

Injustice in Motion



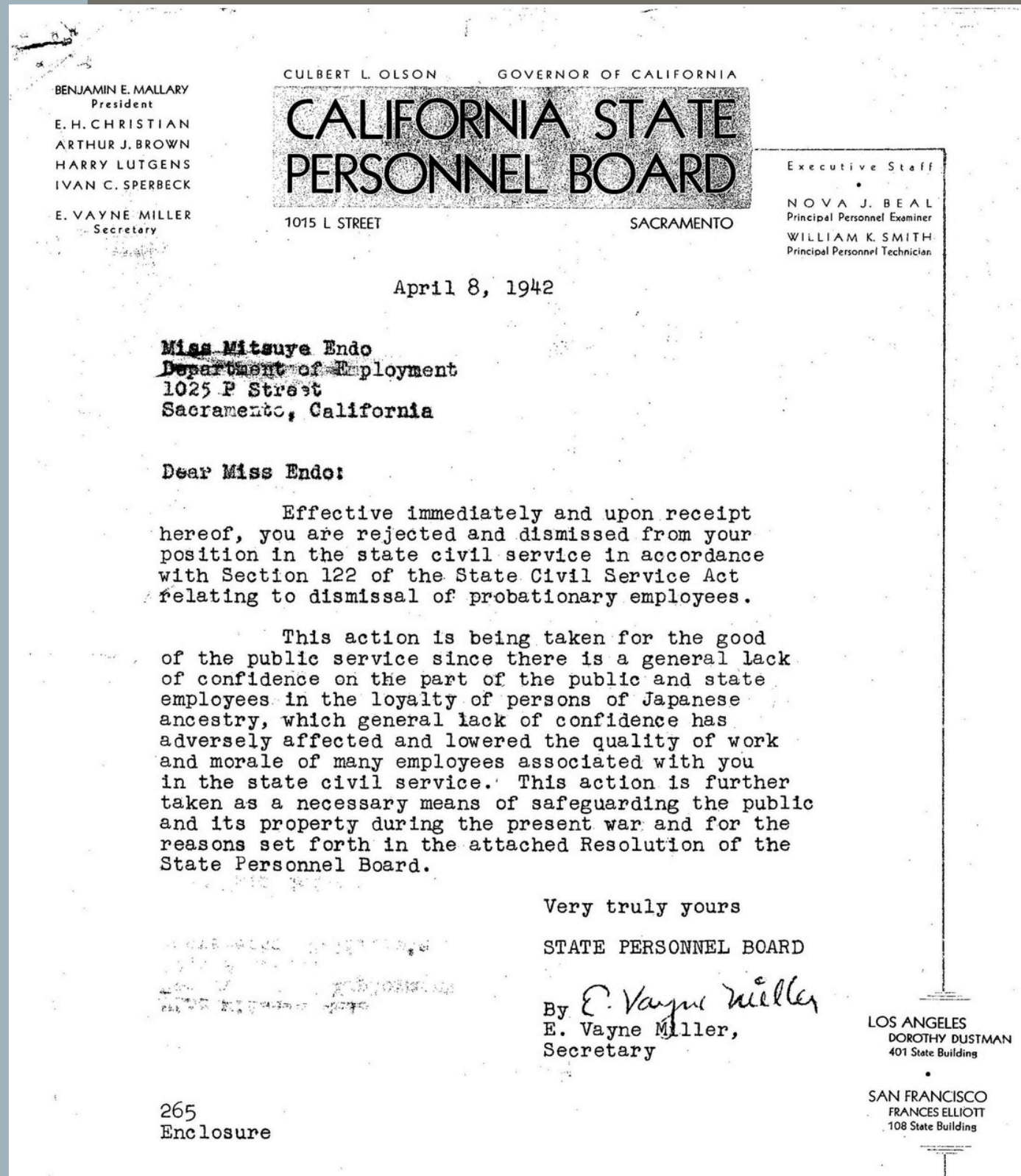
Mitsuye Endo
National Archives

Mitsuye Endo & Family

Mitsuye Endo was a young Japanese-American woman born to Japanese immigrants Jinshiro and Shima Endo. The second oldest of four children, Ms. Endo was born on May 10, 1920. She was a second-generation Japanese-American, also known as a Nisei. She lived in Sacramento's Japantown, where her father worked at a grocery store. Ms. Endo's family was Christian, and her brother served in the military. After high school, Ms. Endo worked as a typist in the California Department of Motor Vehicles. Her family, like many other Japanese-American families, faced significant discrimination and hardship during this period.

Endo's Termination

On February 27, 1942, the California State Personnel Board (SPB) fired 314 Japanese Americans, claiming these employees were disloyal. The SPB claimed that this "disloyalty" contributed to an unproductive work environment and could be dangerous. Mitsuye Endo was employed at the California Department of Motor Vehicles when this news came, forcing her to leave her job. Ms. Endo and 63 other fired employees worked with the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) and attorney James C. Purcell to pursue a case of wrongful termination.

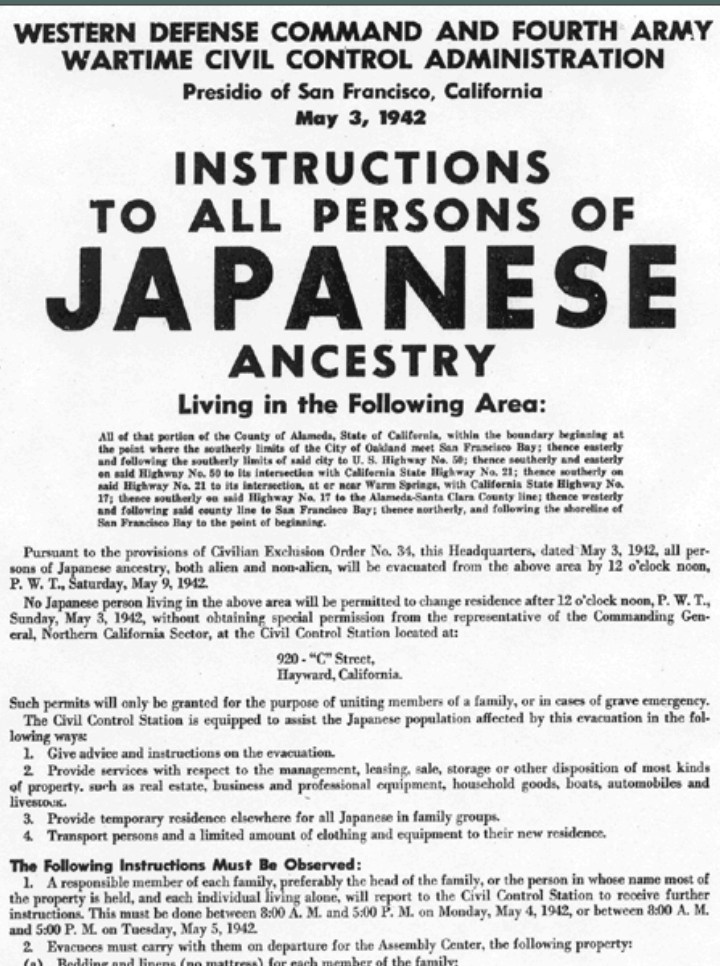


State Personnel Board suspension letter to Mitsuye Endo.
We Hereby Refuse by Frank Abe: Interactive Timeline



FIGURE 16-4—SACRAMENTO ASSEMBLY CENTER

Aerial view of the Sacramento (Walerga) Assembly Center.
Densho Encyclopedia



A civilian exclusion order posted in San Francisco.
National Archives

First Stop: The Assembly Center

In May 1942, following Executive Order 9066, Mitsuye Endo and her family were forcibly removed from their home and sent to the Walerga Assembly Center (depicted above). Assembly centers like Walerga were temporary and built hastily. This was the first step before relocation to the more permanent and remote incarceration camps. The Endos and other Japanese-American families were packed into buses and allowed only one suitcase for all of their belongings. They had to sell everything else for cents on the dollar or, if they were lucky, have friends preserve their items.

"It is my conclusion that said order, discriminating as it does against naturalized citizens and against American born citizens... violates the civil liberties of citizens as guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States..."

Earl Warren, Attorney General of California

