

LOOK

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Prejudice: Our Postwar Battle

When the overseas conflict ends, we face an internal war—unless racial and religious tensions are removed



If the hate movement is revived, symbols of intolerance like this cross set afire by Tennessee Ku Klux Klansmen some years ago will soon blaze again in America.

The architects of peace, gathering in San Francisco this month to blueprint a better world, probably have never heard the story of the Negro girl who was asked by her teacher to name a suitable punishment for Hitler. "Paint him black," was her bitter suggestion, "and bring him to America."

This has been a war of liberation for oppressed peoples all over the globe. Yet within the borders of our own nation, one third of the people—the minorities who constitute our second-class citizens—are still behind the barbed-wire fence of prejudice.

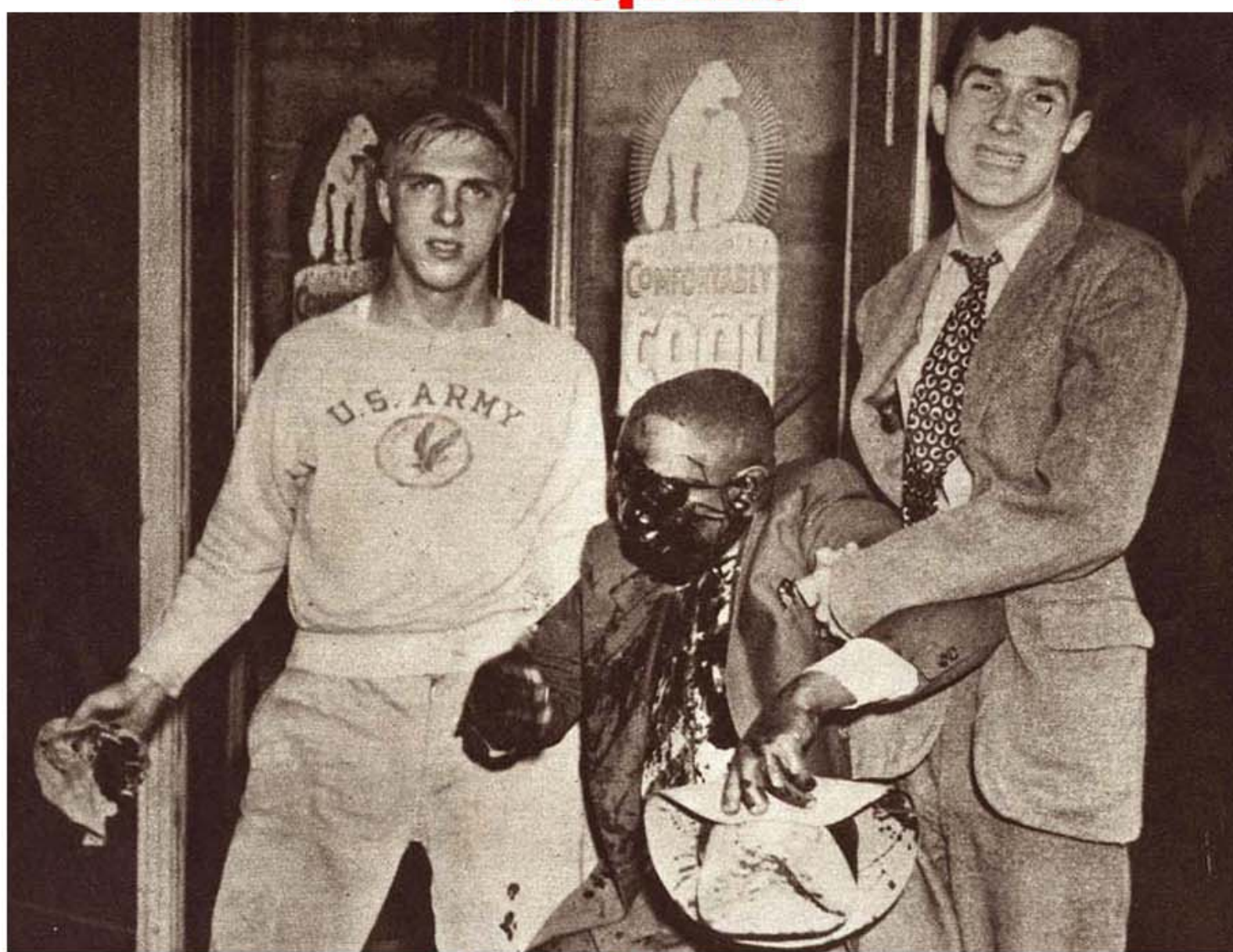
Hatred and suspicion divide America. On one side, generally, is the white, Protestant majority. On the other are the 17,000,000 "sub-Americans" of different races and colors—Negroes, Mexicans, American Indians, Japanese, Chinese, Filipinos—plus the 23,000,000 Catholics and 4,500,000 Jews who, because of religion, are sometimes shut out from main currents of national life.

The powder keg of prejudice awaits the spark that may detonate conflict. When restraints of war are off and demobilization, reconversion and lay-offs disrupt the nation, trouble is expected. Minorities will not easily accept "discriminatory discharges." Merchants of hate will exploit the friction.

Can the United States, dedicated to the pro-

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Prejudice in its ultimate form means violence—last resort of vigilante action and terror against our “second-class citizens.” This Negro being assisted by two white men was stoned in a race riot by other white Americans demanding segregation at a Detroit housing project. In general, the process of intolerance may start with comparatively harmless social snobbery, give way to active denunciation of a minority group, and lead to serious street fights and riots.

position that all men are created equal, ward off postwar catastrophe? An important, timely book—*One Nation*, by Wallace Stegner and the Editors of LOOK, to be published this fall by Houghton Mifflin—astutely analyzes the state of our prejudices. In the pages that follow, based mainly on *One Nation*, LOOK diagnoses this insidious illness which afflicts all America, and suggests some possible cures.

Underlying our prejudices, whether racial, religious or cultural, is fear—the fear of being overrun, changed or diluted, done out of our jobs or social positions. Thus prejudice is a defense of our particular status quo, our “pure” race, our “right” faith. Too many Americans who should know better shy away from people who appear to be “different” and deliberately or unconsciously wall them off.

Segregation—Shame of Democracy

Probably the most common symptom of our malady is segregation. The South’s Jim Crow caste system, at odds with all democratic principles, separates the Negro on trains and buses, excludes him from parks, hotels, restaurants, beaches and schools frequented by whites, seats him in a “nigger heaven” balcony at the theater. Even in our armed forces, Negro enlisted men are often kept apart.

To a lesser extent, Filipinos and Mexicans on the West Coast are barred from “white” restaurants, segregated in theaters. Chinese are apt to be confined to “Chinatowns.”

Advertisements for resorts or for the sale or rent of property often stipulate “Protestant Only” or “White Only” or “Gentile Only.” Restrictive clauses in property deeds, agreements among neighborhood associations and real-estate agents set up the equivalent of a “No Dogs Allowed” ban against the unaccepted. Even

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God Bless America is sung by these children of 24 nationalities in a Los Angeles school. Youth holds the brightest hope for eradication of intolerance. Studies show children have no natural aversion to other races; they learn it, from parents and others. Education alone will not banish suspicions and fears; but it can bring home to American people the pressing need to improve our democracy on all fronts and help remove the threat to the future of our country.

wartime-housing projects are likely to discriminate. In Northern cities, colored ghettos have become worse, rather than better.

By-products: Disease, Poverty, Crime

One effect of physical segregation in slums and "shacktowns" is overcrowding, which in turn produces poverty, squalor, disease, crime and ignorance. Here, even such elementary needs as garbage disposal and fire prevention are generally inadequate.

Illness of almost every kind is pronounced in the Black Belts of virtually every city where Negroes have settled. Pneumonia and scarlet fever, for instance, hit their highest peak there. Infant mortality among Negroes in Chicago is twice as high as it is in the rest of the city. Among the *Hispanos* (Spanish-Americans) of New Mexico, the tuberculosis death rate is about three times the national rate; in San Francisco's Chinatown, it is three times the city's average.

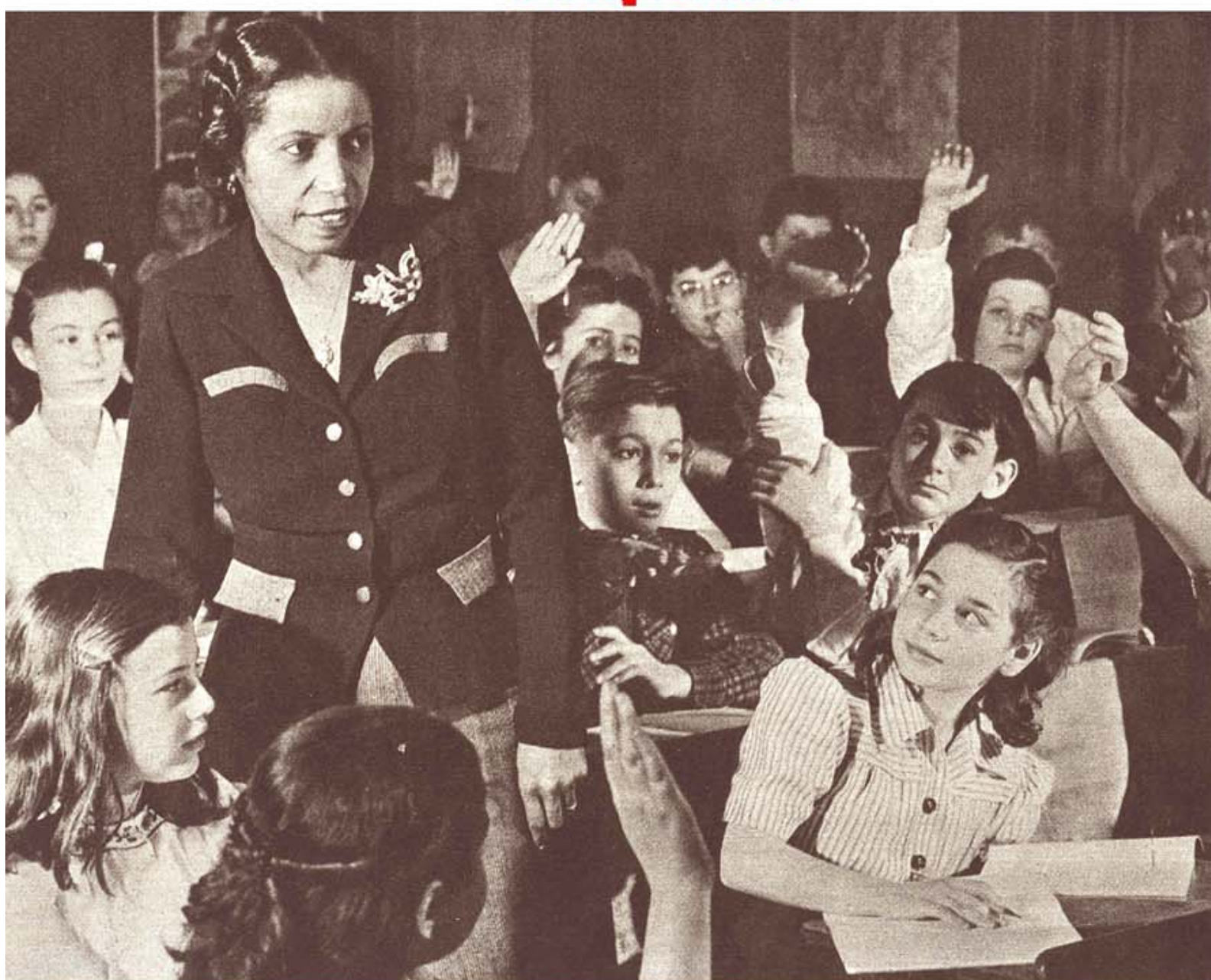
In supporting segregation, as *One Nation* points out, America is subsidizing social evils. When diseases in slums break away and become epidemic, when anti-social behavior created by slum living turns into a crime wave, or when race tensions explode into riots and bloodshed, the entire population pays the bill.

Wanted: Equal Opportunities

Reinforcing the fencing-in process, economic discrimination resists the efforts of our sub-citizens to rise out of their "class." A number of business firms will not employ Catholics or Jews. The South recognizes "white men's jobs" and "nigger jobs," the latter being the servile, the low-paid and the unpleasant. Thirty-two labor unions either exclude Negroes

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A Negro teacher in a classroom of predominantly white children, as in this New York school, should not be a rarity. Equal opportunity will lift the blight from the lives of minorities, give them a chance to develop as citizens. Not lack of ability but prejudice blocks them from economic, educational and social progress. Even under handicaps, Negroes, Jews, Catholics, others contribute much to American life—in science, business, education, medicine, and the arts.

or shunt them into Jim Crow locals. Hate strikes have broken out against hiring and upgrading of Negroes, in the North as well as the South.

Highly trained Chinese and Japanese have been forced into menial jobs. Mexicans and Filipinos generally have been confined to back-breaking migrant labor. Although the manpower shortage and the President's Fair Employment Practices Committee have recently tended to even up work opportunities, widespread discrimination persists.

Schools Are Hand-me-downs

As with jobs and homes, education is offered to some minority groups only on inferior or separate terms. Certain colleges and professional schools have "quotas" for Jews and the colored races. The system of separate schools for colored children, prevalent in the South, shows signs of spreading to the North. Southern schools for Negroes are crowded, inadequately equipped; colored teachers draw salaries lower than those of white teachers. Mexicans in Los Angeles and other Southwest communities have similar educational hand-me-downs.

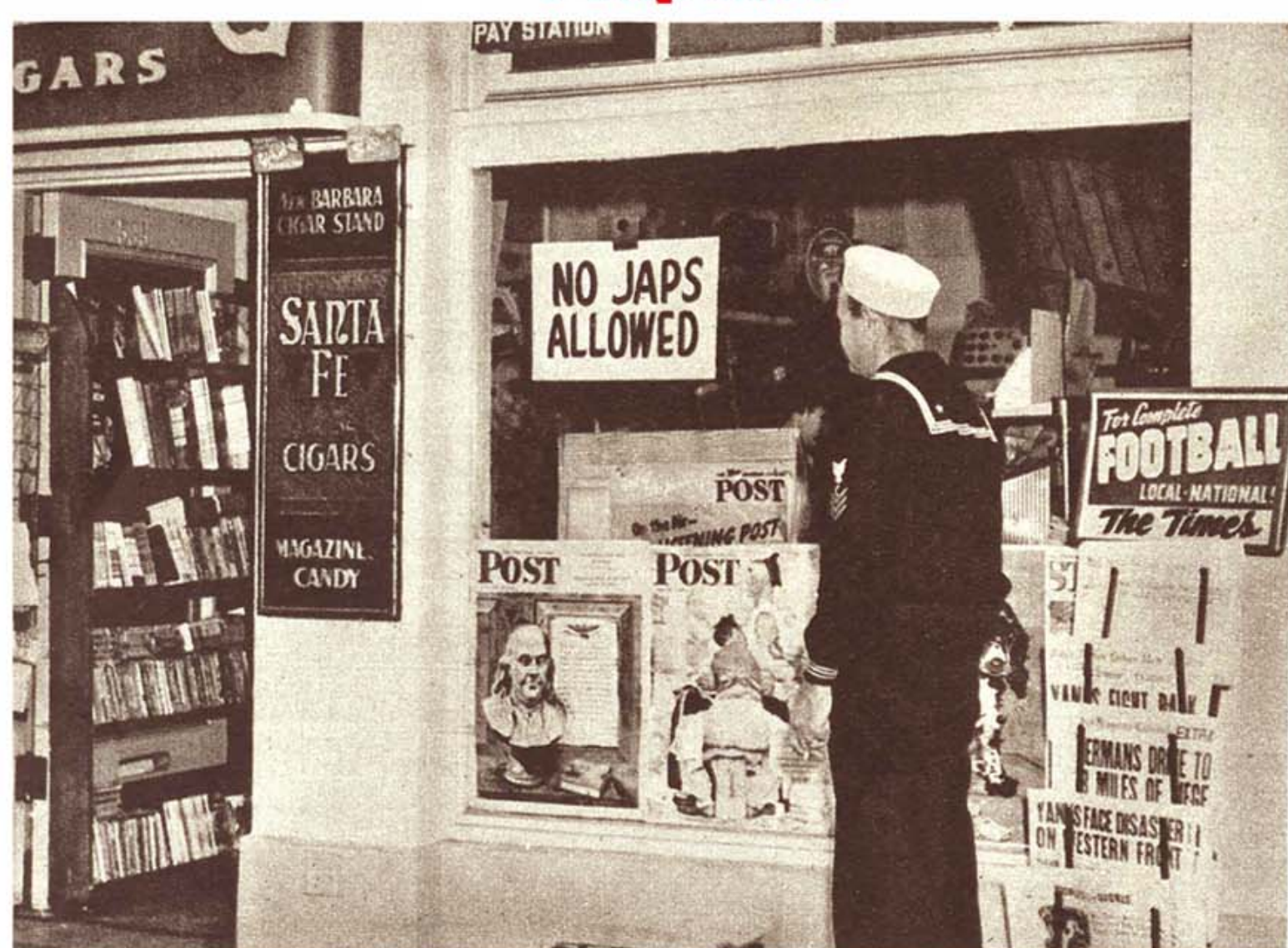
The Law, Too, Is Prejudiced

Inevitably, legal discrimination has become part of the pattern of keeping the sub-American "in his place." Police protection for minorities is frequently a farce. "Law and order" too often is applied according to the ruling caste, class, color and faith. When hoodlums attack a minority group, victims rather than aggressors are jailed—"for protection." Voting procedures like the poll tax in seven Southern states, or direct intimidation at balloting or registration places, rob Negroes and others of their franchise.

The ultimate stage of the sickness known as

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Loyal Japanese-Americans may now return to the West Coast states, but during their absence in relocation camps anti-Japanese feeling—as this sign shows—has grown worse. Jingoistic groups foment much of this hatred.

prejudice is violence. It may take the form of hoodlumism, vigilante action or terror. Recent incidents directed at Negroes, Jews, Japanese, Mexicans and Filipinos have a clear relationship with the Nazi philosophy of hate; the difference is only in degree.

Hate Mongers Use Nazi Method-

Feeding these fires of discord is the slimy propaganda shoveled out by the demagogues who spread their lies via whispers, chain-letters, mass meetings, pamphlets and periodicals. Their poison infects all sorts of people. A decent, well-meaning American is likely to swallow the most whiskered myths and generalizations—canards about Catholic “opposition to scientific progress,” Jewish “monopoly,” Negro and Mexican “shiftlessness,” the Filipino “threat to young American womanhood,” unfair Chinese “competition with white labor.”

The task of checking group tensions, before they break out into a postwar battle, is America's challenge. How can we meet it?

Through our schools and churches, young and old must be made to see prejudice not as white versus black, or Protestant versus Jew and Catholic, but as democracy versus fascism.

Schools should become a social pilot plant for the understanding of races, cultures, heredity. In most young people, merely going to school together breaks down the worst prejudices, unless they are subjected outside to propaganda fomenting distrust, snobbery and hatred.

Needed: More Springfield Plans

Schools can actively educate for racial and religious democracy. An outstanding example is the Springfield (Mass.) Plan. A few years ago, this city found that soon its schools would be attended mostly by children of foreign stock, rather than by Yankees. In a decade, these “across-the-tracks” children, grown up, would run Springfield. Rather than look down on the

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"minorities," Springfield decided to make them full and equal Americans. So the school board revised the curriculum, launched an experimental program to meet the problem.

Under the plan, students are given practical experience in working together. Pride in their backgrounds is encouraged. The Negro, Jewish or Polish child gets a chance to learn, write and talk about the contributions his group have made to America. Parents get the same chance through forums and adult classes. The many kinds of people in Springfield have been welded into a community.

Other cities are studying and copying the Springfield Plan. You should try to interest *your* town in adopting it.

They, Too, Are Fellow-Americans

Know your neighbor. Nobody knows so little about a minority group as the average American who has lived near it for years. Since prejudice feeds on ignorance, any sort of contact, any breakdown of the segregation wall tends to weaken or destroy it. Take part in church, school and community-center get-togethers with people of varied cultural, racial and religious backgrounds.

Help marshal public opinion against intolerance. Get behind one of the many inter-faith and inter-racial organizations, support your mayor's or governor's committee planning and promoting internal harmony.

Prejudice Endangers Your Own Welfare

You have a personal stake in a working democracy. Prejudice, through the evils it creates, undermines public health, public safety, religion, the home, business.

There is no magic formula to end intolerance in America. We can start with education, better jobs, better housing, more social freedom, more political freedom. Progress in one field advances others. But our basic, important mission is to guide the potential good-will of Americans into channels of working and living together as a nation united.



Hoodlumism may take the form of knocking over tombstones in a Catholic cemetery—like this one in New Jersey—or vandalism in synagogues and churches. Disagreement with any religious belief never justifies such action.

⁷ **Prejudice**



Anti-Jewish feeling in America is not often violent but prejudice in Nazi coloring crops out in such signs as this on a railroad underpass in New York City. They indicate youthful gangs have been infected by rabble-rousers.



Bad housing retards families such as these Mexican migrant farm workers. Segregation from "white" residential areas prevents the underprivileged from escaping the slum evils of disease, crime, ignorance, vice, delinquency.

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