

Huntington Beach Civic Center
2000 Main Street
Huntington Beach, California
Rooms B-7 and B-8

Thursday Evening
8 September 1983

Hon. Daniel E. Lungren, Congressman
42nd. District (California)
House of Representatives
Washington, D. C.

Dear Congressman Lungren,

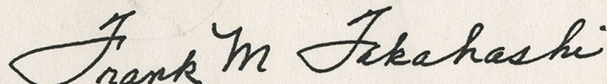
As one of the constituents of this congressional district since 1971,
I request that you act favorably upon the following:

Please read the attached four-page letter into the Congressional Record
in order that your colleagues in the House of Representatives may be exposed
to a perception of the issue of redress sharply divergent from the one you
advocated recently.

Consider accepting my standing invitation to you and Hon. S. I.
Hayakawa to join me at some mutually acceptable public forum in Long Beach,
California, for the purpose of airing our profoundly differing concepts of
Japanese-American imprisonment and the concept of redress as partial
compensation for that unconscionable and unconstitutional violation of
the rights associated with American citizenship. I suggest asking editors
of the Long Beach Press-Telegram to sponsor and publicize this event.

Thank you for your prompt attention to these matters.

Yours sincerely,



Frank M. Takahashi

Enclosure

20701 Beach Blvd., #44
Huntington Beach, California, 92648

Tel: (714)-536-4045

Frank M. Takahashi
20701 Beach Blvd., #44
Huntington Beach, CA, 92648
8 September 1983

Hon. Daniel E. Lungren, Congressman
42nd. District (California)
House of Representatives
Washington, D. C.

Dear Congressman Lungren,

As far as I have been able to determine, investigation into redress for Japanese-Americans as a consequence of unconscionable violation of their rights by the United States government during the Second World War has not focused upon what I view as the paramount issue of American citizenship. As you are vice-chairman of the Commission on Redress, please inform me if I am in error respecting this contention.

Because you are my Representative in the Congress of the United States, I wish you would respond to the following questions:

1. If a citizen of the United States is unconstitutionally denied the rights of citizenship enjoyed by all other citizens, together with full protection of the laws, does that injured citizen enjoy a right to redress, particularly if the national government has been the agent of oppression? Yes? No?

2. Except for the supreme right of physical survival, is there a more precious "right" the United States government might violate than the constitutional right to enjoy life, liberty, and property as an American citizen? Yes? No?

I am a native-born American citizen, genetically Japanese, culturally Occidental, legally American. While I perceive myself, first and foremost, as an American, others in our society, past and present, have elected to treat me as if I were a subject of the Japanese Emperor, subjecting me in the process to the most degrading and humiliating treatment imaginable.

While living in the city of my birth, Long Beach, California, Congress and the President ordered military conscription as World War II approached. When I registered with Selective Service, I was classified 1-A as were most other healthy American males of draft age. Then, however, in the wake of the aerial bombardment of Pearl Harbour by subjects of a foreign power, I was arbitrarily reclassified 4-C, a category that defined my status without trial or conviction: "an enemy alien!" In other words, just because the armed forces of another nation attacked the United States, I, though an innocent bystander, lost my home, my job, my liberty, and my citizenship in the hysteria and shuffle that followed!

Early in 1942, I was wrenched away from the place of my birth, without regard for due process of law, and was unceremoniously thrown into first one, then another, concentration camp, policed by armed forces of the United States. I had not been indicted for any crime.

F.M. Takahashi to D.E. Lungren, 8 September 1983

2

My loyalty to this country never had been impugned. And yet, I was forced to take and pass a humiliating "loyalty test," before the armed guards would pass me through the gate into an approved education-work program on the outside.

Some time thereafter, I was again reclassified by Selective Service, regaining the 1-A rating I had held before the United States formally went to war in December 1941. I was subsequently drafted into the United States Army, became a member of the 542nd. Parachute Infantry Battalion, and was honorably discharged from the service at the end of hostilities.

Now for just a few remarks about my Mom and Dad. Both arrived on American shores before World War I, but, because of discriminatory federal laws then operative, neither ever was eligible to become a naturalized citizen of the United States in the manner of migrants from almost all nations in the world, except those in the Orient! Thus, when Congress declared war upon Japan in 1941, my parents technically became "enemy aliens!" Unlike German and Italian immigrants who arrived in this country at the same time as my folks, and soon became American citizens, my Mom and Dad, despite the fact that they sent five sons to fight in the uniform of the United States Army, died during the war, locked up in a concentration camp! One related incident should be set forth at this time. During the 1970s, the Freedom of Information Act opened the national archives to ordinary researchers and citizens, one of whom discovered a shocking conspiracy on the part of this government to offer the exchange of 100,000 American citizens of Japanese ancestry and their involuntarily resident-enemy alien parents for prisoners of war held by the Japanese government!

I have recently come across printed statements attributed to you in which you strongly opposed any form of compensation to Japanese-American victims of institutionalized oppression. If I am in error, please do not hesitate to correct me. On the basis of several articles I studied in various newspapers, I gather your opposition rests upon one or more of the following arguments:

1. German-American citizens received no compensation for injustices perpetrated upon them during World War I. I have never read that Americans of German descent were legally barred from becoming naturalized citizens of the United States at any time, nor were they consigned to government-run concentration camps between 1917 and 1918.

2. American blacks have not received any compensation for past injustices. Technically speaking, blacks were naturalized en masse through adoption of Amendment XIV in 1868. While those constitutional rights advanced in that amendment were not regularly observed during much of the century which followed, blacks were neither deported nor jailed in national concentration camps.

3. American Indians have not received any compensation for past injustices. Formal citizenship was extended belatedly to Indians during 1924. Again, since they lost their status as a dependent people, Indians have not been locked up--either on

F.M. Takahashi to D.E. Lungren, 8 September 1983

3

reservations or in concentration camps.

4. Americans of Mexican ancestry have not received any compensation for past injustices. Pardon me for repeating what must sound like an old refrain, but, as far as I have been able to ascertain, Mexican immigrants were not prohibited from becoming naturalized American citizens and were not incarcerated in national concentration camps.

I thought it curious that you did not mention American women in your listing of groups subjected to past discrimination in one form or another. Was this just an oversight, or did you decide it would have been impolitic to take a stand against the right of women to sue for compensation growing out of demonstrable forms of discrimination.

For the past forty years, I have diligently sought evidence that some other identifiable group in this country experienced the humiliation of rejection by society, repudiation of citizenship or outright denial in the case of original immigrants, and imprisonment without trial, suffered by Americans of Japanese ancestry--and I include my parents in this category, because they were Americans at heart, regardless of their callous treatment by a hostile national government. The most significant conclusion I have reached, and the facts will bear me out, is that "individuals in high places" conspired unconstitutionally and immorally to deprive me and those I loved of one of their most cherished possessions: the right to live at peace in the United States without harassment or discrimination.

Some Americans may believe the pittance of \$25,000 in compensation for what thousands of Americans endured during World War II is far too much. Personally, I find it almost insulting. In consideration of the despicable abuse I suffered, together with my family and our friends, the dehumanizing disruption of family lives and thriving businesses, and all the other long-term consequences of that most painful episode in my entire life, a hundred-fold, two hundred-fold, a thousand-fold still would be too modest to eradicate the memories. But something immediate and dramatic must be done to establish a precedent so as to discourage others from future emulation. Those individuals who are permitted to exercise power in a democratic society must be held accountable for any excesses committed against innocent people with little or no recourse against the violence and injustices heaped upon their heads.

Even though it was entirely without a factual base, I can appreciate the state of hysteria and fear of conspiracy and treachery which predominated in this country forty years ago when national survival seemed at stake. Nevertheless, if my fundamental constitutional rights could be suspended in a time of crisis, whose may not face the same interruption during the years which lie ahead? We Americans are prone to boast that "this is a government of laws and not of men." Unfortunately, the most perfect of laws is subject to interpretation by the most imperfect of men. No amount of money can compensate me for the losses in terms of reputation, self-esteem, and self-confidence inflicted upon me unjustly. Still, I am entitled to at least a gesture in that direction and expect it.

F.M. Takahashi to D.E. Lungren, 8 September 1983

4

I should like to rest my case with another ancient legal maxim to which citizens of this country customarily give lip-service: "Justice deferred is justice denied." Americans of Japanese ancestry have had justice denied them during the 1940s. Must they witness the added embarrassment of having it further deferred during the 1980s?

Sincerely,

Frank M. Takahashi
Instructor in History (now retired)
Long Beach Unified School District
Former Recreational Director
City of Long Beach