



"Better Americans in a Greater America"



JACL HYMN

Words by Marion Tajiri and music by Marcel J. Tyrrell

*There was a dream my father dreamed for me,
A land in which all men are free;
Then the desert camps with watch-towers high
Where life stood still, 'mid sand and brooding sky.
Out of the war in which my brothers died—,
Their muted voices with mine cried;
This is our dream that all men shall be free.
This is our creed we'll live in loyalty.
God help us rid the land of bigotry
That we may walk in peace and dignity.*

PRESIDENTIAL MESSAGES TO THE JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE

"This nation has been built by the labor and dedication of Americans whose forebears came from many lands. None have worked harder, fought more bravely, or contributed finer sons and daughters to their adopted home than our citizens of Japanese ancestry."

"I am pleased to salute the enduring contributions you have made to our way of life and happy to commend your efforts to perpetuate a culture and a heritage which have so enriched our society."

PRESIDENT LYNDON B. JOHNSON, 1966

"Your organization has earned an enviable reputation for the high standards of citizenship which you have set for all of your members. You have contributed generously to your communities and to our national life."

PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY, 1962

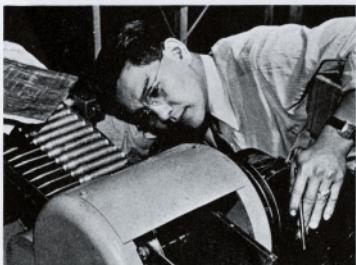
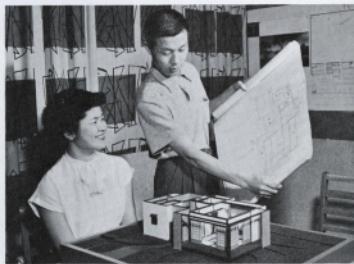
"I congratulate the Japanese American Citizens League on its support of good citizenship, liberty, and patriotism. As you who are League members strive to uphold your organization's motto, 'For Better Americans In A Greater America,' I am confident you will continue to bring credit to your organization and benefit to the United States."

PRESIDENT DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER, 1956

"The significant and effective work of your organization . . . on behalf of all persons of Japanese ancestry in the United States and Hawaii is a tribute to the democracy within whose framework you plead your case and achieve your goals."

"The members of the Japanese American Citizens League have proved anew that decency and justice cannot long be frustrated if we stand together to create new and better bonds of understanding between free citizens in a free nation."

PRESIDENT HARRY S. TRUMAN, 1950



"Better Americans in a Greater America"

The Nisei are Americans who have made their mark in every field of endeavor. They are engineers, doctors, dentists, teachers, business leaders, agriculturists, scientists, writers, artists, musicians, actors, athletes, and many others. They are the sons and daughters of immigrants who came to America from Japan to seek opportunities and to establish a better life for themselves and their families.

Through the pages of this booklet, we would like you to meet the Nisei* (rhymes with KNEE-SAY)—Americans of Japanese ancestry.

The Nisei are a comparatively new and infinitesimal minority in American life. On the mainland of the United States there are about 200,000 of them. Despite distinctive features, they are Americans not only by birth, but by upbringing, education and choice.

Like other Americans, the Nisei come in various sizes, shapes and vocational callings.

There are Nisei butlers and gardeners. There are also Nisei space scientists, judges, college professors, engineers, surgeons and editors. They grow food on farms and flowers in greenhouses. They seek the solution to the mysteries of cancer and other diseases in medical laboratories. Three Nisei represent the State of Hawaii in Congress. There are Nisei jockeys and ministers of the Gospel, cab drivers and Air Force pilots, financiers and social workers, house painters and architects. There are Nisei serving the United States abroad in both the armed and diplomatic services. There are even a few Nisei—a very few—in jail.

The only thing they have in common, aside from their pride in American citizenship, is their ancestry. Their parents, Issei (meaning "first generation"), came as immigrants to the United States about the turn of the century. Just as immigrants from Europe first tended to settle on the East Coast, these newcomers from Japan remained largely in the Pacific coastal states.

Today, Nisei live in every one of the 50 states, moving wherever opportunities beckon them. Perhaps it is only natural that the largest number on the continental mainland live in the most populous state, California.

*Nisei is a Japanese word meaning "second generation." It is used to describe Americans of Japanese ancestry.

The immigrants from Japan came to the United States in search of freedom and opportunity. Like any immigrant group the *Issei* faced many adjustments. Their problems were accentuated by differences in appearance, customs and language. They found that rather than being praised for their industry, they were accused of lowering standards of living. Instead of being hailed as pioneers of the still undeveloped West, they were regarded as intruders. Politicians found in them a convenient scapegoat, harrassing them with cries of the "yellow peril."



But these new immigrants persevered. They helped build the railroads and develop raw land into productive farms. They cleared timber and mined coal. Their crime rate was low. Hardly any became public charges. Their children rarely became delinquents. They were peaceful, hard-working, self-reliant Americans in every way except the most important—our laws prohibited them from becoming naturalized citizens because of their race. And so legally, they remained aliens.

But their children, the *Nisei* were citizens by birth, and the *Issei* looked to them to bridge the gap of misunderstanding and prejudice. The *Nisei*, however, soon learned they had inherited the problems as well as the pioneering courage of their parents. Many persons refused to look beneath the Oriental features of these young men and women and recognize them as fellow Americans entitled to the privileges and responsibilities of citizenship. The *Nisei* found doors closed to jobs for which they were qualified, housing denied them outside the Oriental ghettos.

As the older *Nisei* reached voting age, they realized their struggle for acceptance might be strengthened through unity. A handful of *Nisei* from California, Oregon and Washington met in Seattle in 1930 and formed the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL).



TODAY THE JACL IS THE NATIONAL ORGANIZATION REPRESENTING JAPANESE AMERICANS. Its objective is defined by its slogan: "Better Americans in a greater America." The story of this organization is an inspiring account of a group of young Americans treasuring their birthright, defending it, and seeking to be worthy of it.

Of course all its purposes were not so earnestly serious. The JACL also had its social and fraternal aims. But in their effort to become exemplary citizens, the *Nisei* quickly became aware that in a democracy laws are the people's safeguard, and good citizens take an interest in government. It is perhaps significant that delegates to the first JACL convention took two actions demonstrating the importance they placed on the privilege of American citizenship. They adopted resolutions calling on Congress to:

- Permit *Nisei* girls who had married alien Japanese to regain their citizenship, through an amendment to the Cable Act.
- Grant citizenship to Oriental-born men who had served in the United States' armed forces in World War I.
- Both measures subsequently were enacted into law.

During the 1930's, as more and more *Nisei* attained their majority and became aware of civic responsibilities, additional chapters of the JACL came into being. This was a period of growth and development for the *Nisei* who, individually, were largely preoccupied with the problems of economic and social adjustment. These problems, already complicated by the inherited prejudices, were intensified during the closing years of the decade by a situation over which they had neither control nor connection. Their fellow Americans, outraged by Japan's aggression in the Far East, misdirected their wrath against Japanese Americans.

THE JAPANESE ATTACK ON PEARL HARBOR ON DEC. 7, 1941, shocked and angered the *Nisei* as it did all Americans. The *Issei*, most of whom had lived virtually all their adult lives in the United States, were stunned. Thousands of *Nisei* already were in U.S. Army uniform. Many others, with the blessing of their parents, rushed to enlist.



But the old prejudices were fanned into hysteria against all Japanese Americans. The *Issei*, through no fault of their own, were quickly classified as enemy aliens. For the *Nisei*, it was another matter. In historical perspective, it is possible to document the fact that racism, political opportunism and economic greed created pressures which fed on fear and led to what has been described as the "blackest chapter" in the history of American democracy.

ON MARCH 2, 1942, the United States government ordered all persons of Japanese extraction, citizen and alien alike, removed from the West Coast solely on the basis of race, and locked in inland relocation camps.

Thus began the mass Evacuation of 120,000 men, women and children, two-thirds of them American citizens, months after danger of invasion had passed. No charges were filed against them. No hearing was held as to their loyalty. They were simply ordered out of their homes and escorted behind barbed wire by armed troops in an action unprecedented in American history.

DURING THE PERIOD of mounting hysteria that preceded the Evacuation order, JACL leaders worked valiantly for a restoration of reason. They tried to calm the fears of *Issei* and *Nisei*, cooperated fully with the authorities, sought to remove possible misunderstanding by the American public at large regarding the loyalty of Japanese Americans, protested their case to government policy-makers.

But the pressures were too great. Once the Evacuation decision was made—and explained by the government on the basis of "military necessity"—the JACL had no alternative but to urge the *Issei* and *Nisei* to cooperate in the Evacuation as a patriotic contribution to the war effort.

THERE WERE OTHER CONSIDERATIONS. To resist as a matter of principle—while a tempting course of action, could well have led to bloodshed. Cooperation was essential to demonstrate *Nisei* loyalty to their country in a time of crisis. Furthermore, the JACL recognized that while a case might be made for the rights of the American citizen *Nisei*, there was no recourse for their now enemy alien *Issei* parents and separation of families posed serious complications.

In retrospect, observers have marveled that the Evacuation was completed almost without incident, for the loss of freedom was a bitter experience to the *Nisei*. The cruelest blow was the feeling of being

repudiated by their own government, of knowing that a basic American principle was being violated when they were imprisoned for having the wrong kind of ancestors. It was a particularly grim time for the *Nisei* already in the U.S. Army who saw their families placed in desert camps ringed by barbed wire and guarded by military police. At the time, the loss of 400 millions of dollars in assets — businesses closed, farms abandoned, homes boarded up and furnishings sold for pennies on the dollar — seemed unimportant in relation to the affront to human values and democratic ideals.

ALMOST OVERNIGHT in this trying period the JACL became a mature, fighting organization. With a courage based on faith in America, JACL leaders were making plans for the fight ahead even as the Evacuation was under way. They launched a vigorous program of public education, cooperating with civilian government agencies set up belatedly to safeguard the welfare of the evacuees, seeking relief through the courts from organized persecution. A test case challenging the legality of the Evacuation was taken to the United States Supreme Court. In California, when the Native Sons of the Golden West sought to strike the names of *Nisei* evacuees from the rolls of registered voters, the JACL took successful legal action to block this raid on their birthright.

IN 1942 JACL REPRESENTATIVES petitioned the government to reinstate Selective Service which had been suspended with the Evacuation for the *Nisei*. Early in 1943 the War Department decided to create an Army regiment made up of *Nisei* volunteers. While the idea of a segregated unit was repugnant, the *Nisei* recognized the public relations value of such an organization, working together, going into action as a team. Hundreds of volunteers from the relocation centers and from Hawaii joined *Nisei* already in service to form the celebrated Japanese American 442nd Regimental Combat Team. Their motto was "Go For Broke" — Hawaiian slang for "shoot the works," or "all or nothing."

IN A SERIES OF ACTIONS IN ITALY AND FRANCE, the 442nd became the most decorated unit of its size and length of service in American military history. These G.I.'s with Oriental faces fought not only for the nation, but also for acceptance for themselves and their families. How valiantly they battled to prove themselves is indicated in these figures — 18,143 individual decorations, 9,486 (309%) casualties and seven Presidential Distinguished Unit Citations collected in seven major campaigns.



Nor was the *Nisei* military record confined to the European theater. Though little publicized because of the nature of their duties, some 10,000 Americans of Japanese ancestry served in military intelligence as the "eyes and ears" of Allied forces in the Pacific. They were with every major unit in every Pacific engagement from the Aleutians and Guadalcanal to the march into Tokyo and the occupation of Japan. They served in the front lines and in headquarters from Pearl Harbor to Burma. Analyzing intercepted communications, interrogating prisoners, translating captured documents, persuading die-hard enemy troops to surrender, the *Nisei* saved thousands of American lives and helped shorten the war in the Pacific by many months, according to General MacArthur's Chief of Staff for Military Intelligence. Even the Navy and Marines, which refused to induct *Nisei*, borrowed these language specialists from the Army.

THESE NISEI FACED A DOUBLE DANGER in the Pacific—from the enemy and from fellow G.I.s who might mistake their identity. In tribute to them, Gen. Joseph (Vinegar Joe) Stilwell, commanding general of U.S. Army forces in Asia, remarked: "The *Nisei* bought an awful big hunk of America with their blood."



AS RESTRICTIONS AGAINST THE EVACUEES WERE EASED, other *Nisei* as well as *Issei* left the relocation centers to take part in the civilian war effort. They helped harvest food crops and worked in defense plants. *Issei* with specialized skills served with the Office of Strategic Services, taught the Japanese language to Army, Navy and Air Corps personnel, wrote propaganda leaflets which were rained down on the enemy, monitored enemy broadcasts and played key roles in psychological warfare.

The outstanding record of persons of Japanese ancestry during the war bore out the truth of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's statement that "Americanism is a matter of mind and heart, Americanism is not . . . a matter of race or ancestry." Despite widespread rumors—rumors which are hard to stamp out—the files of every government investigative and intelligence agency show conclusively that not a single resident alien Japanese or American of Japanese ancestry committed an act of sabotage or espionage for the enemy before, during, or after the attack on Pearl Harbor.

IN 1943 THE GOVERNMENT'S PROGRAM of resettlement got under way. Although the West Coast was still closed to them, the evacuees were permitted to leave the relocation centers and move to communities in the East and Midwest. In cooperation with federal authorities and national church organizations, the JACL assisted in the student relocation program whereby *Nisei* college students were able to continue their studies in inland schools. Entire families were resettled in communities throughout the American heartland and were accepted almost without incident.

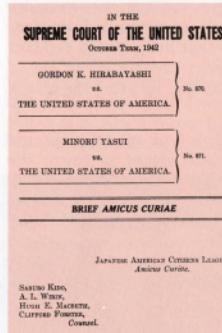
This acceptance was due in part to the exemplary conduct of the evacuees themselves, in part to the good will of Americans who showed they understood the meaning of democracy. But the largest part of the credit must go to the dramatic reports from the European front where *Nisei* of the 442nd were proving themselves in battle. The *Nisei*'s loyal response to the War Department's decision to create "a symbol of the loyalty of Japanese Americans" was paying off.

ON THE HOME FRONT JACL STEPPED UP ITS PROGRAM of public education and established regional offices in Denver, Chicago, and New York to assist in the resettlement program. As Japanese Americans sank roots into new communities, it was only natural that JACL chapters should be formed wherever they settled in appreciable numbers.

At the same time JACL membership, heretofore restricted to Japanese Americans, was opened to all citizens who subscribed to its principles and many friends of the *Nisei* joined.

Meanwhile, deeply concerned over the precedents set by the Evacuation, JACL had sought judicial reviews of the constitutionality of all aspects of the program. Three landmark suits reached the United States Supreme Court.

In 1943, in a suit brought by Gordon K. Hirabayashi, the Supreme Court ruled unanimously that the curfew and travel restrictions imposed on Japanese Americans were a legal application of military authority.



In 1944, in the JACL-sponsored Fred Korematsu case, the majority of the Supreme Court upheld the legality of the evacuation based solely upon race. Three justices dissented.

But late in 1944, the Supreme Court ruled unanimously in the Mituya Endo case that the government had no right to detain loyal American citizens in the relocation centers. Within 48 hours the Army revoked its West Coast exclusion orders.

ONE LEGAL VICTORY HAD BEEN WON, but it is a disturbing fact that the Supreme Court's decision legalizing evacuation on racial grounds still stands. The JACL agrees with Mr. Justice Jackson's warning that the decision is a "loaded weapon" pointed at democratic rights, and a reversal of the decision is an important piece of unfinished business in the aftermath of an ugly chapter of American history.

The reopening of the Pacific Coast clearly revealed the hand of the racists. Having lost the fight to exclude Japanese Americans legally, these elements resorted to threats and violence in an effort to discourage evacuees from returning to homes, farms and businesses. On shameful record are more than 100 cases of arson, shootings and beatings against returning evacuees. By these acts of terrorism, they demonstrated that their cry of "evacuate the Japs as a military necessity" was a sham. Their alleged concern for national security turned out to be a front for blind racial prejudice or desire for personal economic gain.

BUT THE MAJORITY OF RESIDENTS of the West Coast subscribed to principles of decency and fair play, and about three-fourths of the evacuees moved back to their home communities. Again, JACL was in the vanguard, establishing "outposts" in San Francisco and Los Angeles to help in the adjustment of homecoming.

One by one the barriers fell. *Nisei* and *Issei* reestablished homes and businesses, returned to old jobs or found new ones and sought to resume lives disrupted by the Evacuation. One major acknowledgment of the loyalty of the *Nisei* was the Navy's announcement late in 1945 that its ranks would be open for their enlistment.

In their first postwar national convention, JACL members assembled in Denver in 1946 with the sober realization that the organization must spearhead a fight to secure, once and for all, the rights for which *Nisei* G.I.s had gone "for broke." Their wartime experiences had taught them the realistic lesson that only in organization is there strength, that organization is essential even in making a minority group's needs known to its own government. Among their goals were three measures aimed at rectifying injustices against persons of Japanese ancestry:

- Legislation to change federal law classifying *Issei* as "ineligible to citizenship" even though they had resided in the United States a half century or more. This law was the basis for much legalized discrimination against *Issei* in many states.
- Compensation for property losses suffered in the evacuation.
- Stay of deportation for deserving alien Japanese who had lost the right to reside in the United States as "treaty merchants" on the outbreak of war. Many of these individuals had American-born families.

Such an ambitious program could succeed only through a campaign of public education beginning with communities which had been receptive to Japanese Americans. New JACL chapters were established in

the East and Midwest where evacuees had settled permanently, and old chapters were reactivated as the *Nisei* returned to their West Coast homes.

TODAY THE JACL MEMBERSHIP ROSTER reflects the extent to which Japanese Americans have spread out across the United States. Whereas before the war JACL chapters were found only in a half dozen states in the Far West, now there are chapters and members in 32 states and the District of Columbia. Thus, out of the war, JACL emerged a truly national organization both geographically and in scope of program.

To implement the national program, a JACL Anti-Discrimination Committee was incorporated and an office opened in Washington, D.C. JACL had not forgotten that Washington officials in 1941 had been woefully ignorant about this American minority and had allowed West Coast pressure groups to dictate national policy regarding them. JACL leaders realized, too, that there are no spectators in a democracy, and that good citizenship means active participation in government. And so the organization has become the collective voice of the *Nisei*, and the JACL finds itself being consulted on matters of national policy having to do with Japanese Americans.

SINCE JACL REPRESENTS a small minority without effective voting power, its approach to Washington in seeking its objectives was an appeal for simple justice backed by a record of loyalty tested by fire.

By the time of the next JACL convention in 1948 Congress had passed an act to compensate evacuees for their losses, and had consented to place deportation of Japanese treaty merchants on the same basis as those of other nationalities, thus assuring them of being able to stay with their American-born families.

IN ADDITION, THROUGH JACL REPRESENTATIONS, the Soldier Brides Bill was amended to permit the Japanese spouse and children of American servicemen to enter the United States without regard to the Japanese Exclusion Act. This enabled Japanese, for the first time since the Exclusion Act of 1924, to enter this country for permanent residence. JACL was also successful in restoring tenure, cancelled as a result of Evacuation, to *Nisei* in federal civil service. Additionally, Congress passed more than 200 private bills benefiting individual *Issei* and *Nisei*. Significantly, every bill passed without a dissenting vote.

IN 1952, JACL'S MAJOR LEGISLATIVE goal of citizenship privileges for the *Issei* was realized with passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act eliminating race as a qualification for naturalization.



This Act also allowed for the first time a token immigration quota for Japan, negating the 1924 Oriental Exclusion Act which many historians say planted the seeds of resentment which resulted ultimately in war. JACL's plea that certain prospective citizens be permitted to take their examination in their native language enabled many other long-time resident aliens of various nationalities to qualify for American citizenship.

Elimination of the category, "aliens ineligible for citizenship," had widespread repercussions. Some 500 federal and state statutes aimed against and hindering the progress of such aliens, and in many cases their citizen children, were wiped out.

TO ASSIST ISSEI in qualifying for the citizenship they had desired for so long, JACL chapters conducted naturalization classes. So great was the response that for the first time in history the Immigration and Naturalization Service conducted mass swearing-in ceremonies. Despite the advanced age of most *Issei*, the record shows that in proportion to their number more of them became citizens than in any other nationality group.

JACL also interceded successfully for two groups of *Issei* with special problems. California was persuaded to grant old age assistance to *Issei* unable for one reason or another to secure naturalization and who had

lived in the United States at least 25 years prior to passage of the 1952 Naturalization Act. The naturalization petitions of certain *Issei* were challenged on the ground that they had sought exemption from World War I military duty on the plea that they were aliens. Precedents were established when courts in San Francisco and Denver accepted JACL's position that classification as exempt aliens was involuntary and made automatically by local draft boards.

The President's Immigration Act Amendments of October 1965, eliminating the discriminatory Asia-Pacific Triangle and the National Origins formula in determining immigration quotas, marked the achievement of another major JACL goal. In effect it placed immigration from all Asian countries, including Japan, on an equal basis with other Old World countries, including Europe. Significantly, of all organizations supporting the liberalization of the nation's immigration laws, JACL was first in urging equal treatment for the peoples of Asia.

JACL CARRIED ON ITS CAMPAIGN FOR EQUAL RIGHTS in courts and state legislatures as well as Congress. In the Oyama case the U.S. Supreme Court established the right of a citizen child to receive a gift of land from his alien parent. This led eventually to the California State Supreme Court declaring unconstitutional the 40-year-old California Alien Land Law in the Fujii and Masaoka cases. JACL subsequently succeeded in removing this law from the state constitution through referendum. Also as a result of the Oyama case the State of California discontinued what has been referred to as "legalized blackmail" of Japanese landowners by requiring out-of-court money settlements to the state to clear land titles. The state was later to return such escheat monies by action of the legislature.

In the Takahashi case the U.S. Supreme Court invalidated the California law denying commercial fishing licenses to resident alien Japanese.

THE BATTLE AGAINST DISCRIMINATORY LAWS on the state level has been particularly effective. JACL participated in drives to repeal alien land laws in Oregon, Utah, Idaho and Washington, and in eliminating anti-miscegenation laws in Idaho, Nebraska, Utah and Wyoming. JACL helped make Idahoans aware of an obscure statute denying the privilege of voting, serving as jurors and holding office to "Chinese and others of Mongolian descent" not born in the United States, even though citizens. The law was wiped off the books by overwhelming referendum vote.



JACL'S CAMPAIGN FOR EQUAL RIGHTS has not been confined to persons of Japanese ancestry. Realizing that a threat to the rights of any minority is a threat to all Americans, JACL actively has supported the President's Civil Rights program, state and federal Fair Employment and Fair Housing laws, anti-lynch and anti-poll tax bills, and the end of segregation in the armed forces. JACL has been a charter member of the National Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, the coordinating body for more than 100 national organizations representing church, labor, veterans and ethnic groups.

On matters of general concern, but affecting *Nisei* indirectly, JACL has joined with other organizations as "friend of the court" in making its views known. JACL played such a role in Brown v. Board of Education, the historic school desegregation case, and in the case in which the U.S. Supreme Court invalidated restrictive covenants.

JACL participated in the campaign to uphold California's fair housing laws, and joined in amicus brief in the State Supreme Court reversal of the referendum prohibiting the State from providing open housing.

In Loving v. Virginia where the U. S. Supreme Court ruled against anti-miscegenation statutes in the States, JACL filed amicus brief and its National Legal Counsel participated in oral argument.

JACL is proud to have had a part in the campaign for statehood for Hawaii, advocating the staunch Americanism of its people, one-third of whom are of Japanese ancestry.

JACL HAS FELT IT OF UTMOST IMPORTANCE that all Americans be made aware of their fellow citizens of Japanese extraction and their place in the nation. An intensive information and education program has been carried on. Among the highlights have been:

- A gala homecoming arranged for veterans of the 442nd on their return from Europe, with President Truman reviewing the unit.
- Reburial ceremonies for *Nisei* soldiers at Arlington National Cemetery with high government and military leaders in attendance.
- Naming of a U.S. Army transport in honor of Pvt. Sadao Munemori, posthumous recipient of the Medal of Honor.
- Cooperation with the city of Bruyeres, France, in dedication of a memorial park in honor of the 442nd Combat Team, for the role it played in liberating that community.

DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF
PVT. SADAQ MUNEMORI, C.M.H.

442ND INF. REGT.

WHO BY HIS HEROIC SACRIFICE ON THE FIELD
OF BATTLE, PROVED THAT AMERICANISM IS A
MATTER OF THE MIND AND THE HEART, AND
NOT OF RACE OR ANCESTRY.

PRESENTED BY
JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE
NEW YORK CITY MARCH 16TH, 1948

- Sponsoring services at Arlington National Cemetery commemorating the twentieth anniversary of the 442nd, resulting in an unprecedented two-hour tribute to *Nisei* servicemen in the House of Representatives.
- Cooperation with Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer in production of the film, "Go for Broke," a tribute to the war record of the 442nd.
- Cooperation with the Columbia Broadcasting System in production of its TV program, "Nisei—The Pride and the Shame," in the Twentieth Century series.

In addition, the JACL has been the primary source of information for a host of writers and editors, scholars and students, officials and organizations seeking factual information about Japanese Americans.

One of JACL's current functions is as a "watchdog," alert for movements and proposals both in Congress and state legislatures which might have a possible effect on the welfare of Japanese Americans. In this role it has fought discrimination in cemeteries, protested the production of "hate" films depicting Japanese Americans in a false light and the revival on television of wartime movies that portray the *Nisei* wrongfully. Through JACL's efforts, inaccuracies in textbooks concerning Japanese Americans have been corrected. JACL has pointed out the derogatory implications in the word "Jap" with the result that several standard dictionaries have revised their definition of the term and it has all but disappeared from newspaper headlines.

IN 1960 JACL LAUNCHED a project of researching and writing the history of the Japanese in America and their contributions to this nation. While designed as a tribute to the *Issei*, the project was in keeping with the JACL's educational program and to highlight the rich cultural heritage of Americans of Japanese descent. The University of California at Los Angeles has accepted co-sponsorship of the history project and has been designated as a repository for documentary material collected by researchers. Both the Carnegie Corporation and the National Institute of Mental Health have made grants to further the project.

IN RECENT YEARS AN INCREASING NUMBER OF SANSEI—the children of *Nisei*—have turned to JACL for a better understanding of their identity and backgrounds and for knowledge about the struggle of their parents and grandparents to find acceptance in American life. A number of Junior JACL groups have been formed under sponsorship of JACL chapters as an important part of the JACL program. Unhindered by discrimination, these young people already are making significant contributions to their communities and in their fields of endeavor. JACL has established a national scholarship program as a step toward perpetuating the *Nisei* heritage of academic achievement.

THE JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE, born of the needs of a particular ethnic group, is dedicated to hastening the day when Americans of Japanese ancestry face only those problems which have no racial implications and are no different from the problems faced by all Americans. The term "Japanese American" in the organization's name describes the scope of its operations and activities; it does not identify the membership for its ranks are open to all Americans who believe in its purposes and are interested in its activities. Nor is the term ever hyphenated, for JACL is not a hyphenated organization. JACL is also aware that the concept of America as a "melting pot" has been replaced by the concept of an America united in, and enriched by, the diverse cultural backgrounds of all its people. The *Nisei* are proud of their cultural contributions to a greater America.

JACL's governing body is the National Board, members of which are elected at the biennial national convention held each even-numbered year. Legislative powers reside in the National Council composed of two representatives from each chapter which in turn are grouped geographically into eight District Councils: Eastern, Midwest, Mountain-Plains, Intermountain, Pacific Northwest, Northern California-Western Nevada, Central California and Pacific Southwest.

THERE ARE NOW 88 CHAPTERS with total membership exceeding 22,000. The organization is supported through dues and contributions. Associate membership is provided those who reside in areas not served by chapters. JACL is incorporated as a non-profit organization under the laws of the state of California and enjoys state and federal tax exempt status.

JACL publishes a weekly news organ, *The Pacific Citizen*, in Los Angeles to keep the membership informed and to mirror the aims, activities and achievements of Japanese Americans. *The Pacific Citizen* has a proud record of hard-hitting leadership and reporting in the best American journalistic traditions. JACL also maintains a national credit union and offers a health and accident insurance program.

AS IN ALL DEMOCRATIC ORGANIZATIONS, it is the local JACL chapters which provide grass roots support for the national organization. At the local level they carry on programs of public education, community welfare and youth development; they sponsor informative sessions on local and current issues; organize athletic leagues and social events; undertake voter registration and get-out-to-vote campaigns. In short, they serve as channels for the wider participation of Japanese Americans in the total life of their respective communities.



The current acceptance of Americans of Japanese ancestry, as contrasted with their position in 1941, is both a measure of the effectiveness of the JACL and a demonstration of the ability of a democracy to redress wrongs within its framework.

Congressman Walter H. Judd of Minnesota paid eloquent tribute to the Japanese American Citizens League in a statement, titled "Touchstone of Democracy," published in 1955 on the occasion of its 25th anniversary, in the *Congressional Record*:

"THE JACL STORY FOR THEIR FIRST 25 YEARS is an inspiring document of democracy in action, at the best, an epic which could have been written only in America and which completely refutes the hate and race mongers of only a few years ago who charged that the Japanese, by their very character, were unassimilable into the American cultural pattern, which itself as we all know, is made up of the cultures and the contributions of all the many peoples who have immigrated to these shores since time immemorial, as did the ancestors of all of us.

"BUT PERHAPS EVEN MORE IMPORTANT in the long pull of history is that, what the JACL has accomplished here in the United States is living proof to all the free peoples of the world, and especially to those in the Far East who are so important to us as a nation today, that the democratic way is best, for it makes possible the correction of abuses and wrongs and the achievement of justice and redress on the basis of the complete record and of individual merit, not race, color, creed or national origin."

In its ceaseless struggle for the extension of the rights and privileges of America to every citizen, the JACL has been guided by the spirit of its "Japanese American Creed." It was written by Mike M. Masaoka, long-time Washington representative of the JACL. It was first read before the United States Senate on May 9, 1941, and published in the *Congressional Record*:

WILLIAM K. HOSOKAWA
Associate Editor, The Denver Post

JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE CREED

MIKE MASAOKA

"I am proud that I am an American citizen of Japanese ancestry, for my very background makes me appreciate more fully the wonderful advantages of this nation. I believe in her institutions, ideals and traditions; I glory in her heritage; I boast of her history; I trust in her future. She has granted me liberties and opportunities such as no individual enjoys in this world today. She has given me an education befitting kings. She has entrusted me with the responsibilities of the franchise. She has permitted me to build a home, to earn a livelihood, to worship, think, speak and act as I please—as a free man equal to every other man.

"Although some individuals may discriminate against me, I shall never become bitter or lose faith, for I know that such persons are not representative of the majority of the American people. True, I shall do all in my power to discourage such practices, but I shall do it in the American way; above-board, in the open, through courts of law, by education, by proving myself to be worthy of equal treatment and consideration. I am firm in my belief that American sportsmanship and attitude of fair play will judge citizenship and patriotism on the basis of action and achievement, and not on the basis of physical characteristics.

"Because I believe in America, and I trust she believes in me, and because I have received innumerable benefits from her, I pledge myself to do honor to her at all times and in all places; to support her Constitution; to obey her laws; to respect her flag; to defend her against all enemies, foreign or domestic; to actively assume my duties and obligations as a citizen, cheerfully and without any reservations whatsoever, in the hope that I may become a better American in a greater America."