

Draft

PETITION

TO: The President of the United States of America
White House, Washington, D. C.

FROM: American Citizens of Japanese ancestry at
Heart Mountain War Relocation Center, Wyoming

SUBJECT: Clarification of Citizenship status, etc.

Dear Mr. President:

We, the American Citizens of Japanese ancestry at Heart Mountain War Relocation Center, are in complete accord with the spirit and principles as expressed in the statement issued by the Honorable Henry L. Stimson, Secretary of War and your letter directed to the Secretary in connection with the decision of the War Department to form a combat unit of loyal Americans of Japanese ancestry.

No clearer nor more eloquent statement on democratic principle based on equality of men has ever been uttered than these words set forth in your letter: "The principle on which this country was founded and by which it has always been governed is that Americanism is a matter of the mind and heart; Americannism is not, and never was, a matter of race or ancestry."

Alas! But no one can deny that this principle was grossly ignored in the evacuation program of American citizens of Japanese descent. The very fact that the evacuation was inaugurated and carried out on racial ground prompted by prejudices and selfishness of powerful pressure groups on the Pacific Coast is the violation of the Americanism which you so ably expounded in your letter.

The treatments which you—the evacuees underwent at Assembly Centers and now being daily experienced at Relocation Centers are so far short of dignity and courtesy accorded free American citizens.

We doubt whether or not Your Excellency is aware of the fact that we are placed in a camp enclosed by barbed wire fence and under watchful eyes of army sentinels. We feel certain that you will sympathize with us when we question the validity of American citizenship as long as we are forced to live in the relocation centers, which has every semblance of a concentration camp.

We are now being asked to register to expedite the recent decision of the War Department. This we are doing in spirit of cooperation and with unswerving faith that our government shall rectify speedily and fully the injustice done to its minority group.

Your letter to Secretary of War clearly indicates, at least in spirit, that the full citizenship status shall be restored to Japanese Americans. We believe, therefore, that you will give every consideration and cooperation to the following petitions which we hereby set forth:

I. Immediate clarification of citizenship status of American citizens of Japanese ancestry with specific requests that the following actions be taken at once:

- (a) Removal of the barbed wire fences and the sentinels from the War Relocation Centers.
- (b) Freedom to go in and go out from the War Relocation Centers at free will of the citizen evacuees.
- (c) Restoration of Civil Service status.
- (d) Equal opportunity as any other American for employment in war industries, including airplane factories, munition plants and other manufacturing plants producing vital war materials.
- (e) Equal privilege as any other American to serve in every

branch of armed forces of the United States, including Navy, Marines, and the Air Corps.

II. Issuance of Presidential Proclamation to clarify the citizenship status as requested above.

III. Curtailment of all propaganda that fosters prejudice and animosity with false and malicious slanders directed at our race which is in Nazi fashion designed to set race against race.

We firmly believe that Americanism faces a supreme test both at war fronts and home front. The enemies of Americanism within are those sinister forces with selfish motives under guise of patriotism tread upon the right of minority group as in the case of forceful evacuation of Japanese Americans from the Pacific Coast.

What we have petitioned above are just an amicable means of righting the wrong done to the minority group of citizens. We believe they are the logical steps in translating your contention that Americanism is not a matter of race or ancestry, but of heart and mind. With these firm convictions we hereby present our petition for your esteemed consideration.

Dated this 16th day of February, 1943
Heart Mountain War Relocation Center,
Heart Mountain, Wyoming