

14

December  
1943Box 49  
Folder #5  
Item 6 p. 1

Captain Hall:

Chaplain Zimmerman, Office Chief of Chaplains, telephoned this afternoon re George Aki's appointment for service in the 442nd Combat Team. His application has gone through and the papers are now ready to go to Officer Procurement. Chaplain Zimmerman's point in calling was that someone there had the idea that the papers had to be cleared through this office before being sent to Officer Procurement -- He wanted to know if such papers usually came to us. I told him I did not believe that they did. That was his impression also; so, he would forward them (the papers) on to Officer Procurement, he said.

Gibson

Lt. Col. Walter B. Zimmerman 77311

OK just

Box 49  
Folder 5  
Item 6 p.2

342.18 J.A. Volunteers  
Aki, Reverend  
Yamada, Masao

22 October 1943

Dear Chaplain Yamada:

I was very glad to receive your letter of 25 October 1943, which I found most interesting. The observations which you have made will be kept in mind. Mr. McCloy has already spoken to the Chief of Chaplains concerning Reverend Aki.

Sincerely,

JOHN M. HALL  
Captain P.A.  
Assistant Executive

Reverend Masao Yamada  
Office of the Chaplain  
442nd Combat Team  
Camp Shelby, Mississippi

CASW:JMH:MGB

27 October 1943

MEMORANDUM FOR GENERAL WHITE:

Herewith is a letter that Captain Hall showed me which he received from a Japanese Chaplain of the 442nd Combat Team. You will note what he says about the formation of another combat team.

I have the feeling that these people have pretty well demonstrated that they can be made a real military asset and I would think that we would have just about enough for another combat team, although not enough for a division, if we had selective service and the normal screening process.

I should think we could without any difficulty get the Mainland Nisei Chaplain appointed. They are over strength in doctors as it is, and the Secretary's prohibitions do not apply to Chaplains. The Mainland people do have different problems than the Hawaiians. Is this something you could take up with the Chief of Chaplains?

J.J.McC.

Inc.

Ltr 25 Oct 43 Yamada to Hall

442ND COMBAT TEAM  
CAMP SHELLEY  
MISS.

October 25, 1943

Captain Hall, USA  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Sir:

It was a real pleasure to have the opportunity of meeting you and Col. Scobey. It gave me a great lift to know the originators of our Combat Team and hear for myself the confidence placed in this group. I can also state that our Nisei troops were thrilled to have had the opportunity to pass in review for Mr. McCloy. When I returned to the field that night, in most of the camps we had little groups singing songs around the fires as never before. They had gotten the news from their officers that they would be given combat duty when the time came.

As we spoke together in Camp Shelby for a few minutes regarding our unit I would like to follow up some of the items that concern us all. Please consider this correspondence personal and confidential. I want to share with your office some observations I have made.

I. The problem of the Hawaiian and the Mainland Niseis not getting along is not serious anymore. It was at the beginning, but with the Hawaiian boys given NCO ratings, the schism is not anything to worry. There is still some friction, but it is more of a natural process. I know definitely that there is just as much friction between West Coast Niseis and those from Colorado, Utah and elsewhere as there is friction between the Hawaiians and the Mainlanders.

But to solve the many intricate personal problems of the troops I believe it would be a practical necessity to have a Mainland Nisei chaplain. Both Higuchi and I are from Hawaii, and will most likely return to Hawaii after the war. It would be beneficial in the long run to have a Mainland Nisei chaplain for that reason. We must have someone who might aid in the solution of problems when the war is over. I suggest that Rev. George Aki, Jerome WRA, Denson Arkansas, be aided so that he could become the Mainland Nisei Chaplain. He has made the application in Arkansas. I do not know exactly how much he is succeeding, but I am sure without some push it would take a long time.

II. The problem of the Air Corpsmen and men from other units who have been transferred to this unit.

There are definitely two opinions among the men themselves. One group which is a highly intelligent group says that they do not mind being sent here. They understand the problem of the War Department as far as

the Niseis go. However, due to transfers with rank they feel that it would be desirable to form an infantry company composed of all Air Corpsmen. The other group complains that the government is inconsistent, for they misuse manpower ability. They think it is most unfortunate in the transfers for just that reason.

Both groups are thoughtful and you can see their side of the argument. Before going further to make the proper adjustments, may I relay to you some suggestions that we are getting from the mainland Niseis themselves. The above is after all a minor problem if the following suggestion could be materialized.

III. This concerns a complicated question of morale of our mainland Nisei troops, the growing unrest in terms of delinquent tendencies of the youths of the relocation centers, and the future of the whole Nisei problem in the United States. This certainly is not for your office alone to solve, but from what I have heard, there is a grand opportunity for your office to take the initiative toward the best solution.

A. The morale of our Mainland Niseis have not been as high as our Hawaiian lot. I believe the furloughs have had a great deal to do with it. Many have returned to their respective relocation centers and other cities and have been told that they were "suckers". Their college friends have argued with them that even if they gave their lives for America, the future for the Niseis would not be bright. I had four mainland soldiers tell me exactly that. I have heard some Niseis ask me in camp whether there is a future even after they volunteered in the Army.

This is a disturbing element of morale. The one solution would be to make another combat team of all Niseis. I asked you about it when you were here but it was unfortunate that I could not very well give you adequate reasons for it. I told you that on this question of an all Nisei team, there were two opinions among our men. One group is pleased to be in this special unit. the other(minority) would prefer to be "dispursed" among the White units and become "ambassadors of goodwill". I think both opinions have merit, but when one considers the total picture and the future of the Japanese-Americans in the USA, we must use our horse sense and choose the policy that would solve as many problems as possible.

B. The prevalent opinion among our men is a desire for the formation of another Combat Team at the earliest possible moment. I believe in and heartily endorse this new unit because of the following reasons:

1. The fact that the 100th Infantry is doing well psychologically times the formation of a new team.
2. The youths that were in doubt about the opportunity for actual combat in relocation centers now can see for themselves that the U. S. means business and that they should be positively and actively engaged in the service of their country.

A recruiting team sent from the 442nd can bring a lot of encouragement to the youths and parents of these centers and at the same time encourage enough volunteers to form a new unit in a short time.

3. This act would alleviate the "sucker" feeling of our mainland volunteers and boost the morale of this unit. This also would solve in many ways the increasing social problem of delinquent tendencies among youths in the centers, restore confidence in themselves and the United States, and be a positive force to repel pressure groups who still distrust them.

4. In the long run, the best way for a Nisei to be a real American in every sense of the word, is to be put together in an all-Nisei team. This is a startling statement, but it is an observation made right in Camp Shelby. For example, before our Hawaiian boys came to Camp Shelby, they thought they were good Americans. At Camp Shelby they discovered that their White soldiers questioned their Americanism. This has made many of our men think deeply into their own hearts as to the meaning of this word. They have discovered faster in a month what it means to be an American than all the courses taught in their high school history classes.

Being in an all-Nisei team places the responsibility on each Nisei to be "on the ball", making the outfit the best. In spite of some "gold-bricks" and gripers, the majority will be on guard to do more than mere duty. The natural sense of "so living" that by their group performance they could win their places in America is a definite asset.

Many of them even hesitate to speak Japanese, or think Japanese in our camp just because they want to be a true American. In relocation centers and in Hawaii, such rapid transformation could never take place.

I speak out of my experience of ten years in the field of Americanization. The Army has actually done more in one month than any group of people or institution did in ten years. The Army has made them proud of the "Old Glory", their uniform, and their national anthem. Say what you will of the un-Americanism of having an all Nisei combat team, the argument is against it from my observation and from what many of our men have experienced here.

I would beg you for activating another team. Your office did a lot but I am sure you could do more to the best interests of all concerned.

IV. As another item of morale, may I add this observation. I know that this matter is quite touchy. It concerns the present location of our team. If it is at all possible, both the men and officers would be happy to be moved to some camp further north or east. You know the difficulties our men experienced in Camp Shelby.

From my observation in this unit, the problem concerns the officers as much as the men. At times I think the officers complain more about Shelby than the men. I want you to know that the general desire for change is a fact. It would be very beneficial if we did move north to a more friendly environment. The ideal thing would be to have our troops train in a community which would open its doors for re-settlement after the war. Americans, knowing the Niseis in uniform, would go a long way when the time comes to aid the Niseis to find a new home.

Well, I said everything. It was a chaplain's turn to weep on your shoulders. Thank you for giving me this chance to pour out my heart.

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Please share this with Col. Scobey and continue to fight for us. We, on the other hand, will do everything to be the best. We shall not fail!

Sincerely yours,

*Masao Yamada*  
MASAO YAMADA, Chaplain

342.18 J. A. Volunteers

Aki, George

29 October 1943

MEMORANDUM FOR THE CHIEF OF CHAPLAINS:

Attention: Colonel Goodyear, Office Chief of Chaplains.

1. Reference telephone conversation from the Assistant Secretary of War with regard to the desirability for having a chaplain from the Mainland serving with the 442nd Combat Team composed of Japanese-Americans, now in training at Camp Shelby, Mississippi, the following is quoted from a letter from Chaplain Masao Yamada, now serving with this unit:

"The problem of the Hawaiian and the Mainland Niseis not getting along is not serious anymore. It was at the beginning, but with the Hawaiian boys given NCO ratings, the schism is not anything to worry. There is still some friction, but it is more of a natural process. I know definitely that there is just as much friction between West Coast Niseis and those from Colorado, Utah and elsewhere as there is friction between the Hawaiians and the Mainlanders.

"But to solve the many intricate personal problems of the troops I believe it would be a practical necessity to have a Mainland Nisei chaplain. Both Higuchi and I are from Hawaii, and will most likely return to Hawaii after the war. It would be beneficial in the long run to have a Mainland Nisei chaplain for that reason. We must have someone who might aid in the solution of problems when the war is over. I suggest that Rev. George Aki, Jerome WRA, Denson, Arkansas, be aided so that he could become the Mainland Nisei Chaplain. He has made the application in Arkansas. I do not know exactly how much he is succeeding, but I am sure without some push it would take a long time."

2. It is understood that Reverend Aki's application will be checked and that if qualified he will be commissioned for service with the 442nd Combat Team.

(SIGNED) JOHN M. HALL

Chief of Chaplains  
Room 3040  
Munitions Bldg.

JOHN M. HALL  
Captain, F.A.  
Assistant Executive

CASW:JMH:MGB

342.18 J. A. Branch of Service (Chaplains)

x-Hall  
x-Chief of Chaplains  
x-Aki, George

29 Oct 43