

## ***A Challenge to Democracy***

**Narrator:** Evacuation. More than a hundred thousand men, woman, and children, all of Japanese ancestry, removed from their homes in the Pacific-coast states, to wartime communities, established in out of the way places. Their evacuation did not imply individual disloyalty, but was ordered to reduce a military hazard at a time when danger of invasion was great.

Two thirds of the evacuees are American citizens by right of birth, the rest are their Japanese-born parents and grandparents. But [inaudible] are not under suspicion. They are not prisoners, they are not internees. They are merely dislocated people. The unwounded casualties of war.

The time: spring and summer of 1942. The place: ten different relocation centers in unsettled parts of California, Arizona, Utah, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado, and Arkansas. The relocation centers are supervised by the War Relocation Authority, which assumes responsibility for the people after they have been evacuated and cared for temporarily by the army.

A relocation center: housing from seven to eighteen thousand people. Barrack-type buildings divided into compartments. Twelve or fourteen resident buildings to a block. Each block provided with a mess hall, bath house, laundry building, and recreation hall. About three-hundred people to a block. The entire community bounded by a wire fence and guarded by military police: symbols of the military nature of the evacuation.

Each family, upon arrival at a relocation center, was assigned to a single room compartment, about twenty by twenty-five feet. Barren, unattractive: a stove, a light bulb, cots, mattresses, and blankets. Those were the things provided by the government. The family's own furniture was in storage on the West coast.

Scrap lumber, perhaps some wall boards, and a great deal of energy, curtains, pictures, drapes, depending on the family's own ingenuity and taste, help them make the place livable.

Some families built partitions to provide some privacy. Others took what they received and made the best of it.

The three-hundred or so residents of each block eat in a mess hall, cafeteria-style: rough wooden tables with attached benches. The food is nourishing, but simple. A maximum of forty-five cents a day per person is allowed for food, and the actual cost is considerably less than this, for an increasing amount of the food is produced at the centers.

A combination of oriental dishes to meet the tastes of the Issei, born in Japan, and of American-type dishes, to satisfy the Nisei, born in America.

Lands that had never been occupied or farmed were chosen for most of the relocation centers. Most of the land was covered with desert growth, or with timber in the case of the Arkansas centers. It had to be cleared before farming could start, and it had to be leveled, and irrigation ditches laid out or rebuilt, in order that the people could produce a part of their own food.

Then came the plowing, and preparation of the soil, and planting. A few of the centers had crops in 1942. In 1943, all of them. About half of the evacuated people were farm folk—skilled producers of

vegetables, fruit, and other crops. They had made desert land productive before, and around the relocation centers they could, and did, do it again. By the application of hard work, and water for irrigation.

At the two centers in Arkansas, they have introduced Western-type irrigation, and succeeded in producing vegetables in the heat of midsummer when ordinary production methods are not successful. Tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, corn, melons, and many other crops have been grown on land that a year or two years ago was unproductive. Food production is aimed at self-support for the relocation centers. It does not go on to the open market. From the field, it goes to the center warehouse, from there it may go to the kitchen, or it may be shipped to other centers.

The Arizona centers are most productive in winter. The others produce only in summer or fall, so vegetable crops are exchanged. Besides the workers engaged in farming, it takes many others to handle food: in the warehouses, in transportation, in the kitchen.

TO keep the rolling equipment—trucks cars and tractors—in operation, it takes mechanics and machinists. Water mains have to be laid and repaired. Roads, sanitation systems, and buildings have to be maintained. At the Arkansas center the land is covered with trees and the clearing process provides lumber for construction, and firewood for heating.

Those who work are paid. Wages, by outside standards, are low: twelve dollars a month for beginners, sixteen dollars a month for most of the workers, and nineteen dollars for professional people such as doctors, and others on skilled or difficult work. The workers also receive a small cash allowance for clothing. The money received as wages lets an evacuee buy the things he needs which are not provided by the government, but most have had to draw on their savings to live as they would like to.

In each center, a cooperative business association operates stores which handle clothing, toilet articles, and the merchandise which would be needed in any community. The co-ops also run barbershops, beauty parlors, shoe-repair shops, and other services for the community.

When the school bell rings, it's a signal for these students at Hart Mountain in Wyoming to change classes. The school curriculum meets the standards of the state where the center is located Mathematics, American history, geography—the fundamentals of an American education.

This is a class in mathematics. And a rhythm class of fifth-grade pupils. In the modern school, many subjects are added to "readin', writin', and 'rithmetic" as part of the school work.

Some of the teachers are Caucasian. Some are evacuees: Americans of Japanese ancestry. The first graders in this class, taught by an evacuee teacher, are making colored drawings which will decorate the walls of their barrack-building classroom. The same kind of beautifully clumsy drawings that can be found in almost any first grade room.

In the high school, vocational training gets plenty of attention. Scientific farming studied in school and in the field. And older boys are learning trades. They use them first as part of the regular work of the relocation center, as welders, mechanics, machinists, frequently learning to do the necessary jobs in a relocation center have led to better jobs outside.

Health protection is part of the obligation assumed by the government, evacuee doctors and nurses serve in the hospital, under the supervision of Caucasians. Dentists, oculists, and pharmacists also. The Japanese professional men and women, most of them American citizens, had their own practices on the West Coast before evacuation. Many of them now are in the Army Medical Corp, and others have replaced doctors and other health workers in communities outside the centers. The health service in relocation centers, in proportion to population, is about like that of any other American community in wartime: barely adequate.

The evacuees have a form of community self-government, which aids the appointed officials in administration of the community. A community council of evacuees is elected to make rules and regulations. Anyone eighteen years old, or older, is eligible to vote in the elections, which are carried on in the democratic manner.

A judicial commission sits in judgment on minor offenses. Attorneys among the evacuees represent the prosecution and the defense. A serious crime would be tried in the regular courts outside the center. The crime rate among people of Japanese ancestry in the United States always has been extremely low, and this has proved to be the case in the centers.

After working hours, over weekends, a relocation center is the scene of baseball and softball games by the dozen. The teams are counted by the hundred. Evacuees have provided practically all of their own equipment, for little government money has been spent for strictly recreational purposes. In the fall, touch football is in season, and more quiet forms of recreation. The relocation centers include many well-known artists. Amateur and professional artists and craftsmen have used their spare time in creating beauty in many different forms

Sunday church services: advanced preparations include carrying the benches into the barrack building. Most of the alien Japanese are Buddhist, but almost half their American-born children belong to some Christian denomination. Catholic, Methodist, Presbyterian. Except for state Shinto, involving emperor-worship, there is no restriction on religion in relocation centers.

Boy Scouts, who usually provide the color guard for the American flag which floats over each center, are typical of the American organization, which are prominent in each relocation center.

There's a USO club to provide entertainment for the Japanese-American soldiers who come to the center to visit their families or friends. Girl Scouts, Campfire Girls, parent-teacher associations, the Red Cross: the evacuees belonged to these organizations in their former homes and transplanted them to the centers.

The Boy Scout drum and bugle corps here is leading a harvest festival parade, marking the high point of the successful season of farm production. Everyone turns out to view the beauty queen, to see the well-decorated floats, and to join in the good time that goes with a full day of celebration.

While they have many things in common with ordinary American communities, in the really important things, relocation centers are not normal, and probably never can be. Home life is disrupted; eating, living and working conditions are abnormal. Training of children is difficult. Americanism, taught in the schools and churches and on the playgrounds loses much of its meaning in the confines of a relocation center.

When the War Relocation Authority was only a few months old, it was decided that relocation centers should not be maintained any longer than necessary. The first people to leave the relocation centers were volunteer workers recruited to help tend and later to harvest the sugar beet crop of the western states. Almost one-tenth of the evacuees volunteered for this seasonal work in 1942. The result of their labors was a year's sugar ration for about ten million people.

But work in the beet fields was temporary; most of the people returned to the centers. The War Relocation Authority has been more concerned with permanent relocation: getting the evacuees out of the backwaters of the relocation centers, into the mainstream of American life, so their labor can help to win the war, so the cost to the taxpayers may be reduced, so there can be no question of the constitutionality of any part of the action taken by the government to meet the dangers of war, so no law-abiding American need to fear for his own freedom.

Relocation of the evacuees is not being carried on at the sacrifice of national security. Only those evacuees whose statements and whose acts leave no question of their loyalty to the United States are permitted to leave. All information available from intelligence agencies is considered in determining whether or not each individual is eligible to leave. Those who are not eligible to leave have been moved to one center to live presumably for the duration of the war. The others, established as law-abiding aliens or loyal Americans, are free to go whenever they like. Thousands already have gone.

Here are a few of them: Nobira Aramura is examining corn for insects in a field in Illinois. Kenneth Sujioka used to operate his own orchard in Hollister, California. Machine work was a hobby, now it's his job. He's making precision parts for American bombers. Masako Takiyoshi is assistant head nurse in a large hospital. She was a teaching supervisor of nurses in a Seattle hospital before evacuation. She has three brothers—all in the army. The tractor driver here is Roy Himoto, who used to farm near Walnut Grove, California, and was evacuated to the Tule Lakes Center. This young machinist has learned his trade since he relocated to Chicago, and his boss says he learned it well. He's helping to make kitchen equipment. Mrs. Ayako Kasai paints miniature dolls in a Midwestern studio. She used to live in Calusa, California and then lived at the Grenada relocation center. In the background is Cecilia Miyamoto, who divides her time now between working and attending college. Kay Nakadoi feeds the chickens on an Illinois farm and on the same farm is an Issei, Kimago Shimatsu. Shinobu Sekiyama, Joe Tahara, and Yoshio Dogen cultivate potatoes on a farm in the middle west.

This is Ruth Nichi. Her father ran a fruit stand in Berkeley, California and Ruth helped him. After living in the Poston Relocation Center, she moved to Chicago and has become a skillful turret lathe operator. These young men spraying potatoes are from the Minedoka Relocation Center. This boy liked the printing trade, but had no chance to learn it until after he had left a relocation center. He's helping to print some of the nation's supply of magazines.

American eggs are shipped all over the world to Americans in the armed forces and to our allies. Mary Higuchi breaks eggs which are to be dried. And in the same plant, John Iyamuri feeds the drying machines. Jim Karisu used to be a clerk in Madera, California. Now he's a candy maker in Chicago. American flags, some of them for the armed forces, are turned out by Mrs. Yochiye Abe. She hopes that one of the flags she makes someday may be carried in triumph down the streets of Tokyo.

The produce business in Watsonville, California used to be home for these boys. Now they're in the produce business in Denver. Henry Laguro used to be a farmer at Fresno, California. From the Jerome Relocation Center, he moved to the middle west to make marshmallows. Threshing oats in the middle

west is a new experience to Ted Shiota who used to grow vegetables near Venice, California. An artificial leg doesn't interfere with the way he handles a pitchfork. This young fellow, operating a bookbinding machine, is typical of the evacuees who are adjusting to new communities, getting along with their employers, fellow workers and neighbors and finding satisfaction in becoming self-supporting once more.

The Americanism of a great majority of America's Japanese finds its highest expression in the thousands who are in the United States Army. Almost half of them are in a Japanese-American combat team created by order of the Secretary of War early in 1943. Some of the volunteers came from Hawaii; some from the eastern part of the United States mainland where there was no mass evacuation. Hundreds of them volunteered while they were in relocation centers; volunteered to fight against the militarism and oppression of Japan and Germany. They know what they're fighting against and they know what they're fighting for: their country and for the American ideals that are part of their upbringing: democracy, freedom, equality of opportunity regardless of race, creed, or ancestry.