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Excerpts from the broadcast of Arthur
Gaeth, delivered February 11, 1944 over the
Mutual Broadcasting System.

RIGHTS OF JAPANESE AMERICANS

Yesterday afternoon I received a copy of the Topaz Times, which is the little newspaper put out at the Japanese internment center of the War Relocation Authority out in southwestern Utah. It was an extra edition with the headlines---First 121 Topaz Youths named in Initial Draft. There was a certain amount of elation in that story -- the young American citizens of Japanese ancestry, commonly known as the Nisei, were to be given an opportunity, on almost the same basis with other Americans to serve their country in its armed forces.

In the same mail there was a report of the battle record of the 100th Infantry Battalion, made up of Japanese Americans from Hawaii who had been fighting in the Italian campaign. Of the 1000 men, who normally make up a battalion, 96 have been killed and 221 wounded with 17 others reported missing in action. Then I read the story that Remington Stone, assistant to the army deputy district engineer for the central Pacific area just returned from Hawaii, told the Lawyers Guild in Los Angeles. Returning to California after 22 months in supervising the construction of Hawaiian defenses, Stone related how the mass of fortifications on the island which had been destroyed at Pearl Harbor were rebuilt by the people with Japanese ancestry. Only a small fraction of one percent of the Japanese in the Hawaiian Islands, both citizens and enemy aliens were interned after Pearl Harbor-- the people arrested were dominantly of four classes--the consular agents of the government of Japan, the Shinto priests who had come recently from Japan, the Kibei or young men who had been sent back to Japan as youths for their education, and the businessmen who were tied economically to the Japanese Empire and its ruling clique. Stone expressed the opinion that it is chiefly the Japanese who have been in Japan since 1932, when the Manchurian incident enabled the military clique to gain control of the government, who are dangerous to the United States. When that military gang assumed control in 1932 it began a systematic indoctrination of the Japanese against the Whites. But the Japanese who have come to America, came for the most part, years before then, long before this intensive indoctrination took place. Today about 70 percent of the people of Japanese ancestry in the United States are American citizens, having been born here. The fact that they are responding to the war effort ought to be gratifying to every American for it is the best evidence of the ability of the American way of life to integrate people into it. Ghroughout our history there have come to our shores millions of British, Dutch, German, Italian, Slav and other nationalities and always after a generation or two these people have become Americans with our habits, our ideas, and our outlook for the future. We would be slipping if our power of assimilation had not been able to do that with people of Japanese ancestry. That these young people feel as they do, that they want to get into the army and fight for America, that they have been moulded into the American pattern in most cases inspite of opposition and strong ties ought to be gratifying to every American for it is one of the strongest evidences for American superiority and greatness that we have. Most of these young Japanese Americans want no truck with the heels on the other side of the Pacific who would become the war lords of Asia.

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Larry Tajiri, editor of the Pacific Citizen, tells quite a story about what some of these boys who are returning from war are up against. Here it is:

A Nisei has come home from the wars. At an east coast port three weeks ago a hospital ship landed a number of wounded men who were to be transferred in waiting planes to inland hospitals. Among the wounded was a young Japanese American soldier who had fought in the mud and brush of Italy until he had been blinded, until both of his eyes had been shot out. While millions of young Americans are training and awaiting the decisive battles ahead, the war is already over for this nisei soldier. He must start today to readjust himself and his battle-shattered capabilities to the post-war world ahead. What will be the shape of his world, the particular world he must face as a Japanese American?

If this battle-scared veteran of the Italian campaign were to walk out of his army hospital tomorrow, his honorable discharge papers in his pocket, he would find that certain regulations remain in force which stringently limit his rights as a citizen. A Nisei has come home from the wars, but other Nisei are fighting today alongside their fellow Americans or are in training. Those of us out of uniform, living and working in the Main Street of America, must realize the full extent of our obligations. We, too, have our war to fight and win. It is a war against intolerance, against bigotry and prejudice, against the men of warped minds who would misuse this earth and the people in it.

"To the returned soldier, those of us at home can say that we are confident that our government will keep faith with us, and that any restrictive policies levied against us as a racial group in the name of wartime necessity will be abandoned as soon as military conditions permit. We are confident that the government and the army will not submit to the wailing banshees of prejudice, nor to political extortion or editorial blackmail. A Nisei has come home from the war -- and there are thousands of awakened citizenry who are fighting and will continue to fight that the place of loyal Japanese Americans, and all other Americans, be made secure in the world of tomorrow. And this is a fact of which we are most proud. The hate-mongers and the professional purveyors of prejudice are the enemies of the whole people and not of the Nisei alone. The friends of freedom and justice are our friends. We could not ask for better friends, nor for a better side on which to fight." You know there is quite a story in that Tajiri editorial -- that alone would indicate that Larry Tajiri has caught the real spirit of America and that he is treading on solid ground.

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