

WWII Japanese Internment Camps: Using Primary Sources

See a lesson plan related to this material on the Wisconsin Historical Society website.

Excerpts of Letter Written by Lawrence T. Kagawa



WISCONSIN
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY

*Hkamatsu, Robert M. # 1186.
22-34*

THE WAR RELOCATION WORK CORPS

A Circular of Information for Enlistees
and Their Families

"This generation of Americans has come to realize, with a present and personal realization, that there is something larger and more important than the life of any individual or of any individual group—something for which a man will sacrifice, and gladly sacrifice, not only his pleasures, not only his goods, not only his associations with those he loves, but his life itself. In time of crisis when the future is in the balance, we come to understand, with full recognition and devotion, what this nation is, and what we owe to it."

—PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT,
in his Message to the American People,
on February 23, 1942.

The War Relocation Authority

Washington, D. C.

TO AMERICANS OF JAPANESE ANCESTRY:

The democracies of the world are joined in a fight that will be fought until it is won. In this fight, all Americans are making difficult sacrifices. Americans in every portion of the country, Americans of many ancestries, are being put to the test. How each individual, how each group, meets a particular trial will measure his devotion to his Nation.

Americans of Japanese ancestry are now making great sacrifices. You are meeting a most difficult test. Wartime considerations make it necessary for you to leave your homes, your property, and old associations on the Pacific Coast military frontier, and to seek out a new, temporary way of living for the duration of the war.

To help you as much as possible, to assist you in establishing new wartime homes, and to make certain that you will have ample opportunity to earn a living and to contribute the maximum to the Nation's production, the Federal Government has undertaken a planned, orderly relocation program.

On March 18, 1942, the President of the United States established the War Relocation Authority and directed it, a civilian agency, to cooperate with the War Department in evacuating, relocating, and providing work opportunities for all who must leave designated military areas in the interest of national security. Within the Authority, the President established the War Relocation Work Corps.

The War Relocation Authority is now establishing Federally-owned and protected relocation projects. Within these areas you will have an opportunity to build new communities where you may live, work, worship, and educate your children. Life in these new communities will be as well-rounded and normal as possible under wartime conditions.

Many of you have asked for an opportunity to undertake useful work contributing to the war effort. That is why the President established a War Relocation Work Corps in which all able-bodied workers over 16 years of age may enlist for the duration of the war. Enlistment in the Corps is wholly voluntary. Your enlistment will give you an opportunity to serve your new community in many ways: To develop natural resources, to produce food, to manufacture essential articles, and to provide community services.

My personal observations during the past month agree with the reports I have received from numerous military and civilian officials: You are all cooperating wholeheartedly and cheerfully in the evacuation and relocation

program. You are demonstrating to the American people as a whole that you will make your contribution, no matter how trying it may be.

For the War Relocation Authority I wish to say that we intend to demonstrate to the world—to our friends and our enemies alike—that this Nation, grim in the fight it is waging, can at the same time be tolerant, patient, and considerate in handling this human problem of wartime migration and resettlement.

M. S. Eisenhower

Director

WAR RELOCATION AUTHORITY