

King County Jail
May 21, 1942

University Friends Meeting
3959 15th Ave., N.E.
Seattle

Dear Friends:

Being confined behind bars and clanking doors, one would very naturally picture my being totally shut off from life. On the contrary I find myself in the midst of it. As a member of a true international fellowship, I am constantly meeting unusual personalities, and their amazing experiences. And though the English vocabulary here may be said to be lacking in quality, the quantity is surely there. The boys represent all walks of life. They represent anywhere from third grade to a college degree in education. There are all types of religion, and some to which no sect would claim ownership. True democracy is practiced without reservation. I add, with pride, that they have accepted me as one of the boys.

With a new sense of humility I shall attempt to live true to my highest self. When I realize the problems which the Negroes have faced and are now facing, when I think of the suppression of the other minority groups and the misery which is theirs, my problems become very insignificant. Yet, I owe it to life to make the most positive move within my control. Sometimes, a definite NO can be the most constructive move.

I hope I have not caused too much embarrassment to you. I am aware of and am thankful for the understanding qualities of the Friends for all action springing out of a sincere conviction.

The cheery words from outside I look forward to with great anticipation. I am thankful for the fellowship which is ours; I receive much needed strength through it.

I hope to keep in constant touch with you.

Sincerely,

Gordon Hirabayashi

Excerpts from a letter to Gordon Hirabayashi, the member of our Friends meeting, who is in the King County Jail because he could not conscientiously allow himself to be evacuated as an American citizen of Japanese ancestry.

May 24, 1942

Dear Gordie:

You were close to us through much of Monthly Meeting Friday evening. It was pointed out that you were led to your decision, not by the remarks of any of your friends, but by something outside us all. Regardless of consequences you felt you must follow a leading you had received. It didn't matter to you whether you ever had a trial, whether you won your case, whether the Bill of Rights was upheld - what mattered was that you were following the Light as it had been given to you.

The hope was expressed that we would not try to make a hero of you. We shall want to do everything that is right and proper in connection with the legal aspects of your case and are eager to stand by you, but not to worship you, because after all you are merely following your Inner Light and don't want a lot of publicity and excitement.

Several called attention to the way in which you are following the tradition of early Friends by accepting prison life as a consequence of doing what you feel is right. Throughout the Monthly Meeting there was a feeling of agreement and unity, a feeling that what we were saying was "Truth", a feeling that if you had been there you would have been in agreement with us and a real feeling that you were there with us.

I am sorry we have not been able yet to receive permission to visit you, but I think you know we are with you whether or not we are there in person.

Yours heartily,

Tom Bodine