

Student authored letters of protest.

Describing our Houses

I owned a small home on 360 Powell Street with my husband Tadashi and puppy Miki. Miki is a labrador mix breed. Miki was very playful and kept us company. We had just gotten him and now he is gone. Moving on, my husband first bought our home nine years ago. It was very rundown and broken. Finally after four years of fixing it and scraping up enough money we had a safe home. The barbershop we owned was on the bottom floor. That was all of our income and business. My husband and I having spent most of our lives practicing styling and cutting hair. As a girl I would always style my sisters and my mother's hair when we had special occasions or just for fun. Adding to that we had many beautiful headbands and hair clips from Japan on sale. The upstairs interior is very cozy even though we had very little and had to work extra. Some things were given to us from our dear Canadian friends and good customers. We have two very special family heirlooms. One is a beautiful water jug passed down to me by my mother. It was made in Japan. Then we have some pretty blue handmade curtains from my husband's side of the family. I cherished all these possessions and wished to keep them forever.

Letters of Protest

January 16, 1947

Dear Government,

Greetings. My name is Hisa Ikeda. I am a 31 years old, married, and pregnant Japanese-Canadian woman. My husband and I are very upset about some of the things that are going on.

I am writing to you because my husband and I are very angry and concerned about what you have decided to do to Japanese-Canadians. I think our internment is very unfair because we are all Canadians and we all deserve to be treated equally no matter what race we are. Some of us do not even speak Japanese and have never been to the country. I don't even think any of us have ever done anything to help the Japanese army.

This leads me to my very first concern which is about my property and possessions. I recently received a notice saying that my property is on sale and I have gotten \$155 for all my possessions, which have been auctioned off. I am not an idiot. Of course I did not get a fair amount of money. On top of all that you promised our properties would be untouched. That means you have broken that promise. When you release us from the internment camp (if that ever happens) we will have no home to go back to. In addition to that my friend Mary-Anne Crocker sent me a letter saying that some of my possessions have been looted. Thankfully, she managed to save the jug, which is a

family heirloom, but when she got to our property the curtains were all ripped and torn.

My next concern is about the internment shack. It is very small. I have no space to do anything and I am inside all day long. There is a woman in the shack with four kids and no husband. Two of the kids are babies. Then there is a six year old and a ten year old. All of them cry nonstop that they want to go home, which makes it nearly impossible to sleep. I believe I should get a good night's sleep if I am expecting a baby. I would really like it if you changed the way we live in the internment camp.

Last but not least is the problem about my husband being sent to the Prisoner of War camp in Angler, Ontario. We write to each other every day and my husband tells me how there are armed guards and there is barbed wire around the whole camp. Also he has to work all day. He was not allowed to bring any of his possessions, but at least I have something left of him. Hopefully I will get to see him again, which means you will have to bring him back.

I would like to conclude my letter by asking one question. Will you ever regret your decision to intern Japanese Canadians? I certainly hope so. You have ruined the lives of many Japanese Canadians. We do not deserve this punishment.

Yours Truly,
Hisa Ikeda

Dear Government,

My name is Iwasaki Fujiwara. I am 18 years old and I am a Japanese-Canadian. I used to live on 379 Powell Street but now am living in an internment camp. My property on 379 Powell Street was a very nice house. It was cozy, not too big, not too small, but a place that I could call home. I had a diary/notebook that was my mother's and a camera that was my father's. They were both passed down and were TAKEN by the government.

The main reasons why I am writing to you is because I think that it is unfair that just because my family or ancestors were Japanese doesn't mean that I am and I don't even know how to speak Japanese that well anyway. I think that we shouldn't be sent to these internment camps because of our background. I believe that we should be able to stay at our homes and live our normal lives.

I think that another thing that was unfair was that we could only bring a certain amount of things and I had things that I couldn't bring that were important to me, like a dress that was my grandmother's when she was young that she gave me before she passed away.

You had promised me and every other Japanese-Canadian that we would have our property untouched but now properties are being sold. You did not keep your promise to us.

In conclusion, I hope that you understand that the things that have happened to all the Japanese-Canadians is your fault, and we didn't deserve any of it.

Sincerely,

Iwasaki Fujwara

Dear RCMP Office/Government Office,

I am Ito Hayashiya, Age 45.

I am writing about my concerns of the recent mistreatment of many Japanese Canadians across Canada.

One of my many concerns is my property and possessions which you have both sold at a very low price for such originally high value. In fact I believe most of my possessions were sold at roughly an eighth their value.

I am writing (as I said before) about the negative actions the government has taken out on Japanese-Canadian citizens, specifically the racism, discrimination, and general negative publicity.

My property, Hayashiya Cafe - better known as Snakes and Lattes - was a large amount of my income and has been sold. Have you thought out what will happen when this war ends? We will have nowhere to go.

My possessions have also recently been sold, but not all of them. See, the problem with that is some of them (the ones that weren't sold) were left in our property to be possibly robbed or looted. This is extremely insulting and it angers us beyond tolerable.

We hope you will consider this letter and give in to our demands. If not, you might notice that we will tell our story to the media.

Sincerely,
Ito Hayashyia

Greetings,

My name is Mukai Otomatsa. I am 40 years old. I fish and I have a wife and 2 kids. I work at the local fish market on Powell Street. I own a boat, a house, fishing gear, a car, and a fish market. I am writing this letter because I work very hard. I get fish from the sea and come back and sell it. Now Canadians are forcing us out of British Columbia because we are Japanese Canadian.

My second concern is why the government is moving us away just because we're Japanese, which is discrimination and racism. Those who are not Japanese don't get sent away. It's not fair

From: Mukai Otomatsu

Dear Government,

Greetings. My name is Tumara Akido. I am a Japanese-Canadian citizen who has been affected by your decision to intern all Japanese. My family has been living in Vancouver, BC for our whole lives. I am a parent to two and a wife. I do not appreciate the way that the Japanese are being treated. I am concerned about your decision to intern all Japanese, Canadian or not.

I would like to begin by describing my family's possessions. The ones that you took away from us forever. My husband and I own a sewing machine store on Powell Street. I am a professional sewer and tailor. We sell sewing machines that are made in Japan. We also own fabric made in Japan. These fabrics are very rare and hard to find. I have worked on my collection of these rare fabrics for my entire lifetime. These fabrics are a part of my heritage and because I live in Canada, which is my home, you still have no right to take these things away from me. I am Canadian but also Japanese. But even so, the possessions I have bought and the property I own cannot be sold and taken away forever. Now my family has nothing to come back to. My children will never grow up in the house that they were born in. They will never play with the beautiful Japanese dolls that I once played with. In the past when I thought about Canada, I never imagined that something so horrid as this could ever occur in my home, Canada.

I am writing to you today because I believe that the way the Japanese are being treated is unfair. We are all humans and we deserve to be treated equally. We have not done anything that should suggest internment camps. We do not pose a threat to this country. This is our home. Why would we want to destroy it? The majority of us have

never even been to Japan or speak the language. If we were sent back to Japan we would never survive. The Japanese are as much a part of Canada as anyone else.

We Japanese are being robbed of our traditions. With everything taken away from us, we cannot pass on our traditions to our children. My daughter will never play with our 140-year-old doll that has been passed on for generations. Without our traditions we are lost.

In conclusion I would like to ask these simple questions: Will you ever be sorry for the way that you have treated us? Will you give back all that you have taken away from us? I remember when I was younger. Every morning before school started we would sing the National Anthem. I recall how I would proudly sing the first line. It was the line that always stuck with me. O Canada, our home and native land. But now I'm not sure if I can call it that any longer.

Hello,

I am working on a project with a research group at the University of Victoria called Landscapes of Injustice (<http://www.landscapesofinjustice.com>). I piloted a unit for the research group on Japanese-Canadian Internment and Dispossession last year and need to make a video showing our work for the education section of their website as well as for presentations at community centres, universities, etc.

Since most of my students from last year graduated, I wondered whether I could use Citlalli in the video. She would be reading some letters written by a student who graduated last year. I have already recorded her reading, but it's not publicly posted, so I could remove her section if you weren't comfortable with it.

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Thanks!