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March 1, 1943.

Dear Mrs. Rockswold:

Miss Thompson sent me a letter you received from Gen. Douglas H. Hickam, Federal Relocation Center, Bunkers, Arkansas, on the recent policy of the War Department to form combat teams of Japanese-American soldiers.

The decision to form these separate units of loyal Japanese-American soldiers was reached only after careful consideration of both the military value and the effect on the eventual complete rehabilitation of the loyal Japanese-Americans who emigrated before the policy was adopted.

The following telegram on this subject has been sent to each of the relocation centers:

"The question that has arisen most frequently is: 'Why is a segregated unit being formed and will the combat team fight in the same battle area with caucasian troops?' The Secretary of War has directed that the following reply be brought to the attention of all Japanese-Americans within your center: 'It is only because the War Department desires to aid the loyal Japanese-Americans that a separate unit is being formed. Millions of people are not familiar with the Japanese-Americans. By forming an all Japanese-American combat team on a voluntary basis, the American people will be presented with incontrovertible fact that there are loyal Japanese-Americans who are willing to fight for the United States. If the volunteers were spread throughout the Army, their enlistment would attract little attention, but the formation of an all Japanese-American combat team composed entirely of volunteers will help tremendously to convince those who oppose the Japanese-Americans. It is hoped that the Japanese-American combat team will become one of the outstanding units of the American Army. This combat team will fight with and as a part of a caucasian force. The War Department has faith in the loyal Japanese-Americans. This is a splendid opportunity to demonstrate to the American people and to the War Department that Japanese-Americans have faith in America. The success of the program and the voluntary feature of induction will be a great step forward in the rehabilitation of Japanese-Americans.'"

Mr. Mikami believes that definite steps must be taken by the War Department to restore the civilian rights, social and economic losses, unrestricted travel, and occupational opportunities, before the boys

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S.O.
Comment
Mikami, Social H.
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are called upon to serve. The present program constitutes a step in the rehabilitation of the loyal Japanese-Americans. The program embraces the opportunity to serve in the armed forces for those male citizens of military age, and it also provides an administrative procedure whereby loyal Japanese-Americans will be released from war relocation centers and permitted to accept employment in war production and other gainful occupations. While it is not complete rehabilitation, the program is the initial step in that direction and the attitude with which it is received by the Japanese-Americans may be persuasive in determining what additional steps are to be taken.

Sincerely yours,

HENRY L. STIMSON

Secretary of War.

Incl:

orig ltr. Mrs. Roosevelt from Mikami ^{copy} plus S/W from Mikami

Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt,
The White House,
Washington, D. C.

22/20b

Resp. OASW

copy dispatched OASW 3-3-43

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February 9, 1943

Dear Mr. Nishii:

I have your letter of February 5, 1943, in which you protest against the establishment of a regimental combat team composed of volunteer American citizens of Japanese ancestry as an integral part of the United States Army, on the theory that the constitution of the combat team as a separate unit will tend to postpone the eventual assimilation of Japanese Americans into the rest of our population. I can see some basis for your argument, but I do not believe that you have the benefit of all the facts in the matter.

I do not have to remind you of the wave of hatred and distrust of all things Japanese which swept this country after Pearl Harbor. For many months thereafter, no attempt was made to distinguish the loyal from the disloyal; all were lumped together and called "Japs". This feeling continues today, but in diminished force, I am glad to say. The War Department felt that by giving loyal Japanese Americans an opportunity to form a unit of their own, of considerable tactical importance and for service in an active theatre, Japanese Americans could, by an appropriate display of their loyalty and bravery, for all time set at rest the suspicions harbored by the uninformed elements of our population. By the same token the unit would constitute a symbol to which every loyal American of Japanese ancestry could point with pride. It is easy to see that if loyal Japanese Americans were scattered throughout the ranks, their individual contributions would pass relatively unnoticed, whereas by the formation of a separate unit their collective strength will be evidenced to the world.

The War Department is not committed to a policy of segregation for Japanese Americans. As you no doubt know, there are well over two thousand Japanese Americans already in the Army serving in ordinary units both in this country and abroad.

Prepared A.S.W. 2-9-43
Mailed O.A.S.W. 2-10-43
Copies to... *C.S.A. ... saw*

Copy sent to C & B 2-10

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Gen. Comm. S.A.
2 S.W.
Nishii

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There are other reasons, primarily of a military nature, which favor the establishment of a separate unit. The ordinary regiment or division is trained for service in any theatre, whereas a number of factors make it desirable that Japanese American troops be not employed in the Pacific theatre. For instance, there would be the likelihood of inhuman treatment in the event of capture. There would be the possibility, not now existent, of disastrous confusion if the enemy was successful in infiltrating into our midst a few of his troops clad in American uniforms. Again, while it would be expected that Japanese Americans would fight just as zealously in the Pacific theatre as elsewhere, the very fact that they and the enemy sprang from the same racial stock would constitute a psychological barrier affecting the morale of other troops. If Japanese Americans were not established in a separate unit it would mean that Japanese Americans would have to be separated from the unit with which they had trained if that unit became designated for the Pacific theatre. This would be unfortunate for the man as well as for the organization, to say nothing of the time and energy wasted.

I have written you at length as I wanted to make it clear to you that the advisability of creating a special unit for Japanese Americans had been very carefully considered by the War Department prior to its adoption. The conclusion has been reached that this is the best way to proceed. It was not a question of segregation, but of what in the long run would work out best, not alone for the Army, but for our Japanese American population as a whole. It may well be the precursor to equal participation by loyal Japanese Americans in all phases of America's war efforts.

I share with you the hope that all loyal Japanese Americans will be soon restored to the rights and privileges of the normal American citizen. The War Department is attempting to lead the way, by providing the opportunity not only for military service but for employment in war plants as well.

Sincerely,

HENRY L. STIMSON

Secretary of War

Mr. Seichi H. Mikami
44 - 3 0 E
Jerome Relocation Center
Denson, Arkansas

OASW:JMH:MEG

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WAR DEPARTMENT
SECRETARY'S OFFICE
1943 FEB 8 AM 8:37
*ASW*Block 44, Barrack 3, Apt. E
Jerome Relocation Center
Denson, Arkansas
February 5, 1943

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

Dear Mr. Stimson:

It was with a very keen interest that I read your recent announcement of the War Department's plan for an all Japanese-American combat unit; and for the interest of the Japanese-Americans, I am quite anxious to be informed of the motives for this exceedingly undemocratic segregative army procedure.

From our project's representative I was able to obtain some information as to the sessions held in Washington, D. C. in regards to the manpower question of the Japanese and the Japanese Americans; as I was made to understand, representatives from the various interested departments were there and gave, in general, their approval to this new plan. However, may I ask to what extent were they a representative cross section of the Japanese-Americans?

Going through the tragic and humiliating experience of forcible evacuation and subjection to an internment camp, the people of Japanese ancestry and their parents have suffered untold miseries and grief.....loss of home, friends, respect, and above all, liberty. I am certain that all of us are not naive enough to think that we are the only ones suffering as a result of this global war; however, the inroads made upon the civil rights of the American citizens of Japanese ancestry in the name of an "emergency", unwarranted as it was, has left its wound which can to no extent be minimized.

Oftentimes the practical application of a theory arrives at an unthought of end result. Likewise, the segregative plan of the Japanese-American will inevitably

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lead to a duplication of the segregative treatment of the Negroes with all its social and moral evils. Therefore, I beg of you to reconsider the plan from a more long-range and socially-conscious view, rather than a haphazard attempt to solve a problem overnight.

In the face of President Roosevelt's statement made on January 2, 1942 which states, "Remember the Nazi technique: 'Pit race against race, religion against religion, prejudice against prejudice, divide and conquer.' We must not let that happen here. We must remember what we are defending: liberty, decency, justice", the segregative Army plan and the evacuation of Japanese-Americans and their parents are certainly paradoxical.

I believe that a definite step should be taken by your department toward the restoration of the social and financial losses, civil rights, unrestricted travel, and occupational opportunities in conjunction with the opening for armed services for our country.

In this day when the democratic way of life is at stake, efforts to overcome the forces that would ape the Axis way would not be in vain; and this tremendous responsibility lies with the leaders of our country.

I trust that you will accept these suggestions in the spirit in which they are given and I shall be praying for the day that peace and brotherhood may once again reign over this world.

Sincerely yours,

Seichi H. Mikami
Seichi H. Mikami