

RE LETTER TO U of Neb.

1417 "R" Street  
Lincoln, Nebraska  
The War Relocation Authority  
1417 "R" Street  
August 18  
1945

In re: BH:WJE:KF

Mr. Willis J. Hanson  
Leave Officer  
Granada Project  
Apache, Colorado

Dear Sir:

I have just received your letter of the 10th requesting information concerning resettlement of evacuees from the relocation centers. If I may be permitted to express an opinion, I believe that total relocation outside of the centers is quite ideal, but at the same time perhaps undesirable. For instance, some of the older issei probably prefer the company of other Japanese, and very likely a good many of the nisei would like to be with other nisei. Such people in resettling would inevitably form communities of Japanese, and, immediately, the old social and economic problems that existed in some communities on the Pacific Coast would arise. I am not advocating an attitude of snobbishness toward other Japanese or Japanese-Americans, but I should like to suggest that assimilation is all-important to make resettlement successful, and I have found that most of the nisei have just as much or more in common with Caucasians than with other nisei outside of the mutual experience of evacuation. It seems to me essential that you impress the importance of assimilation to all who intend being resettled.

Most of the evacuees who have been relocated in Lincoln are students. Consequently, what I have to say of my own experiences will not be very valuable for your purpose except insofar as the attitudes of the people here and of the community in general are probably the same as the attitudes of any community in the Midwest. Lincoln is typical, I believe, although perhaps more conservative than most Midwestern cities.

We in Lincoln were particularly fortunate in having a Student Relocation Committee under the direction of the Reverend Mr. Robert E. Drew. Mr. Drew gave us much of his own time and effort to tap local public opinion before we came and helped us a great deal once we were here. He helped to make us feel as if we belonged and purged us of many of the psychological phobias that some of us had developed in the relocation centers.

Some of the students who have been relocated here have complained

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at one time or another that they have been slighted because of their Japanese faces. Perhaps I live a sheltered life, but I've never had a similar experience. Wherever I've gone in this region, I have been welcomed, perhaps patronizingly at first but genuinely after a period of acquaintance. Everywhere I have found a great many people interested in the relocation problem, some with a morbid curiosity it is true but most of them with a sympathetic desire to understand and perhaps to help.

One reason for the fact that there is so little relocation for employment here is that opportunities for well-paying jobs are almost nil. Lincoln is still one area with a labor-surplus. I have been working this summer with the Burlington Refrigeration Express Company which pays 50¢ per hour for a 56 hour week. This is awfully poor pay for the working conditions involved. However, there is no discrimination on the job at all as we have small crews. Of later, there have been a great many nisei placed on the different crews probably due to the fact that most Caucasians can find better-paying jobs elsewhere while this is the best-paying job open to nisei. In general, wages in this area are very low, even for jobs closed to nisei.

Living costs here are about the same as they were in Los Angeles at the time of evacuation, considerably lower than they are there now. There is little taxation here, but there are small charges for various services that were taken care of on the Coast by taxation. As for housing, I don't know an awful lot about the situation, but there seems to be a problem. The newspapers carried quite a bit about the difficulties encountered by Negro instructors from the local airbase who were trying to find homes in the city. Wives of soldiers have created another housing problem, but there should be some lessening of pressure due to the dwindling number of students.

This takes care of the fact information you requested, but only a little has been implied and nothing said on the effects resettlement has had on me and other nisei here. I had often been disgusted but never very bitter at the whole idea and process of evacuation, but what little faith I may have lost in the people has been fully restored. I realize that my position as a student makes me less susceptible to anti-Japanese feelings than others, and I have no doubt that elsewhere there are people who unjustly transfer their hatred for Japan to the Japanese and nisei in this country, but I prefer to regard these people as misfits of society anyway. I doubt if I would exchange these months I have spent here for the freedom I had back home and was unaware of until I lost it temporarily; I have made a few friends here whose friendship I shall treasure for the rest of my life whether I return to the Coast, remain here, or push on Eastward, and I have made countless casual acquaintances whom I shall always recall with pleasure. I hope that these people

have gotten something from their association with me and with the other nisei here as well. In short, I am happy to have been able to resettle outside of camp and am sure that the majority of those still in relocation centers will be able to readjust themselves to living in normal communities if the number of evacuees already there is not near the saturation point. I have heard that in some of the other communities evacuees have more or less consolidated in districts possibly because housing conditions have made it necessary, but I feel that this is a deplorable practice and should be avoided at all costs.

I hope that this letter will be of use to you in your relocation program; if further information is needed or desired, I shall be glad to assist you if I am able.

Very truly yours,

Joseph Ishikawa