

According to our English language newsletter, the *Newell Star*, Congress had passed a bill on July 13, 1944, giving petitioners the right to renounce their citizenship despite the ongoing war. President Roosevelt promptly signed the bill. This gave new hope to a group of internees who wanted to return to Japan. Expecting to be shipped back to Japan as soon as possible, the resegregation and repatriation groups launched a resegregation movement.

A right-wing priest from Hawaii named Tsuha organized the Fatherland Study Youth Group (*Sokoku Kenkyu Seinen-dan*) to prepare the Nisei for life in Japan. Recruits had to pledge to (1) avoid involvement in the political struggles in the camp, (2) dedicate themselves to the study of Japanese culture and tradition, and (3) serve the fatherland upon arrival in Japan. Tsuha conducted an inaugural ceremony for the "Fatherland's Study Youth Group" in the Tule Lake Camp High School auditorium.

The leaders of the resegregation and repatriation groups thought that in order to become "true Japanese," young people must not only reject their U.S. citizenship, but also refuse an American education. They asked students to quit the public schools and enroll in either the Peoples' School (*Kokumin Gakko*) or the Greater East Asia Juku. These schools were approved by the movement's leaders.

There were strict dress codes for the members of the study group. The boys had to crop their hair close to their heads and wear gray sweatshirts as a uniform. The girls had to part their hair in the middle and braid it into two pigtails that reached the front of their shoulders. Later both boys and girls wore Rising Sun (*Hinomaru*) headbands. Because of this, the group was nicknamed either "the headband group" or the "short-cropped group."

In order to commemorate the day the U.S. declared war against Japan, December 8th, 1,200 members of the "Fatherland Service Group" (formerly the "Fatherland Study Youth Group") gathered in the plaza at 5 o'clock in the morning. The leaders had purified their bodies with cold water before coming to the plaza. In the predawn darkness, the crowd faced the direction of the Imperial Palace and prayed for Japan's victory. They worshiped the Emperor and then executed the gallant "National Exercise." After that, the whole group formed a column four abreast and fast marched around the compound in step with a bugle accompaniment. As they marched they chanted "*wa shoi, wa shoi*." From that day on, the group assembled each morning for their military exercise.

Most of us were still sound asleep at 5 o'clock in the morning. We were annoyed to be awakened by the yelling, "*wa shoi, wa shoi*" and the blaring of the bugle. In my family, children usually awoke first. Once the children were up, my wife got up. When disturbed, it was difficult to go back to sleep. We could not recover from our lack of sleep and were irritable the rest of the day. For us, the ceremony before dawn was an annoying nuisance.

On one occasion, a 60-year-old woman with an "ain't gonna let the kids outdo me" attitude became very ill *wa shoiing* with the headband group. She kept up with the fast pace shouting "*wa shoi, wa shoi,*" but she exhausted herself. It was a snowy day, and she was inadequately dressed in *mompe* pants. By that evening, she was running a high fever and had to be carried to the hospital. Her doctor diagnosed her as having acute pneumonia and ordered absolute bed rest. Needless to say, she was reprimanded for her participation in the outing.

The Fatherland Study Youth Group began with our blessings. We saw no harm in their motto, "Never meddle in camp politics," and encouraged their zest for studying Japanese culture. We also thought it was good for the young people to discipline themselves through physical training.

Our attitude changed as the membership of the group increased and they began to test their power. In the beginning, a priest headed the Fatherland Study Youth Group. Before we knew it, he was ousted and replaced by a man with a history of violence. The group was renamed the Fatherland Service Group (*Hokoku Hoshi-dan*), but behaved more like a terrorist organization. This group soon rivaled Kai and Kuratomi for influence in the camp.

Like the other activists, the Fatherland Service Group members also agitated for their causes and pressured people to cooperate with them. They extorted signatures for their petition to the Spanish Consul demanding their immediate return to Japan. Some members even assaulted the elderly on their way back from worshipping at the temple for refusing to sign.

There was a knifing incident in block 78 where the Fatherland Service Group was based. One of the detractors from the group got his face slashed. Fearing retaliation, he never notified the police or spoke out in protest. All he could do was cry himself to sleep, so to speak.

On October 10, 1944, the U.S. Attorney General announced that he would send a representative to Tule Lake to interview and advise those who wished to renounce their citizenship. His office would accept or reject each request based on individual interviews.

At this news, the Fatherland Service Group stepped up its military training exercises, and members become more vocal about the benefits of renouncing citizenship. They argued that non-citizens wouldn't have to worry about being drafted into the U.S. Army. They were so successful the total number of people at Tule Lake who petitioned to renounce their citizenship increased to about 5,461.

The interviews began, and immediately there were language problems. One day, I was asked to serve as interpreter for those whose English was weak. I decided to cooperate. One by one the petitioners came for their interviews in an advisory room. Most were young Kibei men who didn't understand English well. But much to my surprise, there were also Nisei who neither understood Japanese nor knew Japan at all.

The interviewer calmly asked each person why he wanted to renounce his U.S. citizenship. One Kibei spouted abusive language right from the start. He denounced America and said he wanted nothing to do with this country. He claimed that citizenship hindered his free thinking. His strong words convinced me he was itching for a fight. Another petitioner was so painfully evasive it was impossible for me to find out what he really thought.

Most of the Nisei clearly stated that they did not wish to renounce their citizenship. The only reason they had come was because their Issei parents were pressuring them, and they could not disobey. Parents returning to Japan wanted their children to come with them. The children did not want to go, but did not want to remain here alone. These Nisei revealed their family troubles. In their own words, they explained their dilemmas and the personal suffering they endured. Unable to escape the forces around them, they were at their wit's end. I felt sorry for them.

The interviewer listened quietly to each story, and if he thought the interviewee's reasons were valid, he added the name to the list "Renunciation Granted."

While I served as an interpreter, I categorized the interviewees into three groups. Those in the first group were not interested in American life and wanted to return to Japan as soon as possible. They wanted to live in a place with Japanese culture and customs. The people in this group were overwhelmingly Kibei in their twenties and thirties. They had hurried back

to the United States before the war started on the advice of both the American Embassy and the Japanese government. Before they could settle into the Japanese American community here, they were thrown into the internment camp. To these Kibei, America was a foreign country.

The interviewees in the second group bore no ill will towards America and did not want to leave. Since they were under pressure from their parents and others around them, they had no choice. This group was made up of quiet, obedient Nisei boys. As a mediator, I had the most difficulty with them.

The third category of people wanting to renounce their U.S. citizenship was made up of people who simply wanted to be left alone. They didn't want to be moved out of the camp, and they certainly didn't want to be drafted. They thought that if they renounced their citizenship, they would be allowed to stay at Tule Lake at least until the end of the war. The people in this group were mainly the original Tule Lake internees who chose to stay put. I was surprised to see that most people in this group were naive and shortsighted people who had not considered the long-term consequences of their decisions.

Without much protest, the interviewer allowed most people in the first group to renounce their citizenship. He tried to persuade those in the second and third groups to reconsider. He patiently explained, "Even if you don't renounce your citizenship, Uncle Sam will not draft you or force you to move out of this camp. You can embrace your citizenship, and if you wish, stay in the camp for the duration of the war." His friendly and sympathetic manner was reassuring.

After an entire day of interpreting, I was exhausted and depressed. On my way out of the interviewing room I ran into George Matsuda. He stopped me, and in front of many people said, "Hey, White Jap, how much were you paid to interpret?" "White Jap" was an insult which meant "Americanized Jap." During wartime, calling someone a "White Jap" was the same as calling him a "traitor." For good reasons, this expression was taboo in the camp.

Instantly I flew into a rage unbecoming an adult. I grabbed Matsuda and slapped his face. People around me were so dumbfounded by my outburst, they didn't even attempt to intervene. I was so upset, I fumed inwardly for a long time afterwards.

I thought to myself, "Isn't citizenship a privilege awarded to an individual? If you have valid reasons to renounce it, that's different. It isn't a

fashion craze. You don't treat it as a fad and allow someone to pressure you. You should think for yourself. If you later decide you don't need it, you can always renounce. Even if it is wartime, citizenship should not stand in your way. What's the point of snarling at each other with blood-shot eyes? What country in the world would be willing to accept people without a country? By the time I got this far, I felt sad.

At the end of that year, the leaders of the resegregation and renunciation movement were sent to Justice Department camps for enemy aliens in Santa Fe, New Mexico. As each group left the camp, well-wishers saw them off at the gate. They sang patriotic songs, carried streamers, waved Rising Sun flags, and cheered "*Banzai, Banzai!*" over and over. The scene at Tule Lake was no different from a scene in Japan when villagers sent their soldiers off to war.

After the war, many renunciants were shipped to war-torn Japan. No sooner had they set foot on Japanese soil, as if free from a possessed demon, they wanted their American citizenship back and started a campaign to regain it. Spending a lot of time and money, 99% of them eventually returned to the land of their birth, the United States.

## 57 Wa shoi, Wa shoi, the Appearance of the Headband Group

A small group among the segregated internees rejected America and wished to return to Japan at the earliest possible date. This group was heavily composed of transferees. These "sincere repatriates" wished to be separated from the "other" internees that had views unlike theirs. This separatist group became known as the resegregationists. This separation plan was first presented to the camp administration and WRA Director Myer by the Negotiating Committee of the Representative Association. This matter was also taken up with the Spanish Consul. By the beginning of July 1944, this underground resegregationist group had grown, become powerful and systematically organized. (Thomas, 1946, 304-307)

In October, 1944, the membership of the *Sokoku Kenkyu Seinen-dan* (Fatherland's Study Youth Group) increased with the Manzanar gang joining the group. When the youth group changed its purpose from a study to a service organization, it was renamed *Hokoku Seinen-dan* (Fatherland Service Group).

At this time, leaders of the loosely knit Resegregation group organized an adult association, *Sokuji Kikoku Hoshi-dan* (Return Immediately to the Homeland to Serve Group) as a counterpart to the youth group. Membership in the adult group was limited to those who had signed a resegregation petition, wished to immediately return to Japan, and pledged absolute loyalty to Japan. (Thomas, 1946, 321-322)

Because the adult and youth organizations had the same aim and purpose, they were often referred as one organization, the *Hokoku Hoshidan*.

On March 16, 1945, the WRA announced that bugling, wearing Japanese emblems, nationalistic exercises, and gatherings were prohibited and punishable by imprisonment. (Thomas, 1946, 357)

The war ended on August 15, 1945, and the internees were released. After the war, many internees returned to Japan, but some remained in the United States. (Thomas, 1946, 357-358)



# Statistics

<b>Date of Operation:</b>	May 27, 1942-March 20, 1946		
<b>Segregated Camp:</b>	September 1943-March 1946		
<b>Location:</b>	35 miles southeast of Klamath Falls, Oregon.		
<b>Postal Address:</b>	Newell, California		
<b>WRA Directors:</b>	Milton Eisenhower	March-June 1942	
	Dillon S. Myer	June 1942-March 1946	
<b>Regional Director:</b>	Robert Cozzens		
<b>Project Directors:</b>	Elmer L. Shirrill	May-December 1942	
	Harvey M. Coverley	January 1942-June 1943	
	Raymond R. Best	August 1943-March 1946	
<b>Commander WDC:</b>	General John L. DeWitt	March 1941-September 1943	
<b>Commander Army Unit:</b>	Colonel Verne Austin		
<b>Project Area:</b>	26,000 acres		
<b>Camp Site:</b>	1,286 acres (1,469 buildings)		
<b>Farm Area:</b>	4,047 acres (306 buildings)		
<b>Elevation:</b>	4,036 feet above sea level		
<b>Rainfall:</b>	10 inches per year		
<b>Temperature Extremes:</b>	Winter	29 degrees below F	
	Summer	101 degrees F	
<b>Growing Season:</b>	March-October		
<b>Peak Population:</b>	Before segregation — September 1942:		15,279
	After segregation — December 1944:		18,789
<b>Internees originated from the following Assembly Centers, 1942:</b>			
Puyallup, Pinedale, Walerga, Arboga, Pomona, and Salinas			

**Camp Population by State and two highest Counties, 1942:**

California	9,842
Placer	1,807
Sacramento	4,984
Washington	4,302
King	2,700
Pierce	946
Oregon	1,138
Hood River	425
Multnomah	312

**Age Distribution Jan 1, 1943:**

33.3% less than 18 years old  
 33.3% 18-35 years old  
 33.3% over 35 years old  
 7 out of 15 female

**Tule Lake Transfers to other Camps:** 6,538

**Other Camp Transfers to Tule Lake:** 12,173

**Adult Population of Segregated Camp by Camp Origin, 1944:**

Granada	1%
Minidoka	2%
Heart Mountain	6%
Rohwer	7%
Poston	8%
Topaz	8%
Jerome	11%
Gila River	11%
Manzanar	12%
Tule Lake	34%

**Refused to Register:**

Total	3,216
Citizens	1,360
Aliens	1,856

**Answered No on #28:** 1,238

**Volunteered for Service:** 59



**Number of Renunciants:**

All camps:	5,766
Tule Lake	5,461

**Total returned to Japan:** 4,423

**Renunciants Expatriated:** 1,116

**Citizenship Restored:**

Total	4,978
No request for Restoration	357
Unaccounted	431
Expatriated Renunciants	685

**Religious Denominations:**

Protestants: Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians,  
Episcopalians, and Salvation Army Independents  
Catholics  
Seventh Day Adventists  
Buddhists

**Sources:**

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Chuman, F., *The Bamboo People*.

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tenBroek, J., *Prejudice, War, and the Constitution*.

Thomas, D., *The Spoilage*.

Weglyn, M., *Years of Infamy*.

U.S.Commission, *Personal Justice Denied*.