

The California Alien Land Law of 1920: Race, Americanization, and (Un)Assimilability

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ABSTRACT: This paper discusses the way in which Japanese immigrants negotiated the ferocious terrain of racial politics in the early twentieth century in the United States by examining their reactions to the Alien Land Law of 1920. Proposed as an initiative measure in California, the law was designed to close the loopholes in the 1913 California Alien Land Law, which prohibited “aliens ineligible to citizenship” and the companies whose majority stock was held by them from purchasing agricultural land, or leasing such land for more than three years. The wording notwithstanding, the Alien Land Laws targeted the Japanese immigrants in the state. This paper begins by analyzing how and why the anti-Japanese movement reemerged in March 1920 when the California Oriental Exclusion League, the bipartisan umbrella organization of the movement, proposed the Alien Land Law of 1920 as an initiative measure. After interrogating the discourse of the anti-Japanese advocates, this paper investigates how the Japanese immigrant community reacted to the initiative measure that would not only damage their socio-economic life but also possibly pave the way to Japanese exclusion. Shedding light on the roles played by the Japanese government, this paper fully explores the thoughts and actions of the Japanese immigrants against the initiative measure.

KEYWORDS: United States history, Asian American studies, race relations, assimilation, social movement

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In the first quarter of the twentieth century Japanese immigrants in the United States, particularly in California, endured many hardships. These hardships included harassment and discrimination in everyday life, in addition to some official actions against them. The Gentlemen's Agreement between the Japanese government and the United States government in 1908 stopped further Japanese labor migration to the United States. This agreement was a result of a series of events that began with the segregation of Japanese students by the San Francisco School Board in 1906. In 1913, the California legislature enacted the Alien Land Law, which prohibited "aliens ineligible to citizenship" and the companies whose majority stock was held by them from purchasing agricultural land, or leasing such land for more than three years. But many Californians were never satisfied with this law. They felt that Japanese immigrants evaded it by establishing land companies with U.S. citizens holding a majority of shares, or by purchasing land in the name of their children with U.S. citizenship. Taking advantage of the "yellow peril" discourse that had been widely circulated, the anti-Japanese advocates mounted a well-organized campaign in 1919. Their efforts led to the establishment of the 1920 California Alien Land Law by ballot initiative, which plugged the loopholes of the former law by banning "aliens ineligible to citizenship" from leasing agricultural land, purchasing stock in land companies owning or leasing such land, and appointing themselves guardians of the estates of minors.

Scholars of U.S. history, Asian Americans studies, and U.S.-Japan relations have, of course, already conducted research on Japanese exclusion. For example, Roger Daniels explored how the anti-Japanese movement emerged and flourished in California from the end of the nineteenth century to 1924 when the U.S. government ended further Japanese immigration by establishing the Immigration Act. In line with Daniels, Frank W. Van Nuys has examined the role of Chester Rowell and James D. Phelan in enacting the Alien Land Laws, while Lon Kurashige has analyzed the voting patterns of the 1920 referendum in Los Angeles. On the other hand, work by Yuji Ichioka, Eiichiro Azuma, Fuminori Minamikawa, and Yuko Matsumoto has investigated the Japanese immigrants' reactions to exclusion in relation to broader questions such as identity and community formation, race relations, inter-empire relations, and nation-building. Examining Japanese exclusion in the context of international relations, Toshihiro Minohara has argued that Japanese exclusion, in effect, developed as a result U.S.-Japan relations. Although scholars have explored the domestic and/or international contexts in which the anti-Japanese movement took place, and although Ichioka, Azuma, Minamikawa, and Matsumoto have examined Japanese immigrants' responses to the initiative measure, nobody has yet fully explained the reactions of Japanese immigrants throughout the ongoing process leading up to the vote.¹

The significance of the Japanese immigrants' resistance to the 1920 Alien Land Law was emphasized in a comment made by a Japanese immigrant in Tulare County in 1922: "We ourselves made our own minds up to cope with the situation because we understood that we

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should not have relied on the Japanese government as we had done before. This is the first step to deal with everything by ourselves to live a real and independent life.”² Therefore, this article investigates the way in which Japanese immigrants acted and thought when they faced the law which would change their lives as well as decrease the autonomy of Japanese farmers. In order to contextualize the Japanese immigrants’ resistance, this study also interrogates the thoughts and actions of the anti-Japanese movement. The time span of this work is from March, 1920, when the anti-Japanese organization proposed the Alien Land Law as an initiative measure, to November, 1920, when the vote was taken. Moreover, this period is divided into two parts: a turning point occurred in September when the anti-Japanese movement was re-organized, whereupon Japanese immigrants organized a countermovement against the initiative.

1. The Anti-Japanese Movement from March to August, 1920

In 1919, the anti-Japanese movement restarted its activity after a six-year lull. James D. Phelan, Democratic Senator of the United States, was responsible for reviving the movement by his speech in the California legislature at the end of March. He attacked the influx

¹ Roger Daniels, *The Politics of Prejudice: The Anti-Japanese Movement in California and the Struggle for Japanese Exclusion* 2nd ed (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962, 1977); Frank W. Van Nuys, “A Progressive Confronts the Race Question: Chester Rowell, the California Alien Land Law of 1913, and the Twentieth-Century Racial Thought.” *California History* 73 (Spring 1994): 2–13; Frank W. Van Nuys, “Sowing the Seeds of Internment: James D. Phelan’s Anti-Japanese Crusade, 1919–1920,” in *Remembering Heart Mountain: Essays on Japanese American Internment in Wyoming*, ed. Mike Mackey (Powell: Western History Publications, 1998), 1–16; Lon Kurashige, “Rethinking Anti-Immigrant Racism: Lessons from the Los Angeles Vote on the 1920 Alien Land Law,” *Southern California Quarterly*, Vol. 95, No. 3 (Fall 2013), 265–283; Yuji Ichioka, *The Issei: The World of the First Generation Japanese Immigrants, 1885–1924* (New York: The Free Press, 1988); Eiichiro Azuma, *Between Two Empires: Race, History, and Transnationalism in Japanese America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Fuminori Minamikawa, “*Nikkei amerikajin*” no rekishi shakaigaku: esunisitei, jinshu, nashonarizumu (Tokyo: Sairyusha, 2007); Yuko Matsumoto, *Constructing the American Nation: Boundaries of Citizenship in the Age of Americanization* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 2007); Toshihiro Minohara, *Karifornia shu no hainichi undo to nichibei kankei* (Tokyo: Yuhikaku, 2006); Eiichiro Azuma, “Dancing with the Rising Sun: Strategic Alliances between Japanese Immigrants and Their ‘Home’ Government,” in *The Transnational Politics of Asian Americans*, ed. Christian Collet and Pei-te Lien (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009), 25–37.

² Setsugo Sakamoto, “Hainichi shintaosaku juritsu no you,” in *Tsurare gun nihonjinkai kaiho daiichi* by Tsurare gun nihonjin kai (1922), 4, Box 263, Japanese American Research Project Collection (JARP), Special Collections, the Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles. All quotation of the Japanese sources in this work is translated by the author hereafter.

of picture brides, the smuggling of laborers, and the possession of land by Japanese as a menace to the country.³ On the day after that speech, Republican State Senator J. M. Inman, another leader of the anti-Japanese movement, tried to introduce his bill to tighten the 1913 Alien Land Law. This attempt ended in failure, but, in early September, Inman called for a meeting with the assistance of John Chambers, Republican State Controller, to reorganize the Anti-Japanese movement. A new bipartisan organization, the California Oriental Exclusion League, was formed, and Inman was named its president. At the same time, similar organizations, including the Los Angeles County Anti-Asiatic Association, which also would lead the anti-Japanese movement with the California Oriental Exclusion League, emerged in other parts of the state.⁴ All these groups supported the program suggested by the California Oriental Exclusion League; it required: to repeal the Gentlemen's Agreement; to exclude "Picture Brides"; to legislate the further immigration of Japanese; to permanently prohibit people of Asian ancestry from American citizenship; and to establish an amendment of the U.S. Constitution which provides that "no child born in the United States should be given the rights of an American citizen unless both parents were of a race eligible to citizenship."⁵

In addition to these organizations founded to explicitly promote Japanese exclusion, the Native Sons of the Golden West (NSGW), a California nativist group, worked with other organizations under one umbrella including the American Legion, the California State Federation of Labor, and farm organizations such as the Farm Bureau and the California State Grange to promote the cause of Japanese exclusion. One article in *Grizzly Bear*, the publication of the NSGW, argued the necessity of "an initiative petition, which will bear law giving California the fullest protection against Japanese encroachments." The author argued that "the unassimilable Japanese—those who are already in our midst and the thousands who are planning to cross the Pacific and infest our native land—present the most striking menace which Americans must immediately overcome. Our Golden State, California, of course is their objective point."⁶

Soon after this article was published, a conference was held in San Francisco on March 13 to discuss the initiative measure. In attendance were three representatives from each organization such as the NSGW, American Legion, the California Oriental Exclusion League, and the Los Angeles County Anti-Asiatic Association. They were all determined to invoke the initiative measure designed to plug the loopholes of the 1913 Alien Land Law.⁷ Indeed, that very same day the Executive Committee of the American Legion voted unanimous endorse-

³ Van Nuys, "Sowing the Seeds of Internment," 5.

⁴ Daniels, *The Politics of Prejudice*, 82–84.

⁵ Quoted in Daniels, *The Politics of Prejudice*, 85.

⁶ *Grizzly Bear*, March, 1920, 21.

⁷ The Los Angeles *Times*, March 16, 1920, II5; the Los Angeles *Examiner*, March 14, 1920, II; *Grizzly Bear*, April, 1920, 24.

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ment of this measure.⁸

William I. Traeger, who attended this conference as a representative of the Los Angeles County Anti-Asiatic Association, noted in his article:

One nation of the Asiatics—Japan—has shown definite plans of colonizing California. The Japanese have become so active in their evasion of the Alien Land Law that immediate action by The People of California is imperative, if California is to remain a white man's country. The activity of the Japs to gain their end, and the failure of the last Legislature... to enact laws to protect California from the Jap colonization scheme, have aroused the citizen to the fact that the peril is real... The proposed law by initiative will stop, at least in California, the Japanese colonization scheme.⁹

Moreover, John S. Chambers argued in his article in the same volume entitled "Conquest by Colonization" that "[p]icture brides have been brought here not only to increase the number of Japanese through the bearing of children, but also to be used as laborers in the fields, a clear violation of the 'gentlemen's agreement,' " pointing out both numbers of the Japanese population and acres of agricultural land they had under lease in California.¹⁰ Exclusionists who described the purchase of agricultural lands by Japanese immigrants as Japanese colonization clearly had a conspiratorial viewpoint and expressed a hysterical fear of Japanese expansion. The anti-Japanese argument followed the logic that white California was threatened by an "invasion" of the Japanese, who were deliberately increasing their population and agricultural land evading and/or violating both the Gentlemen's Agreement and the Alien Land Law of 1913.

When the anti-Japanese advocates insisted on the danger of the Japanese immigrants, they drew a clear line between themselves and the Japanese immigrants, unequivocally regarding the latter as "others." Moreover, the proponents of Japanese exclusion contended that the Japanese immigrants' otherness was due to their unassimilability, which was in turn due to their race. Valentine S. McClatchy, publisher of the *Sacramento Bee* and one of the most powerful anti-Japanese proponents, stated in the hearings of the House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization in July 1920, "The Japanese cannot assimilate and make good citizens, because their racial characteristics, heredity, and religion prevent it... There can be no effective assimilation of Japanese without intermarriage. It is perhaps not desirable for the good of either race that there should be intermarriage between whites and Japanese."¹¹

⁸ The Los Angeles *Examiner*, March 14, 1920, 17.

⁹ *Grizzly Bear*, April, 1920, 24–25.

¹⁰ *Grizzly Bear*, April, 1920, 5, 46.

¹¹ U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Immigration and Naturalization. *Japanese Immigration: Hearings before the Committee on Immigration and Naturalization*, July 13, 1920, 240.

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While Treager defined California as “a white man’s country,” McClatchy also viewed the Japanese as people who cannot assimilate into American society because of their race while he simultaneously pointed out a cultural factor such as religion.

Leroy Johnson, a representative of the American Legion, also expressed the same racial logic, when he argued in the same forum: “The Japanese as a race cannot be assimilated... You know from your own experience that you cannot mix the blood of white and oriental or black races.” Furthermore, he continued,

[W]e simply recognize it as a fact that they are different than we are, and, when we come into competition with them, we cannot stand up against it and they drive us from the land. That is the point at issue—that we cannot meet their competition... The American Legion of California is unanimous upon the proposition that the oriental must be excluded, because they cannot be assimilated, because his standard of living is such that the American cannot compete with him, and that his rapid increase in population is such that if you do not head him off now he will overwhelm us in time.¹²

Johnson clearly distinguished the unassimilable Japanese immigrants from American farmers and insisted on the necessity of exclusion of the former. Moreover, when he was asked how the American Legion felt about the Mexicans, he answered that they “cannot be assimilated.”¹³ From this response, we can see that he assumed a line dividing whites and racial others including the Japanese, while he also thought that the Japanese were dangerous because of their strength as a competitor.

As for the economic aspects of the Japanese immigrants’ strength, a fruit worker pointed out: “There is a slight discrepancy in the price [of labor], owing to the difference in living conditions... The trouble is that the white man cannot compete with the Japanese unless he changes his standard of living.”¹⁴ At the same time, the Farm Bureau noted in its report that “they [the Japanese immigrants] are unfair competitors to Americans engaged in the same industries owing to their use of unpaid female and child labor.”¹⁵ Moreover, Joseph Holmes, a representative of the Farmer’s Grange, stated that the Japanese immigrants did not observe the Sabbath.¹⁶ They insisted that the Japanese immigrants offered cheaper labor than Whites because they did not follow American customs by living in a lower standard, having wives and children work, and ignoring the Sabbath. Thus advocates of the anti-Japanese movement

¹² Committee on Immigration and Naturalization. *Japanese Immigration*, July 16, 1920, 489–490.

¹³ Committee on Immigration and Naturalization. *Japanese Immigration*, July 16, 1920, 489.

¹⁴ Committee on Immigration and Naturalization. *Japanese Immigration*, July 19, 859, 861.

¹⁵ Committee on Immigration and Naturalization. *Japanese Immigration*, July 19, 942.

¹⁶ Committee on Immigration and Naturalization. *Japanese Immigration*, July 14, 307–308.

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viewed Japanese immigrants as unassimilable to the American society because of their race and various social and cultural practices seen as at odds with American customs. As a result, they regarded Japanese immigrants almost as invaders.

In late May, the Oriental Exclusion League and the Anti-Asiatic Association started calling for signatures and circulating copies of the initiative petition.¹⁷ In total, 55,904 signatures were necessary to place an initiative on a ballot in 1920 as the state constitution provided that signatures equal to eight percent of the total votes in the most recent gubernatorial election were required. On June 2, William I. Traeger, President of the Los Angeles Anti-Asiatic Association, told “his enthusiastic audience” at the organization’s meeting that he expected “[f]raternal, civic, patriotic and commercial bodies throughout the State will be asked to take a hand in the work [gather signatures] and finish it early.”¹⁸ As the *Grizzly Bear* featured articles requesting readers to register their name on the initiative petition in every volume after May, we can see that the organizations supporting the anti-Japanese movement were clearly on the offensive.

The Los Angeles *Times* ultimately argued against the initiative measure as Roger Daniels and other scholars point out.¹⁹ But this newspaper agreed with the assertion by the anti-Japanese movement that California was facing danger of the silent invasion of the Japanese immigrants. An editorial of May 8 argued, “The Times... opposed to the Japanese invasion of California soil, which has been going on ever since the so-called gentlemen’s agreement was made... But The Times has held that legislation should come in the form of the bill or bills introduced at a regular session of the Legislature.” It should be noted that the author was opposed to the Alien Land Law not because he/she could not accept it on principle, but because he/she preferred enactment by the legislature. He/she continued: “Our only object is to prevent the white population of this State from being driven out by hordes of Japanese immigrants.”²⁰ It is clear that this editorial is similar to the insistence of the anti-Japanese movement when it drew a color line between “the white population” and the Japanese and contended that the latter invaded white California.

Moreover, the Los Angeles *Times* also regarded Japanese immigrants as unassimilable. As one editor argued; “Socially, biologically, economically, religiously we can never assimilate him [the Japanese]. We are bound to protect our own. We do not propose to compete with him [the Japanese] by allowing our wives and children to grub around in cabbage patches on their hands and knees from 5 o’clock in the morning till 9 at night.”²¹ Labor in the fields

¹⁷ The Los Angeles *Times*, May 21, I7; The Los Angeles *Examiner*, May 30, 1920, I4 and I6.

¹⁸ The Los Angeles *Times*, June 3, III.

¹⁹ Daniels notes that the Los Angeles *Times* was one of five California newspapers that opposed the 1920 Alien Land Law. Daniels, *The Politics of Prejudice*, 146 n. 50.

²⁰ The Los Angeles *Times*, May 8, II4.

²¹ The Los Angeles *Times*, July 10, II4.

by women and children was called into question again, and this assertion of Japanese immigrants' unassimilability based on biological, cultural, and economic reasons resonated with that of the anti-Japanese movement.

This newspaper was vehemently offended by the idea of "biological" assimilation of Japanese immigrants. This can be seen in its reactions to George Shima, President of the Japanese Association of America, who was a witness at the hearing of the House Committee hearing and made remarks clearly at odds with such sensibilities. At the hearing he was asked whether he thought that "intermarriage between the white people and the Japanese would bring on a beautiful crop of men and women," and his reply was that "I will tell you in a hundred years when you come back you will see this warm Japanese blood mixed up with your race."²² These words led to paranoid editorializing as can be seen in the editorial "A Horrifying Suggestion," which argues: "It is the aim of the Japanese to make an experiment of the fusion of the white and Japanese... Wherever blood fusion is attempted degeneracy results... It is not enough that the best agricultural lands of California have passed into the hands of the Japanese, we are now asked to give our daughters in marriage to the slant-eyed subject of the Mikado."²³ A more extreme reaction to the idea of intermarriage can be seen in a letter from a reader that states "in my opinion extermination is preferable to amalgamation."²⁴

Furthermore, the *Times* proposed an unexpected idea: importation of Chinese contract labor, as this plan would make it possible to replace the Japanese with cheaper labor as well as solve the Japanese question. An editorial noted,

Once Japanese are here they are here for life; they hold the land... The great menace of the Japanese invasion is that it is permanent and threatens the supremacy of the white race on the Pacific Coast. With the Chinese no such menace exists. The laborers would be brought here on contract to return at the end of three years. They would be nothing more than agricultural implements... that [a wage of Chinese] would be not more than half what Japanese are making.²⁵

It is certainly surprising that it was suggested to introduce the very people who had been the original target of exclusion, but it is important that the editor regarded Japanese immigrants as replaceable. The editor situated Japanese immigrants completely outside society. To the editor, Japanese immigrants were a menace to "the supremacy of the white race," just as Chinese immigrants had once been viewed. So the solution, ironically, was to substitute "safe"

²² Committee on Immigration and Naturalization. *Japanese Immigration*, July 12, 66.

²³ The Los Angeles *Times*, July 15, II4.

²⁴ The Los Angeles *Times*, July 25, III36.

²⁵ The Los Angeles *Times*, March 2, II4.

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Chinese laborers under contract for Japanese immigrants. The importation of Chinese laborers as a solution was not an isolated proposal. Indeed, another editorial contended: “With Chinese farm help here under a short-term contract there would be no further menace from the Japs.”²⁶

Thus the Los Angeles *Times* was opposed to the initiative measure, but it held the same basic attitudes toward Japanese immigrants as the proponents of this measure; it regarded Japanese immigrants not only “socially, biologically, economically, religiously” unassimilable but also as a menace to white California, drawing a clear color line between Whites and Japanese immigrants and placing the latter outside society.

William D. Stephens, Governor of California, was another prominent politician who pointed out the unassimilability of Japanese immigrants, warning of rapid increases of their population and acquisition of agricultural lands. When the State Board of Control of California published in June a two-hundred-page report on various topics of the Japanese immigrants, such as population, birth rate, land, picture brides, and the Gentlemen’s Agreement, he noted in a preface addressed to Secretary of State Bainbridge Colby:

In many portions of our state we have large colonies of Japanese, the population in many places even exceeding the white population. These Japanese, by very reason of their use of economic standards impossible to our white ideals—that is to say, the employment of their wives and their very children in the arduous toil of the soil—are proving crushing competitors to our white rural populations... the people of California are determined to repress a developing Japanese community within our midst. They are determined to exhaust every power in their keeping to maintain this state for its own people. This determination is based fundamentally upon the ethnological impossibility of assimilating the Japanese people...²⁷

As we can see, all the points that Stephens put forward are to be found in the standard arguments of the anti-Japanese movement, essentially legitimizing the movement by the authority of the Governor.

2. The Japanese Community from March to August, 1920

While the anti-Japanese movement was in full swing in the first half of 1920, Japanese immigrants took limited organizational actions against the anti-Japanese initiative measure in the same period. Those organizational efforts were made by the Japanese associations that

²⁶ The Los Angeles *Times*, July 11, II4.

²⁷ California State Board of Control. *California and the Oriental: Japanese, Chinese, and Hindus*. Sacramento: California State Printing Office, 1922, 8–10.

were composed of the central associations tied to the local Japanese consulates and their local affiliates. The associations held power and leadership in the Japanese immigrant communities as they were tied to local Japanese consulates and, as a proxy of the Japanese government, they were granted the so-called “endorsement rights” through which they certified whether someone was a legal resident in the United States.²⁸ The members of the Japanese associations in the state had been concerned about the anti-Japanese immigration movement since the early 1910s, and promptly responded to the resurgence of the movement at the end of the decade. In Southern California, for instance, the Central Japanese Association of Southern California, tied to the Japanese consulate in Los Angeles, established a committee for organizing a countermovement to the anti-Japanese movement and the initiative measure on April 21, 1920.²⁹ This committee decided to move in three directions in the meeting held on May 22: “holding a temporary series of lectures to enlighten Japanese immigrants..., researching how to deal with Whites, and... publishing pamphlets to argue against the false facts spread by Americans and to educate Japanese immigrants.”³⁰ At the end of April, the Agricultural Committee of the Central Japanese Association of Southern California also agreed to make some charts of statistics showing changes in the fertility of land tilled by Japanese immigrants, to rebut arguments pointed to by the anti-Japanese ideologues.³¹ In addition, the leaders of the Japanese Association of Los Angeles decided in a special meeting on March 29 to start a countermovement against the movement to oust the Japanese.³² Nevertheless, although the Japanese associations designed strategies to counter the movement for the anti-Japanese initiative measure, no further action was reported until September.

Whereas the Japanese immigrant community remained inactive as they lacked solid financial footing to implement their plans, the Japanese government weighed in with its substantial resources. In April, the Japanese Association of America decided to raise 75,000 dollars to launch a countermovement and to cover the fees of printing pamphlets in English, holding mass meetings featuring pro-Japanese speakers, placing advertisements in newspapers, and conducting legal research of the initiative measure. Two months later, however, Japanese Consul General Tamekichi Ota in San Francisco observed that the fund raising campaign had not gone well and failed to reach the target amount that the organization set for June 10.³³ Moreover, Japanese Consul Ujira Oyama in Los Angeles also witnessed that the Central Japanese Association of Southern California was facing the same trouble when the organization did not seem to be able to gather their target of 15,000 dollars.³⁴ The Japanese

²⁸ Ichioka, *The Issei*, Chapter 5; Azuma, *Between Two Empires*, Chapter 2.

²⁹ Nanka chuo nihonjinkai gijiroku, August, 1915–January, 1934, 193, Box 229, JARP.

³⁰ *Rafu Shimpo*, May 22, 1920.

³¹ *Rafu Shimpo*, May 1, 1920.

³² *Rafu nihonjinkai kiroku* (1), January, 1917–April, 1929, 215, Box 337, JARP.

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diplomats feared that if the new Alien Land Law was established it would not satisfy the anti-Japanese movement, but rather lead them to further measures to ultimately exclude the Japanese people from the United States. Therefore, the Japanese associations' inability to raise the financial resources to carry out their plan made the diplomats, including Ota and Oyama, urge the Japanese government to appropriate funds for the countermeasures that were essentially identical to the associations' plans.³⁵ Indeed, the consulates on the West Coast started to print and distribute the pamphlets composed of newspaper and magazine articles and readers' letters which they selected as pro-Japanese and/or anti-initiative voices, as well as speeches and articles by opponents of the anti-Japanese initiative, and statements prepared by Issei leaders including George Shima, President of the Japanese Association of America. Although the Japanese government officials did not grant the funds to the Japanese associations or community leaders, they took similar strategies against the anti-Japanese initiative measure.³⁶

The financial shortage limited the ability of Japanese immigrant leaders to communicate with American society, but they tried "to educate Japanese immigrants" on the problems with the Alien Land Law. In fact, editorials and articles in Japanese newspapers often made similar arguments. The editorials printed in *Rafu Shimpō*, a Los Angeles-based newspaper, of April 27 and 28 directly argued against the initiative measure. First, they pointed out that Japanese exclusionists never understood how Japanese immigrants had contributed to the development of agriculture in California. Furthermore, they argued that the "prosperity of agriculture of California was based on excellent technology and the extraordinary hard work of Japanese immigrants gives profits to mostly Whites... such as consumer, land owner, railroad corporation, broker, worker, and farmer." Finally, they contended that blocking the

³³ Consul General Ota to Foreign Minister Uchida, June 30, 1920, Beikoku ni okeru hainichi mondai zakken: 1920nen kashu tochiho seiritu keikataisaku oyobi hantai undo, Volume 1 (hereafter Volume 1), 3.8.2.339-1-7, Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, Tokyo (hereafter Diplomatic Archives).

³⁴ Consul Oyama to Foreign Minister Uchida, July 3, 1920, Volume 1, 3.8.2.339-1-7, Diplomatic Archives.

³⁵ Memorandum, "Beikoku kashu hainichi kyokai no undo shinkochu naru nihonjin haiseki jinmin chokusetsu rippoan seiritsu boshi undohi hojokin shishutsu no ken," July[?], 1920, Volume 1, 3.8.2.339-1-7, Diplomatic Archives; Consul General Ota to Foreign Minister Uchida, July 11, 1920, Volume 1, 3.8.2.339-1-7, Diplomatic Archives; Oyama to Uchida, July 3, 1920; Consul Oyama to Foreign Minister Uchida, July 5, 1920, Volume 1, 3.8.2.339-1-7, Diplomatic Archives; Consul General Tamekichi Ota to Foreign Minister Kosai Uchida, May 17, 1920, Beikoku ni okeru hainichi mondai: 1920nen kashu tochiho seiritu keikataisaku oyobi hantai undo, Volume 3 (hereafter Volume 3), 3.8.2.339-1-7, Diplomatic Archives; Consul General Tamekichi Ota to Foreign Minister Kosai Uchida, June 20, 1920, Volume 3, 3.8.2.339-1-7, Diplomatic Archives.

³⁶ Ota to Uchida, July 11, 1920; Oyama to Uchida, July 3, 1920.

development of agriculture by Japanese immigrants would contradict economic principle because it would result in a rise in prices as well as a shortage of farm products, ultimately ending the prosperity of California.³⁷

Another daily newspaper, *Nichibei Shimbun*, made similar points: “[W]hat race or nation can manage farms or orchards as well as the Japanese? Californians should recognize that the Japanese have the greatest skills in agriculture from experience... I eagerly hope Californians will understand this unjustifiable movement for the initiative measure will cause them to lose much.” The newspaper also stated that “[i]t is very hard to understand from a mathematic standpoint how it is good for Californians to exclude the Japanese from agriculture in California.”³⁸ These editorials criticized the Alien Land Law from the point of view of economic rationality, insisting that this law would hurt not only Japanese immigrants but also Californians themselves.

Rafu Shimpo added criticisms from a different viewpoint when it pointed out that this initiative measure contradicted not only the Fourteenth Amendment, but also humanity in that it rejected the vested rights to life as well as guardianship of parents.³⁹ This discussion of the unconstitutionality of the initiative was resonant with a pamphlet entitled *An Appeal to Justice: The Injustice of the Proposed Initiative Measure*. It was published in the name of George Shima and printed and distributed by the consulate in San Francisco. The pamphlet noted that the initiative could be strongly rebutted on the grounds of unconstitutionality as “the constitution of the United States guarantees to all ‘persons’ under the American flag the equal protection of laws.”⁴⁰ Moreover, it also suggested that everyone “minimize race feeling,” contending that “it is criminal to exploit that feeling.”⁴¹ Issei leaders also criticized the initiatives unconstitutionality and denounced it even as a “criminal” act to stir up racism.⁴²

At the same time, the emphasis of the *Nichibei Shimbun* on “excellent technology and extraordinary hard work of Japanese immigrants” provided Japanese immigrants themselves with pride as well as identity. Promoting self-confidence and unification in the Japanese community was important for Japanese immigrant leaders, particularly when they recognized

³⁷ *Rafu Shimpo*, April 27 and 28, 1920.

³⁸ *Nichibei*, June 22 and September 20, 1920.

³⁹ *Rafu Shimpo*, May 4 and June 24, 1920.

⁴⁰ George Shima, *An Appeal to Justice: The Injustice of the Proposed Initiative Measure* (San Francisco [?], 1920), 3, Volume 3, 3.8.2.339-1-7, Diplomatic Archives.

⁴¹ Shima, *An Appeal to Justice*, 4.

⁴² For Japanese immigrants’ reliance on civic nationalism, see Minamikawa, “*Nikkei amerikajin*” no rekishi shakaigaku, 100–103. On the two types of U.S. nationalism, see Rogers Smith, *Civic Ideals: Conflicting Visions of Citizenship in U.S. History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999); Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

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that some of them were pessimistic and that it was necessary to encourage them as well as calm them. The attendees of the Pacific Coast Japanese Associations Deliberative Council discussed these matters on June 26.⁴³ The editorials noted as well that “[a]griculture of the Japanese developed not because of the lease but because of our special technology in agriculture... If we do not compete for land with each other, unrest would be diminished even without the lease.”⁴⁴ Furthermore, it was also said that we should “never be pessimistic, be unsettled, or be disconcerted. We should ‘try to improve ourselves and make ourselves better residents in the United States.’”⁴⁵

This appeal for improvements for Japanese immigrants themselves was connected with the efforts of Japanese immigrants to assimilate into American society. As scholars point out, leaders of Japanese immigrants had led the “Beika-Undo (Americanization movement)” since the beginning of the twentieth century when they intended to live permanently in the United States. This movement for assimilation aimed at eliminating gambling and covered the period from the 1910s to the early 1920s. Many gambling houses were owned by Chinese immigrants, and while the elites of Japanese immigrants not only tried to differentiate themselves from the Chinese they also considered gambling against American customs.⁴⁶ Particularly, when the anti-Japanese movement denied the “assimilability” of Japanese immigrants and the basis of their livelihood was at stake, the movement for Americanization was facilitated by leaders of the Japanese community.

In 1920, Japanese immigrant leaders primarily sought to eliminate labor on Sundays and women’s labor in the fields, which the anti-Japanese movement vehemently criticized. The Agricultural Committee of the Central Japanese Association of Southern California made a resolution as early as the end of April saying that given the “intensity of the anti-Japanese movement, we, farmers, will obey American manners and customs, in particular stopping women’s labor on Sundays.”⁴⁷ On July 15, representatives from four organizations including the Central Japanese Association of Southern California and Japanese farmers’ unions had a meeting with seven Americans to discuss the question of labor on Sundays. After this meeting, four organizations jointly published a resolution consisting of three parts:

⁴³ *Nichibei*, June 27, 1920.

⁴⁴ *Rafu Shimpo*, June 10, 1920.

⁴⁵ *Nichibei*, June 28, 1920.

⁴⁶ Izumi Hirobe, “Amerikanizeishon to ‘beika undo.’” In *Shinto suru amerika, kobamareru amerika*, eds. Daizaburo Yui and Yasuo Endo (Tokyo: Tokyo daigaku shuppankai, 2003), 72–88; Ichioka, 176–196; Yuko Matsumoto, “Nationalization’ and ‘the Others’: Japanese Immigrants and Americanization in Los Angeles before World War II,” *Kiyo, Shigakuka* 45 (February, 2000): 1–62; Fuminori Minamikawa, “Esunikku taun ni okeru jinshuhensei—1910 nendaisue rosuanjerusu Nikkei imin ni yoru kyohu undo wo chushin ni,” *Amerika shi kenkyu* 26 (2003): 71–87.

⁴⁷ *Rafu Shimpo*, May 1, 1920.

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First, abolish labor on Sundays, except picking strawberries, gourds, vegetables, etc. which are needed to be in time for the market on Mondays... Sunday is regarded as the Sabbath in the United States... If you need to go against the American custom and work excessively, you are basically making a mistake. Please stop being recompensed for your labor by [Japanese] exclusion.

Second, completely abolish women's labor in the field... Women should do no farm work on Sundays. We cannot protect ourselves from exclusion if we are committed to such a habit.

Third, curtail women's work in the field even on the other six days... You should be careful not to sow seeds of exclusion... We should correct the bad habits of each other and enforce good ones. Please, everybody, understand the situation, obey the above provisions, and be good Japanese.⁴⁸

This resolution shows not only a gentle face toward those outside the Japanese community, but also a strict face toward those inside the community; such expressions as “we should correct bad habits each other” and “be good Japanese” even sound disciplinary. The members of the community were put under the close observation of each other. Americanization, it was thought, would be completed by constant discipline and watch.

The *Rafu Shimpo* never wasted time before voicing similar criticisms. Pointing out, for example, that there were still unsanitary Japanese houses in rural areas, the continuation of women's labor in the fields, and the existence of Japanese smugglers, the newspaper emphasized, “[m]isconduct by one person would be regarded as that of a whole community... Such people have no public mind. We should force them to fully repent and eliminate a kindling charcoal as appropriate punishment for those who do not.”⁴⁹ This editorial demonstrates how firmly the leaders of the Japanese community internalized the customs and values of “Whites” and how ardently they wanted to discipline other members of their community.

Another editorial also revealed the centrality of white Americans in the minds of Japanese immigrant elites:

As Americans, who occupied a little higher place in a cultural level than the Japanese, always try to make a society good and beautiful, they attempt to remove what they think ugly... Many of those who wear grimy cloths and look untidy are such people as Mexicans, the Chinese, Jews, and Negros... Fortunately, the Japanese are more sensitive than Mexicans, the Chinese, etc... but everyone should make more efforts to advance Americanization in beauty.⁵⁰

These sentences reveal their idea of American society which was stratified by race with

⁴⁸ Nanka chuo nihonjinkai gijiroku, Aug. 1915–Jan. 1934, 201–203, Box 229, JARP; *Rafu Shimpo*, July 17 and 18, 1920.

⁴⁹ *Rafu Shimpo*, July 22, 1920.

⁵⁰ *Rafu Shimpo*, July 23, 1920.

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Whites at the top. They estimated their own position and tried to approach the top as well as not to become victims of exclusion and removal. This White-oriented attitude strengthened by a fear of exclusion even led to sycophantic arguments: "Let's endeavor to buy from a grocery owned by Whites even if their price is a little higher than another one."⁵¹

One of a few occasions that Japanese immigrants expressed their views and ideas to the public in this period was the hearing of the House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization. Both *Rafu Shimpō* and *Nichibei* insisted on the need to prepare for it, arguing for the necessity of more Americanization and improvement to prevent more criticisms from the anti-Japanese advocates.⁵² The representatives of the Japanese community witnessed at the hearings that they had been making efforts to be Americanized. For example, Yo Suzuki, the President of Stockton Grower's Exchange, stated: "Well, I am awfully sorry because we try to do our best. We try with all of our effort to become American citizens and we always teach our children to be Americans; to fight for America. We taught that and yet some Americans think we cannot be assimilated but I think we can be assimilated." When asked what he thought about the situation, he continued: "Our purpose is to promote social and moral conduct, and uplift, and we try with all of our efforts to Americanize our people," emphasizing that everybody was against gambling and drinking.⁵³ While he claimed the assimilability and contributions of Japanese immigrants, he regretted that their efforts were ignored by Americans.

On the other hand, a 70-page supplemental statement of K. Kanzaki, a secretary of the Japanese Association of America, pointed out that there were obstacles to the assimilation of Japanese immigrants: "The Japanese have proved that they are assimilable and for the slow progress of assimilation the Americans are as much responsible. It is to be greatly regretted that the barriers of all sorts in the way of Japanese assimilation have never been decently discussed in connection with the question." The statement criticized the obstructions of Japanese assimilation such as racial prejudice, a ban on naturalization of Japanese immigrants, the California Alien Land Laws "prohibiting the Japanese to possess land unless they are citizens (what irony)," and social discrimination. Then Kanzaki concluded, "Unless equality of races and equality of opportunity are established, unless all the barriers of assimilation are melted away... the question of assimilation can never be solved."⁵⁴ This statement blamed the contradictory attitude of Americans; they required Japanese immigrants to be Americanized, while they simultaneously set barriers to the Americanization.

⁵¹ The author argues that after pointing out an anti-Japanese advertisement in train saying that there are more than two hundred groceries owned by the Japanese in Los Angeles and that nowhere else has such a number. *Rafu Shimpō*, June 10, 1920.

⁵² *Nichibei*, June 13, 1920; *Rafu Shimpō*, July 23, 1920.

⁵³ Committee on Immigration and Naturalization. *Japanese Immigration*, July 15, 514, 516-517.

⁵⁴ Committee on Immigration and Naturalization. *Japanese Immigration*, July 15, 681.

3. Enactment of the Alien Land Law of 1920

After the initiative was put on the ballot as Proposition 1 on August 16, the organizations joining the anti-Japanese movement adopted a resolution supporting the proposition. The California Farm Bureau Federation reported in late August that the referendum “on the question of land ownership and leasing by nonassimilable aliens shows conclusively the overwhelming opposition of the Golden State’s farmers to this practice.” The vote was “twelve to one against allowing any more Japanese to come into the country and the same against permitting the leasing of land to these orientals.” It was forty to one against allowing the Japanese to own land.⁵⁵

While this report by the California Farm Bureau Federation supported the initiative measure, the scope of the resolution adopted by the American Legion of California was beyond the initiative measure. It first stated the reasons leading to the resolution, pointing out, “one of the gravest and most alarming conditions of the situation is the ever-increasing number of American-born Japanese arriving at the age of majority, and having all the rights of citizenship, including that of suffrage, although their parents are ineligible.” It continued: “The men returning from the service of this country find their occupations in the hands of these unassimilable aliens, and whole agricultural sections completely dominated by them, to the exclusion of service men.” Then it required such things as “cancellation of the gentlemen’s agreement,” “exclusion of picture brides,” “rigorous exclusion of Japanese as immigrants,” “confirmation and legalization of the policy that Asiatics shall be forever barred from American citizenship,” and “Amendment to Section 1 of the Federal Constitution, providing that no child born in the United States of foreign parents shall be considered a citizen unless both parents are of a race that is eligible to citizenship.”⁵⁶ While this resolution bemoaned the unassimilability of Japanese immigrants, it no longer demanded a law that would ban land ownership and leasing by Japanese immigrants; instead, it proposed stripping the citizenship of second generation Japanese Americans.

On September 2, the activists of the anti-Japanese movement reorganized their organization and formed the Japanese Exclusion League to work for the initiative measure. This organization consisted of the California Oriental Exclusion League, the Los Angeles County Anti-Asiatic Association, NSGW, and other anti-Japanese and Asian groups. The Japanese Exclusion League adopted a declaration of policy including three points. It was opposed to “the admission of immigrants of any people incapable for any reason of assimilating with the white race and of furnishing desirable material for American citizenship,” as well as “the granting of citizenship either by birth or by naturalization to any such people,” and “the own-

⁵⁵ The Los Angeles *Times*, August 29, 1920, IX3.

⁵⁶ The Los Angeles *Times*, August 26, 1920, II.

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ing, leasing or control by them of agricultural lands.”⁵⁷ While this statement supported the initiative measure, it also required that unassimilable people be excluded. Like the resolution of the American Legion, it looked at the next stage to the enactment of the Alien Land Law of 1920. It actually conducted a campaign “to insure the success at the November election of the proposed initiative amendment to the anti-alien land law, and also a movement to bring about national legislation aimed against so-called nonassimilable aliens.”⁵⁸

On the other hand, Japanese immigrants did not directly act on the proposition or the anti-Japanese movement in August. Referring to a rumor that Secretary of State Bainbridge Colby and Japanese Ambassador Kijuro Shidehara had reached an agreement at an unofficial meeting, both *Rafu Shimpō* and *Nichibei* expressed their hope for a new treaty that would permit the Japanese in the United States to be naturalized and ban further immigration in return. They contended that the right of naturalization and Americanization of Japanese immigrants should be connected as seen in the statement of the Japanese Association of America.⁵⁹

The elites of the Japanese community also continued insisting that Japanese immigrants obey the law and customs of the American society and that they be on the lookout for backsliders in the community. An editorial of *Rafu Shimpō* asserted that they should neither drink nor help illegal immigrants entering the United States via Mexico. Moreover, it continued, “We should make more efforts to advise, watch over, or report those who were committed to illegal activities.”⁶⁰ Similarly, the Japanese Association of Stockton adopted a resolution that required Japanese immigrants to “abolish the labor of women and children in the fields,” as well as “pay attention to clothes when going out,” and “report to the Japanese Association the names and addresses of those who would trouble the community.”⁶¹ The Issei leaders continued to call on the community members to discipline and watch over each other so they could prove their Americaness.

On September 18, however, the Association to Stop Stripping the Leases of Japanese Immigrants was formed at a meeting attended by seven-hundred Japanese immigrants in Los Angeles. This organization had no connection with the Japanese Association and it was established solely for the purpose of protesting the injustice of the initiative measure. The attendees at the meeting adopted the resolution:

The proposition will destroy the living conditions of Japanese immigrants and make them lose

⁵⁷ The Los Angeles *Times*, September 3, 1920, I3.

⁵⁸ The Los Angeles *Times*, September 3, 1920, I3.

⁵⁹ *Rafu Shimpō*, August 31, 1920; *Nichibei*, September 2, 1920.

⁶⁰ *Rafu Shimpō*, September 9, 1920.

⁶¹ *Nichibei*, September 18, 1920.

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their job and means of livelihood... This initiative is unjust because it is against those who immigrated according to the provisions not only of the treaty between the governments of Japan and the United States but also of the Constitution of the United States... We appeal to the President of the United States and all American citizens to remember the spirit of the words "all Men are created equal" in the Declaration of Independence.⁶²

This resolution emphasizing the civic ideals was transmitted to President Woodrow Wilson by telegraph.

Witnessing the formation of the organization, the board of directors of the Central Japanese Association of Southern California held a meeting and adopted a resolution that they should cooperate with the Association to Stop Stripping the Leases of Japanese Immigrants on September 23.⁶³ Later that evening, representatives from both organizations decided to consolidate the two organizations and establish a new organization called the Association for the Protection of Farmers under the Central Japanese Association of Southern California.⁶⁴

The Japanese newspapers, particularly *Rafu Shimpo* eagerly supported this movement, urging readers to cooperate with the Association and the movement against the proposition. An article of October 1 insisted, "Now all fellows should make efforts to overcome a disaster which hits everybody... I hope all of you voluntarily contribute to the Association as much money as you can."⁶⁵ Moreover, the number of articles asserting that the initiative was unjust increased after the countermovement had taken shape. An editorial argued that this initiative aiming at the exclusion of Japanese immigrants was contrary to humanity because "it took Japanese immigrants' means to live."⁶⁶ Another insisted that "if the exclusion of Japanese immigrants was recognized as legal, it would disgrace the principles and spirit of the Founding Fathers... reducing the great Constitution to a mere scrap of paper."⁶⁷ Those newspaper articles implored all members of the Japanese community to join the movement opposing the initiative.

The Association for the Protection of Farmers was first to hold lectures to explain the situation to members of the community and raise funds.⁶⁸ The lectures and meetings were held in many cities including Los Angeles, San Francisco, Sacramento, San Diego, Anaheim, Riverside, Santa Barbara, Stockton, and San Pedro.⁶⁹ On October 9, the Association decided

⁶² *Nichibei*, September 21, 1920; *Rafu Shimpo*, September 21, 1920.

⁶³ Nanka chuo nihonjinkai gijiroku, Aug. 1915–Jan. 1934, 208–211, Box 229, JARP.

⁶⁴ *Nichibei*, September 24, 1920; *Rafu Shimpo*, September 24, 1920.

⁶⁵ *Rafu Shimpo*, October 1, 1920.

⁶⁶ *Rafu Shimpo*, October 14, 1920.

⁶⁷ *Rafu Shimpo*, October 6, 1920.

⁶⁸ The Association raised about seventy thousand dollars in total. *Rafu Shimpo*, November 3, 1920.

⁶⁹ *Rafu Shimpo*, September 28, 29, 30, October 6, 1920; *Nichibei*, September 28, 29, October 2, 11, 1920.

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to conduct publicity activities to the general public by placing advertisements in newspapers, putting up signboards, sending notices to landowners, distributing fliers, and organizing public meetings.⁷⁰ Small pamphlets were distributed to the white customers at the groceries owned by the Japanese; direct mail was sent to all five hundred thousand voters (it cost eleven thousand dollars) in southern California; and an advertisement appeared in the *Los Angeles Herald* on October 11.⁷¹ The Japanese consulates in San Francisco and Los Angeles continued to be a driving force in the publicity campaign by taking out advertisements calling on voters to reject the proposal and printing and distributing pamphlets of statistical data to demonstrate the contributions of Japanese immigrants to the development of agriculture in California and arguments by American citizens that opposed the initiative measure.⁷² The *Rafu Shimpo* reported that fliers against the initiative were all over the City of Los Angeles.⁷³ At the same time, this newspaper repeatedly implored readers to ask white acquaintances to vote no to the proposition.⁷⁴ Moreover, four hundred volunteers with more than a hundred cars distributed a half-million fliers to all the houses in the city of Los Angeles, from three o'clock to eight o'clock in the morning of November 1.⁷⁵

In spite of these efforts of the Japanese immigrant community up to the day before the vote, the initiative passed. The initiative gathered 75% of the total votes, and the Alien Land Law of 1920 was enacted.⁷⁶ The *Rafu Shimpo* concluded that the countermovement against the initiative was the first large and organized movement in the history of Japanese immigrants to the United States. Moreover, as early as November 4, it argued that it was being contested in Takao Ozawa's test case whether the Japanese had a right of naturalization, and that if it was acknowledged in the court that the Japanese were eligible to citizenship, the Alien Land Law of 1920 would not apply to the Japanese.⁷⁷ The editorial of the following day argued that Japanese immigrants should bring a test case into the court, requiring a

⁷⁰ *Rafu Shimpo*, October 10, 1920.

⁷¹ *Rafu Shimpo*, October 12, 16, 20, 22, 1920.

⁷² Reports from General Consul Ota in San Francisco and Consul Oyama in Los Angeles to Foreign Minister Uchida in Beikoku ni okeru hainichi mondai zakken: 1920nen kashu tochiho seiritu keikataisaku oyobi hantai undo, Volumes 2 and 3, 3.8.2.339-1-7, Diplomatic Archives, suggest that the Japanese diplomats spent even more resources on the publicity activities after mid-October.

⁷³ *Rafu Shimpo*, October 16, 1920.

⁷⁴ Consul Oyama to Foreign Minister Uchida, November 2, 1920, Volume 3, 3.8.2.339-1-7, Diplomatic Archives; *Rafu Shimpo*, October 16, 29, 30, 1920.

⁷⁵ *Rafu Shimpo*, November 2, 3, 1920.

⁷⁶ Kurashige, "Rethinking Anti-Immigrant Racism," 269.

⁷⁷ *Rafu Shimpo*, November 4, 1920. Takao Ozawa was an Issei who came to the United States in 1894, graduated from Berkeley High School, studied at the University of California. He stated in his own case that he was working for an American company, had no connection with any Japanese organization or community, and spoke only English at home. See Ichioka, *The Issei*, 210–226.

postponement of the application of the law to the Japanese because of Ozawa's case.⁷⁸

4. Conclusion

The anti-Japanese proponents saw the Japanese as unassimilable because of their living standard, woman and child labor in agriculture, and ultimately their race. Drawing a line between the racialized others including Japanese immigrants and themselves, they insisted that the increase of Japanese immigrants and their land ownership and leasing were dangerous to California. Japanese immigrants were regarded essentially as invaders. The anti-Japanese movement sought a law banning Japanese land rights to protect their "white California" from "the Japanese invasion." These views were shared by the governor and the media outlets, including the Los Angeles *Times*, which argued against the initiative measure itself.

On the other hand, the elites and newspapers of the Japanese immigrant community asserted that they were assimilable and that their technology and hard work had contributed to the development of California. At the same time, they insisted that Japanese immigrants become more Americanized by prohibiting the field work of women and children, cleaning their houses, not helping illegal immigrants, and observing and correcting each other. Moreover, they tried to differentiate themselves from the Mexicans and the Chinese, internalizing the concept of racial hierarchies with Whites at the top. From late September 1920, the Japanese community conducted a direct countermovement against the initiative measure. This movement certainly seems to have started too late, but, as a Japanese immigrant's observation cited at the beginning of this work articulated, it was seen then as the first organized movement of the Japanese community by contemporaries. The resources provided by the Japanese government certainly played a big role in sustaining the movement against the initiative, but the movement also marked a significant turning point in which Japanese immigrants recognized their own agency in the struggles with the anti-Japanese movement and began to negotiate the treacherous terrain of racial politics.

Their struggles did not end with the establishment of the Alien Land Law in 1920. The anti-Japanese advocates had already asserted that it was necessary to exclude the Japanese, planning national campaigns for legislation by the U.S. Congress. A Japanese American newspaper argued that they should bring a test case against the Alien Land Law of 1920, and in the following year, a series of test cases were filed by the Japanese Association of America and the Central Japanese Association of Southern California. In November 1923, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled against Japanese immigrants on these cases by upholding the constitutionality of the 1920 Alien Land Law except that the Issei's guardianship of Nisei

⁷⁸ *Rafu Shimpo*, November 5, 1920.

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was allowed.⁷⁹ In addition to the Ozawa decision in 1922, the defeat of Japanese immigrants in these test cases against the 1920 Alien Land Law further racialized and stigmatized them as unassimilable others. The Japanese immigrants' movement against the 1920 Alien Land Law marked their first collective endeavor to be recognized as assimilable, and it certainly would not be the last challenge to the discrimination and exclusion.

⁷⁹ Ichioka, *The Issei*, 226–243.

