

COMMISSION ON WARTIME RELOCATION AND INTERNMENT OF CIVILIANS



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Issued November 5, 1981
For Immediate Release

NEW YORK COMMISSION HEARING TO FOCUS ON RESETTLEMENT EXPERIENCE OF JAPANESE AMERICANS DUE TO WARTIME EXCLUSION FROM WEST COAST

The Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians will hold a public hearing in New York City on November 23 to gather historical and factual information on the resettlement of Japanese Americans in the eastern states as a result of government-ordered removal from the West Coast during World War II.

The nine-member Commission was created by Congress in July of last year to review Executive Order 9066 issued by President Franklin D. Roosevelt on February 19, 1942 and U.S. military directives that required removal from the West Coast and portions of Alaska and confinement in remote camps of approximately 120,000 civilians, including Japanese American citizens, permanent resident aliens and Aleut native citizens.

The Commission has already held hearings in Washington, D.C., San Francisco, Los Angeles, Seattle, Chicago, Anchorage and the Aleutian and Pribilof Islands in Alaska and has received testimony from more than 700 individuals.

The day long New York City hearing will be held in the Terrace Room of the Roosevelt Hotel beginning at 9 a.m.

Commission Chair Joan Z. Bernstein said, "The Commission has heard extensive testimony from hundreds of witnesses concerning conditions and experiences in the internment camps and the impact of confinement on individuals and on family structure. Now the Commission will focus on the experiences of Japanese Americans and resident aliens who resettled in the East because of the wartime exclusion and detention in the western states.

"In addition, the Commission is seeking testimony from Japanese Peruvians who were removed from Peru to the United States during the war, detained in camps until its conclusion, and then relocated in 1946 to work at Seabrook Farms in Cumberland County, New Jersey," she said.

The Commission also seeks testimony from religious organizations concerning their role in the relocation of Japanese Americans and others during World War II, and other persons with professional expertise relevant to the relocation experience.

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Persons interested in presenting oral testimony on November 23 should immediately contact the Commission office at 202-395-7390 and submit a two paragraph statement outlining their proposed testimony to the Commission, Suite 2020, 726 Jackson Place, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20506.

Because of time limitations the Commission will be unable to hear oral testimony from everyone wishing to appear, but the Commission will receive written statements by anyone wishing to testify.

The Commission is charged by Congress with looking into the facts and circumstances surrounding the issuance of the Executive Order and the impact of removal and internment on the Japanese Americans and others and making recommendations on appropriate remedies.

Later this year the Commission will conduct a meeting in Boston to consider legal precedents for redress and possible procedural and legislative measures as remedies to prevent a breakdown of the protection of civil liberties in the future.

"Through our extensive hearings around the country, the participation of hundreds of individuals and many organizations, and our deliberations on legal precedents, we hope to be able to make recommendations on remedies to the Congress which are based on a complete objective and unbiased review," Bernstein said.

Members of the Commission in addition to Chair Bernstein, a Washington, D.C. attorney, are Rep. Daniel E. Lungren, Vice Chair, Long Beach, Calif.; former Senator Edward W. Brooke, a Washington, D.C. attorney; Father Robert F. Drinan, President of Americans for Democratic Action; Dr. Arthur S. Flemming, Chair of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission; former Justice Arthur J. Goldberg, President of the American Jewish Committee; Father I.V. Gromoff, Unalaska, Aleutian Islands; Judge William M. Marutani, Judge of the Court of Common Pleas of Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania; former Senator Hugh B. Mitchell of Washington state.