

Memo: To C. W. Abbott

It is noted that there are several types of petitions being circulated among the mothers of the project. To the best of my understanding, the original petition form was drafted by a nisei attorney, as a suggested form. However, in signing such petition, the mothers did not have a copy of the actual petition, but signed blank sheets of papers, to which the petition was to be later appended. It further appears that most of the mothers do not know who the petition is being sponsored; the explanation being that the responsibility should rest with the entire group of Minidoka mothers and not one individual, who might possibly be prosecuted or in the words of one mother "martyred" for the nisei cause. And finally, no one seems to know precisely to whom the petition is to be directed. It seems odd that such secrecy is deemed necessary among the mothers. To me, this seems indefensible, because if any grievances are to be presented, it ought to be openly and honestly done, and not under cover.

Some blocks have had letters brought off the project, before mailing, because rumor had it that the administration authorities might note the addressee to be the President, and prevent such petitions from being mailed, by removing them from the Post Office. Other blocks are sending their petitions to Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, so that she will "sympathize" with them. Good lord, Mrs. Roosevelt has four soldier sons, and I think she knows all about the hardships of the evacuees without being told again. But, it is pertinent to note, I think, that altho originally planned to have one unified petition on a project-wide basis for the mothers, individual blocks are disagreeing and are sending their petitions out independently of other blocks.

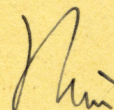
But, the chief point of disagreement, from my personal view point, is the motive with which many of the mothers approach the problem of the impending draft. One group has approached me with a proposed petition, wherein their avowed motive was to prevent their sons from being drafted. They enumerated the following points which they demanded be clarified by the federal government before their sons should be drafted: 1. That there be no prohibition against buying of land by persons of Japanese ancestry; 2. That there be no further refusals to grant business licenses to persons of Japanese ancestry; 3. That the federal government make defense jobs and employment in essential industries open to persons of Japanese ancestry; 4. That the federal government require all schools to accept Japanese students, and to prohibit discrimination by administrative order against entrance of Japanese students in colleges and universities; 5. That because of the untold hardships that the Japanese people have undergone, and because of the treatment in the past accorded to the nisei as "enemy aliens", the children should be exempt from the draft. I cannot recall in detail all the specific points, but in substance, it was something like that.

I understand that a kibe meeting had been held in block 15 on the night of the 11th of this month. One kibe has assured me that the federal government will not draft kibeis; I would be doubtful of that statement, and wonder how widely accepted that rumor is on the project.

I am enclosing the so-called "nisei petition" which I drafted for a couple of fellows who came in to see me, soon after I returned to the Minidoka project. I still marvel at the well-organized manner in which it was mimeographed and three copies each distributed to every block, within two after I had drafted the darned thing. Also, I am enclosing a mother's petition which I also drafted, at the request of the mothers of block 35. I also enclose a copy of a statement from the Utah Nippo, which is expressive of the ideas of many of the disgruntled nisei on the project.

It is my personal feeling that, by and large, most of the niseis are accepting the draft as a matter of course and as a matter of inescapable obligation. For my part, I'm still anxious to get into this man's army, because I feel so darned left out of the big fight. But, as to the attitude of the parents and of the kibeis, I have no opinion to offer. However, it is to be noted that there is considerable confusion and misinformation prevalent on the project, and that it is not conducive to the public welfare of this camp. I believe that informal forum discussions would achieve a great deal in clarifying many of the issues which have arisen, and to which I have no answers.

The above information is supplied with the hope that it may be helpful to the administration in helping the people of this camp. It is not offered in any sense of being a "stool-pigeon" for the administration, but I stand ready and willing to assume full responsibility for any of the personal opinions above expressed, and it would be gratifying to me if the information could be used, by anyone, for the benefit of this community.



Min Yasui

NISEI PETITION: Drafted by MIN YASUI

To be presented to:

President Franklin Roosevelt
Secty of War Henry Stimson
Lt.General Delos Emmons

Minidoka WRA
Hunt, Idaho
February 10, 1944.

We, AMERICAN CITIZENS of Japanese ancestry, now awaiting call into the United States Army under the Selective Service, are highly gratified by the recognition by the federal authorities of our rightful place in America, and we are proud of being given the opportunity to serve our country in its hour of need. When and if called for active service, we shall do our utmost to contribute to the glories of arms of our nation and to give lie to perverted Axis doctrine of superiority of a "chosen race". We are willing and eager to add our share to the national effort in attaining an early victory and in the winning of the war.

However, in that we are now subject to all the obligations of citizenship whereas some of the rights and privileges of an American citizen have been denied to us or are temporarily suspended, we wish to point out that certain inequities exist. We respectfully submit that, consistent with the highest ideals of justice and democracy, our national government should devote attention towards the correction of these inequities.

We feel that the following matters merit special consideration by our government:

1. Freedom of movement:

We believe that we, American citizens of Japanese ancestry, should be permitted to exercise the equal right of movement anywhere at anytime as enjoyed by other American citizens. We are prohibited from entering coastal areas within the Western Defense Command in which our former homes are located. We believe that no discriminatory restriction based on race should be imposed upon the movement of any citizen who is not specifically deprived of such right by due process of law.

2. Right to own property:

We believe that the prohibition against "contraband articles" by the Western Defense Command should be revoked, and that we be permitted to possess whatsoever properties and to use them as any other citizen, subject to the same penalties for the misuse of any such articles.

3. Equal Choice of Service in the armed forces:

We believe that the arbitrary designation of qualified Americans of Japanese ancestry to either the special combat Unit at Camp Shelby or to the special language school at Camp Savage should be modified so as to allow inductees of Japanese ancestry an option of service in any branch of the armed forces of the United States. We feel that it would be a more effective and dramatic exhibition of democracy in action if we are permitted to fight the enemy at the side of our fellow Americans, regardless of ancestry or color, rather than in any segregated unit. Moreover, there are many amongst us who have had specialized training and desire to serve our country in the special field in which we are best qualified and can be of most service. We earnestly request that the privilege of selecting the branch of service in which we are to serve be extended to us, subject to the usual requirements of qualification and national necessity.

4. Availability of special military training program:

We believe that Americans of Japanese ancestry should be granted the same opportunity of joining in special military training programs in colleges and universities as other American soldiers. We feel that many of us are well qualified for such training, and that our best contribution to the war effort could be made along such specialized lines.

5. Equality of Opportunity for Advancement:

We believe that advancement in the military forces should be open to all American soldiers on the basis of ability and qualification. We believe that graduates of the Camp Savage Language School and teachers of Japanese ancestry should be granted commissions on the same basis as any other American citizen. We feel that the denial of the opportunity of advancement to American soldiers of Japanese ancestry to be repugnant to the ideals and aims for which this war is fought.

6. Equality of Employment in Industry:

We believe that the fullest opportunity should be extended to us for employment in any field of industry upon the same basis as any other American citizen. A great many of us have applied for jobs in essential industries to do our share in the nation's war effort, but have been denied such employment, subject to the advance "loyalty check", peculiarly handicapping us in our contribution to the war effort. We feel that such security measures of the internal plant division of the War Department should be applied on an equal basis as other American citizens, without penalizing us on account of race or ancestry. We feel that the President's Proclamation 8802 should be carried out in fact as well as in spirit.

We believe that the above matters should be clarified by our national government for our benefit, as American citizens, as a matter of fundamental right. We feel that the cheerful and willing assumption of our obligations as American citizens reciprocally calls for the unequivocal restoration of our full citizenship rights.

Further, we feel that the following matters should be given your favorable consideration:

1. "Friendly Alien Status" for Japanese nationals whose sons or daughters are serving in the armed forces of the United States. We feel that the sacrifice of the parents and the patriotism and devotion of such soldier sons and daughters merit special consideration. We condemn and abhor the militaristic caste of Japan and their megalomaniac actions in the conduct of this war; but we believe that those of us who are making actual sacrifices to preserve the American way of life ought to be granted special recognition.
2. That the present administration formulate, initiate and enact proper legislation to make financial restitution to those of us who have suffered tremendous monetary, as well as other, losses because of the forced evacuation from our original homes. We believe that such compensation is imperative to maintain the honor and ideals of our nation.

3. That our government exert its efforts to suppress and prevent discriminatory actions and inflammatory anti-Japanese campaigns aimed directly at us, American citizens of Japanese ancestry, and our parents. There exists a program of hate on the West Coast directed not against the enemy we are fighting but against us, who, by our conduct and sacrifices, have demonstrated our loyalty as American citizens; there are a number of un-American communities which will not accept us as residents and other communities which will not permit us to engage in business or other gainful employment. We feel that federal influences must be brought to bear to eradicate such practices, or our sacrifices on the altar of war will have been in vain.

We, as American citizens, are willing to offer our lives for our country, if need be. We are eager to fulfill conscientiously and patriotically every obligation of American citizenship. Therefore, we believe the request for the restoration of every right and privilege of American citizenship cannot be denied to us. Further, we strongly feel that the derogation of the rights of any American citizen besmirches the sacredness and inviolability of American citizenship. We have faith in America, we have faith that our government will not tolerate such inequities to exist any longer than absolutely necessary.

We, the undersigned, respectfully request that careful attention be given to the above matters, and that our government issue proper statements and directives regarding the future status and treatment of American citizens of Japanese ancestry.

MOTHERS' PETITION

WE, the undersigned, a group of mothers of Japanese American sons now awaiting call under the selective service, at the Minidoka War Relocation Center, in Idaho, urgently desire to call attention to certain matters for consideration by the federal authorities, in connection with the impending draft of our sons.

We believe that the federal authorities are well aware of the tremendous unaccustomed hardships and bitter experiences that we, as mothers, and our families have had to undergo as a result of the forced evacuation from our homes on the West Coast; we are sure that the federal authorities are well aware of the great heartbreak and poignant sufferings of anxiety that we have endured, having been forcibly removed from our well loved comfortable homes and removed to the desert wastelands of an artificial frontier community surrounded by barbed wire fences.

Nevertheless, despite all these things, and a great deal more, we, as mothers, are tearfully consenting to send our sons to war, and in the true spirit of motherhood, urging our sons to serve faithfully and heroically in the service of the United States Army, even, if necessary, at the cost of their lives. We feel that our sons are Americans, a part of the good and great things of America, and that it is only fitting and proper

that they respond patriotically to the call of their country.

For us, as mothers, as nationals of an alien enemy nation, condemned and hated, this ultimate sacrifice of our sons to be laid on the altar of war moves us to the very bottom of our hearts, and to the depths of our most fundamental emotions, in a way that is inexpressible; and yet, in making this sacrifice, we deeply feel that the lives of our sons are to be dedicated to the highest ideals and principles of justice, democracy, and freedom, for all peoples, regardless of race, color or creed.

In order that the future sacrifices of our sons shall have not been in vain, we prayerfully request and petition that the federal authorities give careful consideration to the granting of equal privileges as American soldiers to our sons when they are called into active service. We do not complain that our sons are being called, but we plead with heart-felt earnestness that our sons be granted the dignity of serving in the United States Army as free and equal American citizens, and that they do not be segregated in any special combat unit or in any other way be subject to special rules and regulations on account of race or ancestry.