

April 1, 1943

Dear Mr. Marutani:

Your letter of March 19 addressed to the Honorable Henry L. Stimson, Secretary of War, has been referred to this office for reply.

Your letter was a very good one and it presented some points of view which we may have overlooked in setting up the new Japanese unit. It is to be regretted that your brother, Staff Sergeant Max Marutani, was relieved of his assignment with the Air Corps and ordered to duty with the Japanese-American combat team, but under the circumstances it became necessary for the War Department to transfer a large number of Japanese American soldiers from the various army units to the Japanese American combat team. This action represented no policy on the part of the War Department to segregate all Japanese American soldiers to a separate unit, but merely to insure that this particular unit should be one of the best in the Army through the introduction of experienced soldiers in it.

As you know, this unit will have substantial motorized transportation and with your brother's experience he should be in line for promotion and perhaps for the higher ratings given to the motor personnel.

While there is nothing that can be done to cancel his transfer or to insure that he remain in the Air Force, there is a possibility at a later date he may be permitted to apply for retransfer back into the Air Corps.

In making any move of this size in the Army, I know you realize that it frequently cuts across the interests of individuals. There is no question of fair play involved; it is simply a matter of overall rather than individual convenience

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and necessity. The present situation may not be to the satisfaction of either you or your brother, nevertheless, I am sure that as loyal and patriotic citizens, both you and he will accept the War Department decision in this matter with the determination to do your part, whatever it may be, for the cause of your country.

Sincerely,

(SIGNED) JOHN J. McCLOY
JOHN J. McCLOY
Assistant Secretary of War

Mr. Bill Marutani
1120 East University Blvd.
Mitchell, South Dakota

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March 13, 1943

Dear Mr. Marutani:

Your letter of February 28, to the Secretary of War has been referred to me for reply.

At the present time the War Department is organizing combat teams of loyal Japanese-American citizens. If you have no desire to become a member of these units, then I suggest to you that you await your call from your draft board, and upon being taken into the army you will have an opportunity to request that branch of the service which you desire.

In forming the units of loyal Japanese-Americans, it is not the intention of the War Department in any way to engage in a policy of racial discrimination, but only to afford a great number of these citizens an opportunity to fight together in a homogeneous group.

Sincerely yours,

(SIGNED)

GORDON GRAND, JR.
First Lieutenant, QMC
Assistant Executive

Mr. Bill Marutani
1130 East University Boulevard
Mitchell, South Dakota

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WAR DEPARTMENT
SECRETARY'S OFFICE
February 28, 1943

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Mr. Henry L. Stimson, Secretary of War
War Department
Washington D. C.

Dear Sir:

Once before I have written to the War Department offering my services as an American. I received no reply nor acknowledgement of any kind for my letter. I write to you once again with confidence and hope that you will recognize and understand that I am in earnest and in complete sincerity over the matter.

In my attempts to be taken into some branch of the armed forces, preferably the Air Corps, I had written several letters to the Air, War, and Naval Department stating my case and status. But upon each occasion I was refused much to my chagrin. You see, sir, I am an American of Japanese ancestry. But I definitely and firmly maintain that such is no "excuse" for denying me the privilege of fighting for my country, and above all, I cannot understand why the leaders of our armed forces which are fighting racial hatred and governments based upon racial principles would use as an "excuse" of my parentage in barring me from service. Certainly such an alibi is palpably contrary to our American way of thinking and doing things. I feel confident that you see and agree with me on this point.

As I mentioned in my previous letter, I am a college youth of 19 majoring in pre-law. As this college quarter nears its end, many of my fellow class-mates leave school to join the armed forces. But I stay behind to see them go off...go off to fight my battles and carry my share of the load while I sit healthy and safe at home! Despite my pre-law course I am taking special courses which are preparing me for service. Though our country needs college-trained men, I am forced to stay behind because of a mere superficiality of physical differences. I am not given a chance to prove that I am an American as anyone. And it is now that I appeal to you once again that I be given that chance!

But I must make the statement that I shall refuse to join any Japanese-American battalion. I join as an American and not as a member of any special race or a believer of any special creed. I feel that as an American that to join the armed forces on a racial principle is definitely against my beliefs and ideals gained as an American. I want to join the armed forces not merely to fight and kill. I want to fight FOR something! And to join the armed forces on the basis of race is contrary to what I or any American would want to be subjected to. Yes, I realize that the Japanese American Citizen's League expressed a desire for a Japanese battalion. But that is not my consensus of opinion, and I see no reason why any statements made by the Japanese American Citizen's League should guide my actions, thoughts, and actions. It does not guide any other American's life: why should it guide mine? We are all Americans; not Slovak-Americans, Swedish-Americans, and Japanese-Americans.

So once again I appeal to you to be allowed to join the fighting forces of our nation. Nothing would please me more than to serve with that branch of the armed forces in which my brother is now serving--the Army Air Corps. I am taking courses in preparation for technical work in the Air Corps, and soon I hope that I will be given the opportunity to use that training.

I realize my letter to you has been long, but I wished to state my case clearly and unmistakably. I sincerely appreciate your time and attention given to me, and I shall eagerly await a reply from the War Department in the near future.

Very sincerely,

Bill Marutani

Bill Marutani