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VETERANS COMMITTEE FOR EQUAL RIGHTS  
POST OFFICE BOX 861  
SPOKANE, WASH.  
10 September 1945



Gen. A. Brunner, Commander-in-Chief  
Veterans of Foreign Wars  
25 West 44th Street,  
New York 18, N. Y.

Dear Mr. Brunner:

It has come to the attention of the Veterans Committee for Equal Rights that the following action was taken by Post #51, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Spokane, Washington, at its meeting on Wednesday, 5th of September 1945, in regard to Staff Sergeant Spady Royana's application for membership. Staff Sergeant Royana is a Black soldier, born in the State of Washington, and was wounded in every action in the landing on Iwo Jima.

1. Approximately 20 membership applications including that of S/Sgt Royana were rejected.
2. On the protest of the members present that the applications were rejected merely to keep Royana out, it was agreed to hold another vote.
3. It was further agreed to vote on S/Sgt Royana's application separately.
4. All applications, except S/Sgt Royana's, were voted on and accepted.
5. In a separate vote, Royana's application was rejected by approximately 10 votes out of some 20 members present (total membership about 1945).

According to the National rules and by-laws as quoted by Post #51, the number of VFW Post #51 regarding Mr. Richard White and Lt/Sgt Paul, two Black soldiers previously rejected. The two must wait another year before their application can be reconsidered. Frank J. [Name], Chairman of the committee stated to members Post #51's rejection of them as Black soldiers would be a violation of the Post and the National constitution to change the rules to accept applications of Black soldiers. It was also stated that the National constitution is the supreme law of the organization and that the Post and the National constitution is the supreme law of the organization.

This is conclusive evidence that the action of a few members of Post #51 is not only un-American and prejudicial, but also is a violation of the National constitution of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, by-law, and is in opposition to the will of the majority of the members.

We shall forward for your attention at an as yet date a copy of the communication sent by Post #51 to S/Sgt Royana, rejecting his membership.

Sincerely yours,

/s/ Edward F. Salsish  
Chairman, VVER

(P)

10 Sep 45

On August 50 five members of the Veterans Committee for Equal Rights met with a committee from VFW Post #51. VGER was represented by its chairman Edward Salsich, Edward Fajman, Frank Delgiorgio, Richard Ballin and Kern Chew. Post #51 was represented by its commander Dean Halbig, Post manager Brooks and Donald Crosby. The VGER stated that its main purpose for the meeting was to ascertain what had been done to revise the regulations, as had been stated, so the Pfc. Richard Harte could be reconsidered for membership. Halbig denied that there ever was such a plan. He also denied the newspapers statements attributed to him as "completely false". He asked if Harte had accepted any of the invitations to join posts in other cities. Salsich answered that if Harte had, what would happen if he requested a transfer or if he reapplied after an elapse of a year. "Harte isn't going to get into this post as long as he lives," Halbig answered. He stated further that out of approximately 1500 members, better than the three required black balls had been put into the box rejection Harte's application. He first held the National responsible for the fact that Harte could not get in on the basis of certain laws which he would not read. When a quotation was read from the National organization that, "It is the desire of the National organization and our commander in Chief, Jean A. Brunner, to not only accept our Japanese American servicemen into the organization, but to ask them to join," Halbig replied that neither Brunner nor anybody else could tell Post #51 what they were to do.

"The boys returning from the South Pacific will have no use for Japanese of any kind," Halbig said. "If they meet Japanese members in the classrooms, anything might happen and we don't want trouble." It was pointed out that 53% of the signatures protesting the action of Post #51 were from men who had seen action and were wounded in the Pacific; that they included CPL Robert R. Clavery veteran of the death march Bataan and a prisoner of the Japanese for 24 months; that Kern Chew, one of the five representatives of the VGER was a Chinese American who was at Leyte and had his lungs shattered on Okinawa from Japanese action.

Salsich next asked, "There are many Negro soldiers, veterans of overseas combat, wearers of the Purple Heart, holding all the qualifications for membership in the VFW would they be eligible to Post #51?" It was made very clear that their applications would not even be accepted much less voted on. That if they actually did come up "that they'd be referred elsewhere." In other words, certain Americans are not acceptable to Post #51 though they meet the requirements of the National VFW. "These German Americans, French Americans and Italian Americans are Anti-Americans... they are not real Americans" Halbig said. A member of the VGER answered that this is just what "He fought against, this was fascism." Brooks, manager of Post #51 replied, "You don't know what you fought for."

This statement signed and sworn to by Edward Salsich,  
Frank Delgiorgio, Richard Ballin, Edward Fajman and  
Kern Chew

A-28 342.18 Volunteers

Staff/Sgt Spady Koyama, well known Spokane Nisei soldier learned yesterday that his application for membership in Spokane Post #51 of the Veterans of Foreign Wars has been rejected. Koyama is a graduate of Spokane's Lewis and Clark High School and is a native of Ferry County, Washington. He served at General MacArthur's headquarters in Australia, and later was on detached service with the 6th Army in New Guinea and the Dutch East Indies. He was wounded during the landing operations on Leyte by a piece of shrapnel from a five hundred pound bomb dropped by an enemy dive bomber.

S/Sgt Spady Koyama made application on September the first along with a fellow patient from Baxter, Sgt Eugene Nation a veteran of North Africa and Italy. "We were told that our applications would be acted on at the meeting of Post #51 the 2 following Wednesday," Nation said. When he found that his had been approved and S/Sgt Koyama's rejected he said, "Why should VFW Post #51 show prejudice against one of my comrades in arms? We both fought the same fight against prejudice and discrimination!"

Sgt Koyama learned of his rejection the same time he learned that he along with Pfc. Richard Naito, another Nisei previously rejected by in June to membership in Post #51, were unanimously elected to the Military Order of the Purple Heart, Chapter 208 Spokane. It is interesting to note that many of the members of the Purple Heart are also member of Post #51; that chapter 208 of the Purple Heart are using the clubroom facilities of Post #51.

Harold L. Schorg Sr. Vice Commander of the Order of the Purple Heart said, "We admitted these Japanese Americans to membership in the Purple Heart without a dissenting vote. Men wounded in action on the battlefield have a deep feeling of comradeship for all men, who like themselves, have shed their blood for America. This feeling is above race or creed or color. We're all Americans and we all fought for the same things."

The adjutant of chapter 208 of the Order of the Purple Heart said, "The issues involved in his matter are far greater than appear on the surface. If our Veterans Organizations deny membership to these boys, because of their ancestry, then we make a mockery of the very things for which they fought. These boys shed their hot blood for America in battles on opposite sides of the world. To have them come home and fail to hold out the hand of comradeship to them will mean that all their blood and sacrifice has been in vain. To deny them is to deny all our history, to deny the very rock on which America is founded. I am proud that our Chapter of the Purple Heart has held out the hand of comradeship to them." These two statements were in the Spokane papers Friday the same day the rejection of S/Sgt Koyama was published.

News of Sgt. Koyama's rejection spread rapidly among his fellow soldiers at local military posts. "It is our view that the admission by unanimous vote of Dick Naito and Spady Koyama, two fine American soldiers, into the Order of the Purple Heart, emphasizes once again the undemocratic position taken by a few members of VFW Post #51 in consistently black-balling applicants of Japanese ancestry who have served their country," was the statement of Sgt. Ed. Salsich, chairman of the Veterans Committee for Equal Rights, ~~which was set up by members and former members of the Armed Forces to combat and expose cases of discrimination and prejudice because of race, creed, color or extraction involving present or past members of the armed forces and Merchant Marine.~~