

December 3, 1975

Dear Michi:

I owe you a more complete explanation of my position since my refusal to be identified as the "Initiator of..." must have caused you considerable distress.

First, I believe being a "former prisoner, American Concentration Camp" is the best and only qualification I have for writing a review of Years of Infamy. Of all the distinguished professors and congresspersons who have praised your book, no one else (except for Edison who chooses not to be so identified) can add the poignancy of an actual victim. That's why I wrote, "For once a book has been written from the perspective of the oppressed..."

As to why I specifically declined an identification as "Initiator of...", the reasons are complicated and has to do with my concept of leadership. It is not that I am so inhumanly modest that I shun all recognition--after all, I did write that article for Amerasia Journal, which was terribly egotistical. But after writing one comprehensive account from my viewpoint, and insuring the preservation of primary documents in the Bancroft Library, it would be highly improper for me to continuously promote myself through self-serving titles.

Besides, the actual initiators were Charles Allen, Miriam Friedlander, Frank Wilkinson, and Mary Kochiyama. They raised the issue at least a year before I became involved. Of course, they got nowhere until the JACL entered the campaign: and JACL never would have become involved without pressure from the Asian American Political Alliance: and AAPA never had the necessary contacts in Congress: and the congresspersons were afraid to touch the issue until the JACL generated a facade of respectability: etc., etc.. All this is to say the campaign's success must be attributed to a complex set of circumstances and the work of hundreds of organizations and thousands of individuals, all of whom were mutually interdependent, with no single group capable of achieving the goal by themselves. My own role was an attempt to mesh all of these diverse elements into common cause.

As an organizer, I try to develop a sense of importance, satisfaction, and recognition in every person who participates. The most damaging, and invariably fatal, thing that could happen to a nation-wide legislative campaign is for one or two individuals to receive all the publicity. During the Title II campaign, I systematically encouraged every committee member to go out on television appearances, press interviews, and public speaking engagements, so that many more people besides Edison and I received media exposure. The very diversity of people taking active roles--from ordinary citizens to nationally known politicians--created a situation whereby no single individual could take all the credit when it was all over. I am still active as an organizer and any inference of self-credit-taking would destroy my creditability.

Concerning the "relegation" of the repeal drive to a footnote, I believe that to be perfectly proper. Your book is about the World War II experience, not necessarily about subsequent events. Any criticisms on that point would be wholly unjustified.

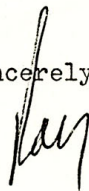
It's too bad we did not become aware of each other sooner. At least my wife, Taeko, whose personal background is identical to that of Wendy Yoshimura, would have gladly given you an interview. Taeko's family answered "no-no", was sent to Tule Lake, renounced, expatriated to devastated Hiroshima, later regained citizenship and returned through the efforts of Wayne Collins. Another person around here, playwright Hiroshi Kashiwagi, has been outspoken about his "no-no" and draft refusal roles at Tule Lake. Perhaps when your book is published, it will give more former renunciants the courage to speak out.

Incidentally, I met Mr. & Mrs. Yoshimura at Wendy's court hearing yesterday and asked them about how they regained their citizenship. They informed me that Wayne Collins indeed was their attorney. If you wish to correspond, their addresses are:

Mr. & Mrs. Frank M. Yoshimura
4714 E. Dwight Way
Fresno, California 93702

Ms. Wendy Yoshimura
c/o Santa Rita Rehabilitation Center
Women's Quarters
P. O. Box 87
Pleasanton, California 94566

Sincerely,



Ray Okamura

Early Critical Acclaim for YEARS OF INFAMY

... a truly excellent and moving book ... YEARS OF INFAMY is hard hitting but fair and balanced. In its careful, detailed coverage, it shows just how unnecessary, unconstitutional, cruel, and destructive of all human values was the removal of the people of Japanese origin to concentration camps. ... The story has often been told, but usually with an emphasis on the silver lining ... Michi Weglyn concentrates instead on the other side of the picture ... It is a terrible story of administrative callousness and bungling, untold damage to the human soul, confusion and terror. It reminds us not to close our memories on this phase of our history with the facile thought that it all turned out happily in the end. For thousands it did not, and more unseen damage exists than most suspect. ...

—Edwin O. Reischauer, Educator (Harvard University) and former U.S. Ambassador to Japan

YEARS OF INFAMY reminds us with burning reminiscences of a shameful time in our history ... the senseless creation of concentration camps ... (let's stop kidding by calling them "detention" camps) ... YEARS OF INFAMY is required reading for everyone who says, "It can't happen here." ... we can never repair the damage done to loyal and decent Americans.

—Dore Schary, playwright and author, Go For Broke

... a powerful and absorbing book. It eloquently reminds us of a painful period when America, caught up in the passion of war, betrayed the principles of liberty and justice so basic to its own self-image. This reminder is necessary if we are to avoid the repetition of those tragic years.

—Daniel K. Inouye, United States Senator

Those of us who feel justifiable pride in fighting Japanese imperialism during the early 1940s can only feel shame at the injustices visited upon Nisei and Issei at home while our backs were turned. Michi Weglyn has ably documented this sad chapter in our history, and told it as a compelling morality play.

—William Manchester, The Glory and the Dream

I was greatly impressed ... Michi Weglyn's book takes a giant and much needed step in bringing to light this unfortunate episode in our Nation's history. ... my highest recommendations ...

Spark Matsunaga, Member of Congress

Once I started reading Michi Weglyn's YEARS OF INFAMY I couldn't put it down. Every page says something important about an unconstitutional action by the Federal Government, which still in large measure refuses to recognize the enormity of the wrong done to a loyal group of American residents and citizens. Ms. Weglyn's documented essay clearly shows that those who did the interning were dehumanized while those who were interned retained and expanded their humanity.

—Patsy T. Mink, Member of Congress

Excellent ... a work of high merit and genuine originality which goes well beyond the considerable literature on the subject. ... The phrase in the subtitle, "the untold story," is not a publisher's blurb but the truth. It is a remarkable tribute to Michi Weglyn's tenacity and intelligence that she has unearthed documents that a series of trained scholars and reporters overlooked ... If this book attains the success it deserves, perhaps one consequence will be that, at long last, a decent retribution will be made to the heirs of those made to suffer and incur considerable losses ... Postwar Nazi Germany tried to pay for the country's injustice, but the payment to Japanese Americans was a hollow mockery.

—Dr. William Petersen, Robert Lazarus Professor of Social Demography, Ohio State University

... a well documented and compelling work which describes the plight of the loyal, and I can attest, very brave and gallant Americans of Japanese ancestry during World War II. The 100th Infantry Battalion and 442nd covered themselves with glory. ... I was proud to have them in the Fifth Army.

—Gen. Mark W. Clark, U.S.A. Ret.

... a monument to our heritage. For too long, I felt that no one could capture the story that must be told. Finally, we have the chilling unvarnished truth — in a definitive work of fine research and sensitive writing which brings enlightenment with each new paragraph. No other book on the subject contributes so many new facts: the shameful conspiracies, the official deceptions and coverups ... a masterful contribution to the rewriting of that part of our history too long distorted and misrepresented. YEARS OF INFAMY is a must for every library in the land and must reading for every American. ... It's DYNAMITE!

—Edison Uno, Educator (San Francisco State University) and Hearst Award recipient (1973) as Outstanding Civil Libertarian

The volume provides important insights ... a valuable contribution to the understanding of a tragically mistaken wartime decision.

—Carey McWilliams, Prejudice, and Editor The Nation

... the first major departure ... the author reveals critical facts heretofore buried in government files ... Michi Weglyn writes with great compassion and strength of the years of injustices, deprivations, and losses ... For once a book has been written from the perspective of the oppressed, not the oppressor and their apologists.

—Raymond Okamura, Former Prisoner, American Concentration Camp (1942-45)