

organizations, such as Korean Baseball Organization; and, interviews with individuals involved in making sporting policy during the period under investigation.

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Assimilation or Isolation? Nisei Baseball and the American Mainstream

During the 1930s Japanese American community leaders actively encouraged their second generation-Nisei-to excel as Americans. To that end, they sought an identity, which heavily portrayed himself or herself within the fabric of the larger mainstream. In doing so, acceptance by the mainstream, they hoped, might temper the discriminatory attitudes aimed at their community. Baseball seemed to fit well into this plan. By engaging in America's national pastime, the Nisei hoped to advance their identity as Americans, but in constructing exclusively Nisei leagues, they also isolated themselves from the very cause for which they sought.

Nisei baseball operated as a duplicitous factor in the quest for acceptance and possible assimilation. For the Japanese in America, the game served a dual purpose: it had an established tradition among the Nisei forefathers as the game's genesis lay in the land of their birth. In many respects, the game was a bridge between two generations. Furthermore, it was a sanctuary that the competitive Japanese could turn to during a period where many social doors remained closed to those of their kind. Their community papers aggressively touted the baseball achievements of their players, and American patriotism was not an uncommon theme during the several tournaments held throughout the west.

By the mid-1930s however, the games and leagues were exclusively Nisei, and mainstream newspapers, even in small towns, rarely, if ever, posted the scores of those games. Like their communities, Nisei baseball remained an isolated institution that did not reach the eyes of the larger population. Hence, by 1941, notwithstanding a so-called "golden age" of baseball, the Nisei players, like their community, were no closer to finding acceptance in the mainstream than had been the case a decade earlier. As such, anti-Japanese proponents found the Nikkei – all Japanese

whose residence was America – to be easy targets at the outbreak of World War II.



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