

## A CRISIS OVER JAPANESE SCHOOL CHILDREN

"Episode 26: A Crisis over Japanese School Children," was drawn by Henry (Yoshitaka) Kiyama for the hardcover comic book that he published in San Francisco in 1931. The comic book was translated by Frederik L. Schodt and republished in 1999 by Stone Bridge Press (Berkeley, California) with the title of *The Four Immigrants Manga*. It is one of the first original material comic books ever published in the United States. This episode is reprinted with permission from Stone Bridge Press. The following description was written by Frederik L. Schodt to help readers understand the context of the comic strip's episode.

Concerning the school segregation of Japanese in San Francisco, California, in 1906, Mr. Schodt writes:

Organized groups like the Asiatic Exclusion League, backed by labor unions and otherwise "progressive forces," advocated the segregation of all Asian children in San Francisco schools. With newspapers conducting inflammatory anti-Japanese campaigns, after the 1906 earthquake there were boycotts waged against Japanese-owned restaurants and frequent attacks on Japanese individuals in the city. On October 11, 1906, the San Francisco Board of Education ordered all Japanese and Korean school children to join the Chinese, who were already segregated. This action caused an uproar in Japan and led to the unprecedented involvement of a U.S. president—Theodore Roosevelt—in local San Francisco politics. Roosevelt considered the anti-Asian California legislators and politicians, "idiots" and was genuinely concerned that San Francisco's inept handling of its Japanese school children might bring Japan (which had just defeated the Russians) and the U.S. to the brink of war. The problem was eventually resolved by a compromise known today as the 1907–8 "Gentlemen's Agreement" with Japan. Japanese children were allowed to attend San Francisco schools (unless, according to one frequent complaint, they were overage, or had limited English ability); in February, Congress passed an immigration act that Roosevelt signed, ending further Japanese immigration via Hawaii, Mexico, or Canada; and Japan agreed to stop issuing visas to Japanese laborers going to the United States.[1]

### Group Task

After reading "Episode 26: A Crisis over Japanese School Children," discuss the conflicts being expressed by the Japanese immigrant men. Imagine that you are a second-generation Japanese American in San Francisco in 1906 and are ordered to attend segregated schools. Write a poem that captures your feelings regarding this segregation.

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1. *The Four Immigrants Manga*, pp. 140-141.

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A Crisis over Japanese School Children



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Courtesy of Stone Bridge Press; *The Four Immigrants Manga* by Yoshitaka (Henry) Kiyama; trans. Frederik L. Schodt.

## ALIEN LAND ACTS

"Episode 49: The Alien Land Act," was drawn by Henry (Yoshitaka) Kiyama for the hardcover comic book that he published in San Francisco in 1931. The comic book was translated by Frederik L. Schodt and republished in 1999 by Stone Bridge Press (Berkeley, California) with the title of *The Four Immigrants Manga*. It is one of the first original material comic books ever published in the United States. This episode is reprinted with permission from Stone Bridge Press.

As pointed out in *The Issei and Civil Rights* reading, Japanese and other Asian immigrants in the United States were aliens ineligible to citizenship; this was the law until 1952. The alien land acts (or laws) passed by the state of California in 1913 and 1920 (as well as similar acts passed by other states) were efforts to stop the purchase of land for agricultural use by Japanese immigrants. The "alien" in "alien land acts" referred to aliens ineligible to citizenship, that is, all Asian immigrants. The 1913 Alien Land Act made it illegal for aliens ineligible to citizenship to purchase land illegal. There were two ways, however, to legally get around this act. One was to lease land; the other was to purchase land in the name of one's U.S.-born children, who were U.S. citizens by birth. The 1920 Alien Land Act made it illegal for aliens ineligible to citizenship to lease land.

These acts were declared unconstitutional in a state court decision in 1952. Also, a federal law was passed the same year that abolished the "aliens ineligible to citizenship" status.

### Group Task

After reading "Episode 49: The Alien Land Act," discuss some of the laws passed against immigrants from Japan. You may want to refer to *The Issei and Civil Rights* reading. Note the following statistics: In 1909, Japanese farmers in California owned about 17,000 acres and leased or sharecropped nearly 140,000 acres. By 1919, six years after the passage of the Alien Land Act, Japanese owned about 75,000 acres and leased or sharecropped nearly 385,000 more. This acreage represented less than one percent of the arable land in California, but the estimated 35,000 Japanese agriculturists produced a crop worth \$67 million annually, about ten percent of the market value of California's produce.[1]

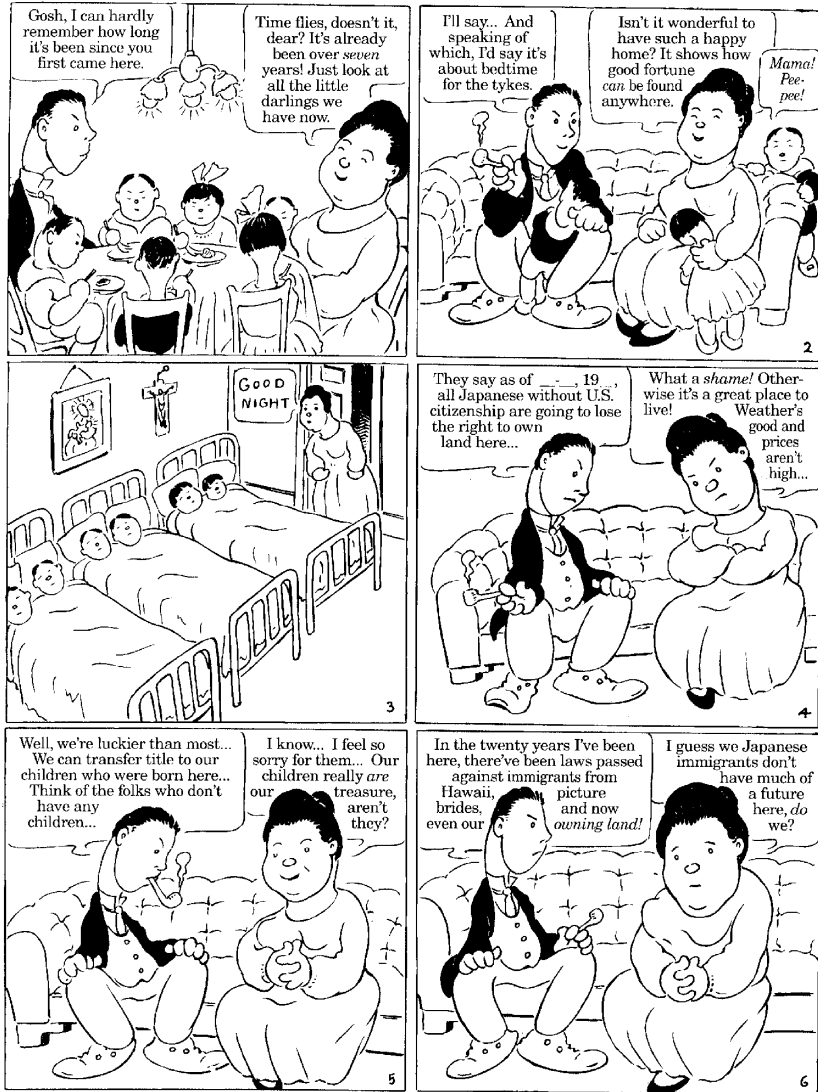
Imagine you are an American (of any ethnicity) or Japanese (immigrant from Japan) farmer in 1919, and there is discussion brewing about another alien land act that would make leasing and sharecropping by "aliens ineligible to citizenship" illegal. Take a position on this discussion and write a persuasive letter to your congressperson (if you are a U.S. citizen) or to the Japanese Consul General (if you are a Japanese immigrant).

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1. "Alien Land Acts," *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan*, Vol. One (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1983) p. 4

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The Alien Land Act



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## IMMIGRATION ACT OF 1924

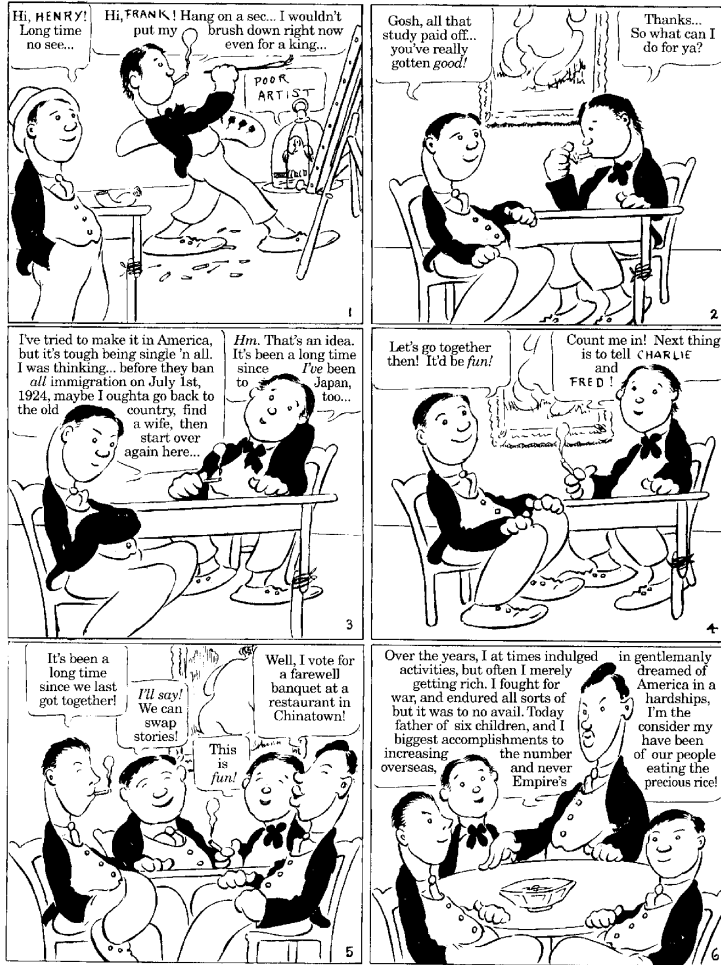
"Episode 52: Good Bye," was drawn by Henry (Yoshitaka) Kiyama for the hardcover comic book that he published in San Francisco in 1931. The comic book was translated by Frederik L. Schodt and republished in 1999 by Stone Bridge Press (Berkeley, California) with the title of *The Four Immigrants Manga*. It is one of the first original material comic books ever published in the United States. This episode is reprinted with permission from Stone Bridge Press.

As pointed out in *The Issei and Civil Rights* reading, the Immigration Act of 1924, which was passed by Congress, provided for the total exclusion of aliens ineligible to U.S. citizenship. At that time only whites and blacks were eligible to citizenship. This decision greatly impacted U.S.-Japan relations. Japanese immigration to the United States stopped except for a few isolated cases of Japanese entering the United States for family or special occupational reasons. The situation continued until the passage of the McCarran-Walter Act of 1952.

### Group Task

After reading "Episode 52: Good Bye," discuss some of the conflicts the four immigrants felt while living in the United States. Using information from this discussion as well as information from *The Issei and Civil Rights* reading, develop a five-minute role play of the four immigrants having a reunion and reflecting back on their past experiences. The scene should be in Japan at some date in the future, that is, after 1924.

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Good Bye



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Courtesy of Stone Bridge Press; *The Four Immigrants Manga* by Yoshitaka (Henry) Kiyama; trans. Frederik L. Schodt.