" As citizens, they were legally allowed to own land and homes but experienced widespread housing discrimination. When Togo Tanaka tried to purchase a home in Los Angeles, he made 119 inquiries about houses for sale, and in 114 instances he was told: "You cannot live here. Your money is not good enough. The deed has a racially restrictive covenant, and only members of the Caucasian race may reside here."⁸³

But Nisei were determined they would not be "Japs" forever. They would prove their worth and force whites to accept them "on the basis of merit, and merit alone." They would overcome prejudice by trying harder, especially at school. Not expecting equal treatment, the second generation knew they had to be better than average if they hoped to overcome the handicap of discrimination. "We will show them [whites] that we can do something," declared a Nisei, "but we will have to fit ourselves better than the ordinary American." The second generation strove to be exceptionally well educated. "Race prejudice in California," observed Nisei college student S. Morris Morishita, "is producing an unusual phenomenon. It is creating an educated class among the second-generation Japanese the like of which is not duplicated anywhere else in the world."⁸⁴

Young Japanese Americans graduated from high school with good grades, even honors, and many completed college. The average educational level of Nisei was two years of college — well above the national average. Still, they found themselves cut off from employment opportunities. Many came of age during the Great Depression — a time of massive unemployment in the country. But, because of racial discrimination, job possibilities were especially restricted for the Nisei. A study of 161 Nisei who graduated from the University of California between 1925 and 1935 found that only 25 percent were employed in professional vocations for which they had been trained. Twenty-five percent worked in family businesses or trades that did not require a college education, and 40 percent had "blind alley" jobs. University job-placement offices repeatedly reported virtually no employment prospects for Japanese-American graduates. "Our experience with employment for Japanese and Chinese has been

most unsatisfactory," the University of California at Berkeley stated. "Many of these students have taken the engineering courses and we have found a distinct prejudice against foreigners existing in the public utilities and manufacturing companies." Similarly, Stanford University observed: "It is almost impossible to place a Chinese or Japanese of either the first or second generation in any kind of position, engineering, manufacturing, or business."⁸⁵

Proudly holding college degrees, Nisei saw dead-end futures waiting for them. "Practically no employment except domestic," said a Nisei YWCA worker in Oakland in 1927, "is open to Japanese people, even though they be University graduates, except employment by their own people." One Nisei who graduated with honors in electrical engineering had difficulty finding employment, while his white classmates were able to step right into their professional field upon graduation. He drifted to Los Angeles and then to Honolulu, where he was finally able to secure a minor position in a small electrical shop that offered practically no chance for advancement. Yoshiko Uchida reported that her sister, a Mills College graduate with a major in child development, could find no employment in her field as a certified nursery-school teacher and had to work as a nursemaid. "My sister . . . was not alone in facing such bleak employment opportunities," Uchida added. "Before World War II, most of the Nisei men who graduated from the university as engineers, pharmacists, accountants, or whatever seldom found employment in their field of study." Civil-service employment was virtually closed to Nisei: in 1940 Los Angeles did not have a single Japanese fireman, policeman, mailman, or public-school teacher.⁸⁶

Changing their names would not have opened employment opportunities to the Nisei: one of them, Kelly Ohara, had a Japanese surname that matched his Irish given name. Ohara had a bachelor's degree and had also completed graduate work in engineering with good grades and strong recommendations: still he was unable to find a job in an American company. His Japanese family name might have seemed and sounded Irish, but Ohara did not look Irish.⁸⁷

Like their Chinese-American counterparts, Nisei found themselves trapped in an ethnic labor market. Only a very tiny percentage of them worked for white employers: in Los Angeles in 1940, only 5 percent were employed in white-owned businesses. The vast majority of Nisei worked in small Japanese shops, laundries, hotels, fruit stands, and produce stores. After graduating from the University of California at Berkeley in 1940, Yori Wada tried to find a job, driving

from Eureka to Ventura; unsuccessful, he returned to his hometown to work as a clerk in a Japanese grocery store. Some Nisei became doctors and dentists, serving Japanese exclusively; many more became "Japanese gardeners." As a senior in college, a Nisei woman described her restricted career future: "After I graduate, what can I do here? No American firm will employ me. All I can hope to become here is a bookkeeper in one of the little Japanese dry goods stores in the Little Tokyo section of Los Angeles, or else be a stenographer to the Japanese lawyer here." Denied equal employment opportunities in the larger economy, the Nisei were confined to "the Japanese colony."⁸⁸

Unable to find employment in their chosen careers, college-educated Nisei were often asked: "Why don't you 'go back' to Japan to work?" "Well," they snapped, "what do you mean by going *back* to our old country? We've never been there in the first place." Annoyed, they added: "Most of us were born here, and we know no other country. This is 'our country' right here." Many Nisei became discouraged. "No matter what our qualifications may be," they complained, "evidently the only place where we are wanted is in the positions that no American would care to fill — menial positions as house-servants, gardeners, vegetable peddlers, continually 'yes, ma'am'ing. . . . Why try to be anything at all?" Some Nisei resigned themselves to their limited employment prospects. "What's the use of going to college?" one of them argued. "I have a little fruit stand, and I give the American customers the kind of service they want. I have a comfortable income. I am happy."⁸⁹

But actually, as historian John Modell has noted, "for hemmed-in Nisei, the fruitstand was the bitterest of all symbols of their frustration." In 1940, one out of five Nisei in Los Angeles worked in Japanese-owned retail produce stands, and half of the Japanese retail produce proprietors and managers were Nisei. Produce work was hard and the hours long — up to seventy-two a week. "I am a fruitstand worker," wrote one Nisei in a local newspaper. "It is not a very attractive nor distinguished occupation, and most certainly unappealing in print. I would much rather it were doctor or lawyer . . . but my aspirations of developing into such [were] frustrated long ago by circumstances . . . [and] I am only what I am, a professional carrot washer."⁹⁰

The problem, the Nisei saw, went far beyond the mere matter of jobs. It was profoundly cultural, involving the very definition of

who was an American. In his reflective essay, "The Rising Son of the Rising Sun" published in *New Outlook* in 1934, Aiji Tashiro questioned why Japanese Americans were viewed as strangers. "The Japloshkis, Idovitches, and Johannsmanns streaming over from Europe," he noted, "[were able] to slip unobtrusively into the clothes of 'dyed-in-the-wool' Americans by the simple expedient of dropping their guttural speech and changing their names to Jones, Brown or Smith." Tashiro knew it would make no difference for him to change his name to Taylor. He spoke English fluently and had even adopted American slang, dress, and mannerisms. But "outwardly" he "possessed the marked characteristics of the race." To be accepted as an American seemed hopeless. "The voice of the flute has long been the unfathomable voice of the East beating upon the West with futility."⁹¹

But most young Japanese Americans were unwilling to retreat in philosophical resignation. As citizens, Nisei could do what had been denied to their parents — they could vote and seek to exercise power within the body politic in order to protect their rights. During the 1930s, some Nisei organized Japanese-American Democratic Clubs in San Francisco, Oakland, and Los Angeles. Calling themselves "progressives," they had multiple goals — support for the New Deal, election of progressive Democrats, and the promotion of legislation to outlaw racial discrimination. They tended to come from the working classes rather than the professional or petite bourgeoisie. Their monthly *Nisei Democrat* and the Los Angeles *Doho* carried news of their activities and helped to broaden the base of Nisei political participation. As Japanese Americans, the progressives struggled against racism. At the 1938 state conference of the Young Democrats of California, for example, Ruth Kurata and her fellow Nisei delegates from the Los Angeles club presented demands for federal legislation to make acts of racial discrimination punishable misdemeanors and for the establishment of a council within the Young Democrats to be responsible for eliminating discriminatory laws. A year later, Nisei progressives circulated a petition supporting legislation guaranteeing equal rights in employment, housing, and civil liberties to racial minorities in California. They also supported the labor movement, especially the activities of the Congress of Industrial Organizations, and urged Japanese-American laborers to struggle for higher wages and improved working conditions through unionization.⁹²

Paralleling the activities of the Nisei progressives was the emer-

gence of another response, led by Nisei professionals and small businessmen. One of the leaders, James Sakamoto, editor of the *Japanese American Courier*, expressed their vision:

The future is bright for residents of this community, but the brightness depends upon their intent to settle here and to make homes here that they may take their rightful part in the growth of the city. The time is here to give a little sober thought to the future. The second generation are American citizens and through them will be reaped the harvests of tomorrow. Home, institutions, and inalienable rights to live the life of an American, is the cry of the second generation and will be the cry of posterity. It is high time to lower the anchor.

By "lowering the anchor," Sakamoto referred to the full identification of Nisei with America. They were born in the United States and would stay permanently; they should not think of themselves as Japanese but as Japanese Americans. In fact, the problem was their very dual identity, their hyphenated status. The solution was simple: Nisei should seek to become "one hundred percent Americans."⁹³

To promote this perspective, Sakamoto and like-minded Nisei saw the need for a national organization. Second-generation professionals had formed local Nisei civic clubs, such as the American Loyalty League in San Francisco and Fresno and similar organizations in Seattle and Portland. The leaders included Dr. Thomas Yatabe of Fresno and lawyers Saburo Kido of San Francisco and Clarence Arai of Seattle. Within the community, they were respected as prominent young men, and they felt a sense of responsibility for the community. In 1930, they gathered at a convention in Seattle and established the Japanese American Citizens League. Significantly, at the meeting, a debate exploded over the name of the new organization. Their name, they realized, would carry their message. Should they use a hyphen between "Japanese" and "American"? they asked. Or should they drop all reference to "Japanese"? In the end, the convention agreed to subordinate "Japanese" as an adjective to modify "American."⁹⁴

The JACL struck a chord in the hearts of many Nisei. Between 1930 and 1940, the organization expanded dramatically from eight charter affiliates to fifty chapters, with some fifty-six hundred dues-paying members. The JACL met the needs of Nisei professionals and small businessmen. Through the JACL, they could claim their identity as Americans. They could educate the larger society, disseminating

information about the educational and business achievements of the Japanese-American community. Through JACL conferences, banquets, dances, and social activities, they could also satisfy their needs for ethnic community. Ironically, ethnic solidarity seemed to offer a way for Japanese Americans to be accepted by white society.

The JACL focused on the conservative and accommodationist strategies of enterprise and self-help. "Agitation begets agitation," Sakamoto insisted, "and this can never lead to the best results." The "seeds of discrimination," the editor continued, could be completely uprooted only through the cultivation of friendship and understanding. Economic success in the form of small business and independent professions such as medicine and law would be the "sledgehammer blow" driving the Nisei "stake" into American society. Self-improvement, not political militancy, should be the Nisei approach. While acknowledging the existence of discrimination in employment, the *Nikkei Shimin* (*Japanese American Citizen*) published by Kido urged Nisei not to protest and complain: "In technical or commercial vocations, we cannot afford to work with talents *inferior* to Americans. It is not enough even to be their *equals*; we must *surpass* them — by developing our powers to the point of genius if necessary. We believe that the complaints against race prejudice in the matter of vocational opportunities *are not justified*. They only show that something is lacking in the initiative or ability of the one who complains."⁹⁵

"Patriotism" would be the key to open the door to acceptance. "Only if the second generation as a whole works to inculcate in all its members the true spirit of American patriotism can the group escape the unhappy fate of being a clan apart from the rest of American life," Sakamoto argued. "Instead of worrying about anti-Japanese activity or legislation, we must exert our efforts to building the abilities and character of the second generation so they will become loyal and useful citizens who, some day, will make their contribution to the greatness of American life." The crucial word was "loyal." Japanese Americans, both Issei and Nisei, had already proven their usefulness in the American economy. What the Nisei had to demonstrate was their worth as patriotic sons. The 1936 JACL convention denounced dual citizenship, and its newly elected president, James Sakamoto, launched the JACL's "Second Generation Development Program." Nisei were urged to demonstrate their American loyalty by:

- Contributing to the social life of the nation, living with other citizens in a common community of interests and activities to promote the national welfare.
- Contributing to the economic welfare of the nation by taking key roles in agriculture, industry, and commerce.
- Contributing to the civic welfare as intelligent voters and public-spirited citizens.⁹⁶

Both the "progressives" and the JACL members were struggling over their identity, trying to find and make a place for themselves in America. Politically, the Nisei generally viewed themselves as American citizens. They had chosen not to be dual citizens, and many felt this decision should entitle them to "just as many, if not more, rights than a native-born American." "I am a citizen by choice," explained a Nisei, "but a native-born person is a citizen of the United States because he cannot help it."⁹⁷

Moreover, Nisei had cultivated an American cultural outlook. An editorial in the 1939 English holiday edition of the San Francisco *Japanese American News* (*Nichi Bet*) celebrated the American consciousness of the Nisei: "Once upon a time, and surely it was a long time ago, someone had the magnificent idea of the Nisei bridging the Pacific" to establish an understanding between Japan and America. But the time had come to "burn a few of our bridges behind us." The Nisei did not really have actual or spiritual ties to "the homeland of their parents." Their true culture was not one of Japanese art and music and literature but was essentially "middle-class American." Young Nisei listened to Bob Hope and Fred Allen, sang the songs of Bing Crosby, read *Collier's*, the *Saturday Evening Post*, and the *American Magazine*. They enjoyed "swing, the Sunday funnies, and Myrna Loy."⁹⁸

But the editorial had simplified the feelings of the Nisei. Actually, many of them experienced profound cultural confusion—what a Nisei described as the "queer mixture of the Occident and the Orient":

I sat down to American breakfasts and Japanese lunches. My palate developed a fondness for rice along with corned beef and cabbage. I became equally adept with knife and fork and with chopsticks. I said grace at mealtimes in Japanese, and recited the Lord's prayer at night in English. I hung my stocking over the fireplace at Christmas, and toasted *mochi* at Japanese New Year.... I was spoken to by both parents in Japanese or in

English. I answered in whichever was convenient or in a curious mixture of both.

The Nisei were both "Occident" and "Orient," but they felt they would always be Japanese and could never be American. "I wanted to be an American," a Nisei explained. "I wondered why God had not made me an American. If I couldn't be an American, then what was I? A Japanese? No. But not an American either. My life background is American.... [But] my looks made me Japanese."⁹⁹

Deep in their hearts, many Nisei did not want to be completely assimilated, to become simply "American." They felt they were heirs to a complex combination of two cultures and that they should be allowed to embrace their "twoness." Everything they had learned at school about their country had taken "root" and they felt they were Americans. But the second-generation Japanese did not want to have to reject the culture of their parents, which had also become a part of themselves. Even JACL theoretician James Sakamoto explained how the Nisei had a "natural love for the country of their birth" as well as for the land of their parents. In their view, Japan was "a nation, complete in itself, great, wonderful, with a glorious future." Within themselves the Nisei experienced "the clash and the adjustment and the synthesis of the East and the West." They stood on the "border line" that separated the Orient from the Occident, the "streams of two great civilizations—the old Japanese culture with its formal traditions and customs and the newer American civilization with its freedom and individualism" flowing on either side of them.¹⁰⁰

Monica Sone felt this division within and described the ways it pulled her in her autobiography, *Nisei Daughter*. After arriving in America in 1904, her father had worked with a railroad gang, harvested potatoes in Washington's Yakima Valley, and cooked in the galleys of ships sailing between Seattle and Alaska. With his savings, he opened a small laundry and thought about marrying and settling down. Through a go-between he asked for the hand of the seventeen-year-old daughter of a Japanese Congregationalist minister who had emigrated with his family to Seattle. Shortly after the birth of the first child in 1918, he sold his shop and bought a hotel in the skidrow district. A year later Kazuko Monica was born. Her Japanese name meant "peace," and her American name came from Saint Monica, the mother of Saint Augustine. Two of her siblings also had both Japanese and American names—Henry Seiichi and Kenji William.¹⁰¹

The world of Monica's childhood reflected this cultural duality. In her home there were the *North American Times*, Seattle's Japanese-community newspaper, "its printing resembling rows of black multiple-legged insects," as well as back issues of *National Geographic*. She ate pickled daikon and rice as well as ham and eggs. Monica played games like *jan ken po* and jacks, and she studied both Japanese *odori* dance and ballet.¹⁰²

At the age of six, Monica had made the "shocking discovery" that she had "Japanese blood" when her parents told her that she would be attending Japanese school. Suddenly she had to figure out who she was and looked at the society around her for clues. In Seattle, she wandered past Japanese shops and stores, "past the cafes and barbershops filled with Filipino men, and through Chinatown." She noticed "some pale-looking children who spoke a strange dialect of English, rapidly like gunfire," and her friend Matsuko told her they were *hakujin*. Then Monica saw children who, with their black hair and black eyes, looked very much like her. But they spoke in "high, musical voices," and Matsuko whispered to her that they were "Chinese." Monica wondered what it meant to be Japanese.¹⁰³

To be Japanese, Monica learned, involved an identity with Japan. Seattle's Japanese celebrated *Tenchosetsu*, the Emperor's birthday, shouting "banzai, banzai, banzai" and singing *Kimi gayo*, the Japanese national anthem. When the Japanese community knew a Japanese training ship would be arriving, it would "burst into sudden activity, tidying up store fronts, hanging out colorful welcome banners." During their visit, the Japanese sailors would be invited to dinner in the homes of Issei families. Everyone would attend sumo wrestling matches and performances of Japanese classical plays. Every June Seattle's Japanese held a community gathering — the Nihon Gakko picnic, where they played games, sang *naniya bushi* songs, danced, and stuffed themselves with sushi, barbecued teriyaki meats, and *musubi* rice balls.¹⁰⁴

But Monica knew she was not only Japanese. While she enjoyed many of the activities of her parents, she also experienced other feelings. She shouted *banzais*, but did so "self-consciously." She sang the *Kimi gayo*, but did so "slowly and low" as if she were reluctant to part with each note, feeling "heavy-eyed and weary." Monica shared the sentiments expressed by a Nisei boy. After one of the seemingly tedious celebrations of *Tenchosetsu*, he shouted to a friend: "Thank God, that's over! Come on, Bozo, let's get going." Monica thought she had more interesting things to do. She was a "rabid"

fan of Mickey Mouse and a member of the Mickey Mouse Club that met every Saturday morning at the Coliseum Theater. "We sang Mickey Mouse songs," she recalled, "we saw Mickey Mouse pictures, we wore Mickey Mouse sweaters, we owned Mickey Mouse wrist watches."¹⁰⁵

When Monica was about seven years old, she was taken on a family visit to Japan, where she met "real Japanese." At the port, her uncle greeted them by "bowing stiffly," and her father and mother, "not to be outdone, bowed their heads and plunged into an elaborate greeting." Before entering the hotel dining room, Monica and her siblings were instructed to take off their shoes; inside, they had to sit on the floor, their legs tucked beneath them, "tailor fashion." On one occasion Monica made a remark in English, and her cousin teased her: "You talk so funny." Neighborhood children also mocked the young visitors, whispering aloud, "Look, they must be from America. They certainly wear odd clothes."¹⁰⁶

Monica's parents had taken their children to Japan to meet their aging grandfather. When it came time for the family to return to America, the children tried to persuade their grandfather to come to Seattle and live with them. "There's plenty of room for you, Ojichan," pleaded Henry. "You could share my room. I wish you'd live with me, Ojichan!" But Ojichan smiled tenderly and said he was too old to go to America. Many years later Monica learned the real reason why he could not accompany them: in 1924, the United States had prohibited all Japanese immigration. "That was why Father had taken us to Japan, so Grandfather could see us and say farewell to his son who had decided to make his home across the sea. The children who had been born in America belonged there and there he and Mother would stay."¹⁰⁷

But, as she grew up, Monica found that the Japanese were not always welcome in America, even though they had become settlers and even though many of them like herself were citizens by birth. She heard whites call her father "Shorry" and "Jap." When her parents tried to rent a summer cottage near the beach, they were told: "I'm sorry, but we don't want Japs around here." Stunned by the rejection and the remark, Monica blurted out: "But, Mama, is it so terrible to be a Japanese?" Even the second-generation Japanese, Monica noticed painfully, were denied a claim to the land of their birth. As a teenager, she had driven to the country with some friends to swim at the Antler's Lodge. But the manager blocked their entrance, saying, "Sorry, we don't want any Japs around here." "We're

not Japs. We're American citizens," the teenagers retorted as they sped away in their car. A Nisei friend, Dick Matsui, was working at the Pike Public Market one summer when a white man selling vegetables at a nearby stall shouted at him: "Ah, why don't all of ya Japs go back to where ya belong, and stop cluttering up the joint." Dick snarled back: "Don't call me 'Jap.' I'm an American."¹⁰⁸

The most anxious problem Monica and her fellow Nisei faced was employment discrimination. Issei parents painted grim prospects for them. "A future here! Bah!" exploded one of her father's friends. "How many sons of ours with a beautiful bachelor's degree are accepted into American life? Name me one young man who is now working in an American firm on equal terms with his white colleagues. Our Nisei engineers push lawn mowers. Men with degrees in chemistry and physics do research in the fruit stands of the public market. And they all rot away inside." After graduation from high school, Monica applied for secretarial training at the Washington State Vocational School and was told by the counselor: "We are accepting six of you Japanese-American girls this year. I don't want you to think that we are discriminating against people of your ancestry, but from our past experiences, we have found it next to impossible to find jobs for you in the business offices downtown."¹⁰⁹

Actually, Monica had been admitted to the university and had her heart set on going to college in the fall. Her parents had allowed her brother Henry to attend the university, but they suddenly said she should enroll in business school. "But why?" she asked, confused and distressed. "There's something in the air I don't like," her father replied hesitantly. "Some hotheads have been talking about war between America and Japan for some time now." And he added: "From a purely practical point of view, I want to see you acquire an office skill of some sort so you can step into a job and be independent, just in case." A dutiful daughter, Monica went to business school and graduated within a year.¹¹⁰

Like many Nisei, Monica often felt despair and wondered if she would have to beat her head against the wall of racial discrimination all of her life. But she swallowed her pride, determined to endure the injustices, bound to America by "an elemental instinct." After a bout with tuberculosis, Monica returned to her family. Her parents had bought a new house, a "marvelous big barn of a house on lovely Beacon Hill," where they could see "the early morning mist rising from Lake Washington in the east, a panoramic view of Puget Sound and the city in the west." Monica felt a surge of energy and optimism.

"In such a setting, my future rolled out in front of me, blazing with happiness. Nothing could possibly go wrong now." But had Monica looked more closely, as did some worried fellow Nisei, she would have discerned on the western horizon the terrible storm cloud of war that was sweeping ominously toward America from across the Pacific and that would show the fragility and vulnerability of the separate Japanese economy and community.¹¹¹