UC Santa Barbara

Journal of Transnational American Studies

Title

Excerpt from After Camp: Portraits in Midcentury Japanese American Life and Politics

Permalink

https://escholarship.org/uc/item/2mz5t4zh

Journal

Journal of Transnational American Studies, 4(1)

Author

Robinson, Greg

Publication Date

2012

DOI

10.5070/T841012815

Copyright Information

Copyright 2012 by the author(s). All rights reserved unless otherwise indicated. Contact the author(s) for any necessary permissions. Learn more at https://escholarship.org/terms

eScholarship.org Powered by the California Digital Library
University of California

After Camp

Portraits in Midcentury Japanese American Life and Politics

GREG ROBINSON



University of California Press
BERKELEY LOS ANGELES LONDON

—-1
—0
—+1

571-48160_ch00_2P.indd iii 9/22/11 3:54 PM

Portions of Chapter 1 first appeared in Greg Robinson, "Le Projet M de Franklin Roosevelt: Construire un monde meilleur grâce à la science . . . des races," *Critique Internationale* No. 27 (May 2005), pp. 65–82. Portions of Chapters 3 and 10 first appeared as Greg Robinson, "Nisei in Gotham: Japanese Americans in Wartime New York," *Prospects: An Annual of American Cultural Studies*, Vol. 30 (2005), pp. 581–595. Chapter 4 originally appeared in somewhat different form as Greg Robinson, "Birth of a Citizen: Miné Okubo and the Politics of Symbolism," in Greg Robinson and Elena Tajima Creef, eds., *Miné Okubo: Following Her Own Road* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008), pp. 149–166. Portions of Chapter 6 first appeared as Toni Robinson and Greg Robinson, "*Mendez v. Westminster*: Asian-Latino Coalition Triumphant?" *Asian Law Journal*, Vol. 10, 2 (May 2003), pp. 161–183, and in revised form as Greg Robinson and Toni Robinson, "The Limits of Interracial Coalition: *Méndez v. Westminster* Reconsidered," in Nicholas De Genova, ed., *Racial (Trans)formations: Latinos and Asians Remaking the United States* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), pp. 93–119. Chapter 11 first appeared as Greg Robinson and Toni Robinson, "*Korematsu* and Beyond: Japanese Americans and the Origins of Strict Scrutiny," *Law & Contemporary Problems*, Vol. 68, No. 2 (Spring 2005), pp. 29–55. Portions of Chapter 12 first appeared in Greg Robinson, "Une alliance malaisée: Nisei et Africains-Américains," *Matériaux* No. 87 (Autumn 2007), pp. 49–66.

University of California Press, one of the most distinguished university presses in the United States, enriches lives around the world by advancing scholarship in the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. Its activities are supported by the UC Press Foundation and by philanthropic contributions from individuals and institutions. For more information, visit www.ucpress.edu.

University of California Press
Berkeley and Los Angeles, California

University of California Press, Ltd.
London, England

© 2012 by The Regents of the University of California

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Robinson, Greg, 1966–
After camp : portraits in midcentury Japanese American life and politics / Greg Robinson.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-0-520-27158-6 (cloth : alk. paper)
ISBN 978-0-520-27159-3 (pbk. : alk. paper)
1. Japanese Americans—Social conditions—20th century. 2. Japanese Americans—Politics and government—20th century. 3. Japanese Americans—Civil rights—History—20th century. 4. Japanese Americans—Evacuation and relocation, 1942–1945. 5. Cold War—Social aspects—United States. 6. Community life—United States—History—20th century. 7. United States—Social conditions—1945– 8. United States—Ethnic relations—20th century. I. Title.
E184.J3R63 2012 2012
973'.04956—dc23

2011030474

Manufactured in the United States of America

21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

-1—
0—
+1—

In keeping with a commitment to support environmentally responsible and sustainable printing practices, UC Press has printed this book on 50-pound Enterprise, a 30% post-consumer-waste, recycled, deinked fiber that is processed chlorine-free. It is acid-free and meets all ANSI/NISO (Z 39.48) requirements.

1. Political Science?

FDR, Japanese Americans, and the Postwar Dispersion of Minorities

The term *political science* usually refers to all the ways—polls, models, and statistics—that academics have used to bring scientific principles to the study of political behavior. Yet my use of these two words comes from a completely opposite direction and refers to the use of science for political purposes—an unexamined aspect of the domestic and foreign policy of President Franklin Roosevelt during the years of World War II. FDR and his advisors, believing that concentration of minority groups, especially urban-based, within established nations bred poverty and intergroup tensions, sought to alleviate conflict by scientifically planning the mass migration and absorption of unwanted groups into rural and underpopulated areas. Through the mass dispersion and assimilation of ethnic and racial minority populations, the United States would promote peace and economic growth.

My focus is divided into two distinct, though interrelated, dispersion initiatives. The first one took place within the United States. Here, during 1943–44, Roosevelt formulated plans to "distribute" incarcerated Japanese Americans in small groups throughout the country to solve the "Japanese problem." He meanwhile considered various proposals for the scattering of Jews and other immigrants. On the international side, FDR commissioned the M Project (the *M* standing for *migration*), a top-secret anthropological study by a team of scholars that eventually encompassed some six hundred reports, essays, and translations of articles on human migration and settlement. The goal of this project was to provide the president with expert advice on the possibilities for large-scale postwar relocation of millions of European refugees and members of unwanted populations to Latin America in accordance with Darwinian racial principles. The study of these interconnected programs reveals both the complexities of Franklin

—-1
—0
—+1

571-48160_ch01_2P.indd 15 9/22/11 11:26 AM

Roosevelt's views of race and society and the paradoxical nature of social engineering for Issei and Nisei.[1]

Franklin Roosevelt's interest in demographics and migration developed early. As a child he noted the tensions stirred by the presence of a French Canadian minority in his grandfather's hometown of Fairhaven, Massachusetts. When he grew to manhood and moved to New York City, he was regularly exposed to nativist fears of immigrants and to the countervailing efforts of settlement workers (including his future wife, Eleanor) and other progressives to "Americanize" the newcomers. In 1920, during his unsuccessful campaign as Democratic candidate for vice president, the young FDR expressed his ideas on the subject in an interview with the daily newspaper *Brooklyn Eagle*:

> Our main trouble in the past has been that we have permitted the foreign elements to segregate in colonies. They have crowded into one district and they have brought congestion and racial prejudices to our large cities. The result is that they do not easily conform to the manners and the customs and the requirements of their new home. Now, the remedy for this should be greater distribution of aliens in various parts of the country. If we had the greater part of the foreign population of the City of New York distributed to different localities upstate we should have a far better condition. Of course, this could not be done by legislative enactment. It could only be done by inducement—if better financial conditions and better living conditions could be offered to the alien dwellers in the cities.

During the mid-1920s, when he was a private citizen, Roosevelt expressed his admiration for the Canadian government's policy of assisted settlement of European immigrants in agricultural regions: "When the individual or family in the European country applies to the Canadian agent for permission to come over he must agree to go to one of the sections of Canada which is not already too full of foreigners. If, twenty-five years ago, the United States had adopted a policy of this kind we would not have the huge foreign sections which exist in so many of our cities."[2]

Even as Roosevelt expressed interest in resettling existing urban immigrants, he articulated support for official restrictions on immigration, in ways that followed popular racist prejudices. In 1925, one year after Congress passed a restrictive immigration act that effectively banned immigration from southern and eastern Europe, Roosevelt affirmed that European immigrants should be barred "for a good many years to come" so that the United States could "digest" (i.e., assimilate and Americanize) those who had been admitted already, and he added that the government should con-

-1—
0—
+1—

571-48160_ch01_2P.indd 16 9/22/11 11:26 AM

centrate henceforth on admitting only the most readily "assimilable" so that quick "digestion" could proceed. While Roosevelt did not specify which immigrants would meet such a standard, his language of assimilation and especially his call for "European blood of the right sort" left little doubt that he meant primarily western Europeans. Already, in 1923, , he had stated unequivocally that Japanese, like other Asians, should be excluded from both immigration and citizenship rights in order to protect America's "racial purity." In a second article in 1925, he further warned of the dangers of racial mixing:

> Anyone who has travelled in the Far East knows that the mingling of Asiatic blood with European or American blood produces, in nine cases out of ten, the most unfortunate results. . . . In this question then of Japanese exclusion from the United States, it is necessary only to advance the true reason—the undesirability of mixing the blood of the two peoples.[3]

The immediate roots of both the M Project and the plan for resettlement of Japanese Americans lie in Franklin Roosevelt's efforts to handle the question of Jewish refugees. As early as 1938, FDR commissioned Johns Hopkins University president Isaiah Bowman, who had previously advised President Woodrow Wilson at the Versailles peace conference on redrawing European frontiers, to come up with a plan for resettling Jews outside Europe without bringing them to the United States, and thus resolving the Old World's "Jewish problem" there. Bowman's idea was to disperse the Jews in small numbers—the smaller the better—in rural areas throughout the globe, so that they could live off the land and give up the commercial and banking professions that had aroused such opposition to them.[4] During the following years, Bowman and his team researched various possibilities for resettlement of Jews in Latin America and advised on the political prospects for negotiating the admission of refugees with different governments. The various plans remained generally unimplemented for a number of reasons, not the least of which was Bowman's own opposition to organizing the mass transportation of "a large foreign immigrant group" to Latin America, since it would embroil the United States in European quarrels. "Why not keep the European elements within the framework of the Old World?" he asked FDR. "Even if we do not favor migration to Latin America, but allow it, difficulties will arise."[5]

Roosevelt evidently agreed, for he took no further action along such lines during the prewar years. (His doubts could only have been confirmed by the results of the July 1938 Evian conference on refugees, which he took

—-1
—0
—+1

571-48160_ch01_2P.indd 17 9/22/11 11:26 AM

the initiative of organizing. Not only did the Latin American countries in attendance refuse to increase their own quotas for admission of Jewish refugees, but some actually further restricted entry.) Roosevelt nonetheless kept Bowman's initial plan in mind for later use. In particular, he began to return to the subject after December 1941, when the United States entered World War II. As the president learned of atrocities committed against the Jews and other European minorities, he began to think about the larger problem of displaced persons (DPs) and turned back to the broad lines of the Bowman plan. His concern was not simply what to do with the Jews but how to handle the several million other people throughout Europe and Asia whom the war had forced to flee their homes and who would be left stranded when the conflict ended. Roosevelt realized that this was a worldwide problem, and he firmly believed it was the responsibility of the United States, as part of its claim to world leadership, to take the lead in organizing nations around the globe to help them find new homes. Undaunted by the failure of international conferences to open doors for Jews threatened by Nazism, Roosevelt planned to negotiate agreements with Latin American states to admit displaced persons. (He rejected as politically unworkable and socially undesirable the admission of large numbers of refugees to the United States, which he did not consider an "underdeveloped country.") As Robert Strausz-Hupé, who was to help direct the M Project, later explained, "Neither strictly military nor even of immediate political importance, the [refugee] problem engaged the president's generous humanitarianism; moreover, it was likely to bear upon the future peace."[6]

In fact, FDR's interest in refugees was connected to a fundamental concern about overpopulation. In Roosevelt's view, which was shared by many social scientists of the period, the chief long-term causes of the war were population growth and overcrowding. These led to shortages and competition for scarce resources, which in turn bred the tensions that led to war. If the surplus population from densely populated regions could be resettled in sparsely populated areas, Roosevelt reasoned, these tensions would diminish. As Ladislas Farago, who was long associated with the M Project, noted:

> Roosevelt's conception of the D.P. appears unorthodox and revolutionary. He regarded the victims of the war as representing but one of . . . three groups. In the second group were the surplus populations of certain European and Asiatic countries, while the third group was made up of so-called "geopolitical problem children" whose presence in certain countries is traditionally exploited for power-political purposes. Roosevelt believed that the postwar necessity of a large-scale

-1—
0—
+1—

571-48160_ch01_2P.indd 18 9/22/11 11:26 AM

resettlement of refugees would enable him to solve the interdependent problems of all three groups simultaneously.[7]

FDR's goal was to discover areas where large-scale resettlement might take place, and he sought expert help. He told his advisors that he was not interested in counsel on the political and economic questions inherent in arranging resettlement: he considered himself the supreme expert on dealing in politics. Instead, he turned to scientists who could, he believed, provide practical, nonideological, professional advice on ways to organize resettlement and to minimize the impact and friction such refugees were likely to provoke in their new homes.[8]

The president soon found a potential leader for his project. During early spring 1942, as Roosevelt began turning over in his mind the DP question, he came into contact with Dr. Ales Hrdlicka, chief anthropologist at the Smithsonian Institution. Hrdlicka was a specialist on skull measurement, which was then a common and respected aspect of anthropology. Although himself a Czech immigrant and an opponent of nativism, Hrdlicka had strong prejudices against African Americans and other racial minority groups. In a 1928 article on measuring blacks' skulls, Hrdlicka referred to the black population of Washington, D.C., as "the semi-civilized, suspicious, scattered free laborers and servants of a big city."[9] He also had a history of racial hostility toward Japanese people, which he expressed at various points throughout the 1930s.

In early 1942, Hrdlicka wrote the president to warn of his fears about the Japanese. In his letter, he informed FDR that the members of the Japanese race were innately warlike and hostile by reason of their less developed skulls, which placed them lower in evolutionary development than other "races." Roosevelt was intrigued, and he inquired about solving the "Japanese problem" through mass interbreeding. It is not entirely clear from the president's answer to Hrdlicka whether he wished to force the Japanese to interbreed with other Asian groups in order to dilute their alleged innate aggressiveness or wanted to ensure that other Asian groups interbred with superior European racial stock in order to give them a leg up against the Japanese.

Impressed with Hrdlicka's ideas on the question of reshaping the Asian Pacific population through efficient programs of racial mixing, FDR invited Hrdlicka to meet with him in late May 1942 to discuss the general problem of postwar migration. Some idea of Roosevelt's interest in planning to overcome intergroup hostility can be inferred from a letter he wrote at the time to Canadian prime minister W. L. Mackenzie King

—-1
—0
—+1

571-48160_ch01_2P.indd 19 9/22/11 11:26 AM

about the endemic conflicts between English Canadians and French Canadians. Canada was undergoing a crisis over conscription, which was heavily opposed by French Canadians unenthusiastic about fighting for England and empire. Roosevelt confided to Mackenzie King that joint efforts might be necessary to remove the opposition:

> All of this leads me to wonder whether by some sort of planning Canada and the United States, working toward the same end, cannot do some planning—perhaps some unwritten planning which need not even be a public policy—by which we can hasten the objective of assimilating the new England French Canadians and Canada's French Canadians into the whole of our respective bodies politic. There are, of course, many methods for doing this which depend upon local circumstances. Wider opportunities can perhaps be given to them in other parts of Canada and the U.S.; and at the same time, certain opportunities can probably be given to non–French Canadian stock to mingle more greatly with them in their own centers.
>
> In other words, after nearly two hundred years with you and after seventy-five years with us, there would seem to be no good reason for great differentials between the French population elements and the rest of the racial stocks.
>
> It is on the same basis that I am trying to work out post-war plans for the encouragement of the distribution of certain other nationalities on our large congested centers. There ought not to be such a concentration of Italians and Jews, and even of Germans as we have today in New York City. I have started my national Resources Planning Commission to work on a survey of this kind.[10]

In May 1942, FDR met with Ales Hrdlicka at the White House. The anthropologist swiftly pronounced himself willing to organize a concerted initiative to arrange postwar migration and contact according to "scientific principles of demographic movements and race mixtures." Hrdlicka suggested holding a "Pan-American Congress on Post-War Immigration," to be followed by the creation of an international migration center to coordinate policy. He no doubt recognized that this might sound unrealistic, for he then suggested as an alternative the formation of a body of experts to plan population shifts. "This body should chart the problem from the anthropological, medical, and economical points of view. It would determine the countries that will have to discharge their surplus peoples, and those that might receive them; learn by direct observation, through brief field trips, the conditions of the prospective receiving regions; and lay foundations for rational selection and direction of the migrants."[11] Hrdlicka

-1—
0—
+1—

571-48160_ch01_2P.indd 20 9/22/11 11:26 AM

offered to set up such a body at the Smithsonian if private foundation money could be secured. "Such a body could begin to function without delay, and begin to furnish or publish its reports within a few months."[12]

Realizing the foreign policy implications of such an action, Roosevelt immediately sent Hrdlicka's proposal to Secretary of State Cordell Hull and asked Hull to speak to him about it.[13] At the same time, Roosevelt discussed his postwar migration plans with Vice President Henry Wallace, who expressed great interest.[14] After receiving these endorsements, Roosevelt decided to proceed with the formation of what he called an "Institute of Population," and he called again on Isaiah Bowman for assistance in directing the project. Bowman explained that he was too busy to take on any more activity but agreed to lend his name to the project.[15]

Meanwhile, Roosevelt turned for administrative support to another trusted advisor, the journalist and former State Department official John Franklin Carter. Carter was the chief of a special White House political intelligence network Roosevelt had established in early 1941, which collected information on everything from experimental weapons to political conditions in Martinique. In particular, at the president's orders Carter sent a team of agents, led by Curtis B. Munson and Warren Irwin, to the western states and Hawaii during fall 1941 to inquire into the loyalty of Japanese communities. Following reports from his agents that Japanese Americans were overwhelmingly loyal—Munson estimated Nisei as "90–98% loyal" and pitifully anxious to demonstrate their patriotism—Carter had tried to organize efforts to defend Japanese communities from potential race rioting, and had lobbied Roosevelt against mass removal after Pearl Harbor.[16]

Carter agreed to act as organizer and paymaster for the migration project. However, since he had no anthropological knowledge or experience, he deputized his assistant Henry Field, an anthropologist from the Field Museum in Chicago who specialized in Near Eastern civilizations, to manage the intellectual side of the project. At the end of July 1942, Carter and Field met with Roosevelt to receive his directions, and then visited Hrdlicka. What the president wanted, Carter explained, was to bring to Washington "a small, informal committee of leading anthropologists from the United States, Mexico and Canada," who would "discuss plans for an Institute of Population and report on the ethnological problems anticipated in postwar population movements."[17] Their mission was "specifically . . . to formulate agreed opinions as to problems arising out of racial admixtures and to consider the scientific principles involved in the process of miscegenation as contrasted with the opposing policies of so-called 'racialism.' "

—-1
—0
—+1

571-48160_ch01_2P.indd 21 9/22/11 11:26 AM

Once this was accomplished they would "submit a report in writing for the confidential guidance of the President of the United States."[18] Carter explained that the office of the president would provide funds for travel and other expenses, and he and Field would administer the project. Hrdlicka expressed agreement with the plan. However, following the meeting Carter mentioned to Roosevelt that he had grave doubts as to Hrdlicka's suitability, and warned the president that "unless, through me, you maintain a firm grip on this agenda, he will stop at little to twist it into precisely what it should not be allowed to become: a mandate for him to impose his dogmatic anthropological convictions upon national policy."[19]

FDR replied that he appreciated Carter's concerns, but told him to go ahead anyway, commenting playfully about his goals for the project: "I know that you and Henry Field can carry out this project unofficially, exploratorially, ethnologically, racially, admixturally, miscegenationally, confidentially, and above all, budgetarily. Any person connected herewith whose name appears in the public print will suffer guillotinally."[20]

Hrdlicka soon produced a list of potential committee members—a dream team of anthropological brains. With Field's help, Carter added some new names to keep the committee from being "an Ales Hrdlicka cheering section," and to ensure the committee's unofficial nature he took out the government employees Hrdlicka had suggested. He then passed the list on to Roosevelt.[21] After looking over the plans, the president decided that a formal committee would be cumbersome and probably lead to leaks. FDR instead asked Hrdlicka to join with Bowman and Field in a committee of three, to be aided by whichever consultants the committee wished to invite. Carter transmitted the request to Hrdlicka, explaining that the committee was to address itself to the general questions of finding vacant places suitable for postwar settlement (specifically South America and Central Africa) and identifying the kinds of people who would be sent to live there. He then added some specific questions of racial eugenics personally posed by Roosevelt:

> In consideration of this problem the President wished the committee to keep especially in mind the political fact that the South American nations will insist on a base stock of their own in regions opened to settlement, that they want a "planned" melting pot with a basic "flux" of 30–40% of their own people. This base stock will naturally include a considerable admixture of Indian blood. The President wishes to be advised what will happen when various kinds of Europeans—Scandinavian, Germanic, French-Belgian, North Italian, etc.—are mixed with the South American base stock.

-1—
0—
+1—

571-48160_ch01_2P.indd 22 9/22/11 11:26 AM

The memo then listed some of the specific matters that Roosevelt had gone into:

> The President specifically asked the committee also to consider such questions as the following: Is the South Italian stock—say, Sicilian—as good as the North Italian stock—say, Milanese—if given equal economic and social opportunity? Thus, in a given case, where 10,000 Italians were to be offered settlement facilities, what proportion of the 10,000 should be Northern Italians and what Southern Italians? He also pointed out that while most South American countries would be glad to admit Jewish immigration, it was on the condition that the Jewish group were not localized in the cities, that there wasn't to be "Jewish colonies," "Italian colonies," etc. How can you resettle the Jews on the land and keep them there? Historically, he pointed out, the Jews were originally an agricultural and pastoral people and the ghetto system . . . is of comparatively recent origin.

The three-man committee began slowly to set to work, but the tensions soon became unmanageable. As Carter later explained, "Hrdlicka was impossible to deal with because his whole idea was to use the government money to go down to Mexico to try to verify his theories about the migration of early American man."[22] By late fall 1942 Hrdlicka had withdrawn completely from the project.

The M Project (at first referred to as the "Bowman-Field Committee") was officially established in November 1942.[23] It was funded by allocations from the President's Special Funds.[24] Bowman again declined to serve actively, although he agreed to be an advisor and to receive a copy of all reports. Field assumed responsibility for the project. Through Archibald MacLeish, who was librarian of Congress, assistant director of the Office of War Information, and a close Roosevelt speechwriter and advisor, the M Project was offered three study rooms in the Library of Congress. MacLeish also agreed to detail Dr. Sergei Yakobson to assist. Soon Dr. Robert Strausz-Hupé and Stefan Possony—both of whom would later be Cold War foreign policy specialists, and the former an ambassador as well—came to join them. Ultimately, a project staff of approximately thirteen was built up. Many of them were Jewish refugees who joined the president's project in lieu of military service. Although the project staff did not include specialists in all fields, they were able to draw on the talent of numerous researchers within the government because of their powerful sponsor. In addition, Sripati Chandrasekhar, a graduate student at New York University, was recruited as a special expert on demography and population transfers in Asia. (Chandrasekhar would later return to India

—-1
—0
—+1

571-48160_ch01_2P.indd 23 9/22/11 11:26 AM

and become minister of health and family planning under Indira Gandhi, in which role he would arouse controversy for his forthright advocacy of voluntary sterilization and other means of "correcting" overpopulation.)

By mid-1943, the M Project was issuing reports almost on a daily basis. In Field's words, the task was to prepare "world-wide studies on areas with surplus population, their racial and religious composition, and their nationals' potential skill and adaptability as emigrants." M Project staffers drafted studies of previous settlement attempts and of immigration laws of potential settler countries, as well as reports, translations, lectures, and memoranda on a wide variety of topics, including maize in Siberia, animal husbandry and the development of the paper industry in British Guiana, soils of San Carlos and Valencia, Venezuela, and the American Jewish Committee's detailed studies of eastern European Jews and Jewish colonies in Saskatchewan, Argentina, and other places.

Roosevelt remained informed about and interested in the M Project, although he had no direct contact with the staffers and did not issue further agenda items for M Project studies, apart from allegedly commissioning special reports on the status of Jews and minorities in the Soviet Union for ammunition prior to his meeting with Soviet leader Joseph Stalin at Teheran. In October 1943, he invited Field to visit him at Shangri-La, the presidential retreat in Maryland (later known as Camp David), and encouraged him to continue the M Project. The resettlement of millions of refugees, according to FDR, "was not only desirable from a humanitarian standpoint, but essential from a military point of view as well . . . For the discontented can and will cause trouble, serious trouble."[25] Field would later claim that Roosevelt envisioned a wide network of irrigation canals to enable Europeans to resettle in the deserts of North Africa, as well as a project to use desalinated Mediterranean seawater to make North Africa the granary of Europe. Although he was aware that such a proposal (and a similar one to resettle Asians in Australia) would be tremendously expensive, he declared they were worthwhile in averting further wars.

Even as Roosevelt continued to receive reports from the M Project staff, he turned his attention to the domestic scene. In addition to asking the National Resources Planning Commission to come up with ideas for the distribution of Jews, Germans, and Italians, the president did some of his own canvassing on the question. In May 1943, Vice President Wallace reported in his diary that the president had spoken at length on the possibility of scattering Jews to avoid conflict. "The President consulted his neighbors in Marietta County, Georgia [the location of FDR's home at Warm Springs] and at Hyde Park, asking whether they would agree to

-1—
0—
+1—

571-48160_ch01_2P.indd 24 9/22/11 11:26 AM

have four or five Jewish families resettle in their respective regions. He claimed that the local population would have no objection if there were no more than that."[26] In a fictionalized dialogue, John Franklin Carter summed up Roosevelt's rationale for forcing assimilation: "It's only human nature for people to want others to conform to their standards. The Jews are a race apart, a religion apart . . . a special group inside every other nation. Such separations have always caused suspicion and trouble."[27]

Meanwhile, the question of Japanese Americans drew his attention. In the weeks after Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, the army prepared to remove some 112,000 people of Japanese ancestry from their homes. Roosevelt and his advisors seem to have given little thought at first to the long-term disposition of the inmates. On the contrary, they declined to assist a number of different projects submitted by Nisei leaders such as James Sakamoto, Hi Korematsu, and Fred Wada for voluntary relocation by groups of Japanese Americans and mass colonization of western farmland. Nonetheless, as plans for removal proceeded and a newly created civilian agency, the War Relocation Authority (WRA), began constructing camps in the interior for involuntary mass confinement, the president and various officials began to consider possibilities for permanent resettlement elsewhere. On July 7, 1942, Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson wrote the president to warn him that California governor Culbert Olson, whom he facetiously referred to as "that great patriot," had inquired whether Japanese Americans could be released from confinement to work as cheap labor during the autumn harvest. Stimson added scornfully that the same Californians who were so "hell-bent" on having the army rush "the Japanese" out should not be permitted to change their minds when it suited them. Instead, Stimson proposed going on with "our permanent relocation of the evacuees," which he termed "the permanent settlement of a great national problem."[28]

Once the Japanese Americans were moved into the camps, government authorities gradually developed a "leave clearance" system to permit those adjudged "loyal" to leave the camps and resettle in small groups outside the Pacific coast, which remained closed to Japanese Americans. Thus, a fraction of the inmates departed during 1943 and 1944. Within the government there were various discussions and exchanges of opinion with regard to the desirability of permanent dispersal outside the West Coast. For example, in April 1943, following a visit to the Gila River camp, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt told the press, "I hope that as they go out, both after the war and during it, the [Japanese Americans] will go out in small groups to different communities scattered throughout the land. [Like] many people in this

—-1
—0
—+1

571-48160_ch01_2P.indd 25 9/22/11 11:26 AM

country [they] have lived at a concentrated point, in communities within a community, so to speak, a condition which has tended to delay their assimilation into the American society."[29] FDR himself told a Chinese American White House visitor, Hung Wai Ching, during spring 1943 that he favored resettlement of Japanese Americans nationwide and "felt that they should be spread around the country. [He] mentioned about Hyde Park" (i.e., his discussions with neighbors about resettlement of small groups). According to Ching's cryptic notes, FDR likewise proposed mass intermarriage of Japanese and the creation of a "Neo-Hawaiian" race," in view of the "success of Chinese mixture with others," and referred to a "Smithsonian anthropologist" (presumably Hrdlicka) as support for his ideas.[30]

All the same, there was little concrete planning, either in the White House or elsewhere in the bureaucracy, of means to encourage dispersion. Rather, the president and his advisors assumed, with good reason, that most Japanese Americans would seek to resettle in their prewar locations once released. FDR publicly pledged in September 1943 to permit the camp inmates to go back to their homes once the military situation made it possible, and even altered the draft of an official statement to excise language implying that Japanese Americans would not be able to return to the West Coast in due course.[31]

In spring 1944 the matter came to a head, as White House officials reached consensus that there was no threat to security that would justify further exclusion of Japanese Americans from the West Coast. Interior Secretary Harold Ickes, who was responsible for the WRA, called for the immediate opening of the camps. However, in the face of concerns over potential violence against returning inmates, mixed with election-year political considerations, the president demurred. Instead of having Japanese Americans "dumped" in California, he proposed gradual release and piecemeal relocation of the camp inmates in areas such as Hyde Park. "He stated that by personal inquiry he had reached the conclusion that quite a few could be distributed in Dutchess County and that if the same could be done all over the country it would take care of all."[32] On June 2, Ickes wrote FDR to plead with him to revoke immediately the order excluding Japanese Americans from the Pacific coast. He explained that in the absence of military necessity there was "no basis in law or equity" for the ban, and added that exclusion interfered with resettlement elsewhere by stigmatizing inmates as disloyal. Ickes warned that the "retention" of the Internees in the camps would be "a blot upon the history of this country."[33]

Roosevelt replied on June 12 that he opposed a "sudden" revocation of exclusion. Rather, "for the sake of internal quiet," his plan was to avoid do-

-1—
0—
+1—

571-48160_ch01_2P.indd 26 9/22/11 11:26 AM

ing anything "drastic or sudden." He proposed a gradualist approach, involving several steps:

> (a) Seeing, with great discretion, how many Japanese families would be acceptable to public opinion in definite localities on the West Coast, (b) Seeking to extend greatly the distribution of other families in many parts of the United States. I have been talking to a number of people from the Coast and they are all in agreement that the Coast would be willing to receive back a portion of the Japanese who were formerly there—nothing sudden and not in too great quantities at any one time.

Roosevelt added that he had concluded from discussions with people in the East, Midwest, and South that inmates, "one or two families to each county as a start," should be "distributed" around the rest of the country. "Dissemination and distribution constitute a great method of avoiding public outcry." He asked Ickes to proceed with that plan "for a while at least."[34]

While Roosevelt's advocacy of "distribution" was clearly attributable in good part to political expediency, as well a genuine desire to avoid conflict on the West Coast, he also sincerely believed in the benefits of dispersion, and tried to push it along by asking for updates on resettlement in the weeks that followed. He consulted Assistant Secretary of War John McCloy and General Charles H. Bonesteel, the West Coast defense commander, about schemes for "dissemination" of Japanese Americans throughout the country. A skeptical Bonesteel remarked, "The President seemed to feel that there should be no difficulty in accomplishing a solution of the problem whereby one or two Japanese families would be placed in each of several thousand small communities throughout the nation. He went into detail in showing how the plan would work in his own county."[35] Even after the November 1944 election, when Roosevelt at last gave his consent to preparations for lifting exclusion and opening the West Coast to return by Japanese Americans, he continued to favor dispersion. In a press conference on November 21, 1944, Roosevelt hailed the progress the government had made in "scattering" Japanese Americans through the country. "In the Hudson River valley or in western Joe-gia [Georgia] probably half a dozen or a dozen families could be scattered around on farms and worked into the community."[36]

Franklin Roosevelt did not have a chance to implement plans for mass dispersal before his death in April 1945, shortly before V-E Day. The M Project never extended beyond the planning stage. After Roosevelt's death the M Project was ordered continued for several months by President Truman, and by the end of 1945 it had produced 665 studies, making up

—-1
—0
—+1

571-48160_ch01_2P.indd 27 9/22/11 11:26 AM

ninety-six volumes. However, Truman did not have the same faith in planned migration as Roosevelt had had, and he did not act on the studies. Truman did ultimately evince interest in using the M Project data to promote wise disbursement of aid money under his Point IV Program for economic and technical assistance for development of Third World areas, and in 1949 he asked that each regional director be sent the papers on the relevant area. However, Point IV was a small, limited program, and the information was by then long out of date. It is interesting to speculate on the uses FDR would have made of the M Project studies. As Carter stated, "Of course, if Roosevelt had lived, maybe something could have been done, but Roosevelt did not live." Instead, all the tremendous labor involved in the M Project came to naught, although Robert Strausz-Hupé insisted dubiously, "I do not believe our labors were entirely in vain. Only a few of the migrants of World War II vintage have been settled upon homes or on the land. Yet some were. These would have suffered greater hardships had it not been for better planning based upon the research of [our] geographers, agronomists, anthropologists, sociologists, and experts in legislation on immigration."[37]

Meanwhile, the president's plans for domestic "distribution" of Japanese Americans remained equally unrealized. Once the West Coast reopened to Japanese Americans in January 1945, camp inmates began to return to their prewar home regions in large numbers, and even those who moved outside the West Coast tended (with various exceptions) to congregate together in large urban colonies. Officials offered financial support for those settling outside the West but recognized the futility of trying to interfere with the constitutional right of citizens to settle where they pleased.

It is as well that no such program was implemented, as it would have been not only tyrannical but also probably flawed.[38] One powerful indication of the limitations of such an enterprise is the official program to resettle Indochinese refugees during the mid-1970s, the first occasion after World War II that the government attempted a conscious policy of dispersal and absorption of an ethnic/racial group. Although the government had previously created the Refugee Relief Program in the 1950s to aid European and Cuban refugees and had sought assistance from religious and charitable organizations for aid in resettlement, the case of the Indochina refugees represented a race-conscious remedy in which dispersion was the favored tool to promote assimilation and overcome racial hostility. Following the fall of Saigon in April 1975, President Gerald R. Ford signed the Indochina Migration and Refugee Assistance Act. Under this law, the White House undertook a humanitarian operation to absorb and assist

-1—
0—
+1—

571-48160_ch01_2P.indd 28 9/22/11 11:26 AM

some 135,000 refugees from Vietnam, most of whom were military or government officials of the deposed South Vietnamese regime, plus 5,000 more refugees from Cambodia. In a notable case of public-private partnership, the White House and State Department put together a network of religious, ethnic, and progressive organizations, from Catholic charities to Ukrainian aid organizations and Chinese community groups, to sponsor the refugees. The Ford administration set up refugee camps at military bases, most notably Camp Pendleton in California, and arranged for the release of family groups from government custody once they had received offers of sponsorship. At the same time, in an unconscious echo of wartime policy, Ford administration officials insisted on the dispersion of the refugees in small family groups outside the West Coast as a condition of their release from the refugee camps. The government's strategy of dispersal—even blocking the collective resettlement of family groups beyond immediate family members—was based on hindering the growth of ethnic communities in order to avert a "Vietnamese problem." As in the case of the Japanese Americans, the goal was to ease the adjustment of the migrants and lessen prejudice against them in their new homes

It is difficult to measure whether any such dispersal strategy would have done much to dilute mass hostility toward Indochinese refugees in the wake of the Vietnam War. In any case, the punitive and ethnocentric nature of the policy undercut its purposes, and the policy was a radical failure on its own terms. Most of the refugees who had agreed to be dispersed soon undertook a second resettlement into ethnic enclaves (many on the West Coast) alongside friends and relatives, and a generation later the ethnic Vietnamese population in the United States remains concentrated in a few centers.

To conclude briefly, the lesson of Roosevelt's "political science" is that racial bias and eugenicist thinking can influence government policy in many ways, even—perhaps especially—when racial thinking bears the imprint of scientific expertise and is cloaked in humanitarian purpose. FDR and his advisors launched a visionary scheme through which they undertook to use scientific expertise to help guarantee a peaceful and stable future for the world. They genuinely believed that by shifting populations and deliberately remaking the racial composition of entire regions, they could lessen international tension and promote peace and economic growth. Yet what underlay this progressive goal was the reshaping of demographic patterns in accordance with Social Darwinist racial principles, which had already been called into serious question by Franz Boas and others, and which are outmoded and even shocking by current standards. While we are no doubt fortunate that none of the more radical elements of the M

—-1
—0
—+1

571-48160_ch01_2P.indd 29 9/22/11 11:26 AM

Project was ever put into effect, we should nonetheless remember that the project was designed (and funded to the tune of $180,000) to be used in a serious way. At the same time, the case of the Japanese Americans demonstrates the persistence of the dubious belief that destruction of ethnic communities will ensure assimilation and social harmony (the suffering of the Japanese Canadians, who were stripped of their property during the war, barred from the West Coast, and scattered throughout the nation, calls this thesis sharply into question). We must be wary of all attempts, however well meant, to redraw human population distribution patterns, for it is as easy to stigmatize so-called racial characteristics as to valorize them.

-1—
0—
+1—

571-48160_ch01_2P.indd 30 9/22/11 11:26 AM

Hawaii. However, the compelling story of the 150,000 "local Japanese" and their postwar struggle for political and economic influence is sufficiently discrete and well-documented that it really lies outside the framework of this study. See, for example, Tom Coffman, *The Island Edge of America* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2003) and Franklin Odo, *No Sword to Bury* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004). Also largely (though not entirely) beyond the scope of this volume is the postwar experience of Japanese Canadians, following their own wartime confinement. See Roy Miki, *Redress: Inside the Japanese Canadian Call for Justice* (Vancouver: Rainforest Books, 2004).

4. Primary material on Japanese Americans in the generation after the war ranges from memoirs of individuals and collected oral histories to the published output of the Japanese vernacular newspapers of the period. Among the most striking and insightful works, in my view, are the final chapters of Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston and James D. Houston, *Farewell to Manzanar* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2002 [1972]); Daniel I. Okimoto, *American in Disguise* (New York: Walker/Weatherhill, 1971); Gene Oishi, *In Search of Hiroshi* (Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle, 1988); and the collections "Nanka Nikkei Voices: Resettlement Years, 1945–1955," Los Angeles, Japanese American Historical Society of Southern California, 1998, and Brian Komei Dempster, ed., *Making Home from War: Stories of Japanese American Exile and Resettlement* (Berkeley, CA: Heyday Books, 2011).

5. Winthrop D. Jordan, *White over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550–1812* (New York: Penguin Books, 1971 [1968]), vii.

6. John Modell, *The Economics and Politics of Racial Accommodation: The Japanese of Los Angeles, 1900–1942* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977).

7. On the history of the Japanese Evacuation Claims Act and its place as a "pyrrhic victory" for Japanese Americans on the road to redress, see Greg Robinson, *A Tragedy of Democracy: Japanese Confinement in North America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), ch. 6.

8. Naoko Shibusawa, *America's Geisha Ally* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006) is a fascinating study of how "Japaneseness" was revalued and reabsorbed into Cold War U.S. culture, though it does not delve into the place of Japanese Americans in the transformation. Caroline Chung Simpson's *An Absent Presence: Japanese Americans in Postwar Culture* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002) describes the erasure of the wartime confinement as an element in U.S. political life after the war.

1. POLITICAL SCIENCE?

1. For the use of social scientists in both Japanese American camps and the M Project, see generally David Price, *Anthropological Intelligence: The Deployment and Neglect of American Anthropology in the Second World War* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008).

-1—
0—
+1—

571-48160_ch01_2P.indd 250 9/22/11 11:26 AM

2. Franklin Roosevelt, column in the *Macon Telegraph*, April 21, 1925, reprinted in *F.D.R. Columnist*, ed. Donald Scott Carmichael (Chicago: Pellegrini and Cudahy, 1947), 38. During the early years of the Depression, Roosevelt put forth various schemes to resettle the urban unemployed, largely immigrants, on agricultural land. However, his plans ignored economic and cultural realities. Resettlement under the New Deal was implemented only in piecemeal fashion and not directed primarily toward urban immigrants. Frank Freidel, *Franklin D. Roosevelt: The Triumph* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1956), 225–26.

3. Franklin Roosevelt, column in the *Macon Telegraph*, April 30, 1925, in *F.D.R. Columnist*, 41. For Roosevelt's 1920s racial views, see Greg Robinson, *By Order of the President: FDR and the Internment of Japanese Americans* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 36–43.

4. On FDR and Bowman, see Neil Smith, *American Empire: Roosevelt's Geographer and the Prelude to Globalization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

5. Blanche Wiesen Cook, *Eleanor Roosevelt*, vol. 2: *1933–1938* (New York: Vintage, 1999), 560–61.

6. Robert Strausz-Hupé, *In My Time*, 188.

7. Ladislas Farago, "Refugees: The Solution as F.D.R. Saw It," *United Nations World*, June-July 1947.

8. On the M Project, see Price, *Anthropological Intelligence*, 125–37.

9. Ales Hrdlicka, "The Full-Blooded American Negro," *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* XII, 1 (July-September 1928): 155.

10. Letter, Franklin D. Roosevelt to W. L. Mackenzie King, 1942, reprinted in Normand Lester, *Le livre noir du Canada anglais* (Montreal, 2006).

11. Letter, Ales Hrdlicka to Franklin D. Roosevelt, May 27, 1942, Jack Carter file, President's Secretary's File, Office Files, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library, Hyde Park, NY (hereafter "Carter file").

12. Ibid.

13. Memo, FDR to Cordell Hull, June 5, 1942, Office File 5325, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library (henceforth "FDRL").

14. Memo, Henry Wallace to FDR, June 5, 1942, Office File 5325, FDRL.

15. Memo, John Franklin Carter to Ales Hrdlicka, July 30, 1942, Carter file.

16. For Carter and his team, see Robinson, *By Order of the President*, 65–70, 78–83.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid.

19. Memo, John Franklin Carter to Roosevelt, July 30, 1942, Carter file.

20. Memo, FDR to John Franklin Carter, July 30, 1942, Carter file.

21. Memo, John Franklin Carter to Grace Tully, August 3, 1942, Carter file.

22. John Franklin Carter Oral History, June 1966, FDRL, 22.

23. Letter, John Franklin Carter to Harry S. Truman, November 6, 1945, John Franklin Carter file, Rose Conway file, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, MO.

—-1
—0
—+1

571-48160_ch01_2P.indd 251 9/22/11 11:26 AM

24. John Franklin Carter, memo to President Harry Truman, May 7, 1945, John Franklin Carter File, Harry S. Truman Library.

25. Henry Field, *M Project for FDR* (privately printed, 1963), 327–28. "This time we must not prop up Europe with billions of dollars for if we do, we shall eventually become the most despised and finally hated nation on Earth. Everyone wants to be helped in adversity. But later, it is only human to become envious of the wealth of a great benefactor, then jealousy, and finally hatred, overcomes all other sentiments." Ibid.

26. Henry Wallace Diary, May 22, 1943, Henry Wallace Papers, University of Iowa, microfilm copy in Library of Congress.

27. Jay Franklin (John Franklin Carter), *The Catoctin Conversation* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1947), 175.

28. Letter, Secretary of War to the President, July 7, 1942, Official File 197-A (Japan), FDRL.

29. "Mrs. F. D. Roosevelt Visits," *Gila River News-Courier*, April 25, 1943, 1.

30. Hung Wai Ching, "Visit to White House for Conference with President F.D. Roosevelt, May 9, 1943," Hung Wai Ching File, Morale Committee Files, Box 1, RASRL Papers, Special Collections, University of Hawaii-Manoa, Honolulu, HI. I am indebted to Tom Coffman for calling my attention to this document.

31. Robinson, *By Order of the President*, 196–97.

32. Henry R. Stimson Diary, May 26, 1944, 3–4. On the May cabinet meeting, see Robinson, *By Order of the President*, 218.

33. Letter, Harold Ickes to FDR, June 2, 1944, Official File 4849, FDRL.

34. Memorandum, FDR to E. R. Stettinius Jr. and Harold Ickes, June 12, 1944, Official File 4849, FDRL.

35. Letter, Gen. C. H. Bonesteel to John J. McCloy, July 31, 1944, RG 107, ASW014.311, National Archives, Washington, DC. Bonesteel noted that those who were scattered would face racial hostility and be vulnerable to economic retaliation.

36. Franklin D. Roosevelt, press conference no. 982, November 21, 1944, in *Complete Presidential Press Conferences of Franklin D. Roosevelt* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1973), 24:247–48.

37. Strausz-Hupé, *In My Time*, 193.

38. The situation of Japanese Canadians forms a striking contrast with that of their counterparts south of the 49th parallel. In Canada, where the cabinet acted independently of Parliament under the War Measures Act, the government formally confiscated and sold the properties of Japanese Canadians, and pressured those it confined to move east and scatter themselves, under pain of postwar deportation to Japan. Thus, Japanese Canadians settled in small colonies in the eastern part of the country, and even after the Pacific coast was belatedly reopened in spring 1949 they did not return in large numbers. See Greg Robinson, *A Tragedy of Democracy: Japanese Confinement in North America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), ch. 6.

-1—
0—
+1—

571-48160_ch01_2P.indd 252 9/22/11 11:26 AM