

(The following letter is an excerpt from the Heart Mountain Sentinel of Saturday, April 29, 1944.)

Heart Mountain Sentinel,
Heart Mountain, Wyoming

To the Editor:

Two years out of our lives we have spent in a concentration camp. The reason why we were placed there, and without due process of law, is open to question. The very constitution of this nation is built upon freedom and liberty for all. Not, as one speaker so quaintly put it, on the proposition that a minority has no rights. That is the teaching of Facism.

It is to free the world of oppression that this war is being fought. Yet a congressman from Wyoming, himself alien born, has advised sending all of Japanese descent back to Japan. Is it not a black mark upon American history that it is not yet able to practice at home what it seeks to teach abroad?

The administrative personnel of this camp have worked hard to make life bearable for us. It is through no fault of theirs that the fundamental system is wrong. If this is the record of our treatment in the past, what guarantee does the future hold for us? That all people in these camps should receive judicial or congressional clarification of their status and return of full civil rights, no one but the most bigoted will deny.

There has been much comment upon the case of 52 boys from Heart Mountain who are in custody of the U.S. Marshall. They have stated their desire for a clarification of their citizenship status by congressional act or judicial pronouncement, and return of all civil rights before application of selective service. A request is made for a judicial ruling that no minority group may be thus treated in the future.

The stand the boys have taken is to be ruled upon by the courts of the land. Yet a true perspective of such cases may not be obtained perhaps, until these years have gone down in history. These boys are in no sense draft dodgers as so crudely stated. They feel that a person who has the courage to stand up for his convictions under strong pressure has much more fortitude, will make a far better soldier than one who follows the line of least resistance.

They have declared their trust in the innate fairness of the American people; that a just decision will erase this black mark from American history; that they will be able to go to war and fight heart and soul for a cause which they know is just.

This is a case upon which the high courts of this nation, after due thought, will render decision. This is surely not a case upon which certain brilliant and self styled judges and attorneys should discourse critically and render homespun decisions. Nor is it sufficient for swivel chair patriots to write strong articles against ones who are in no position to defend themselves. It is to be sincerely regretted that they are unable to follow by actions the words they write.

Minoru Tamesa
14-2-B