Ruth A. Leppman Papers

Collection number: 2006.12

Japanese American National Museum
Los Angeles, California

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Claire Gordon
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Lauren Zuchowski

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Descriptive Summary
Title: Ruth A. Leppman papers
Dates: 1942-1953
Bulk Dates: 1952
Collection number: 2006.12
Creator: Leppman, Ruth A.
Collection Size: 2 folders
Repository: Japanese American National Museum (Los Angeles, Calif.)
Los Angeles, California 90012

Abstract: This collection contains letters between Kiyoko Oda and Ruth A. Leppman and cover Kiyoko’s time at Gila River, her return to Japan in 1943, and her process of returning to the United States that began in 1951. The collection also includes Kiyoko’s sponsorship documents for her re-entry into the United States.

Physical location: Japanese American National Museum 100 North Central Avenue, Los Angeles 90012

Access
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Preferred Citation

Biography / Administrative History
Kiyoko Oda Hiramatsu was born in 1914 in Giru, Japan. She immigrated with her parents in 1920 and graduated from Oberlin College and Conservatory of Music in 1938. The first few letters were written in 1942 between Kiyoko and her Quaker college friend Ruth Armstrong Leppman. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Kiyoko decided to enter the camps rather than impinge on her friends in the Midwest and ended up at Gila River before returning to Japan with her parents in 1943. One typed letter contains the poignant handwritten marginalia: "My piano is for sale."

The correspondence begins again in 1952, as Kiyoko was working at a U.S. Army base in Gifu. She began the procedures of trying to return to the United States, first through a 'private bill' sponsored by a congressional representative, but eventually entering in 1953 under an immigration visa as returning resident alien after the McCarran-Walters immigration law passed in 1952. The collection includes Ruth's correspondence with several congressmen and blank affidavit forms that were used to prove that Kiyoko would not become a public charge.

After returning to the United States, Kiyoko worked for Bank of American in California. She married a widower, Richard Hiramatsu, whom she had known in Gila. They settled in Santa Maria, where Kiyoko had spent part of her childhood. Kiyoko and Ruth lost touch for many years, but got in contact again in the late 1980s and visited before Ruth died in the 1990s.
Scope and Content of Collection
This collection is largely comprised of letters, with a bulk of the materials relating to Kiyoko’s sponsorship to re-enter the United States. Ruth was instrumental in securing Kiyoko’s sponsorship through her outreach with congressmen. This is a valuable collection indicating the on-going friendship between a Japanese American woman and Euro-American woman that spanned decades and continents. It also illustrates the role of Quakers helping to mitigate the consequences of the incarceration, even into the following decades.

Arrangement
The letters are arranged chronologically between two folders.

Indexing Terms
The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library’s online public access catalog.
Leppman, Ruth A.
Hiramatsu, Kiyoko Oda
Japanese Americans
World War II
United States. War Relocation Authority
Japanese American evacuation and resettlement
Gila River Relocation Center
Gila River Indian Reservation (Ariz.)
Oberlin College. Conservatory of Music
Oberlin College
Gifu-shi (Japan)
Oberlin (Ohio)
Santa Maria (Calif.)