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Article Summary: Other universities initially refused to accept Japanese American students forced into World War II concentration camps. The University of Nebraska was among the first to welcome them. It eventually enrolled more Nisei students than all but two other institutions. The author asserts that this controversial acceptance resulted from humanitarian decisions made by a few individuals in Lincoln.

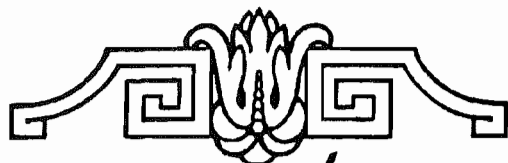
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Photographs / Images: Nisei students released from concentration camps to attend the University of Nebraska: Cromwell Mukai, Marie Yamashita, Joe Nishimura (Photo by Tom Parker, War Relocation Authority); former students attending the 1999 dedication of a plaza and plaque commemorating the University of Nebraska's admission of more than one hundred Japanese American students during the war: Ted Okamoto, Yuri Adachi, Nobu Shiokari, Mary Kumigai Okamoto; students at the State Capitol, 1949: Harry Tachino, Dolas Okawaki Koga, Maudie Nakada, Harry Matsuyama; George Walter Rosenlof, university registrar, who smoothed the way for Nisei students; Tom Shiokari perched on the pyramid of Sigma Tau, an engineering honorary fraternity; students comparing notes on the steps of the engineering building: George Furutani (Manzanar), Sukio Oji (Gila River), Joe Nishimura (Manzanar); Yuri Maruyama and Midori Sakamoto doing their homework, 1942; Yuri Maruyama Adachi at the 1999 plaza dedication; Second Lieutenant Kei Tanahashi, who came to UN-L for post-graduate study in economics and finance and was killed in action in Europe with the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, a unit composed entirely of Japanese Americans; a Nisei student and a classmate solving a field problem in engineering in front of the coliseum; two students from the segregated "International House" dormitory; John Shiokari working at the YMCA cafeteria for room and board; inset biography and picture of Ben Kuroki, World War II hero; students on a snowy day; Tom Shiokari posing at the State Capitol



Admitting Nebraska's Nisei **Japanese American Students at the University of Nebraska, 1942–1945**

By Andrew B. Wertheimer

On April 24, 1999, nearly one hundred people—many of them graying, Japanese—American alumni of the University of Nebraska, gathered near Kimball Hall on the university campus to commemorate the university's admission of more than one hundred Japanese American students fifty years earlier during World War II. The plaza, financed by contributions from many of those former students, who also contributed scholarship funds and support for the university library, pays tribute to the university for being one of the first to admit students from America's wartime concentration camps.²

The university was not only among the first to accept Japanese American students, but enrolled the second greatest number during the trying early years of 1942 and 1943. By war's end, the university, as a part of the national student relocation movement, had welcomed the third largest number of Nisei students; only the universities of Utah and Colorado admitted more.

Relocation and Detention

Congress and most historians now recognize that racism and war hysteria motivated the United States government in 1942 to forcibly relocate more than 120,000 Japanese Americans from their homes in California and western Washington, Oregon, and Arizona into

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concentration camps in the American interior. Two-thirds of those incarcerated were second-generation Japanese Americans, or Nisei—American citizens by birth. The process began on February 19, 1942, when President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, allowing the military to exclude civilians from military exclusion zones.³

On March 2, 1942, Nebraska-born Fourth Army Lt. Gen. John L. DeWitt issued Public Proclamation Number 1, which established military zones on the

War Relocation Authority (WRA) administered topaz and the nine other concentration camps, located in the American interior.⁴

The Student Relocation

The median age of the Nisei in 1940 was seventeen, and many were just entering universities when the war began. In 1942, when the forced mass relocation disrupted their lives, 3,530 Nisei were attending colleges or universities, all but 271 at West Coast schools.

The good Nebraska experience helped erase the bad memories of the relocation and direct me toward the future.

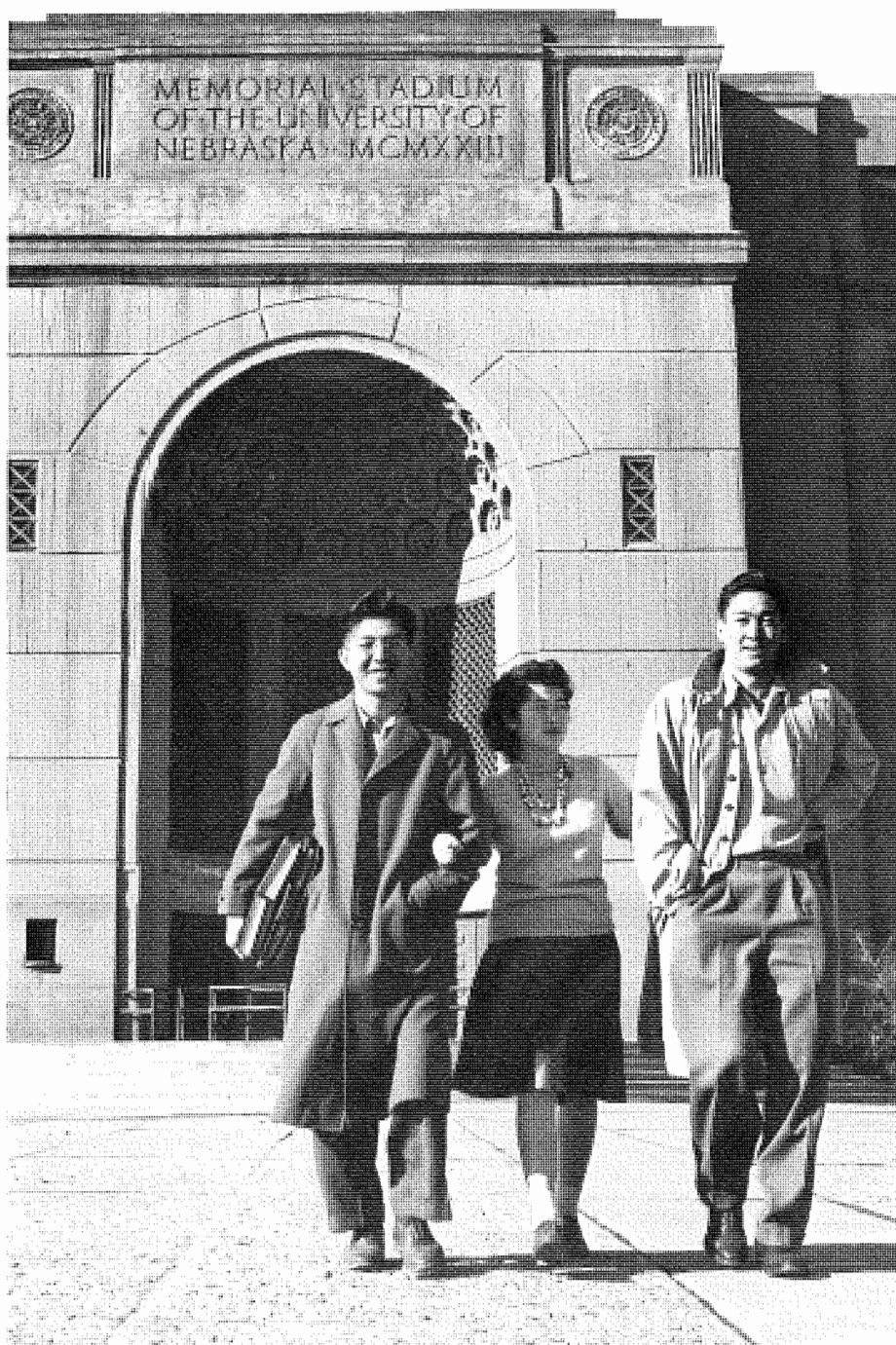
Dr. K. George Hachiya,
University of Nebraska student, 1942–43¹

West Coast and encouraged Japanese Americans living there to “voluntarily relocate.” It also required them to file change of address forms with the Army's Wartime Civil Control Administration (WCCA). On March 24 the WCCA ended voluntary relocations, and began implementing civilian exclusion orders. Japanese Americans were forced into temporary detention centers, such as Tanforan, a hastily converted racetrack south of San Francisco that held nearly eight thousand people in whitewashed horse stalls and other substandard quarters under WCCA control, until the more permanent Topaz Relocation Center could be constructed in a desolate part of Utah five months later. The civilian

As Japanese Americans packed and sold their belongings, academic leaders expressed concern for the Nisei, many of them star students, and several academic and church coalitions emerged to help the Nisei continue their education. The associations eventually merged to form the National Japanese American Student Relocation Council (NJASRC).⁵

The council, assisted by the American Friends Service Committee and other organizations, tried to place students in Midwestern and Eastern colleges and universities. The NJASRC also worked closely with the WRA to obtain permits for the students, and with the Army and Navy, whose regulations prevented Nisei from matriculating at many campuses

Japanese American Students at UNL, 1942-1945



Three Nisei students released from the concentration camps to attend the University of Nebraska stroll in front of the stadium for War Relocation Authority photographer Tom Parker. Left to right: Cromwell Mukai from the Topaz camp (Utah); Marie Yamashita from Heart Mountain (Wyoming); and Joe Nishimura from Manzanar (California). Photo by Tom Parker for the War Relocation Authority. Courtesy Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley

on the discriminatory premise that the Nisei posed a security threat to secret projects being conducted there. The council also worked with church groups to raise scholarship funds, and with the Nisei themselves to ensure that information about educational opportunities outside got back to the concentration camps. The council also encouraged the Nisei to pursue their educational goals despite the frustrations they encountered.

Many Nisei students did not wait for assistance from government or civilian agencies, but began writing application letters, some before the forced relocation, others from the sixteen temporary detention centers. Later, Nisei in Topaz and the nine other concentration camps also sent impassioned applications. The responses were often disheartening, and while few of the rejections survive, their words were burned into the memory of an entire generation.

Early Japanese victories on the Pacific front, combined with America's long history of anti-Asian discrimination, whipped the media and much of the nation into a frenzy that saturated everything from the news to the cartoons, and implied the outright disloyalty of Japanese Americans.⁶ In this context, many universities simply rejected Nisei applications out of hand, or adopted policies like those of the University of Kansas, whose regents initially forbade admission of any Japanese Americans. Most of the few schools that admitted Nisei were small, private, religious colleges where high tuition and a fear that they might be the only Asian Americans on campus discouraged many Nisei from matriculating. It should be noted, however, that many private colleges provided financial aid to the Nisei students they accepted, something the University of Nebraska did not do.

Japanese Americans in Nebraska

The relocated Nisei students who arrived during the war were by no means the first ethnic Japanese to enroll at the



A 1999 photo of four former students attending the dedication of a plaza and plaque commemorating the University of Nebraska's admission of more than one hundred Japanese American students during the war, echoes a photo of four students at the State Capitol taken some fifty years earlier. Above, left to right: Ted Okamoto, Yuri Adachi, Nobu Shiokari, Mary Kumigai Okamoto. Photo by Andrew Wertheimer. Right, left to right: Harry Tachino, Dolas Okawaki Koga, Maudie Nakada, Harry Matsuyama. Courtesy Tom Shiokari.



University of Nebraska. Japanese and Japanese Americans had studied at the University of Nebraska since the late nineteenth century, among them Yachiro Yamashita, who stayed with William Jennings Bryan from 1898 until he graduated five years later.

Nebraska was at the eastern edge of Japanese settlement in the United States. Issei (first-generation Japanese Americans) came to Western Nebraska with railroad crews around the turn of the twentieth century, and several hundred were brought to Omaha during the 1904 meatpacking strike. The 1940 census enumerated 480 Japanese Americans in the state, most engaged in agriculture in the Panhandle.⁷

In 1916, Hiram Hisanori Kano, a graduate student in agricultural economics, wrote that he was one of fifteen Japanese and Japanese American students on campus. In 1930, five Japanese and Japanese American

students studied art and engineering, and three were enrolled in the dental and medical schools. In 1941, just before Pearl Harbor, eleven Nisei students attended the University, most from rural Nebraska.⁸

Appeals to Governor Griswold

Following news of the incarceration, West Coast academic leaders, including University of California President Robert Gordon Sproul, launched a campaign to allow Nisei students to continue their education outside the exclusion zone. Sproul sent letters to thirty-two universities east of the exclusion zone and to the governors of the Great Plains states. A California newspaper article did not mention a response from Nebraska, but reported that the University of Idaho, University of Nevada, Iowa State College, University of Kansas City, and Colorado State College had agreed to admit Nisei, while the University of Iowa and

University of Wichita had refused.

There is no letter from Sproul in the files of Nebraska Governor Dwight Griswold, but a letter dated April 7, 1942, from Ralph T. Fischer, Jr., president of the Associated Students of the University of California, requests the governor to use his influence to help the "hard-working, intelligent, loyal and really American" Japanese American students. Griswold responded three days later, assuring Fisher that "Nebraska authorities will cooperate in every way to be of assistance to them."⁹

Although Griswold's letter promised no specific actions, he probably realized that the Nisei students could become an explosive political issue. His office was also negotiating with the WRA and western Nebraskans about using Japanese Americans from the West Coast to help with the sugar beet harvest and other work. Some farmers and employers provided encouragement, but he also

Japanese American Students at UNL, 1942–1945

met emphatic opposition from people like Harry Fridley of Omaha, who wrote on March 24 that bringing in Japanese American farm laborers would be “a very dangerous thing to do unless the Japs are place[d] in a concentration camp and closely guarded.”¹⁰

The GrassRoots Republican Club of Lincoln wrote Griswold on March 14 to “protest the admission of Japanese aliens to the state of Nebraska, unless they be segregated and placed under heavy guard.” Griswold replied, “These Japs must be kept where they cannot possibly do any harm,” and wrote to the Provost Marshall General on April 3 that he would be “pleased to have...Enemy Internment Camps in Nebraska...with the understanding that they will be under guard at all times and will not be located near any vital war industry.”¹¹

No record exists to prove that Griswold contacted the university about his exchange of letters regarding the Nisei, but his other correspondence made headlines throughout the state as Nebraskans expressed themselves in favor of using relocated Japanese Americans as inexpensive temporary laborers, or against a “Japanese invasion” of the state.

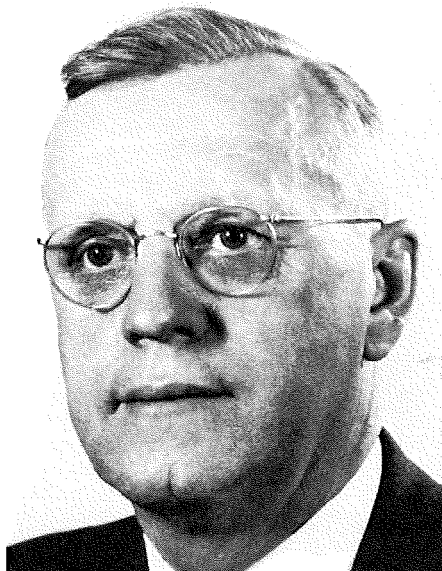
Appeals to the University

Even before Fischer wrote to Governor Griswold, the president of the University of Minnesota, W. C. Coffey, wrote to the presidents of seventeen other Midwestern universities asking them to consider admitting Nisei students. University of Nebraska Chancellor Chauncey S. Boucher responded three days later saying that two unnamed university presidents had already written him regarding placing their students, and “in each instance I have said that I felt this matter of policy should be passed upon by our board.”¹²

At their meeting on March 28, 1942, the board of regents officially approved admitting “Japanese students” if the FBI cleared each applicant. The university established four criteria for admission:

1. Evidence of good scholarship
2. Evidence of loyalty to the American form of government
3. Evidence of American citizenship
4. Evidence of funds sufficient to care for their expenses.

A quota for Nisei students is frequently mentioned in university documents and elsewhere, but no quota is specifically



George Walter Rosenlof, university registrar, was instrumental in smoothing the way for Nisei students. He worked directly with the students themselves, persuaded the chancellor to raise the University of Nebraska's quota, and appealed to other colleges and universities to accept more Japanese Americans. Courtesy Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Libraries

recorded in the minutes of the March 28 meeting, and the Nisei are not mentioned again in the minutes of subsequent meetings.¹³

News of the university's willingness to accept Nisei students was made public in an Associated Press story on April 6, 1942. The story reported the results of a survey sent to thirty-two interior universities inquiring about their willingness to admit Nisei students. Only fourteen—including the University of Nebraska, Iowa State College, and Yankton College—replied in the affirmative. A column

in the *Daily Nebraskan* on May 5 reported that Nebraska was one of eighteen schools responding positively to letters from a committee of the Western Colleges Association concerning the plight of Japanese American students “evacuated” from UCLA and other universities.¹⁴

By June 29 the university had admitted two students who had “voluntarily relocated” and, according to a government report, was on a list of sixty-seven colleges and universities willing to admit Nisei. One of only three state universities on the list, Nebraska had agreed to admit twenty Nisei, ten men and ten women, the report said, because the campus and community attitudes would “tolerate a few.” The next day the university returned a questionnaire to the NJASRC indicating it could accept twenty-five or more Nisei students.¹⁵

Dr. G. W. Rosenlof

George Walter Rosenlof, the university registrar, was the campus official who had the most direct dealings with the Nisei students. There no evidence that Rosenlof had any previous contact with Japanese Americans, and early in the process of admitting the Nisei students he wrote to Robbins Barstow, director of the NJASRC, asking for confirmation that “Nisis” [sic] were American citizens. This suggests limited knowledge of Japanese Americans, and perhaps it is telling that he would rather write to Barstow than talk with any of the Nisei already on campus. Nevertheless, O'Brien wrote Beale, it was Rosenlof who convinced Chancellor Boucher to raise the University's quota of Japanese American students from twenty-five to fifty.¹⁶

Perhaps Rosenlof was influenced by a letter from Mary C. Baker, the dean of women at Fresno State College, who wrote him on July 21, 1942, about two Nisei applicants to Nebraska. She explained that the Army had delayed their permits while deciding which schools would be open to Nisei. In the meantime, she wrote, both students had “lost their beautiful home” and had



The snapshot of Tom Shiohari perched on the pyramid of Sigma Tau, an engineering honorary fraternity (top, left, courtesy Tom Shiohari), is a marked contrast to the posed “casual moment” staged by War Relocation Authority photographer Tom Parker (above). Comparing notes on the steps of the engineering building are (l. to r.) George Furutani from the Manzanar camp; Sukio Oji from Gila River, and Joe Nishimura from Manzanar. Courtesy Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley

been sent to the Poston concentration camp in Arizona, which she described as a desert where temperatures sometimes reached 125 degrees. She added:

If this evacuation seems to some of us unnecessarily cruel, it must be much more difficult for our young citizens who have had all their training in our schools and are very much a part of our community to understand why this should happen to them. It is true that great kindness and consideration have been shown on all sides but it is a bitter and sad experience.... Your reputation for kindness to Japanese students has reached us and we are very grateful.¹⁷

Rosenlof was obviously moved by the letter and sent a copy to Barstow, adding:

I cannot for the life of me understand why we can't bring some order out of chaos and bring to pass at least fair treatment of these poor unfortunate citizens. I don't dare to speak as I feel—suffice it to say that to me it is exceedingly disappointing that the government and the Army officials particularly are not handling this situation

as it ought to be handled. We are very critical of the concentration camps set up by the Germans and their handling of aliens and rightly so. I just wonder what some of the enemy might think about the way our own citizens are treated even though they be of Japanese extraction.

I realize as you do that there are among these Japanese-American citizens probably some we should not trust and I suppose this is a case where the innocent must suffer with the guilty. I am also conscious of the fact that we are exercising caution here in this institution. I am sorry that circumstances are as they are, but I don't know what we can do more than we have done. I had thought I would appeal to our Congressmen but maybe you can make a stronger appeal. I believe that you can.¹⁸

Rosenlof maintained a warm correspondence with the NJASRC and kept them apprised of the Nisei situation on campus. He also met many of the students personally, and tried to persuade other Nebraska colleges to accept Nisei students. In 1943 he wrote to the president

of the recalcitrant board of regents of the University of Kansas, informing him “of our success” and urging the Kansas board to give “serious and favorable consideration” to the question of admitting Nisei students. As secretary of the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, Rosenlof also acted on the NJASRC's request to bring up the “relocation of loyal Japanese American students” at the association's executive meeting on October 24, 1942.¹⁹

The Student Relocation

The first two Nisei accepted at the University of Nebraska left the Exclusion Zone during the “voluntary relocation” period, which ended in March 1942. Like other Japanese Americans who traveled east to interior states, they often encountered obstacles. Many restaurants and gas stations along the way had posted “Japanese not welcome” signs,

Japanese American Students at UNL, 1942–1945



Another of Tom Parker's 1942 War Relocation photos features Yuri Maruyama (facing the camera, (above) and her roommate, Midori Sakamoto, doing their homework. Courtesy Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. Yuri, now Yuri Maruyama Adachi (right), was among the nearly one hundred Nisei alumni who attended the 1999 dedication. Photo by Andrew Wertheimer



or simply refused to serve them.²⁰

Reports of this kind of reception discouraged many from making the move, as did some Japanese American leaders on the Great Plains and in the Midwest who were afraid of the effects larger numbers of Japanese Americans might have on race relations in the region. Others felt they had nowhere else to turn after having their assets frozen and investments lost, and some simply gave up, saying *Shkata ga nai* (it can't be helped) after having relocated as many as three times, as the Army re-drew the Exclusion Zone boundaries.

But some who had the funds and the courage eventually ended up in Lincoln, in part because it was among the largest of the eighteen colleges and universities responding positively to the Western Colleges Association's appeal. By June 1943, twenty-nine Nisei from outside the exclusion zone had matriculated at the

university. Some were residents of Nebraska or nearby states; others had "voluntarily" relocated to the state. By late 1943 forty-nine had come to Nebraska directly from the concentration camps, replacing earlier attendees who had graduated.²¹

On October 12, 1942, Rosenlof wrote Howard Beale that between fifty-six and sixty Nisei students were at the university, including six or seven from Nebraska. On November 20, Rosenlof wrote the NJASRC that he appreciated the "fine quality of the young people" and wished he were "in a position to take more of them," but tried to rationalize that it might be best if the Nisei were not "centered in one or two institutions but scattered."²²

Rosenlof continued to receive applications—more than 150—but when he approached the chancellor about again increasing the quota, Boucher replied,

"We should not extend the number beyond that agreed by the Board of Regents."²³

Rosenlof wrote the chancellor on December 18, 1942, that he had not known that the Graduate Studies Office had accepted nine Nisei students beyond the quota of fifty. He requested admission of another six students already in Lincoln, reminding Boucher that only one criticism of the University's policy of admitting the Nisei had surfaced. Boucher noted on the letter, "Talked with him—Answer NO more."²⁴

The Reverend Robert E. Drew, director of the Wesley Foundation at the university and head of the Lincoln Student Relocation Council, wrote to the NJASRC on January 28, 1943:

You probably have heard of the early December action of the University of Nebraska Board of Regents, which kept a number of Nisei students from entering

the second semester. There seems to have been a little lack of coordination within the University administration. The Registrar's office had already received nine beyond the University's quota of fifty and they had promised to receive an additional eight or nine at the beginning of the second semester. The Regents' decided against allowing this group to enter. Dr. Rosenlof is embarrassed at the turn of events and he has worked very hard to help the disappointed students to find schools that they can enter.²⁵

Once the quota was filled, Rosenlof advised students to apply to other schools including Drake University, the University of Utah, and Nebraska Wesleyan, which had raised its quota from ten to fifteen Nisei. The University of Nebraska appears to have written acceptance letters to at least ten students more than were eventually admitted. There is no evidence to suggest whether Rosenlof thought some of those accepted would not actually come, or if he believed the university would admit more than the quota allowed. One of the ten who had been accepted but was refused admittance was later admitted to Drake University, only to find on his arrival there that Drake's quota also was filled. The university adhered closely to its quota of fifty, but admitted new students whenever any of the fifty graduated, transferred, or left the university for employment or the military.²⁶

Many Nisei from Hawaii, mainland universities, and the camps served in the all-Nisei 442nd Regimental Combat Team, which, because of its heroism and "go for broke" attitude, became the most decorated American unit in World War II. Two casualties suffered by the 442nd were Kei Tanahashi and Harry Tanaka, both relocated Nisei who studied at the University of Nebraska before going overseas. Both died on European battlefields. Other Nisei served in the Military Intelligence Service in the Pacific and are credited with shortening the war by years. Nisei servicemen played an important role in helping to prove Japanese Americans' loyalty despite the treatment they received from the government and their fellow citizens.



Second Lieutenant Kei Tanahashi had completed military training at UCLA before his family was sent to the Heart Mountain camp in Wyoming. He came to the University of Nebraska for post-graduate study in economics and finance while awaiting his call to active duty. He was killed in action in Europe with the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, a unit composed entirely of Japanese Americans. Courtesy Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley

Community Reaction and Military Clearance

The community reaction to Nisei students in university cities was sometimes far from welcoming. At Park College, Missouri, and the University of Idaho, for example, community pressure was intense. Although the seven Nisei admitted to Park College won what the council called the "Battle of Parkville" and attended despite community protest, six Nisei students admitted to the University of Idaho had to "retreat from Moscow" when the university rescinded their admission, fearing a violent community reaction.²⁷

The Army, in part as a response to community protests, instituted a process whereby colleges and universities were required to secure written community approval before admitting Nisei. In Lincoln, Neil C. Vandemoer, the director of the state Department of Assistance and Child Welfare, wrote to the council on July 21, 1942:

At this time there appears to be no ill feeling toward American Japanese in this community. We feel sure that American-born Japanese will receive due consideration as American citizens.²⁸

Initially, this letter was used for all applications to Nebraska schools. However, by August 7 of that year he had elaborated on it:

We have learned, however, that it is the attitude of the Mayor of the City of Lincoln and of the Chief of Police, that as American citizens these students would be given the privileges and would be expected to accept the responsibilities of citizenship.... While we are able at this time to state that there is no reason believe that the community of Lincoln, Nebraska, will exhibit any unwholesome attitudes towards these students, we do not know what the future may bring towards these students.... Progress of the War may cause attitudes to arise which are not present at this time.

This careful wording, though, was not for public release and may have reflected conservative reactions to the WCCA mandate that community leaders take personal responsibility for the Nisei's safety. In September the university provided the NJASRC with more positive letters from Maurice W. Hellman, president of the Council of Social Agencies, and from Francis Drake and J. B. Kniffen of the Lincoln YMCA.²⁹

Obtaining military clearance was another barrier to the admission of Nisei students. The War Department and Navy Intelligence had separate lists of schools they wanted to remain closed to Nisei. Originally the lists included primarily schools with classified research projects or Reserve Officer Training Corps units, and those within twenty-five miles of a strategic military site. That ruled out most large public universities, the first choice of Nisei applicants.

Japanese American Students at UNL, 1942–1945

On August 24, 1942, the Army and Navy cleared the University of Nebraska, but on June 4, 1943, for unstated reasons, proscribed it, and only Nisei who passed a stricter security check could be admitted.³⁰

The University in the War Effort

As students, faculty, and staff left campus for military service and other war-related activities, the University of Nebraska, like most schools, was dramatically changed. To survive the war years and show support for the war effort, colleges and universities competed for military contracts for research and training programs. The War Department and Navy routinely used these contracts punitively, as a pretext for banning Nisei students from campuses.

In early summer 1942 the military put a temporary halt on all university admission of Nisei students. By June 24 the Navy had approved sixty-nine schools, but the Army was in no hurry to approve schools, and the University of Nebraska did not appear on a list of fifty-seven approved colleges and universities until August 25, 1942.³¹

By 1943, the Special Training and Reassignment School, and the Army Specialized Training Program were in operation at the University of Nebraska, which probably explains Nebraska's reclassification as proscribed. Also, at least one small, classified, war-related research project was in progress in the pharmacy school, and possible leaks were feared. Two special agents were ordered from Omaha to investigate "persons of Japanese Ancestry attending the University of Nebraska, Lincoln" in March 1944. Their declassified report reveals that only a few people knew of the project, and contained assurances that Nisei would not be allowed access to the confidential research.³²

Community Attitudes in Lincoln

Most of the Nisei interviewed for this study reported they were treated well in Lincoln, and, while most kept a low profile, nearly all had treasured personal



The Nisei students found most of their Nebraska classmates friendly and helpful. Above, with the university coliseum as a background, an unidentified Nisei student and a classmate solve field problems in engineering. Courtesy Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley

stories of Nebraskans who went out of their way to befriend them. Some, like Roy Deguchi, noted the simple kindness of a family who invited him to church, picnics, and their home. On one visit he learned that their oldest son was on the Pacific front. Their kindness to someone of Japanese descent illustrates what he called "the Nebraska spirit, a sense of fairness," a perspective echoed by many of the Nisei.³³

The main exception was in housing, especially in the cold attitude of Elsie Ford Piper, the assistant dean of women, who vigorously enforced the unofficial segregation of women's dormitories. In 1944, the board of regents codified the unofficial policy, announcing that women's dormitories should be segregated to avoid "interracial agitation or

interracial questions whenever possible." To carry out the policy they created an international, or "I-House," dormitory, which housed twenty-four students, including four Nisei, three Blacks, and one Puerto Rican. The segregation order was criticized by other students, but was not rescinded until 1949.³⁴

Although individual acts of kindness were the most memorable, an organized group also came to the aid of the Nisei students. Its exact origins are unclear, but the Lincoln Japanese Student Relocation Council apparently was a grassroots organization established by local clergy reacting to news of the forced relocation reported in the *Christian Century* and other church publications and letters. A July 13, 1942, letter from Joseph Conard of the NJASRC in Berkeley to the Reverend

Robert E. Drew refers to information on the community, and describes how a process for cutting the red tape and obtaining travel permits for the Nisei slowly developed between the Lincoln Student Relocation Council, which had opened May 29, and the WCCA.³⁵

Conard also wrote that Lincoln Kanai, a well-known Nisei activist, had visited the University of Nebraska, adding that Kanai was not affiliated with the NJASRC. Little is known of Kanai's visit except that it was part of a tour of colleges in the Midwest at which the thirty-three-year-old activist discussed student relocation. Kanai, who was executive secretary of the Japanese YMCA in San Francisco before the war, drove from the West Coast to Washington, D.C., making stops in Denver, Boulder, and Greeley to meet Nisei students, campus administrators, and YMCA clergy.³⁶

In Nebraska he stopped at Hastings College, Nebraska Wesleyan, Creighton College and Duchesne College. Kanai also visited the governor's office, and met with Father Flanagan of Boys Town, Omaha Bishop James H. Ryan, and the *Omaha World-Herald* to promote the Nisei cause. Kanai may have been surprised by his reception in Lincoln for he wrote:

Before I had a chance to get set, C. D. Hayes, [and] the University secretary called and hoisted me over to see the Chairman of the Student Relocation Center, Rev. Drew. Worked on plans and made possible plans to be most effective next year; and so Univ. of Nebraska will do well with 47 students in the fall.³⁷

Kanai's enthusiasm may have spurred the Committee to further action, but things were obviously already in motion on campus and in the community.

Drew sent letters to students in several temporary detention centers, informing them that the Lincoln Student Relocation Council had learned of their applications to the University of Nebraska from Dr. Rosenlof, and "knowing some of the problems you face as you plan your move to Nebraska, we write this letter to offer you our friendship and assistance. Our committee hopes to aid you in three ways: 1.) in securing a room,

2.) in securing employment if that are necessary, 3.) making friendly social contacts after your arrival in Lincoln." The letter listed as members of the committee Robert E. Drew (chairman), Gerald Kendall (pastor, Nebraska Baptist Student Council), C. D. Hayes (university



University housing was a significant exception to the generally hospitable treatment Nisei students received in Lincoln. The unofficial segregation of women's dormitories was vigorously enforced, and became an official policy in 1944. An "International House" dormitory was created, housing twenty-four non-Caucasian women, including the two unidentified students above.

Courtesy Tom Shiokari

YMCA), Yukio Nakashima, Jennie Neill, Kazutoshi Sakayama, Mrs. P. C. Swift, Meyer Ueoka, and Howard Yoshina.³⁸

As the council became more active, it gained members from other denominations as well. Several Nisei fondly remembered the warm reception they

received at Lincoln's Burlington station from Drew and others. The local committee also arranged housing for the Nisei, a major accomplishment in the light of wartime shortages. Throughout the war, the committee met monthly to work on issues, such as the uphill battle to place Nisei in Nebraska's training hospitals, securing part-time employment for the Nisei students, and full-time employment for other Japanese Americans who came to Lincoln.³⁹

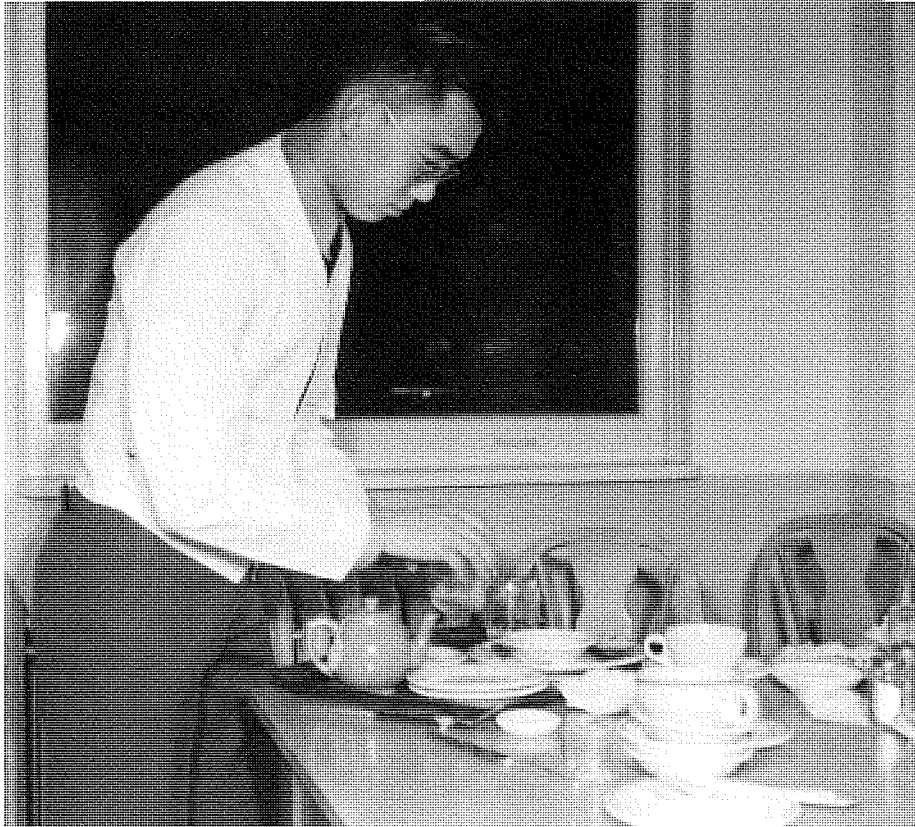
In November 1942, Robert W. O'Brien of the NJASRC visited Lincoln as part of a nationwide trip. Gertrude L. Hanford of the Nebraska Congregational Conference, reported the University of Nebraska had about sixty Nisei students, and that in an informal discussion, a university professor had remarked that things were "moving very well" and the university had a "very fine group of American Japanese young people."⁴⁰

In the final report of the Omaha District Office of the WRA (May 1943–Feb. 1946), Relocation Officer Frances Holtz wrote:

The Lincoln [Student Relocation] Committee has been the most active committee in that they have assumed a definite responsibility—they have found jobs, handled housing problems, and assisted in educational problems. They also have a list of speakers available to speak to interested groups whenever called upon.... Reverend Robert E. Drew, Director of the Wesley Foundation of Methodist Student Work at the University of Nebraska, was named Chairman of the Lincoln Citizens Relocation Committee, deserves special mention at this point for the exceptional assistance rendered and courage extended to resettlers in Lincoln.⁴¹

Although resistance to the Nisei students at Nebraska was minimal, the university was clearly aware that there was a limit to local tolerance, which might, in part, explain the gradually increasing quotas. Enough opposition surfaced in the fall semester of 1942 that Rosenlof issued a press release that ran in several Nebraska newspapers on August 21 under headlines such as "Jap Student Report Denied by University" (*North Platte Telegraph*), "Uni Denies

Japanese American Students at UNL, 1942–1945



Individuals and organizations, including the Lincoln Japanese Student Relocation Council, assisted Nisei students in finding places to live and, if needed, part-time work. John Shiokari worked at the YMCA cafeteria for his room and board. Photo by Tom Parker for the War Relocation Authority. Courtesy Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley

Knowing of Increase in Jap Students this Year" (*Scottsbluff Daily Herald*), and "Jap Student Talk Quashed" (*Omaha World-Herald*). The release denied rumors that the university planned to accept more than three hundred Japanese American students and explained that the Regents had approved a quota of Nisei students who were loyal United States citizens, had not been educated in Japan, had a high academic record and could afford to study at the university.⁴²

Historian Roger Daniels indicts the American Legion for pressuring university regents to stop admitting the Nisei. Indeed, John E. Curtiss, Commander of the Legion's Nebraska Department expressed opposition to the student relocation.⁴³ Rosenlof wrote to the

NJASRC that he "tried to put [Curtiss] in his place," because "he is one of these 'ultra 100% Americans.'" Curtiss's reaction should not have surprised Rosenlof. Nationally the Legion was opposed to student relocation, and had routinely targeted Japanese Americans.⁴⁴

Rosenlof wrote that real Americanism rests,

in the rank and file of...men and women of America, who claim no distinction and who only seek to live in accordance with the principles of democracy which they love and which they seek to maintain and extend that count most. The universities and colleges have no less an important place in the hearts of our people for what they have done to conserve American idealism and perpetuate it to the benefited generations unborn.⁴⁵

Some in the American Legion called for Americanism not to be "small or narrow minded."⁴⁶ Nevertheless, on June 4, 1943, the Nebraska Department of the Legion passed a series of resolutions calling for the government to force all Japanese Americans into concentration camps under military control, and stressed its opposition to the release of "Japanese for the pursuit of higher education and other reasons."⁴⁷ On the same day, in a letter to Governor Griswold, Arthur E. Rogers, president of the Livestock Commission Company, protested the admission of Japanese Americans to the university. He warned of trouble for elected regents unless "there should be some way of eliminating" the Nisei "from our university." Nevertheless, these voices remained a minority in Nebraska.⁴⁸

Speaking Out, Remaining Silent

Lincoln's generally positive reaction to the Nisei was not just the result of the work of community activists, but also of the Nisei themselves. All of them were well aware that they were ambassadors for other Nisei who wanted to enroll, and several were encouraged to speak in public. Graduate student Martha Okuda, for example, spoke about the forced relocation at a monthly luncheon of social work students and faculty. She was so well received that the students decided to send Christmas presents to the college-age students in the concentration camps. Others spoke to church groups, club meetings, and high schools. Ralph Ibata, a Nebraska Nisei and University of Nebraska alumnus, gave up his job as an electrical engineer in Ohio to teach physics at the university, a subject much in demand during the war.⁴⁹

To avoid "causing problems," the Nisei students also tried to remain inconspicuous, and the NJASRC considered "avoiding Nisei cliques" to be part of their responsibility.⁵⁰ Trudy King of the NJASRC, writing to Robert Drew, attached the critical comments of an unnamed Nebraska Nisei that had been

Ben Kuroki The Nebraska Nisei hero of World War II

Few chapters in the history of Nebraska's Japanese Americans are as well known as the story of Ben Kuroki, probably the most famous Nisei hero of World War II, who flew fifty-eight missions as a turret gunner in B-24 and B-29 bombers in both the European and Pacific theaters.

Kuroki was born in Hershey, Nebraska, in 1918, where his family grew potatoes and raised ten children. The day after Pearl Harbor Ben and his brother Fred went to North Platte to enlist in the army, but were "given the runaround" because of their ethnicity. Undeterred, they made the 150-mile trek to Grand Island where the Army Air Corps accepted them. After enduring discrimination and isolation they were assigned to different units, and Ben eventually became an aerial gunner in a B-24 squadron stationed in Europe.

Turret gunners had notoriously short lives, and those who survived twenty-five missions were allowed to return stateside. Kuroki, however, not only survived his twenty-five, but volunteered for an additional five missions before returning home to a hero's welcome. Like the army's all-Nisei 442nd Regimental Combat Team, he was featured in newsreels produced to demonstrate Japanese-American loyalty. Even as a decorated war hero, though, Kuroki experienced discrimination at home, and to further prove his loyalty he volunteered to serve in the Pacific. After several refusals, Kuroki eventually received the assignment he sought and served on twenty-eight bombing runs over Japan.

Kuroki spoke on nationwide tours about his experiences later in the war, and on one such publicity tour was ordered to be a witness at the trial of Japanese Americans detained in a Wyoming concentration camp who refused the draft (see Frank Abe's documentary film, *Conscience and the Constitution: Japanese American Resistance during World War II*,



Transit Media, 2000). He also spoke at the University of Nebraska, and returned there in 1947 as a student on the G.I. Bill. He graduated in 1950 with a BA in journalism. After graduation he edited weekly newspapers in York, Nebraska, Michigan, and California. He retired in 1982 as editor of the *Star-Free Press* of Ventura, California.

In 1991 Kuroki was the keynote speaker at the opening of the Nebraska State Historical Society's World War II exhibit, "What Did You Do in the War? Nebraskans in World War II" at the Museum of Nebraska History in Lincoln.

Based on Ralph G. Martin, Boy from Nebraska: The Story of Ben Kuroki (New York: Harper, 1946); Kuroki's unpublished speech at the Nebraska State Historical Society in 1991; and information from historian Arthur A. Hansen, who is writing a monograph on Kuroki's life.

forwarded to the NJASRC by the recipient of the student's letter, a concentration camp resident:

I've been waiting to get in [to the Pioneer Co-op Dorm] since last semester. I sort of hated to leave this place, but it has become known as the Jap House with 7 of us here and only 1 white fellow left. The truth of the matter is that I've been pretty much disgusted with the carefree

attitude of the majority of the relocated students here. They have not tried to go out and meet others and mingle in with everyone, but instead, have become more and more cliquish and have become conspicuous as ever.... If the students don't change their ways soon there'll be just another California here. The novelty has worn off and the students themselves have forgotten the purpose they came here for.⁵¹

Several students also started a small fundraising campaign, collecting more than twenty-five dollars for the NJASRC in gifts of one or two dollars.⁵²

The Search for Motivation

A cynical explanation of the University of Nebraska's unusual willingness to assist a relatively large number of Nisei

Japanese American Students at UNL, 1942–1945

students might be that it simply needed the out-of-state tuition revenue to help keep the institution afloat in a period of tight wartime budgets. But the same could be said of most universities and colleges during the war, including those that did not accept Nisei. Another view might be that Nisei students came to Nebraska because of roadblocks and bureaucratic mechanisms created by the military that kept them from going elsewhere until later, or that the Christian clergy who cooperated with the NJASRC were bent on proselytizing among the Nisei, a continuation of earlier Protestant missionary relationships with Japanese Americans.

More likely, however, it represents the relative victory of a few individuals who made practical humanitarian decisions largely based on a strong sense of social responsibility, and the of the Nisei students themselves, who moved to Lincoln, usually having no familiarity with the campus or community, and frequently with more hope than financial resources.⁵³

The general acceptance of their presence in Nebraska was a surprise to the Nisei students who had experienced years of severe discrimination and outright segregation on the West Coast. California, which was home to two-thirds of all Japanese Americans, had a vocal anti-Japanese movement by the turn of the twentieth century. Some Nisei attended segregated schools and had few dealings with Caucasians.⁵⁴ Most credit their reception to the good nature of Nebraskans, and many have become loyal supporters of the university.

That still does not explain why the main actors so actively assisted the Nisei. Although direct evidence, such as diaries or revealing letters of Drew and Rosenlof, is lacking, one can speculate on their motivations based on the socio-historical context. Nebraska's ethnic history might reveal part of the answer. Like much of the Great Plains, it is heavily populated by religious, economic, and political refugees from Central and Eastern Europe, such as Czechs and

German-Russians. These groups not only experienced discrimination in Europe, but were significantly affected by the "100% Americanism" movement and the actions of the jingoistic Nebraska State Council of Defense, which targeted



Nebraska winters probably came as a shock to many of the Nisei students who had grown up in California. Nevertheless, this photo from Tom Shiokari's scrapbook suggests that most happily adapted to snowy days. Courtesy Tom Shiokari

ethnic Germans during World War I. A memory of events such as the council providing the board of regents with a list of twelve professors suspected of "a spirit of inactivity, indifference, and opposition towards this war" may have influenced university officials to admit the Nisei.⁵⁵

Recent attention has also been drawn to early anti-Catholic discrimination in Nebraska, including the disruption of a football game with Notre Dame by anti-Catholic demonstrators, and the

presence of a KKK chapter on campus in the 1920s, despite the fact that Roman Catholics constituted the largest denomination in the state in 1906.⁵⁶

As a school principal and superintendent in Nebraska during World War I, Rosenlof would have read of events in Lincoln and around the state. He may also have been exposed to the East Coast's dismissive view of West Coast anti-Japanese racism while pursuing a Ph.D. at Teachers College in New York. Finally, he also seems to have been interested in bettering the fate of refugee scholars from Europe in 1941, which attests to his character and sense of social responsibility, also suggested by a letter to Conard in which he wrote, "We have tried to see this thing in the true American spirit, and the administration, including the Chancellor and the Board of Regents, have been very sympathetic" to the plight of the Nisei.⁵⁷

Another point of view was suggested by Nisei alumnus Patrick Sano: "A spiritual motive that transcends social behavioral influences." Sano wrote that sometimes "religious and spiritual upbringing and subsequent indoctrination move a person to greatness: to perform kindly and saving deeds," and he credits Drew and Rosenlof for taking to heart the lesson, "we are our brother's keeper." Sano added "human nature is capable of attaining degrees of perfection if that moment to act is discerned and seized [as] Rosenlof and Drew did."⁵⁸

Similar spiritual and social motivations may have motivated Robert Drew. As a Methodist minister, he was of the same denomination as many Japanese Americans who had responded to the missionary work of Reverend Suyematsu Saito in the early 1920s. Drew probably would have met many Methodist Nisei at the University of Nebraska before and during the war, especially during the years he was active in student relocation.⁵⁹

Indeed, Drew later mediated between the NJASRC and the national organization that aided Methodist Nisei by giving them scholarships at the church's



Tom Shiokari, sent from his California home to a concentration camp in Arizona before admission to the University of Nebraska, poses under one of the American eagles flanking the Abraham Lincoln statue at the Nebraska State Capitol. Courtesy Tom Shiokari

colleges, including Nebraska Wesleyan, which also admitted many of the Nisei who had originally come to Lincoln to attend the University of Nebraska, but were denied admission when Nebraska enforced its quota in fall 1942. Trudy King of the NJASRC wrote Drew that the students were very fond of him, saying that although they had heard so much about him, he was “a regular guy!”⁶⁰ Drew also was a member of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, one of America’s oldest peace organizations.

Although Nisei continued to matriculate at the university on the G.I. Bill in the late 1940s, many transferred to West Coast campuses after they were released from military service and their families could return to the coast. With the deaths of Drew, Rosenlof, Boucher, and several Nisei alumni, many details of this episode might have slipped away, but it is nevertheless possible to provide a broader understanding of the important roles played by individual Nebraskans and the effects of the student relocation on restoring faith in the American dream for more than a hundred Japanese Americans during one of the dark periods of this nation’s history.⁶¹

Notes

The author wishes to thank Professor Noriko Asato, Professor Andrew Wedeman, (both of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln), and Roger Kobayashi, M.D. for their collaboration on the Nebraska Nisei Heritage Research Project, which financed Lisa Kobayashi’s search of Nebraska newspapers. Professor Wayne Wiegand of the University of Wisconsin-Madison offered many helpful suggestions. Thanks, also, to Lucy Buntain and Andrea Cranford, who shared their correspondence with the Nisei, and to Robert Craig, Nebraska Department Adjutant of the American Legion who allowed me to look at back files of the *Nebraska Legionnaire*. Most importantly, thanks to the Nebraska Nisei who kindly shared their impressions and memories and suggested improvements for this paper. Particular thanks go to Takuro Nakae, Shigeo Nakanishi, Patrick Sano and Tom Shiokari.

¹ K. George Hachiya, in “University of Nebraska-Lincoln Nisei Reunion Commemorative Album,” ed. Andrea Cranford, University of Nebraska Archives and Special Collections (hereafter UNL Archives).

Japanese American Students at UNL, 1942–1945

² The War Relocation Authority used the euphemisms “internment camp” and “relocation center,” but as many scholars point out, internment camps are only for detaining non-citizens. Although they were vastly different from the Nazi concentration camps and death camps of the Holocaust, even President Roosevelt referred to them as concentration camps.

³ The best historical study of the incarceration is Roger Daniels, *Concentration Camps: North America: Japanese in the United States and Canada During World War II* (Malabar, Fla.: Krieger Publishing, 1981). For the results of the congressionally appointed investigation of the forced relocation, see *Personal Justice Denied: Report of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997). First-generation Japanese Americans, or Issei, were barred from becoming U.S. citizens until the passage of the Walter-McCarran Act in 1952.

⁴ Sandra C. Taylor, *Jewel of the Desert: Japanese American Internment at Topaz* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 63.

⁵ Thomas James, “Life Begins With Freedom: The College Nisei, 1942–1945,” *History of Education Quarterly* 25 (Spring-Summer 1985), 155–175; Gary Okihiro, *Storied Lives: Japanese American Students and World War II* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999). The primary institutional study of the NJASRC is by its former director, Robert W. O’Brien, *The College Nisei* (Palo Alto: Pacific Books, 1949). See also Noriko Asato, “National Japanese American Student Relocation Council” in *Encyclopedia of the Great Plains*, ed. David Wishart. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, forthcoming), and Allan Austin, “From Concentration Camp to Campus: A History of the National Japanese American Student Relocation Council, 1942–1946,” Ph.D. diss., University of Cincinnati, 2001.

⁶ For a Nebraska example, see “Oregon Doesn’t Claim ‘Yosh’ of Yokohama,” *The Daily Nebraskan*, September 27, 1942.

⁷ Asato, “Japanese” *Encyclopedia of the Great Plains*; Harry H. L. Kitano, *Japanese Americans: The Evolution of a Subculture* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1969), 162; Domingo H. Cabcauungan, “The Japanese: Buddha and Christ,” in *Broken Hoops and Plains People: A Catalogue of Ethnic Resources in the Humanities: Nebraska and Surrounding Areas* (Lincoln: Nebraska Curriculum Development Center, 1976).

⁸ Roger Daniels, “William Jennings Bryan and the Japanese,” *Southern California Quarterly* 48 (1996), 227–40; Hiram Hisanori Kano, *A History of the Japanese in Nebraska* (Scottsbluff, Neb.: Scottsbluff Public Library, 1984), 6; Japanese Student’s Christian Association in North America, *The Directory of Japanese Students in North America and Hawaii* (New York: Japanese Student’s Christian Association in North America, 1930), 88.

⁹ *The Oakland Tribune*, Mar. 28, 1942; *Daily*

Californian, Apr. 3, 1942. The ASUC Executive Committee sent letters to the student councils of eighty colleges and to the governors of Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, Nevada, North Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming; Ralph T. Fischer to Dwight P. Griswold, Apr. 7, 1942, Dwight Palmer Griswold Papers. RG 1, SG32, Box 12, Nebraska State Historical Society (hereafter Griswold Papers); Griswold to Fisher, Apr. 10, 1942, Griswold Papers.

¹⁰ Harry Fridley to Griswold, Mar. 24, 1942, Griswold Papers. Governor Ralph Carr of Colorado later lost his election bid for a senate seat largely because, unlike other Western governors, he welcomed Issei and Nisei to Colorado. Bill Hosokawa, *Nisei: The Quiet Americans*, (New York: William Morrow, 1969), 225–26. The offensive term “Jap” and the misuse of “Japanese” for Japanese Americans are being retained here and elsewhere in quotations because they reveal much about the times and the frame of mind of the original writers.

¹¹ GrassRoots Republican Club to Griswold, Mar. 14, 1942, Griswold Papers. For an account of a quashed effort to locate a concentration camp between Cambridge and Bartley, Nebraska, see “Army Rejects Nebraska Site for Center,” *Pacific Citizen* July 9, 1942.

¹² W. C. Coffey to Chauncey S. Boucher, Mar. 18, 1942; Boucher to Coffey, Mar. 21, 1942, “Alien-Japanese Americans, 1942–44,” University of Minnesota President’s Papers, 1945–1978, University of Minnesota Archives.

¹³ “Minutes, Board of Regents, University of Nebraska,” Volume 15, Part II, 1/1/2, Box 2, UNL Archives; George W. Rosenlof to National Student Relocation Council, Aug. 17, 1942. “University of Nebraska.” National Japanese American Council Collection, Box 73, Hoover Archives, Stanford University (hereafter NJASRC).

¹⁴ “14 Schools Would Take Jap Students,” *Omaha World-Herald*, Apr. 7, 1942; Marsa Lee Civin, “On Other Campuses,” *Daily Nebraskan*, May 5, 1942.

¹⁵ “United States Government-WRA,” NJASRC, Folder 278, II, 2, 1; “Questionnaire,” “University of Nebraska,” NJASRC, Box 73.

¹⁶ G. W. Rosenlof to Robbins Barstow, “University of Nebraska,” NJASRC, Box 73; “Excerpts from a letter sent to Howard K. Beale on Nov. 21, 1942, from Robert W. O’Brien,” “University of Nebraska,” NJASRC, Box 73.

¹⁷ Mary C. Baker to Rosenlof, July 21, 1942, NJASRC, Box 73.

¹⁸ Rosenlof to Barstow, “University of Nebraska,” NJASRC, Box 73.

¹⁹ Rosenlof to Bodine, Jan. 7, 1943, “University of Nebraska,” NJASRC, Box 73; Beale to Rosenlof, Sept. 28, 1942; Rosenlof to Beale, Oct. 5, 1942, “University of Nebraska,” NJASRC, Box 73; “University of Nebraska,” NJASRC, Box 73.

²⁰ “Coast Japs Claim They Get Cool Reception as

Migrate,” *Scottsbluff* (Nebraska) *Daily Star Herald*, Mar. 12, 1942.

²¹ *Directory of American Students of Japanese Ancestry in the Higher Schools, Colleges and Universities of the United States of America* (Philadelphia: National Japanese American Student Relocation Council, 1943), 55–6.

²² Rosenlof to Beale, Nov. 20, 1942, “University of Nebraska,” NJASRC, Box 73.

Gary Okihiro charges the NJASRC with cooperating with the WRA and in supporting its underlying racist view that the Japanese Americans were to blame for the discrimination against them as they spread out across America.

²³ Rosenlof to Beale, Oct. 12, 1942, “University of Nebraska,” NJASRC, Box 73; “University of Nebraska,” NJASRC, Box 61; *Ibid.*, Nov. 11, 1942; Rosenlof to Boucher, Dec. 18, 1942, Office of the Chancellor, 1938–1946, Box 3, RG 2/11/4. UNL Archives.

²⁴ Rosenlof to Boucher, December 18, 1942, “Office of the Chancellor, 1938–1946,” Box 3, RG 2/11/4, UNL Archives. Boucher’s annotation is dated Dec. 22, 1942.

²⁵ Robert Drew to Bodine, Jan. 28, 1943. “Drew, Robert,” NJASRC, Box 6.

²⁶ Benjamin Schwarz to John Gross, Jan. 2, 1943, Jan. 18, 1943, United Methodist Church Archives, Drew University; Drew to Bodine, Jan. 28, 1943. “Drew, Robert,” NJASRC, Box 6. Before leaving Nebraska, the student also wrote to the Japanese American Citizens League asking for assistance, explaining, “We are getting discouraged.” unidentified student to JAACL, Dec. 26, 1942, “University of Nebraska,” NJASRC, Box 73.

²⁷ Daniels, 101.

²⁸ Neil C. Vandemoer to NJASRC, July 21, 1942. In the author’s possession.

²⁹ Conard to Boucher, Sept. 5 1942, “University of Nebraska,” NJASRC, Box 73,

³⁰ “List of Colleges which have been on and off the Navy Proscribed List,” July 31, 1943, WRA collection, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley (hereafter Bancroft).

³¹ “List of 57 Colleges and Universities Approved by War and Navy Departments for Student Relocation,” Aug. 25, 1942, WRA collection, Bancroft.

³² MacLaran Sawyer, *Centennial History of the University of Nebraska*, Vol. II: *The Modern University, 1920–1969* (Lincoln: Centennial Press, 1973), 122–3; “Nebraska Survey,” National Archives, Record Group 389, Provost Marshall General Office Personnel Security Division, Japanese American Branch General Files, 1942–1946, “Survey of Educational Institutions,” Box 1737, Declassified NND 740063, Oct. 27, 2000.

³³ Roy Deguchi to Noriko Asato, May 15, 1999. In possession of the author.

³⁴ Robert E. Knoll, *Prairie University: A History of the University of Nebraska* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 112–113. Several Nisei women interviewed for this study identified experiences with Piper as their worst memories of Nebraska. Such segregation seems to have been unofficial before 1944, but in a letter dated June 27, 1941, Piper warned Boucher: If we grant one Negro student admission to any of our halls of residence it will...create a very serious problem." Elsie F. Piper to Boucher, June 27, 1941, "Foreign Student Relations, RG 23/19/10, Box 21, UNL Archives.

³⁵ On March 25, 1942, the Berkeley University YMCA, YWCA, Wesley Foundation (Methodist), Plymouth House (Congregational), Westminster House (Presbyterian), and Roger Williams Club (Baptist) sent a mass mailing to individuals asking for help in putting "Christian ideals into practice" by helping to place the University of California's four hundred Nisei, and another fifteen hundred elsewhere on the West Coast. Joseph Goodman, Papers, 1942–45, MS 840, Box 1; "Lincoln Kanai," North Baker Research Library, California Historical Society; Joseph Conard to Robert Drew, July 13, 1942. "Drew, Robert," NJASRC.

³⁶ Kanai became well known for his July arrest at a Williams Bay, Wisconsin, YMCA conference for violating the orders prohibiting "voluntary relocation" from the exclusion zone. Audrie Girdner and Anne Loftis, *The Great Betrayal: The Evacuation of the Japanese-Americans During World War II* (New York: Macmillan, 1969), 202–3; "Kanai Detained in Wisconsin on Army Order Violations Charge," *Pacific Citizen*, July 16, 1942; Daniels, 22.

³⁷ Lincoln Kanai to "Dear Friends, En Route to Chicago, New York, Washington, D.C.," June 30, 1942, Joseph Goodman Papers, 1942–5, MS 840, Box 1, "Lincoln Kanai," North Baker Research Library, California Historical Society.

³⁸ Drew to [a student]. "Drew, Robert." NJASRC. Box 6.

³⁹ The only preserved minutes of the Lincoln Relocation Committee begin in late 1943. National Archives, Record Group 210, War Relocation Authority, Box 29, 201.7, "Minutes—Omaha, Indianapolis, Kansas City."

⁴⁰ Gertrude L. Hanford to Elisabeth Johnson, Nov. 29, 1942, "Doane College," NJASRC, Box 61.

⁴¹ "Final Report of the District Office Activities, Omaha, Nebraska," WRA Collection, Bancroft.

⁴² Many Nisei, particularly elder sons, had spent some years in Japan living with relatives and improving their Japanese language ability. These *Kibei*, as they were known, were treated with much suspicion by authorities.

⁴³ Daniels, 100; "Excerpts from a Letter Sent to Howard K. Beale on Nov. 21, 1942 from Robert W. O'Brien," "University of Nebraska," NJASRC, Box 73; See *Nebraska Legionnaire*, Sept. 17, 1942.

⁴⁴ See, for example, "1943 [National] Americanism Program Adopted," *Nebraska Legionnaire*, Dec. 24, 1942, which called for all Japanese "whether alien or American-born, be kept under Army control even to the extent of excluding them from the special privilege of leaving the concentration centers to attend universities and colleges." This policy had earlier been established by the 1942–43 National Commander Roane Waring at the Legion's first national wartime convention in Kansas. See the *Nebraska Legionnaire*, Oct. 1942.

⁴⁵ Rosenlof to Beale, Oct. 12, 1942, "University of Nebraska," NJASRC, Box 73.

⁴⁶ See, for example, the manifesto "Americanism" by Lowell L. Walker, Earl L. Meyer, and William B. Morrey of the Nebraska Legion's Americanism Committee, *Nebraska Legionnaire*, Feb. 19, 1942.

⁴⁷ "Committee Asks Control of Japs," *Nebraska Legionnaire*, June 17 1943.

In 1942 the Nebraska Division of the Legion had 19,314 members, including Gov. Griswold. *Nebraska Legionnaire*, May 21, 1942, Aug. 19, 1943.

⁴⁸ Rogers to Griswold, June 4, 1943, Boucher Collection, University of Nebraska. UNL Archives. Cited in Sawyer, 59.

⁴⁹ "Nisei Aids U.S. War Effort by Teaching Physics at Nebraska," *Pacific Citizen*, Oct. 29, 1942.

⁵⁰ Elizabeth Emlen, Director NJASRC, to Drew, Nov. 29, 1942, "Drew, Robert," NJASRC, Box 6. Emlen's letter asked Drew if the NJASRC should "point out to the Nisei students their responsibility towards their racial group and towards the whole resettlement program."

⁵¹ Anon. to Director, NJASRC, March 12, 1943 (Attachment, Trudy King to Drew), "Drew, Robert," NJASRC, Box 6. None of the Nisei interviewed for this study remembered Drew advising students to keep a low profile, but it is telling that many Nisei did not get to know each other until the recent alumni gathering. Similarly, the Lincoln Relocation Committee in February 1945 "discussed the possibility of a Goodwill dinner here in Lincoln" to publicly thank officials and community leaders for their efforts to help the Nisei. "After considerable and careful deliberation the committee decided against the idea. It was the feeling of the group: a.) That such an affair would call attention to the Japanese American group when our aim is to help them lose their identity as a separate group. b.) That such an affair might stir up antagonistic individuals who otherwise, would remain quiet." Drew

to WRA Relocation Officer W. K. Holland, Omaha, February 10, 1945, "Minutes—Omaha, Indianapolis, Kansas City." National Archives, Record Group 210, War Relocation Authority, Box 29, 201, 7.

⁵² Emlen to Drew, May 12, 1944. "Drew, Robert." NJASRC.

⁵³ Several of the former students interviewed for this article said their only knowledge of the University of Nebraska before applying was the performance of its football team at a pre-war Rose Bowl match against Stanford.

⁵⁴ See David K. Yoo, *Growing Up Nisei: Race, Generation and Culture among Japanese Americans of California, 1924–49* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 2000), and Roger Daniels, *Politics of Prejudice: The Anti-Japanese Movement in California and the Struggle for Japanese Exclusion*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962).

⁵⁵ Richard Hofstadter and Walter P. Metzger, *The Development of Academic Freedom in the United States* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1955), 497. See also Robert N. Manley, *Centennial History of the University of Nebraska*, Vol. I: *Frontier University, 1869–1919* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1973).

⁵⁶ James C. Olson, *History of Nebraska*, 2nd ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), 343. I had originally speculated that Rosenlof himself might have been of German extraction or of the Catholic faith, but soon learned that he had a Swedish-American, Presbyterian background.

⁵⁷ Rosenlof to Conard, Sept. 9, 1942. "University of Nebraska." NJASRC, Box 73.

⁵⁸ Patrick Sano to the author, December 19, 2001.

⁵⁹ Kano, 17. For more on Japanese American Protestantism, see Brian Masaru Hayashi, *For the Sake of Our Japanese Brethren: Assimilation, Nationalism, and Protestantism Among the Japanese of Los Angeles, 1895–1942* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995). O'Brien surveyed the relocated student Nisei and found 23.9 percent were Methodist, and the percentage was even higher during the initial student relocation period. See also Beale to H. W. McPherson, November 5, 1942, United Methodist Church Archives, Drew University.

⁶⁰ Trudy King to Drew, March 24, 1943. "Drew, Robert." NJASRC, Box 6.

⁶¹ I am working with Noriko Asato on another study, based on oral interviews with Nisei former students at the University of Nebraska, that attempts to explore the student relocation within the context of their life histories.