

## A TYPICAL DAY IN THE WAR RESEARCH LABORATORY<sup>1</sup>

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It is difficult for a person unfamiliar with the concrete materials of the laboratory to form any accurate judgment as to their character and value from a formal report. In order to provide something of the flavor of the actual work of the laboratory, it was decided to include a supplementary report incorporating entries noted in the journal of a staff member on a typical day together with pertinent extracts from the interviews, diaries, and preliminary research summaries which pass over his desk. Some liberty has been taken in the actual selection of the items included, in order to give them a truly representative quality, but all of the items are accurately quoted, except for identifying names and places.

Monday, June—, 1945. An absence of several days on field work found an accumulation of several reports from the outside islands. Most of them mention a "return to normalcy in race relations" broken only occasionally by some incident of strained relations, particularly toward the Japanese as a consequence of recent atrocity stories. The generally favorable situation revealed in these reports is much less noticeable in Honolulu where "foreign" elements are still so strong. Several of the reporters speak of incidents between service men and civilians, but these incidents were much less frequent and less serious than in early 1944 when the first combat troops returned to Hawaii for rest. The following extracts reveal something of the general temper of the reports.

When we saw the convoy of trucks carrying marines waving captured Japanese flags, we knew that the marines who fought on Iwo Jima had come back to Hawaii. The people here (Japanese) were a bit jittery. They didn't know just how these marines would regard the local Japanese residents. When the first group of marines fresh from Tarawa came here, they made such a bad name for themselves, because of the actions of a few, that the residents are still fearful of the marines. However, thus far, I haven't heard of any instances where the marines have done harm to the civilians.

The friendly spirit seems more evident now; more than it was three years ago. Immediately after the break of war, there seems to have been a feeling among the populace, that the Japanese were not to be trusted. This "feeling" gradually wore off, due to the broadmindedness of the people here in Hawaii and the friendly atmosphere that prevailed prior to the break of war among the different nationalities.

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1. The following statement was prepared as a supplement to a progress report on the War Research Laboratory of the University of Hawaii and is published in *Social Process*, with the author's permission, because of the interesting data which it contains in the field of wartime race relations.



There were cases where a certain racial group were being segregated in their course of activities, but this, too, has gradually turned to the better.

There is a marked improvement in the feeling towards people of Japanese extraction by other racial groups. Although there have been isolated cases of people showing extreme dislike for people of Japanese blood, the general feeling has steadily improved in the last three months.

This is due to the favorable publicity that our 100th Infantry, 442nd Combat Team, and the various units of the Interpreter's groups are getting for their brilliant record.

I will point out the "Hood River American Legion incident" as an example, on which our local and mainland newspapers have condemned their action editorially and high officials, such as the Secretary of War Stimson, denouncing their action and urging the restoration of the sixteen names stricken from their roll, which have helped mold favorable public opinion, and as a result, we have had countless people of other racial groups denounce such discrimination and injustice.

Two chaplains stopped in to inquire as to the reactions of local residents to Negroes. They explained that some of their Negro troops were disappointed in the type of "brush-off" treatment they were receiving from the Island population, and particularly from girls of Oriental ancestry. A statement of one Negro soldier to a girl of Japanese ancestry was quoted as being somewhat typical of this point of view:

..... I soon found out (to my amazement) that I was an "untouchable," "had a tail," "would kill, at the drop of a hat," and "that my friendship was not desired." Naturally, having a very definite "I'm-just-as-good-as-they-are attitude," I quickly retreated and have not even tried to advance since, (thanks to my self-respect). ..... Do you realize that according to the population of the different nationalities in the U.S., the Colored far out-rank the others in the sports world? Can you boast of such achievements in a period of only 79 years? ..... I am merely drawing a parallel between one group of Colored people having the audacity to discriminate another group, when some of the former live in dirty, wooden, broken-down shacks, walk the streets minus shoes, and have very little, if anything, to say in their Terriotrial Government. ....

The chaplains stated that they did not regard this point of view as representative of all of their troops, but it was sufficiently common to merit some attention.

A simple answer to their inquiry was difficult to formulate, but on the basis of such information as we had, I attempted to make a statement approximately as follows: Prior to the war the Negro hardly existed in the direct experience of most local residents. Most of the American and Island-born residents con-



ceived of the Negro in terms of the minstrel show caricatures and of the American movie stereotypes. The very few Negroes living in Hawaii were commonly thought of as Part-Hawaiians or just as "Others." The term Negro was rarely, almost never applied to local residents.

Since 1940 there has been a large movement of Negro troops and defense workers to Hawaii, and almost every district of the Islands has had direct experience with some Negroes since the outbreak of the war. The reactions of the local residents have varied so greatly by localities and by periods that only the most simple statement would accurately describe all the situations.

In general, the Negro has experienced the same type of differential treatment accorded each of the newly-arrived immigrant groups. He was automatically accorded the bottom position on the social scale; and being strange and different, he was also kept at a safe distance by the other ethnic groups. This tendency was accentuated by the practice of the newspapers to add the designation "Negro" to any account of a crime committed by a member of this group. This pattern has been followed with other immigrant groups in the past. Thus the resident population have learned to think of the Negro in terms of stereotypes as "dangerous, over-sexed, irresponsible."

Such mass characterizations of the Negro have been further encouraged by white servicemen, who resented the attention which local girls gave to the Negro in the early stages of the war. Many young women of Oriental and of Hawaiian ancestry developed aversions toward the Negroes solely through their associations with white servicemen. It is noteworthy that the local young men have been more friendly toward the Negroes than their sisters and girl-friends.

The fear expressed early in the war by certain mainland observers that the local Japanese might exercise a subversive influence upon the newly-arrived Negroes was certainly ill-founded. Some of the more sophisticated Nisei did manifest a considerable interest in the Negro and were somewhat disposed to identify themselves with the Negroes, as another minority group. But the local Japanese have never manifested the militant attitudes toward their assumed aggressors found among some of the mainland Negroes. Most of the local Japanese have been frankly suspicious, if not fearful of the Negroes.

It seemed worthwhile here to quote a few statements from a casual conversation which had just been turned in by one of our reporters:

The other night our church girls acted as hostesses at a dance to a group of Negro soldiers. We tried to be pleasant and sociable, but you know how it is. We all have a certain feeling toward Negroes. You can't say you are completely free from prejudice, can you, when it comes to close associations with the Negroes? I can tolerate them; but when it comes to dates with them, it's another question.



Well, these Negro soldiers aren't used to getting much attention from girls of other races, so if you're nice to them, they become intimate. They start asking for your phone number and even dates. When it gets to that point, it gets disgusting and spoils the evening. You have to start thinking of all kinds of excuses to turn them away. Most of them are sensitive when refused. Right away they feel that you refuse them because they are Negroes and for nothing else. In most cases that is actually the reason, but what can you do if you can't like them. Our girls weren't very enthusiastic and many sat back and didn't dance at all.

Next day in church, Reverend———, in his sermon said something about our girls advocating racial equality, interracial good will, etc., but when it came to putting that into practice, they didn't try. He rubbed it in in a subtle manner that the girls wouldn't dance with the Negro service men, and that got me mad. You know, it's easy for him to talk that way; it's easy for him to be friendly with the Negro men because he's a man. But it isn't for the girls. I wonder if he realizes that.

To this comment most of the girls agreed that they, too, found that to be a problem at Negro U.S.O. dances where the Negroes got too intimate when treated well by the Oriental girls.

XYZ, newspaper reporter for the Honolulu———, called to inquire whether we were ready to give him the promised statement regarding the effect of the war upon interracial marriage. Fortunately a brief analysis of recent statistical trends had been completed a few days earlier and it was possible to supply him with material for an article. The statements of especial interest to him were as follows:

In the two years just prior to Pearl Harbor 30.9% of all marriages in the Territory were of the sort commonly called interracial marriages; whereas, in the two war years ending June 30, 1944, 38.8% were mixed racial marriages. . . . . The principal factor behind this rapid spurt in the ratio of out-marriages is undoubtedly the sudden rise of our military and defense personnel, most of whom are single men, a long way from home. If any considerable number of them are to marry at all, it must be with women of another racial ancestry; and the statistics of "out-marriages" clearly indicate that a sizeable number of island visitors have succumbed to the charms of local non-Caucasian girls. Factors of supply and demand determine to a considerable degree where cupid's shots are placed in Hawaii.

The most notable increase in out-marriages has occurred among the Caucasian males. Of the 2,854 haole men who were married in Hawaii during the prewar biennium, 931 or 32.8% found wives of another ancestry. After Pearl Harbor, there were 3,589 haole men who found wives in Hawaii and of these 1,949 or 54.3% married out. The part-Hawaiians offered the greatest attractions as brides, 622 marrying haole men in the two year period. Girls



of Japanese ancestry were selected as marriage partners by 300 haole men during this same period of time. An additional 286 haole men secured brides of Chinese, Korean, or Filipino ancestry.

..... The women of Japanese ancestry, who prior to the war found husbands almost exclusively within their own racial group, have increasingly since the war secured mates in all the other racial groups. Where prior to the war one out of every ten Japanese brides married a non-Japanese man, since the war the ratio has increased to almost one out of every five. Haoles, Chinese, Asiatic-Hawaiians, and Filipinos account for most of the increase of non-Japanese husbands of Japanese women.

A call from the telephone operator stated that a Mr. M. was on his way over to our office. Mr. M. proved to be a federal investigator, inquiring about a student who graduated in 1934. This is the fifth request for information of this type during the present month. Fortunately I remembered very well the person under investigation and could give an adequate report. Mr. M. was interested in our research program and remained to chat about his observations in the field of race relations during the course of his visits to the various islands.

..... When I first came to Hawaii about two years ago, I had the usual mainland conception especially with respect to the Orientals here. I thought of the Japanese in terms of buck-toothed individuals, who sucked air through their teeth and were as two-faced and crooked as the devil himself. The Chinese, on the other hand, I thought of as honest, straight-forward, dependable persons, whose word was their bond. After two years of this sort of work, where I come daily into contact with every type of person in the islands and get to see what sort of persons they really are, I've just about come to reverse my judgments. I'm doubtless as prejudiced now as I was two years ago, but my experience with the Japanese has been generally that they were honest and that I could depend upon what they said, whereas the young Chinese business men, in particular, have been just as undependable and dishonest.

These comments are significant for us only as indicating a certain trend in public opinion and, of course, they are not reliable criteria of the relative morality of the two groups. He revealed that his attitudes toward the Japanese had been very much influenced by their record in the 100th and the 442nd while he resented the fact that the Chinese had gone into highly remunerative businesses and into defense jobs. This point of view is fairly common *just at present* among a number of the middle class Haoles here.

Among the accumulation of reports on my desk was a collection of the more revealing comments included in the notebooks kept by students in our large introductory course (Sociology 151) last winter (February, 1945). An analysis might well constitute the basis for one issue of "What People in Hawaii Are Saying and Doing."



A surprisingly large proportion of the women students were impressed by what appeared to them as the deliberate flaunting of the local etiquette of racial equality by mainland servicemen. Comments such as the following were typical:

I witnessed another incident while riding the bus, concerning the Negroes as well as the Japanese. First a few Japanese girls came on. Some haole boys who were riding the same bus stated: "Why can't the Japs walk? They do not have to ride the busses." Why do these boys have prejudice against the Japanese? Is it because we are at war with Japan? But aren't we just as loyal as the other American citizens? Besides we can't help it if Japan declared war on the United States.

A few stops later, two Negro soldiers came on. These same haole boys said sarcastically, "Move to the rear. Don't stand in the front." Now these soldiers didn't have to be reminded. They were moving to the rear and while they did not say anything to the boys. If they had said anything, there surely would have been trouble. Instead they just ignored them and sat down.

One day a group of Negroes came to the canteen to buy some coffee. There happened to be some white marines eating and one of them was slightly drunk. When he saw the Negroes coming in he said loudly, "Gee, it's getting hot in here. I'm burning. It's dark, too. I can't see," and then he laughed. The Negroes knew the remark was meant for them, but they paid no attention to the drunkard who was still making sarcastic remarks. The Negroes had learned to take these unkind remarks and walked out quietly after they had their coffee. I was so angry with the rude marine that I told him how little I thought of skunks like him. He only laughed and said, "Why, are they your boy friends?"

One day while riding the Waikiki bus, I saw an incident which has convinced me of the strong racial prejudice on the mainland. There were three sailors sitting comfortably on the front side seats of the crowded bus. Presently an aged Oriental woman came into the bus. Seeing that there was no room for her to sit, she just stood in front of the sailors. None of these sailors, though they saw her, lifted an eyelid, nor did they even try to budge from their seats for this old woman. She stood there until a girl in one of the other front seats gave up a seat to her.

About five stops later a young haole lady came into the bus and stood by the sailors. Like a flash of lightning, one of the sailors got up from his seat to let her have it.

Some of these comments are undoubtedly accurately reported. On the other hand, there is clearly some tendency to interpret mainland mass-transportation etiquette as racial discrimination.

An interesting study of mass observation might also be made of the range and variations in the WAC story which has been making the rounds recently in Honolulu. The first version, which came to our attention about a year ago, ran about as follows:



A mainland WAC who was compelled to stand in a crowded bus remarked quite audibly to her companion, "Where I come from, colored people stand up for white people"; whereupon a part-Hawaiian girl, seated next to the WAC, promptly rose and knocked her flat.

The versions quoted by the students vary considerably, with however always some Islander forcefully impressing upon the *malihini* the local principle of racial equality and the inappropriateness of racial snobbery.

a. This incident was related to me by an observer:

On a bus one day a Wac from Georgia was sitting by a window. A dark Hawaiian girl got on and took the empty seat beside her. The Wac said, "You can't sit here."

"Why not?" the Hawaiian girl asked.

The Wac slapped her face; the Hawaiian girl slapped her back. The Japanese bus driver made the Wac get off the bus. A soldier on the bus snickered.

b. I heard of this incident last night and I thought it might interest you. This incident took place on the Pearl Harbor bus. A group of Wac's got on the bus and sat down by a very dark Hawaiian girl. One of the Wac's said, "Where I come from, black people aren't allowed to ride on the same bus with white people." The Hawaiian girl knowing that the Wac was talking about her, got up and slapped the Wac's face. When this Wac complained to the bus driver, the driver refused to help her because he said that she started it.

c. It seems that a certain Wac came into a crowded bus and as everybody else had to take her chance at standing. Instead she went up to a Hawaiian girl who was sitting and demanded that "The natives should stand and give their seats to the white people." This seemed too much for the Hawaiian girl, who stood right up and slapped her on the cheek. As it goes, a serviceman nearby took hold of the Wac's arms and told the Hawaiian girl to strike her again. He said that he knew the Hawaiian people who treated him so very nicely and would side with them anytime.