

Art Library  
201 Morrill Hall  
University of Nebraska  
Lincoln 8, Nebraska

Dr. Eugene Rostow  
Yale University  
New Haven, Connecticut

Dear Prof. Rostow:

Norman Thomas warned me that he was not acquainted with you personally but suggested that I send you the enclosed article with the idea of having it submitted to the editorial board of the Yale Review if you thought it worthy of publication. It is a ~~personal~~ documentary article in semi-epistolary form illustrating the routine one went through before being released from WRA camps to normal community life.

If you think that the article would be more acceptable with further editing, please take any liberties you may want to; I realize, however, that you are very busy and may be unable to do this.

Mr. Thomas' address is The Post War World Council, 112 East 19th Street, New York 3, N. Y. For your further possible reference, I am also submitting the following names:

Dr. Lowry C. Wimberley, Andrews Hall  
University of Nebraska, Lincoln 8, Nebraska

Mr. O. Stepanek, Law Building  
University of Nebraska, Lincoln 8, Nebraska

Neither has seen the enclosed article, but both are familiar with other writing I have done.

Thank you very much for your trouble.

Very truly yours,

*Joseph Ishikawa*  
Joseph Ishikawa

YALE UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF LAW  
NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT

EUGENE V. ROSTOW

January 22, 1946.

Mr. Joseph Ishikawa  
Art Library, 201 Morrill Hall  
University of Nebraska  
Lincoln 8, Nebraska

Dear Mr. Ishikawa:

Thank you for sending me your manuscript, which I return herewith. I have been out of my office lately, and apologize for my delay in replying.

Your correspondence file has the raw material of a fascinating story. I rather think, however, that it would be more rewarding if translated into direct psychological terms, rather than left in the cold and formal language of letters.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

*Eugene V. Rostow*

EVR:D

Article  
4500 words  
At usual rates

Joe Ishikawa  
c/o Department of Art  
University of Nebraska  
Lincoln 8, Nebraska

## ROAD TO FREEDOM

Author's note: While making a periodic clean-up of some old correspondence, I was on the verge of throwing out the letters that make up the bulk of this article when it occurred to me that properly arranged <sup>and edited</sup> it might be a graphic account of the struggles of one person to have his freedom restored. With the closing of the War Relocation Centers, the relocation program is largely history. The <sup>resettlement</sup> ~~relocation~~ ventures of individuals from camps to normal communities, one example of which is described in this article, are a part of that history. In a larger sense, they are part of the history of the United States describing one further step in the assimilation into American culture of the Japanese portion of our population.

Early in the spring of 1942, even before the preliminary steps of the evacuation from the West Coast of persons of Japanese ancestry had been completed, a Student Relocation Council was set up to aid the relocation of Nisei students at approved colleges and universities in unrestricted areas of the country. In May, this organization, voluntarily started by a handful of students and public-spirited citizens, was expanded into the National Student Relocation Council with headquarters in Philadelphia and regional offices in San Francisco and Los Angeles and later in other sections of the country.

The variety and scope of the tasks the Council shouldered were Herculean. They ranged all the way from interviewing prospective students to arranging for the opening of schools to Nisei and forming a scholarship pool. The tremendous role the Council played in reestablishing the rights of citizenship to a great number of Nisei cannot be sufficiently evaluated here, but there isn't the slightest doubt that the pattern set by the National Student Relocation Council paved the way for the successful total resettlement program that followed.

Having been assured that I would be granted my A. B. in June, 1942, by the University of California at Los Angeles, I thought of taking work for an advanced degree elsewhere and accordingly made application with the representatives of the Student Relocation Council when they visited the Santa Anita Assembly Center where I happened to be incarcerated.

The procedure in that early stage of the game was for the evacuee to obtain an acceptance from some school approved by the proper governmental agencies including the War and Navy Departments after which the Council set about obtaining the clearance of the individual student with the proper authorities. I had been in correspondence with the University of Colorado from the first of the year when the until-then-remote threat of evacuation became imminent. Hopes of going to Colorado, however, were squelched with the receipt of the following letter:

The University of Colorado  
Boulder, Colorado

August 5, 1942

My dear Mr. Ishikawa:

We have sent permits to register to as many Japanese-

American students as can be taken into the University of Colorado for the fall quarter. For this reason, your application for admission must be refused.

We received and acknowledged to you the transcript of your credits from the University of California at Los Angeles on June 23. This transcript of course, does not include the statement of your degree nor the date of its award. If you wish to send it to some other college that can consider you for admission, we shall be very glad to accomodate you. Please do not hesitate to write to us to send the transcript elsewhere.

Very truly yours,  
Helen G. Duggan  
Examiner

This was an unexpected blow. It had one very marked effect on me; I, who had found the atmosphere of the camp too enervating to write letters to friends, all of a sudden went on a writing spree. The following letter or one very similar to it went to the deans of the graduate schools of the State University of Iowa, the University of Nebraska, Cornell University, the University of Minnesota, and the University of Chicago:

Santa Anita Assembly Center  
Arcadia, California  
August 10  
1942

Dear Sir:

Would you be so kind as to tell me what measures your university has taken regarding the admission of students of Japanese ancestry.

I received my Bachelor of Arts degree in English

literature from the University of California at Los Angeles this June and am anxious to work for an advanced degree in English. If you would kindly send me information as to fees and courses available, I should appreciate it very much.

Thanking you for your trouble, I am

Very truly yours,  
Joseph Ishikawa

Colorado had been my first choice because of its fine English department and the reputed beauty of its campus. Iowa was second on my list for the excellence of its creative writing courses, while Nebraska followed it because of the recommendation of the U. C. L. A. wrestling coach, Ray Richards, a Nebraska alumnus. Cornell had been an early futile dream of high school days; Chicago attracted me through the reputation of Robert Morss Lovett, and Minnesota was on the list just in case I was turned down by the other schools. That letter reaped the following harvest:

The University of Nebraska  
The Graduate College  
Lincoln

August, 1942

My dear Mr. Ishikawa:

Our requirements for the admission of students of Japanese descent are as follows:

- (1) presents proof of citizenship;
- (2) has satisfactory academic qualifications;
- (3) has sufficient financial resources;
- (4) is recommended by one or more responsible citizens as to character and loyalty.

We are enclosing an application blank which you should fill out along with the above information.

We are forwarding to you a bulletin of the Graduate College.

I should also point out that Nebraska charges non-resident tuition on a reciprocal basis which would amount to \$75 per semester for students from California.

Very truly yours,  
R. W. Goss, Dean

The State University of Iowa  
Iowa City  
The Graduate College  
August 14, 1942

Dear Mr. Ishikawa:

Replying to your letter of August 11, I regret to say that on account of the Naval Training Unit at this University, we are not allowed to register any Japanese students for the duration.

Very truly yours,  
Carl E. Seashore  
Dean

The Graduate School of Cornell University  
Ithaca, New York

August 16, 1942

Dear Mr. Ishikawa:

In accordance with the request in your letter, I am sending you the Announcement of the Graduate School.

Cornell University has no general policy whatever regarding the admission of American citizens of Japanese ancestry. We are quite prepared to receive your application if you care to file it, and to consider it in the usual manner. We should wish also that an applicant would submit evidence of American citizenship and a statement of the amount of time that the applicant has

lived in Japan, if any.

Yours very sincerely,  
George H. Sabine  
Dean

The Universities of Chicago and Minnesota both sent replies that no plans for the acceptance of Japanese students had yet been formulated, but that they were being worked on.

That left me with two alternatives. It was the recommendation of a friend versus an old dream. In the end, not being a sentimentalist, I chose Nebraska, partly also because I felt that my shaky financial state made Nebraska more feasible than the Eastern school. It is a decision I have never regretted although I am sure I would have gotten much from Cornell too.

My decision made, the application and following communication were sent to Dr. Goss:

Santa Anita Assembly Center  
August 20, 1942

Dear Dr. Goss:

I am herewith submitting my application for admittance to the Graduate College of the University of Nebraska. Aside from the usual information required for admission, you listed four additional requirements for persons of Japanese descent. I am submitting that information on a separate sheet in the order you listed.

If I fulfill all your requirements and am granted permission to register, I should appreciate your notifying Mr. Joseph Conrad\*, National Student Relocation Coun-

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\*Conard is the correct spelling. There are many who worked tirelessly in the relocation program, but the executive director of the San Francisco office, Joseph Conard, now executive director of the American Friends Service Committee in San Francisco, was the prime mover in our area and the one best known in Santa Anita. Probably due to early courses in English literature, most of us thought for a long time that his name was "Joseph Conrad."



11, 1830 Sutter Street, San Francisco, California.

The photograph I am enclosing is of necessity not very recent; I have not had access to a camera for some time and previously had only a few informal snapshots taken.

I do not find any mention of an application fee in the Graduate College Bulletin; if there is any please notify me immediately.

Very truly yours,  
Joseph Ishikawa

Supplementary Sheet

1. Proof of citizenship: I have on my person a birth certificate which I shall send by registered mail upon request. I am assuming that there is no need to submit proof of citizenship until I arrive there.
2. Academic qualifications: I am having my transcript forwarded to you; I'm sure that they meet your requirements.
3. Financial resources: I have about \$400 available immediately and am assured of a small monthly income.
4. Recommendations by responsible citizens as to character and loyalty: All of the persons I have listed on my application will probably give me a character recommendation.

Applying for entrance into a university meant more than merely filling out an application and writing to the dean; other letters had to be written too:

(To Dr. Alfred E. Longueil and Dr. Franklin P. Rolfe, favorite professors at the University of California at Los Angeles):

Santa Anita Assembly Center  
August 20, 1942

*indent* ] Dear Dr. Longueil (Dr. Rolfe):

I am seeking admission to the University of Nebraska Graduate School and have taken the liberty of submitting your and Dr. Rolfe's (Longueil's) names as "persons who have knowledge of your training and ability for graduate work." It would be greatly appreciated if you would write to Dr. R. W. Goss, Dean of the Graduate College, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Nebraska, and recommend me for entrance.

Any advice you can give me will be gratefully received, and any further recommendations you can make will be welcomed.

Thanking you for your kindness, of the past as well as now, I am

Very truly yours,  
Joseph Ishikawa

(To Ray Richards, U. C. L. A.):

Dear Coach:

I'm trying like heck now to get into your alma mater, Nebraska. They are quite encouraging and have sent me an application. In it they have asked me to list names of "persons who have indicated a willingness to write in support of the application." I took the liberty of submitting your name along with those of Dr. Longueil and Dr. Rolfe. I should appreciate your writing to Dr. R. W. Goss recommending me for entrance.

. . . Any recommendation you can make will probably be stretching the truth, but at least it'll make one poor Jap happy. (I certainly have developed an inferiority complex since coming here.)

Of course, their accepting me doesn't mean that I'll

automatically be allowed to leave this camp or any relocation center that I may be shipped to in the meantime, but I hope that they will let me out. I'm anxious to go ~~over~~<sup>AFTER</sup> an M. A., but aside from that, I'd like to shake myself free of this demoralizing atmosphere. I'm getting pretty used to life around here and am afraid that I'll get to like the place; that will mark my utter degeneration. . .

\* \* \*

Sincerely,  
Joe

(To Mr. R. E. Gardner, a high school teacher and wonderful friend):

Dear Mr. Gardner:

I've been meaning to write to you ever since I came here, but I've been mentally lethargic from the first.

I hope you will forgive me, but the main purpose in my finally writing to you is to ask a favor. I am seeking admission to the University of Nebraska Graduate School and have taken the liberty of submitting your name as one who has "knowledge of your training and ability for graduate work." Of course, as I was never in any of your classes you know almost nothing of my academic ability (frankly, my record at U. C. L. A. was only mediocre), but I should appreciate it very much if you would write to Dr. R. W. Goss. . .

\* \* \*

. . . We are being well-treated and there's no doubt that there is a maximum of physical security assured us in camps such as this that would be lacking outside during these uncertain war years, but at the same time, psychologically it's a very depressing situation we are in. . . I

suppose it's selfish of me to want to escape this, but I'm certainly not indispensable around here and may be able to at least keep myself from retrogressing mentally if I were at school outside.

\* \* \*

Sincerely,  
Joseph Ishikawa

Within a few days, several letters were received from those to whom I'd written wishing me luck and assuring me that they had written to Dr. Goss. I'm sure that they could not find too much to recommend me, but their letters <sup>TO NEBRASKA</sup> must have said some undeservedly nice things.

In the meantime, the warmest and most friendly multigraphed form letter I've ever seen was received under Joseph Conard's signature. It was written in an encouraging key, but thought it fair to warn everyone that the lateness of the year would mean that only a relatively small number could expect transfers, but that the Council would not slacken its work "as long as the service is needed."

For some time I had been worried about my status with the several agencies that had to approve all people who were released from the centers as I had been in Japan from September, 1939, to December, 1940. Finally, I wrote to Mr. Conard in an effort to check on rumors that I had heard:

Santa Anita Assembly Center  
August 21, 1945

Dear Mr. Conard:

Thank you for your letter of the 19th. I am seeking entrance to the University of Nebraska, and as I have an individual problem that you might help solve, I am taking

advantage of your invitation to write. . .

It has come to my attention that it is exceedingly difficult for persons who have lived or studied in Japan to leave assembly or relocation centers to take jobs or attend schools in areas even outside of the vital defense zone. . .

My contention is that residence in Japan is no evidence of disloyalty to America; on the contrary, it seems to me that anyone reared under democratic principles would, upon going to Japan, lose any illusions he may have had about Japan's "new order." Having been there, I am probably more aware than the average what we are in for if we are defeated; I have seen Japan's military government in action and want no part of it. . . I suppose there are many others in the same position who feel the same way.

\* \* \*

I cannot help but feel that any decision barring Nisei who have been to Japan from being released from centers in order to attend school is comparable to barring other American citizens who have studied in Germany or Italy from schools here.

\* \* \*

If you have no authority to judge this case, I should be grateful if you would forward this to the proper person. . .

Very truly yours,  
Joseph Ishikawa

National Student Relocation Council  
Pacific Coast Headquarters  
Berkeley, California  
August 27, 1942

Dear Mr. Ishikawa:

. . . As you know, it is necessary to postpone consideration

on the group of students known as "Kibei\*." At present there is no definitive definition of time and study spent abroad which is necessary to bring one within that class. We believe that it probably means that the student has had a substantial proportion of his education abroad. Since you stated that you were in Japan for about sixteen months, it seems probably that no objections will be raised in your case.

\* \* \*

Sincerely yours,  
Joseph Conard

Having received that reassuring letter, another snag developed:  
I WAS DUE FOR

The University of Nebraska  
The Graduate College  
Lincoln

September 9, 1942

Dear Mr. Ishikawa:

We have received a transcript from the University of California at Los Angeles and we find no evidence on it that you have received your bachelor's degree. It states that you were granted honorable dismissal in May of this year.

If you will have the University of California notify us that you were granted the bachelor's degree you will have met our requirements for full admission to our graduate college, providing you present your birth certificate as proof of citizenship at the time you register.

Very truly yours,  
R. W. Goss, Dean

It being the middle of September, time was getting to be

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\* Literally one who "comes home to America"

an important element. Immediately upon receipt of that letter, I phoned the registrar's office at U. C. L. A. and requested that a verification of my having been granted a degree be sent to Nebraska. I also wrote to the long-suffering Dr. Goss:

Santa Anita Assembly Center  
September 14, 1942

← Dear Dr. Goss:

Your letter of the 9th is at hand informing me that I shall have met your requirements for full admission if I have the University of California notify you that I have been granted my A. B. and providing I present my birth certificate when I register.

Upon receipt of your letter, I contacted the registrar's office at U. C. L. A. and requested their sending you a memo stating the fact that I have my degree.

I am also writing to the National Student Relocation Council asking them to obtain my release. If you would write to them notifying them that I have been granted admission, it will facilitate this.

I should also like to know what rooming and boarding facilities are available. I am enclosing a self-addressed stamped airmail envelope and shall be grateful for that information.

Very truly yours,  
Joseph Ishikawa

And as if the equally long-suffering Joseph Conard did not have enough worries on his mind, I continued my bombardment of him:

Santa Anita Assembly Center  
September 15, 1942

Dear Mr. Conard:

Thank you very much for your letter of August 27. I have delayed answering you pending further news from Nebraska. . . .

. . . Dr. Goss has informed me that I shall have met requirements for full admission. . . if I have the University of California notify them that I have been granted my bachelor's degree. . . .

As registration for the fall semester begins on September 24, I should like to obtain my release as soon as possible. I am scheduled to leave for the Granada Relocation Center in Colorado on the morning of September 19; I don't suppose any release can be effected before that date, but would it be at all possible for me to be released from the Relocation Center before the opening of the semester? I may register as late as October 14, but should prefer leaving in time to attend the opening classes. . . .

Very truly yours,  
Joseph Ishikawa

In retrospect, I have come to wonder why the National Student Council wasted time answering my tiresome and sometimes petulant letters, but at that time, back came the usual patient reply, this time signed by Trudy King of the permit department which meant that machinery for my release was being set in motion.

National Student Relocation Council  
West Coast Committee  
September 23, 1942

Dear Joe:

Thanks for the verified statement of your finances.



Would you please send us immediately WRA Form 26 which is required of all students in Relocation Centers. You may obtain this from the Project Director, a member of his staff or from the placement office. And, could you also send us your official letter of acceptance from the University of Nebraska.

As soon as we receive these two documents, we shall apply for your travel permit.

Cordially yours,  
Trudy King, Permit Department

That was received at Granada, Colorado, our family having been removed to the relocation center in the meantime, Santa Anita having been only a temporary assembly center. The dust-laden wind of <sup>v.c.</sup> Southeastern Colorado hardly made the camp seem like my idea of a permanent home, and I became more and more impatient to get back to civilization. Taking no chances, I wrote to Dr. Goss and Mr. Conard notifying them of my new address and bringing them as much up to date as possible.

Formal acceptance by the University of Nebraska was received in Santa Anita by my oldest brother the same day we left. He forwarded the original to the Granada project director and a copy to me. Apparently the project director never received it, but in a few days I received a copy from Dr. Goss which I shot to the National Council.

Late arrivals from Santa Anita brought the rumor that I had received clearance at Santa Anita; so on September 26 I wrote again to Mr. Conard asking for verification of this story; in addition, I found a new target to pester in the student leave officer at Granada.

Meanwhile, classes were getting under way in Lincoln, but while I was worried I did not become discouraged. There was more than just tedious anxious waiting, however; forms had to be filled and sent, clothes had to be packed.

Two more encouraging letters came from the San Francisco office, the second one expressing the wish that ~~ixx~~ they would soon get letter from me "postmarked Lincoln, Nebraska."

Finally on October 5, a notice from the Student Leave Officer was received. Nervous as a groom and excited as a bride, I went to the administration building and found that my travel permit was ready at last. It read in part:

This is to certify that Joseph Ishikawa of Block No. 12G-1-F within the Granada Relocation Area is allowed to leave said Area on October 5, 1942, to go to the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Nebraska for the following purpose: to attend school. He is required to return to such Area not later than June 15, 1943, unless otherwise ordered by the War Relocation Authority.

There was much more to it devoted to conditions and restrictions (most of which were later relaxed or removed), but to me that poorly mimeographed sheet of paper was a passport to freedom.

After some days in Lincoln, made hectic by registering three weeks late and trying to get caught up in various classes, I wrote a final letter to the National Student Relocation Council:

Lincoln, Nebraska  
October 17, 1942

~~Dear~~ Dear Mr. Conard:

My delay in writing to you may seem to indicate otherwise,

Read to Freedom 17-17-17  
~~but~~

Ishikawa

but I am certainly appreciative of all you did to obtain my release enabling me to attend the University of Nebraska. The difficulty of finding a place to stay due to my late arrival prevented me from expressing my appreciation earlier.

I was rather surprised to see the great number of Nisei students already here when I arrived; it was further indication of the great work you have been doing, and I am sure that every one of us who has been granted the privilege of continuing his education is grateful to you and your associates for your efforts to place us.

I wired the Rev. Robert Drew as you suggested, and he had someone at the station to meet me when I arrived although it was after midnight; it was a heartening welcome, and I am happy to say that I have since found the whole city to be just as cordial.

\* \* \*

Hoping that you will convey my thanks to the other members of the Council, I remain

Very truly yours,  
Joseph Ishikawa

One other letter remains to be written. It is to the friends who encouraged me when things looked darkest; among them are people whom I've known for years; among them also are friends like the zealous workers on the N. S. R. C. staff whom I've never met and whom I've never adequately thanked. It is to be addressed to the friends I've made since relocation who have eased the burden of the whole undertaking; I am very much aware of what they have done and at what cost to themselves. It is to be addressed, too, to the countless number of unknown friends who have done much but

of whose activities I am not aware. It is to be addressed to every person interested in liberty:

January, 1946

To you, whom I hope it vitally concerns:

It is with as much humility as gratitude that I sit down to write this letter -- humility because I have not utilized to the fullest extent the opportunities that you, by your combined efforts, have tendered me. In many ways, I am a failure; but perhaps that does not matter because at least symbolically I am an emblem of what you have done to re-establish civil liberties to a group which in one hysterical moment had them revoked temporarily. In a small way, I am a symbol of the magnificent gestures that a democracy can make to rectify its tragic errors.

The restoration of my civil liberties is something that was very momentous in my life. It did not come automatically with the formal approval of the F. B. I. and the naval and military intelligence officers. It ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ approached fruition with the sympathy and consideration -- not given condescendingly -- tendered by a few people I met on the trains between Granada and Lincoln who helped me lose my initial self-consciousness. It was aided<sup>and finally achieved</sup>/by the warm and sincere acceptance by the people of the Midwest, and eventually by the whole nation. \*\*

It is undoubtedly a cliché to say that one doesn't miss his liberty until it is denied him, but that was so startlingly true in my case that I feel impelled to repeat it here.

However, as I write this, there are still people denied

their civil rights: the establishment of a Permanent Fair Employment Practice Commission is still far from reality; men whose consciences forbade them to bear arms in war still occupy C. P. S. camps and prisons; the racial tensions of Gary, Los Angeles, Chicago, Detroit, New York and elsewhere still echo. Internationally the situation in China, Palestine, Indonesia, Europe is appalling.

You are probably wondering if this is pertinent to the rest of my letter. I'm quite sure it is because what I'm clumsily trying to point ~~at~~<sup>out</sup> is the fact that the restoration of my civil rights means nothing unless everyone can enjoy those same rights. What I have been given can and must also be granted Negroes and Jews and others who do not always have full and equal rights.

As the most powerful nation in the world, we are in a position to lead the world out of darkness and disorder, fear and uncertainty by the example we set. Do we have anything to offer as an alternative to civil war in China? Imperialism and insurrection in Indonesia? Chaos in Palestine? Starvation and rioting in Europe? I think we do. In a sense I have been resurrected; I should like to see the down-trodden people all over the world resurrected, starting with the underprivileged and oppressed in our land.

Sincerely,  
Joe