

HEADQUARTERS WESTERN DEFENSE COMMAND  
OFFICE OF THE COMMANDING GENERAL  
PRESIDIO OF SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA



11 July 1945

18 J.A. Publicity

Major Davidson Sommers  
Office of the Assistant Secretary of War  
Pentagon Building  
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear Major Sommers:

General Pratt has directed that I send to you the inclosed papers concerning subject submitted by First Lieutenant Herbert R. O'Connor inasmuch as he feels the subject matter thereof will be a matter of interest to Mr. McCloy.

General Pratt's action in the matter is shown in his second indorsement to The Chairman, Committee on Awards, War Department, Washington, D. C.

With best wishes, I am

Yours very truly,

*C. W. Feagin*  
C. W. FEAGIN  
Colonel, G.S.C.  
Acting Chief of Staff

5 Incls.

- #1 - Suggestion fr Lt O'Connor
- #2 - 4th Ind, OPD, to Hq ASF
- #3 - Ltr, Dir., WRA to ASF
- #4 - 1st Ind, Hq ASF, to CG WDC
- #5 - 2d Ind, Hq WDC, to Com. on Awards, ASF

11 Jul 45

D/C

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The undersigned officer was on temporary duty with the Japanese American 442nd Regimental Combat Team in France shortly after news was received of the unfortunate incident at Hood River, Oregon wherein the names of Nisei servicemen were stricken from the Town Honor Roll. The detrimental effect it had on the morale of these men, fighting for the very people who had perpetrated such an injustice, was tremendous. While this was just one occurrence and although the action was later rescinded the fact that such an event could take place is indicative that perhaps some Americans do not observe the fundamental principles of democracy to the extent that we like to believe. It further implies that the significant role that this loyal minority group has played in the present war is either not fully known or is unappreciated.

It is the mothers, wives and sisters of the members of this unit which has performed so brilliantly in combat who are held in internment camps in this country. It doesn't make for stronger determination and better fighting spirit when these men hear that their home communities refuse to take their families back.

The suggestion is respectfully made that one or more military speakers of Occidental ancestry be sent by the War Department to address town meetings and civic organizations, especially on the West Coast, to inform the public of the exploits and deeds of these Americans who have demonstrated their patriotism beyond question. This much, at least, we owe the 442nd, but more than the straightening of accounts it would be a step in the direction of creating a broader and more tolerant attitude among the citizenry, of their fellow countrymen.

If it is deemed that the suggestion has any merit it is respectfully requested that the undersigned be considered for the work.

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NAME: HERBERT R. O'CONNOR, JR., 1st Lt. AUS                      SERIAL NO. 01004651

ORGANIZATION: 1336 Service Command Unit

STATION: A. P. Hill Military reservation, Fredericksburg, Virginia

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OPD 000.7 (16 May 45)

**COPY**

4th Ind

Operation Division, War Department General Staff, Washington, D.C., 1 June 1945

TO: Headquarters, Army Service Forces (Attention: Committee on Awards).

The Operations Division has no primary interest in suggestion #579, relative to military speakers to inform the public, especially on the west, with regards to the deeds and patriotism of Japanese-Americans in the combat service. However, it is suggested that the War Relocations Authority who handle Japanese adjustment problems, including publicity, be contacted in this matter.

FOR THE ASSISTANT CHIEF OF STAFF, OPD:

/s/ WILLIAM A. WALKER  
Colonel, GSC  
Deputy Chief, Current Group, OPD

Incl  
n/o

Incl #2

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Box 48  
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Page 4UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
WAR RELOCATION AUTHORITY  
WASHINGTON

JUN 18, 1945

Office of The Director

COPY

Maj. Gen. Lutes, GSC  
Chairman  
ASF Committee on Awards  
Room 5C 519  
The Pentagon  
Washington, D. C.

Dear General Lutes:

Your letter of June 9 asks for the comment of the War Relocation Authority on the enclosed suggestion of Lt. Herbert R. O'Connor, Jr. that one or more military speakers of Occidental ancestry be sent by the War Department to address public meetings, particularly on the West Coast, informing them of the battle record of Japanese American soldiers in the Army of the United States.

It is my belief that this is an excellent proposal having great public information value. In my opinion, it would also partially meet the demands expressed by many American combat officers and enlisted men for action to curb West Coast acts of terrorism against the families of Japanese American servicemen and attempted violence against Nisei soldiers and veterans. Such service papers as the CBI Roundup, the Mid-Pacifican, and Stars and Stripes in strongly worded editorials have expressed the anger of enlisted men at these outrages. In addition, many members of the armed forces have written to their home town newspapers, to such publications as Time and Life, and to widely syndicated newspaper columnists, asking that the race baiting against the Nisei be brought to an end. Copies of the CBI Roundup and Mid-Pacifican editorials are enclosed, together with a news item on the Stars and Stripes statement.

You may also be interested to learn that Marines who have engaged in recent Pacific campaigns have added their protests to those of combat soldiers opposed to discrimination against loyal Japanese Americans. In a letter to the editor of the San Francisco Chronicle published on June 11, men of the 4th Marine division wrote that they concur "completely with Mr. Ickes' denunciation of these shocking occurrences." This letter, supporting Secretary Ickes' recent statement condemning terrorism against Japanese Americans by a "lawless minority" of hoodlums, was signed by Marines including a major, four first lieutenants, one staff sergeant, and one corporal. The press reports that the Army loaned Nisei soldiers in combat intelligence units to the 4th and 5th Marine divisions at Iwo Jima. From all press accounts the Nisei acquitted themselves handsomely. It

Incl #3

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would appear that the officers and men of the 4th Division who wrote the letter to the Chronicle are well aware of the Nisei record and did not hesitate to condemn publicly those who would prefer to ignore the proven record of Japanese Americans fighting Hirohito's forces in the Pacific.

It is now the belief of many outside observers, as well as that of the WRA, that the number of citizens on the West Coast who support fair treatment of loyal Japanese Americans and law-abiding Japanese aliens is increasing from week to week. Many prominent West Coast organizations and individuals, and a number of editors and high-ranking public officials, have declared that the action of the Army in revoking mass exclusion and permitting return of the evacuees to the Pacific states, and the Supreme Court decision affirming the rights of loyal Japanese Americans, both must and will be supported by the majority of California, Washington, Oregon and Arizona residents. In addition, I think it may be safely said that thousands of other fair-minded citizens on the West Coast, who had not previously concerned themselves with the rights of the evacuees have had their stomachs turned by outrages against servicemen's families. These angered citizens of Caucasian descent have spoken up against these continued attacks and in some localities have reduced the influence of the anti-evacuee groups.

However, these people of good will urgently need the public support which the Army could give by placing its enormous prestige into the campaign on behalf of law and order, and by sending in military speakers to acquaint communities, particularly West Coast rural areas, with the battle performance of Japanese American soldiers. It is a matter of record, that in 32 California cases of violence or threatened violence against evacuee families--including for example, a case in Merced county in which attackers shot at a Nisei corporal on furlough in Army uniform and at his brother-in-law--a Japanese American veteran, there have been arrests in only two instances.

The first time arrests were made, for attempted dynamiting and arson against the parents of a boy who helped in the rescue of the Lost Battalion by the 442nd in the Vosges mountains, a rural jury acquitted the defendants after the defense counsel pleaded, "This is a white man's country. Let's keep it so." In another rural case, a man pleaded guilty to firing four shotgun blasts into a Japanese American home, was given a six months' sentence and the sentence then was suspended by the judge. This woefully poor showing by enforcement and court officials and the jury is responsible for the fact that terrorism increased in the weeks thereafter.

Local feeling in some places about Bataan and the March of Death, where newspapers have printed stories about the Nisei fighting in Europe, and nothing about their work in the Pacific against the brutal Japanese enemy, also has contributed to terror attacks against loyal Americans of Japanese ancestry. It will take the best efforts of Army officers or enlisted men who have fought with the Nisei, to reach into some of the smaller towns and rural areas of the West Coast and demonstrate that the Army has

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had proof in battle that Japanese American soldiers are loyal fighting members of our American democracy, and by their performance in the Pacific, have shown they are proven foes of the Japanese enemy.

If the Army should adopt some version of Lt. O'Connor's proposal I believe that possibly the nightriders will ride no more in California. The racist groups who deny that there is such an individual as a "good Jap" may find themselves ignored by at least some of the gullible. With the support of an overwhelming majority of West Coast residents thus secured, the families of Nisei servicemen then will be free to do their daily jobs, contribute their utmost to the defeat of Japan, and live their lives unmolested and with the respect due them as mothers and fathers of American soldiers.

It would be particularly effective if those speakers assigned by the Army, in addition to telling the audiences of the battle record of the 442nd Combat Team of Japanese Americans, could also inform the public of the battle exploits of some of the Nisei fighting in the Pacific against Japan. There are a number of stories about their Pacific fighting that have been cleared by military censors and published in newspapers in various cities. We have had reports from time to time of Caucasian officers back in this country who praised the Nisei attached to their Pacific commands. The enclosed pamphlet, "Nisei in the War Against Japan," is a compilation of some of the newspaper accounts of the job Japanese Americans have done in various Pacific combat zones.

When I first read your communication, and Lt. O'Connor's suggestion, I experienced a strong feeling of personal gratification that the Lieutenant should be moved to offer his idea. I regret that I have not had the opportunity to meet him, since the words he uses to advance his suggestion are the words of an American officer with splendid ideals of justice and fair play. The fact that he offered his suggestion, considered together with the many expressions of support for Nisei servicemen publicly offered by other American soldiers, in my opinion all adds up to prove that the boys in service have a powerful and unerring instinct for the true practice of democracy. What they believed in times of peace, they have seen confirmed in battle, that "Americanism is not and never was a matter of race or ancestry," but "is a matter of the mind and heart."

Sincerely,

D. S. Myer

Director

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SPGCE 248.8

1st Ind

LUTES:JTB:ra

Headquarters, Army Service Forces Committee on Awards, Washington, D. C.  
4 July 1945

TO: The Commanding General, Western Defense Command, Presidio of San Francisco, San Francisco, California

1. Attention is invited to basic communication from the Director of the War Relocation Authority on the attached suggestion.

2. Information is requested as to whether or not Lt. O'Connor's suggestion that military speakers of Occidental ancestry be sent to address civic meetings on the West Coast to inform the public of the deeds of these Americans who have demonstrated their patriotism beyond question will be effected within your command.

BY COMMAND OF GENERAL SOMERVELL:

/s/ LeR. Lutes  
LeR. LUTES  
Lieutenant General, GSC  
Chairman  
ASF Committee on Awards

1 Incl  
File

Copy furnished:  
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ASF #4761

Incl #4

**BASIC:** Ltr, War Relocation Authority, Dept of the Interior, dtd 18 June 45,  
Subj: Military speakers to address public meetings on battle record of  
Japanese-American soldiers in AUS.

2d Ind.

JUL 11 1945

HQ WDC, Presidio of San Francisco, California.

TO: The Chairman, Committee on Awards, War Department, Washington, D. C.

1. With reference to basic communication and first indorsement thereto, the following considerations are deemed to be pertinent:

a. During the three months that have passed since the basic suggestion was advanced, the exploits of American soldiers of Japanese ancestry have been given much publicity throughout the area of the Western Defense Command through the medium of the press, radio and public expressions of prominent individuals, including statements by the Secretary of War and the Secretary of the Interior.

b. With the concurrence of the Assistant Secretary of War, this Headquarters has adopted and pursued a policy based on the assumption that it is inadvisable for military authorities to publicly participate in discussions with reference to a matter as controversial as is this one of the return of persons of Japanese ancestry to the West Coast states. Primarily because, in final analysis, the opposition to the return of these Japanese is based on economic and racial factors, great care has been exercised throughout in the Army's participation in this program to avoid taking any action which could be interpreted by the public at large or by civil authorities or agencies as an interference by the Army in their responsibilities and functions. To adopt the basic suggestion would eventually be interpreted by those opposed to the return of the Japanese as an effort on the part of the military to pave the way for the return of large numbers of civilian persons of Japanese ancestry by extolling the military deeds of a relatively small number of American soldiers of Japanese ancestry.

c. With the concurrence of the Assistant Secretary of War, the Commanding General of the Ninth Service Command has utilized his agents to investigate, follow up, and urge action on the civil authorities where acts of violence have occurred involving service personnel. He also authorizes his agents to visit any scene where an act of violence has occurred, but only in order to procure data for his information, no other action being taken unless service personnel is involved. In the State of California, this Headquarters has sent officers to certain individuals to convey to them the belief of the Army that certain of their actions are un-American, interfere with the war effort, and to emphasize the possibility that their continuance might result in retaliation against our prisoners in the hands of the Japanese. Public appearances and discussions, however, have been carefully avoided.

2. In view of the considerations outlined above, it is not contemplated that any action will be taken by this Headquarters with reference to the suggestion made by Lieutenant O'Gonors:



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BASIC: Ltr, War Relocation Authority, Dept of the Interior, dtd 18 June 45,  
Subj: Military speakers to address public meetings on battle record of  
Japanese-American soldiers in AUS.

3. It will be noted that reference has been made to the Assistant Secretary of War. It should be understood that the policies with reference to the Japanese exclusion program are determined in the War Department by the Office of the Assistant Secretary of War. It is suggested that prior to any further action being taken with reference to Lieutenant O'Connor's suggestion, that the matter be discussed with the Office of the Assistant Secretary of War.

1 Incl.  
n/c

H. C. PRATT  
Major General, U. S. Army  
Commanding