

May 12, 1944

The Editor (Letter Box)
The Rocky Shimpo
Denver, Colorado

Dear Sir,

I have enclosed a copy of a personal letter sent to me by a friend who is in jail awaiting trial for alleged violation of the Selective Service law. He is one of the group of sixty two Americans of Japanese ancestry who are fighting for their Constitutional rights as any American would.

Up to now much has been said pro and con regarding the stand the boys took and their subsequent imprisonment, but as yet there has been no comment by the individuals themselves from their position behind bars. I believe that it is only fair that they have a chance to state how they feel after being in custody for over a month and a half as they wait for their trial. Because George expresses the feelings of these young men quite clearly in his letter to me, I thought that if you could possibly publish his letter in your letter box, it may make the peculiar position of these evacuees clearer to the general public.

In the name of "freedom of the press" I sincerely hope that you will be able to publish this enclosed letter. I have the original letter in my possession for verification at any time.

Sincerely yours,

Frank Kai
9-21-B
Heart Mountain, Wyo.

May 4, 1944

Dear Frank and friends,

We are supposed to leave for Cheyenne on Monday, or Tuesday, according to what the Marshall has told us. The Grand Jury is scheduled to convene on May 8th.

The fact that at last will come our chance for the trial for which we have so fervently hoped and prayed for all these past months is making us feel restless and impatient. But we are eagerly and determinedly awaiting the day, knowing deep within our hearts and minds that no matter how the trial ends, we are right. Our conscience and our hearts shall be clear, knowing that we have had the courage to fight for a fundamental principle. We may lose the verdict, but the verdict shall be man-made; and with the passing of Time, eternal truth and right will come to light---that is my firm belief.

Yes, truly, it is the first time since our arrival here that Time seems like Time and that Time does not fly. It seems only a mere three or four days that we have been in confinement when in reality it is about a month and a half now.

Word has reached us through a hint the F.B.I. dropped when he visited us here that the prosecution will try to base their case solely on the matter of evading the draft. We are not considering whether to report for the draft or not, to live or to die, as the true issues, nor the principle we are fighting for. We are hoping that the Government, for once and for all time, will really try to solve the issue confronting it and not try to evade the issues: clarification of our Constitutional rights, review of the record of its past unjustified and discriminatory acts, and the remedy and rectification of the injustices committed and being committed on us during evacuation, its attendant pauperization of our people and the detention without cause of loyal citizens. We are hoping that they will do their utmost toward restoring the rightful and untouchable dignity of citizenship that is the birthright of any citizen of this nation.

We are firm in our belief that reinstatement of the draft without the discriminatory features, as it applies to us at present, should come only after proper clarification and reinstatement of full citizenship rights. The Government should make us the free citizens that all loyal citizens of this nation should be before ordering us to serve in the armed forces. In our present status of virtual war prisoners with all our civil rights suspended and limited, it is almost impossible for us to face the future without the fear that what has happened to us can always happen again. It is against the recurrence of such history-blackening precedents that we are fighting for. We are fighting to make those words "regardless of race, color, or creed" become a reality, and not mere vague and hazy ideals; we are fighting to get an interpretation of those immortal words that shall be so universally accepted that future administrations will fear to tamper with it.

Mr. Baldwin has stated that "morally our case is strong but legally we are weak" or something to that effect. Just what will be the moral reactions of the citizens of the liberated and vanquished countries when they hear of a United States that keeps its citizens in status comparable to war prisoners, behind barbed wires and military police?

He acknowledges that we are morally right. Does he mean that the administration is not morally right in their handling of the Japanese problem on the mainland?

A person who disregards or violates good morals is not well respected by his fellow-friends. In likewise, a nation must practice and observe good

cont' d

morals to win the respect of fellow-nations, especially in the case of the United States, the nation which will be the spearhead of the post-war reconstruction era and whose responsibility it is to spread the Gospel of Democracy and its blessings among the liberated and vanquished nations.

The saying states "practice what you preach". It is essential that the United States shall practice what it preaches; that this nation shall practice true democracy--the democracy which gives its blessings and its protection to all its citizens regardless of race, color, or creed now. Otherwise, we may win the war but lose to the militant propaganda of the Japanese government, the philosophy of ASIA for Asiatics. Otherwise, critics can point out and say America is not a democracy for it discriminates against race and color, has different castes or classes of citizens (free, suspended and virtual prisoners), segregates and isolates one group of citizens from the others, it pits the majority against a helpless minority, it bans the right of a citizen to reside and travel as other citizens, it disregards the fact that a man's home is his castle, it dispossesses, pauperizes and ejects at will any group of citizens, it practices protective custody by which the innocent are placed in confinement, it practices detention of citizens without charge.

The United States must awake and should rectify the errors and injustices committed on us, otherwise, this shall remain forever a blot upon the history and conscience of our nation.

What prompts an individual who, fully realizing the priceless value of life and knowing well that we can live but one life, to willingly offer his life in defense of his country? What is he fighting for when he joins the fighting forces?

You say Democracy is what we are fighting for; democracy, its blessings of freedom and liberty, the pursuit of happiness and livelihood, tolerance, justice and against unjustified persecution.

We wonder, are we blessed with the blessings of Democracy at home? Do we have homes, liberty, freedom and justice? Are we not supposed to be enjoying those sacred blessings and privileges as free citizens before we are to enter the armed forces?

The malignant growth that is cancer, unseen and unfelt at first, can if it remains unchecked long enough ruin and destroy the lives of men, and in a larger sense nations too. Likewise, the violent propaganda of race hatred and race baiting now being so glibly expounded by these self-styled super-patriots can warp and poison the minds of the uninformed and unthinking.

Sorry I've rambled at will. Frank, I was wondering if you have forgotten Patrick Henry's "Give me liberty or give me death" speech. Good thing you didn't think of it while you were in the guardhouse because you might have taken it literally and walked out and, thus, be shot at by the Military Police on duty. I guess the moral of the barbed-wire fences and guardhouse, the M.P. and your stroll is that you are not a free man. In short, you'll be a free man--but dead.

Please tell all our friends that we are all well and in high spirits. Give them all our best regards.

Stick with your good work and do it to the best of your ability. \$16 a month pay should not be what you are working for. Satisfaction comes from the knowledge that you have given your best to your work.

Sincerely,

George Ishikawa