

THE JAPANESE AMERICAN TEEN AGERS IN 1942

During the early days of internment many of the young adult Japanese males reluctantly assumed family leadership. A position that historically had been limited to the father of the family. The fathers position as provider for the family had made him the claimant as final authority in decisions with regards to family affairs. When the U.S. Government assumed the position of provider for all family needs and issued the orders for behavior of the entire familys behavior, the Government took away the perogatives of the Japanese father and became in effect the foaster father of each Japanese American Family. The older son in the Japanese American Society, after their internment, in many cases began to assume family leadership now being relinquished by fathers because they were no longer the family providers. Another factor in the change was the fathers failure to lear the language of their adopted Country and the resultant inability^{to} talk and express themselves to Caucasian Center Administrators and read or understand directive printed material.

The teen agers because of their education in American schools and constant association with caucasian fellow students were much more compatable with U.S. thoughts, customs, beliefs, likes and dislikes. Therefor they knew why certain certain ingredients of their fathers customs did not blend well with predominant American customs.

At that time the average American Japanese student ranked academically in the top 10% of his or her American school class.

It is interesting to note that encouragement to succeed and excell in education had come in large measure from the father who had worked extremly hard to pay for the neccesities of the children.

I am sure that a survey of the lives of the 1942 Japanese American teen agers would reveal a very high professional and financial success percentage. Probably considerably higher than their counter-
part non-caucasian students.

At that time I found them to be amazingly alert with a faculty to think adult which few teen agers can do today.

This may be attributed in part to the fact that because of the parents inability to sneak and understan English, the teen agers had been interpreters for their parents since the children were small.

Education in American schools and the resulting ability to understand American attitudes and values was the key to change in the Japanese American leadership.

If you were associated with an Assembly Center you would have seen the change taking place before your eyes.