

## LETTER FROM PROFESSOR GORDON CHANG

Dear Students:

Letters, diaries, and other privately written material provide us readers today invaluable insights into the lives of people in the past. This personal material can reveal someone's inner thoughts and feelings, which are usually more candid or emotional than what might be expressed publicly, and with these perspectives, we can gain a fuller appreciation of their times and experiences. We can also more vividly imagine their lives as they were lived. We are therefore fortunate to have the writing of Professor Yamato Ichihashi, himself a professor of history at Stanford University at the time of World War II, to tell us about his years in a wartime internment camp, where the federal government required him and his wife, Kei, to live during the war.

Professor Ichihashi arrived in the United States from Japan, where he was born, in 1894. He was a teenager and came here to study. He graduated from high school in San Francisco, received his university education at Stanford, and earned a doctoral degree from Harvard. He taught at Stanford from 1913 until his internment in 1942. During a long and productive career, he became known as a specialist on Japanese history and foreign relations, publishing books and many articles on the subjects. But it is his privately written material that he left about internment that may be his greatest legacy today. He died in 1963.

His material provides us with the most extensive—in fact, the only—first-hand, on-the-spot account of the entire internment experience. Other accounts only provide information about partial aspects of internment or are based largely on memory, which the passage of time influences. As important as are these accounts, they do not have the detail and immediate feeling contained in material composed as the events were lived, such as the material produced by Ichihashi.

His writing records his life from the moment he left his home on the Stanford campus to his return three long years later. He wrote letters to his closest friends, such as Payson Treat, with whom he had worked at Stanford for more than twenty years. He kept a personal diary in which he entered thoughts about his life and descriptions of his activities and surroundings. Often he made multiple entries for a day, recording events as they happened and describing conversations as they transpired. His writing, in other words, provides us with an unmatched way of knowing about internment and its effects on someone.

Ichihashi was an especially capable witness to internment. He was completely fluent in English as well as Japanese. In the prewar years, he was one of the leading specialists on Japanese-American community life. He was perhaps the most eminent internee in the camps. And because of his stature and reputation, others, both internees as well as camp administrators, constantly turned to him to ask for his advice and help. His vantage point on the internment experience was therefore especially unique.

But Yamato Ichihashi was not a detached observer of events. He was also a victim and endured hardships along with the tens of thousands of other Japanese Americans during the war. He experienced deprivations, cruelties, and hardships which took a toll on his physical and mental health and on his own family. During internment, his health deteriorated and the pressures of confinement destroyed his family life. He became permanently alienated from his wife and only child during the war.

When you read these materials, think about the conditions and experiences they describe and what it might have been like for you to have lived through them. You might think about how you would have reacted to the events and conditions described by Ichihashi. You might also think about how Ichihashi's correspondents might have felt when they read these letters and reports from their close friend.

Although I am a very different person than Ichihashi—my background, generation, and life experiences are all very different—I was deeply moved when I studied his material. I was touched by his humanity; that is, I could feel what he experienced, at least in part, as another human being who had suffered injustice. But I could also feel part of his strength in his effort, exerted day by day, to record the difficult life that he was forced to endure. And I felt respect for his legacy of writing that he has provided posterity.

Sincerely,  
Gordon Chang

Chang, Gordon, editor and annotator, with a biographical essay by Gordon H. Chang: *MORNING GLORY, EVENING SHADOW: YAMATO ICHIHASHI AND HIS INTERNMENT WRITINGS*, Copyright 1996 by the Board of Trustees of the Leland Stanford Junior University.

Discuss the following:

- According to Professor Chang, why are Professor Ichihashi's writings so important?
- What attributes make Professor Ichihashi especially qualified as an observer of camp life?
- What if Professor Ichihashi were one of your teachers? How would you react to the news that he would have to be incarcerated? What would you do about it?
- What valuable lessons have you learned from Professor Chang?

**Diary Entry:** Read through this diary entry, which was written by Professor Ichihashi during the mass exclusion of Japanese Americans from the West Coast. A group task follows the entry.

27 May 1942

Through Hideo Furukawa of the Palo Alto [Japanese] Service Committee, [we] learned of the evacuation announcement Saturday morning (May 23, 1942) at 11:00 A.M. Summoned for registration at San Jose State College gym [on Sunday] at 8 A.M., [we] learned that Tuesday was the day of evacuation; I tried to negotiate for a one-day postponement; the office personnel were unanimous in approving, including Lieutenant Holmes, Jr., the military provost, but the Central Office at S.F. said nothing doing.

So K [Kei, Ichihashi's wife] and I busied ourselves in packing our luggage and arranging the house which was left in the care of the University. A complete set of keys was left with the Stoltenbergs and Lois Ruth Bailey. Left the house at 11:00 A.M. Tuesday (May 26th). Sam Anderson drove us to Mayfield where we assembled at the Japanese Language School, 472 Sheridan Avenue [in Palo Alto]. We were supposed to leave there at 12:00, but due to the inadequacy of trucks to carry luggage, we were detained until after 1 P.M.; we did not reach San Jose until 2:00. A medical examination was held and we did not get on the train until 3:00. It was a hot day, but we had to walk quite a distance with heavy luggage; it was cruel hardship on old people like ourselves. All this was done at the San Jose Freight Depot.

We entrained at 3:00; the cars composing this train were all old day coaches, dirty and smelly—no light in the lavatory which people, especially children, dirtied in no time. Upholstered chairs showed moth-eaten spots. Basket supper [with] sandwiches, 2 cup-cakes, an orange and milk at 6:00 P.M. This was repeated for breakfast (Wednesday). At night, heat was turned on and it got too hot, so that electric fans were turned on; thus passengers suffered either from heat or draft. This was the worst-managed train [I] experienced in the U.S., in addition to the above characteristics. Each car was guarded by an armed soldier. Beside him there was a doctor and a nurse.

All these people were nice and sympathetic. The train was supposed to reach the destination at 6 or 7 A.M. the following morning. But alas, it did not reach the Santa Anita Assembly Center till 12:30. It was a most trying trip—hot, dirty, very uncomfortable. But who were responsible for all this remains a question. At any rate, the delay was in part due to detention at Los Angeles when an electric motor had to be substituted for a steam engine; we reached Los Angeles at 7:00 A.M. but were detained until 11:30. We missed lunches. K and I got exhausted in finding our luggage and [trying] to have the same delivered to our woodshed. We had to stand in heat 2 1/2 hours. When we got to our dwelling-to-be after 3 hours, we were shocked to discover that it was empty except *mutsuki* [diapers] drying which belonged to the [people] next door. Luggage was piled up; at 5:00 [our] much hoped for "supper" was to be had. We were assigned to the Mess Hall (Red) in the Main Building. As we approached it, we heard a terrific noise (later found [out it was] the handling of used metal apparatus—metal plates designed like Stanford Union Blue Plates, a cup, a tea-spoon and a fork). Here thousands [eat] at 3 intervals. For our supper we got cherries compote [?] (white) 1/2 dozen, a small quantity of baked spaghetti, a small boiled potato, rice, and water to drink.

Thus far we saw the shed and food, both of which made us feel very sad; it was an awful come-down. But when we returned to the shed, we found two dangerous wooden cots and we were told to pack bags with straw for mattresses. This was too [much]. By negotiations, I succeeded in obtaining two iron cots with mattresses, which are deluxe equipment as compared with the former. Having not slept a wink the previous night, we slept soundly in this hideous sleeping place, if it is fit to be so designated.

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## Group Task

Develop a three-minute role-play based on one or more of the events discussed in this diary entry.

## Letter: Yamato Ichihashi to Edgar Robinson

Read through this letter, which was written by Professor Ichihashi at Tule Lake incarceration camp. A group task follows the entry.

June 25, 1942

Dear Edgar:

Thank you for the kind letter; I have been trying to write sooner but in vain. I owe a number of letters to friends, and as usual, I am behind in my correspondence. For one thing, it has been very hot with plenty of moisture, making it hard to bear. In fact, I have suffered from headaches and nose-bleed. Besides, the general condition is such that it is [difficult?] for everybody to sit at a desk and write. In addition, I have many visitors seeking my advice on all sorts of matters: I get very tired, if not exhausted everyday. Nevertheless, I am trying my best to help these helpless "residents"...

Whenever I attempt to write, I am tempted to write so much, I often get lost in the midst of writing. This may happen in this letter too; so do not expect to get anything brilliant. I am too perturbed for that. However, I shall try to tell you a few matters that might interest you ....

[In two paragraphs omitted here, Ichihashi repeats the description of camp life he gave Payson Treat in previous letters.]

If hell is a reality, our society is one; it is an awful punishment for men and women of culture and refinement. There is an article, "Concentration Camp: U.S. Style," in the June 15th issue of *The New Republic*; if you want a detailed description of another "center," read it for it presents a true picture without any exaggeration....

Dr. Wilbur has probably told you what I am trying to do in the field of "education" limited to those 16 and below. I am trying to help "teachers" engaged in the work, of course without qualification. No "formal" education is allowed until September; it is estimated that there are 4,400 children in this school-age group. No help from the management or outside is made; no equipment and no material for the "school." Yet the "teachers" are doing remarkably well, and my heart breaks when I think of the future of [these] wild and undisciplined kiddies and the task facing the teachers. At my suggestion an informal PTA was formed; I talked to the teachers and the PTA. The first gathering brought about 600 persons. I am not sure what I can accomplish, but I am persuaded to attempt what I can do to alleviate, if possible, social and moral evils already manifest. We need help from the outside in every way to prevent the breeding of [the] worst kind of humans. But alas no outsider is allowed inside the prison-gate! Reasons for this are too obvious. I must end abruptly—too many callers.

Very sincerely,  
Yamato

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### Group Task

Imagine that you are high school students in the Tule Lake incarceration camp. What recommendations would you give Professor Ichihashi for organizing the school system in the camp?

## Letter: Yamato Ichihashi to Payson Treat

Read through this letter, which was written by Professor Ichihashi at Amache incarceration camp. A group task follows the entry.

10-H 12-D  
Amache, Colo.  
Oct. 31, 1943

Dear Payson:

The typewriter has been repaired, and there is no more excuse for not writing, so here goes a partial report of this new relocation center. As has been intimated before, this center is so quiet due to the passive character of its residents; there have been no exciting events since our arrival here, and for that matter, no interesting occurrences. This is an impressive fact for one who has come from Tule Lake, although I do not wish to convey the idea that the residents of Tule Lake are a bad lot, even if they are characterized "disloyal"; for their behavior, the administration is largely responsible, or perhaps the policy of the WRA [War Relocation Authority] is, in that the people are forced to develop an abnormal psychology to an unfortunate degree. Perhaps they are foolish not to realize that the world finds itself in an abnormal state and that no one is sensible. But enough on reflection.

The camp is situated in the midst of a vast prairie, and bears a romantic name of Amache, but is more popularly known as the "Sand Hill" which is more appropriate to its natural characteristics. It is subject to famous, "unusual" weather: gales and sandstorms, thunder and lightning, cloud-bursts, hot and cold; just now hails are dropping, which might change into rain at any moment. One does not know what to wear to protect himself, and consequently illness prevails, keeping doctors very busy. However, Kei and I have been very fortunate in having escaped any illness; the only incident along this line was that one day Kei bit a small pebble mixed in rice she was eating and one of the fillings was broken; but the dentist is not supplied with necessary materials to refill it, cement alone being available. This has been our only misfortune [so] far.

The barracks here are like those of all the centers, although as compared with those of Tule Lake, they have a slightly better external appearance. They are 120 x 20 feet, and are subdivided into six "apartments" of three different sizes: 16, 20 and 24, and these are assigned to families according to their size. The windows are larger in size and allow more light into the interior; the floor is either of concrete or bricks. Apparently the insulation is poor, and conversations on either side can be heard too distinctly to our discomfort. We occupy one of the middle rooms and have for one of our neighbors, a young mother with three little children who cry and make noise aplenty for our benefit day and night. I have just secured statistical information on the residents of this block: the total population is 196 made up of 100 males and 96 females; their distribution by age are as follows:

0-17	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-Over
75	22	19	20	19	24	18

The first group is largely made of small children while most of the last age-groups are those of 60 or over, and these together number one hundred out of the total of 196. This distribution is more or less typical of the entire population of the camp, and largely explains the passive character of the people. They seem to lack aspirations of any kind; adults resemble retired people, while the majority of youngsters are in the crying stage.

This center was opened on August 27, 1942, with the arrival of the first contingent from the Merced Assembly Center, the people from the central valley, and subsequently, the residents of the Santa Anita Assembly Center joined between September 19–30. Some of the first group informed me that the camp was not quite ready for human habitation; for instance, latrines did not exist at the time of their arrival, and they suffered a good deal of physical discomforts. I can well imagine that, because the similar situation obtained when the first contingents reached the Santa Anita Assembly Center. The meals served at both places were extremely bad, causing illness of all sorts. At any rate, when the occupation of the camp was completed, the population stood at about 7,600, of which number two-thirds were nisei and one-third, issei aliens. Occupationally, one half was rural and one half was urban, with the customary distribution in respective districts; the former was composed of farmers and farm-hands from the valley, while the latter was from the city of Los Angeles. In other words, the character of the Amache population was similar to that of the other centers.

However, since the WRA adopted its policy of re-settlement, a larger number moved outside; according to a published account, more than 1,300 left the camp on October 13, 1943 to work outside permanently, i.e., these are not permitted to return to the camp. And on the same date, nearly 1,000 more were working on temporary leave; these can come back, if they so desire. The majority of these was composed of men in more vigorous age-groups, with some adventurers, young boys and girls. At the present, the population stands at about 6,400, including 1,000 recently arrived from Tule Lake; the latter is made up of "loyal" citizens and aliens, old men and women, young mothers and children, all lacking "guts."

The polio situation has subsided as the weather has become cold, and the ban on outside shopping has been removed since last Monday. We are hoping to take a trip to our nearest town, Lamar, about 10 miles to the west, where, we are informed, we can shop. At present, we confront the problem of transportation, and only 25 are daily permitted to leave the camp, and the competition is very keen. In the meantime, we are more fortunate than most of the residents because of our discovery of new relatives who have been helping us in many ways. This week an Aichi man whom we used to know at Sacramento, but a resident of Colorado for the [last] 17 years, paid us a visit; we were mutually surprised by our grey hair: mine has grown quite white due to the lack of necessary vitamins. The food served here is particularly poor; it could not be otherwise, since the WRA spends only 32 cents per capita per day. Yet Kei and I have done fairly well so far, and you must not worry about us; somehow we will continue to manage to keep up our pep.

Hoping that this note will find you, despite your hard work in the garden, in the best of health, and your Madam in the same state, [I] remain,

Very affectionately yours,  
Yamato

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## Group Task

Imagine that you are a news correspondent for a weekly news magazine. Payson Treat has provided you a copy of this letter. Write a three-minute phone interview with Professor Ichihashi.