

Should Orientals Join Blacks in Racial Protests?

Yes

Stand Up and Be Counted,
Say Some Seattle Nisei

By RAY INOUE

Yellow power: A new concept in the black and white of civil rights. Or an exercise in futility?

In Seattle's Oriental community, the latter sentiment prevails, although you can get arguments for both viewpoints.

Supporters of the power premise believe it fills a real need, a long-standing vacuum in human relations.

When an action group, the Asian Coalition for Equality (ACE) was organized five months ago, the Rev. Mineo Katagiri, of the Ecumenical Metropolitan Ministry, one of its founders, said:

"Orientals should be participants in rather than spectators of the struggle for equality."

"Racism is not directed solely at the blacks," said the Rev. Canon Lincoln Eng, another ACE leader, "and to combat it, we have to assert ourselves, to become involved..."

On September 24 some Orientals did become involved. They participated in a protest over the nohiring of minority job trainees at construction projects at the University of Washington. That protest later erupted into violence and involved property damage and several arrests.

FIVE DAYS later, ACE members, in a fiery confrontation in the mayor's office, protested police tactics at the U. W. demonstration.

Canon Eng, an Episcopalian, who engaged in an explosive exchange with a city police official during the meeting with the mayor, said "it was a shock to many people to think an Oriental, you know, the 'quiet American' would take that way to the establishment."

ACE leaders thus feel the incidents have blown the stereotype image of the long-suffering, quiet, docile

Analysis

Oriental. And they plan to capitalize on it.

Yet this sense of liberated militancy is causing no little concern among the city's Orientals.

"They're just asking for trouble," said a Nisei businessman in the International District. "And what they're doing might cause problems for the rest of us."

The businessman's reservations are not his own. They reflect, in only slightly varying degrees, the thinking of most of the Oriental community.

IN PART, the doubts appear to be a common, middle-class WASP (YASP) reaction to some of the more violent aspects of the protest movement.

In part, they represent friction between Oriental and black, a delicate topic, but an inescapable fact of life, especially among the older Issei (first generation) in the Central Area.

"You have to remember," said the businessman, "that these people had their friends and relatives mugged and robbed. The robbers are black... so they blame all blacks."

A service-station operator cites several businesses that have been forced to leave the Central Area after repeated harassment.

"These guys resent the fact they had to move. Hell, anybody would. And they have friends, and they're doing a lot of talking."

"How many of these guys are you going to get in civil-rights drive?"

OVERLYING these doubts, however, is a general disinterest in the whole area of civil rights—black or yellow.

Minoru Masuda, a research assistant professor of

psychiatry at the University of Washington, blames the apathy of the Nisei on an "obsession with the sense of conforming. They don't want to do anything to draw attention to themselves. It's a very conservative—and a deplorable attitude."

Conservatism flavors the conversation of the Oriental grocer, the Boeing engineer and the postal worker and becomes the unofficial line of Oriental veterans groups, service clubs and such organizations as the Japanese-American Citizens League.

Don Kazama, president-elect of the Seattle J. A. C. L. and a participant in the U. W. demonstration, concedes he does not have the support of the members for his many civil-rights activities.

INDEED, there was quite a flap within the group when it was learned that J. A. C. L. signs were carried by some of the marchers in the U. W. demonstration. Earlier, the J. A. C. L.'s District Council, made up of representatives of the various Northwest chapters, had voted a resolution to support the demands for black job trainees, but some of the members did not feel the resolution warranted the involvement of the entire J. A. C. L. chapter in the protest.

Kazama, like many of the Oriental activists, senses a measure of resentment within the Oriental community.

"A lot of them get angry with me. But they're just afraid... of becoming involved, of anybody rocking the boat."

The activities of Jim Takisaki, a board member of the Central Contractors Association, the leading pressure group in the job-trainee dispute, and his brother-in-law, George Miyake, have provoked similar reactions.

For Miyake and Takisaki, their involvement is partly economic. They do business



(Suddenly, the Seattle Oriental is becoming identified with civil rights and the protest movement. The direction and scope of the new activist mood are explored by a Times copy editor, Ray Inoue, who views the phenomenon as a newsman and as a Nisei, a second-generation Japanese-American.)

in the Central Area. "Still we feel we're doing what's right," Miyake said. "The blacks have legitimate gripes. And when they get what they want, well, we'll all benefit."

"A lot of guys don't understand that, though. I don't think they want to."

Even at the church level, noninvolvement is the prevailing mood. When the Rev. Harry H. Murakami of the Blaine Memorial Methodist Church, a predominantly Japanese church on Beacon Hill, polled some of his congregation on the U. W. trainee demonstration, almost half said they had no opinion. Of those who voted, the majority was against such demonstrations.

Mr. Murakami, who took part in the U. W. protest, said "it's very difficult to get people even thinking of the rights issue."

At the Japanese Presbyterian Church, the Rev. Richard T. Nishioka indicated he himself is not committed to the ACE movement.

Citing the U. W. incident, Mr. Nishioka said "I'm not

ready to support these extreme forms of demonstrations, especially when they involve violence, injury or property damage."

"Certainly I am for civil rights, and there's no question that these tactics have accomplished a great deal."

"However, I still think it would be better to attempt a sophisticated, quiet exercise of power to constructively offset the effects of white racism."

Despite such rebuffs, the activists are not discouraged.

"At least we've created discussion," said Y. Philip Hayasaka, director of the city's Human Rights Department and who originally conceived the idea of ACE. "Not all of it is favorable, but now it's in the open."

SIX YEARS ago, you could have counted the civil-rights workers in the Japanese community on one hand—clenched. Now the idea is spreading.

Kazama, the "eternal optimist," also sees a growing awareness among the Orientals, especially among the

No

Sit Down and Be Spared,
Say Some Older Issei

young. But he has not abandoned the hope of attracting the older Nisei.

Kazama cited a management-training course which the J. A. C. L. sponsored last spring for Japanese and Chinese postal workers preparing for a test for supervisory posts.

"As a result of the course, I've found more and more of the older guys talking about what a collective effort can accomplish."

Now firmly and fully committed to its goals, ACE promises to keep the pressure on.

"The Oriental's position and achievements in society still are tenuous," said Dr. Joseph Okimoto, a member of the ACE executive committee. "We are still very much a visible minority."

"The Japanese still experience discrimination in housing, pay and job promotions, but most of them have accommodated psychologically for racism."

"After all, discrimination is open to interpretation. An individual can choose to ignore a slight and dismiss it as a quirk of another individual."

"But a subtle kind of discrimination does exist. And I won't consider our fight won until we are 100 per cent citizens."

Specifically, ACE's next target is the repeal of Title

II of the Internal Security Act of 1950 which provided that in emergencies certain persons can be placed in concentration camps without trial.

"We are particularly concerned because of a statement made by J. Edgar Hoover (F. B. I. director) earlier this year during testimony on Red Chinese infiltration in the U. S.," Canon Eng said. "He said there are 300,000

Chinese in the United States, some of whom might be susceptible to recruitment." He didn't mention those of us who happen to be loyal citizens.

"The first thing that comes to mind, of course, is the internment of the Japanese in 1942," Canon Eng

continued. "People say it can't happen again. Why not? The possibility exists, and if it happened once... who knows?"

Canon Eng said the "yellow peril" fears still exist. "I get letters and phone calls from people wondering why we're stirring up trouble. I've been called many names, including a Communist."

Canon Eng added he is that much more convinced of the need for action from the Oriental.

"If you don't make noise, you get stepped on," he said.

And although the Oriental community remains muted and uncommitted, Canon Eng and his co-workers plan to make a lot of noise.

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