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Special Editor's Note

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# Special Editor's Note

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THOMAS BENDER

In his book *By Order of the President: FDR and the Internment of Japanese Americans* (2001), Greg Robinson discussed FDR's decision to remove Japanese Americans from their homes and concentrate them in internment camps. Now in this chapter from his recently published book, *After Camp: Portraits in Midcentury Japanese American Life and Politics*, he unearths Roosevelt's grandiose and frightening idea of their return to civil society by scattering them—two or three families at a time—in small towns, all away from the west coast.\* He also thought such a scatter plan would suit refugee European Jews who he hoped would settle in Latin America. Indeed he thought ethnic minorities crowded into American cities might also benefit if resettled in small towns. While this is a racial story, FDR's vision here was also driven by the rural sentiments of FDR, the gentleman farmer. That produced some highly regarded programs, most notably the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and the "Greenbelt towns." But the massive population transfers that Robinson shows to have been on the president's mind would have made a mockery of the US rights tradition. Of equal importance, Robinson's examination of the role of major social scientists recruited to the project provides an object lesson in the dangers of intellect seduced by power.

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