

NO MORE INTERNMENTS!

1985 DAY OF REMEMBRANCE COMMITTEE

FOR JAPANESE AMERICAN REDRESS

February 7, 1985

On February 19, we mark the 43rd anniversary of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's tragic signing of Executive Order #9066 which resulted in the forced removal of 120,000 Japanese Americans and their parents to U.S. internment camps during World War II. The same Executive Order also authorized the removal of the Aleutian people from their homes on the Aleutian and Pribilof Islands to abandoned canneries and mines in Alaska.

We are writing, at this time, to request your support, and that of your organization, in our struggle for redress and reparations for those unjustly uprooted and incarcerated. We hope you will join the movement to prevent the recurrence of similar acts in violation of constitutional and personal property rights.

Within a few months after E.O.#9066 was issued in February 1942, the entire Japanese population on the West coast was removed to ten major concentrations camps in isolated areas in the desert, mountains and swamplands of Arkansas, Wyoming, Idaho, Utah, Colorado, Arizona, and the eastern outskirts of California. Other individuals were also detained in North Dakota, Montana, New Mexico and Texas. The confinement lasted for the duration of the War. Seven internees were shot and killed by U.S. soldiers ; 1,862 inmates died during the incarceration from illnesses or from lack of adequate medical care. More than 1,000 were later hospitalized in mental institutions and tuberculosis hospitals. Some Japanese on the East coast were jailed on Ellis Island in New York City. It is estimated that 10 percent of the evacuated Aleuts died during their two- or three-year stay under the harsh conditions of the Alaskan camps. Citizens and permanent residents alike were publically branded as "the enemy," "disloyal," or "traitors" without due process or a shred of evidence.

In spite of these injustices, more than 33,000 Japanese Americans served in the U.S. military during World War II. The unprecedented valor and sacrifice of the all-Japanese 100th Infantry Battalion (dubbed the 'Purple Heart Battalion') and the 442nd Regimental Combat Team (which suffered 308 percent casualties) helped to counter the prejudice and hostility against Americans of Japanese ancestry. Much less known were the heroic exploits of nearly 6,000 Japanese Americans, assigned to the Military Intelligence Service (MIS), who served in the Pacific Theatre of Operation attached to every branch of the U.S. Armed Forces and to other Allied units. They, too, suffered casualties disproportionate to their numbers.

There was lasting suffering and trauma--the loss of homes, farms, businesses, and other property; the destruction of cultural and community ties; the injury to careers, professional advancement and health; as well as the denial of freedom and dignity. Over the past 43 years, many have sought justice and compensation, with meagre

results. Although the issues were largely ignored in the past, persistent community effort has sustained a movement for redress and reparations, which has grown significantly in recent years. National organizations in the Japanese American community, such as the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), the National Coalition for Redress/ Reparations (NCJAR), and the National Council for Japanese American Redress (NCRJ), along with the Washington Coalition for Redress (WCR), have advanced various legal and legislative measures seeking justice. The continuing support of many concerned individuals and organizations in the larger community has been critical to the success of these efforts.

Legal measures have included three coram nobis petitions filed in January 1983 in federal courts (Korematsu, Yasui and Hirabayashi) and a major class action lawsuit. The coram nobis petitions seek to overturn the convictions of three men who were found guilty of violating the Executive Order. Korematsu's conviction has been rendered void. The class action lawsuit, filed by NCJAR in March 1983, is directed at the wholesale violations of constitutionally guaranteed rights and the resulting damages that require compensation. Work on the appeal continues.

The Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (CWRIC) was formed in 1980 by Congress to review the facts and circumstances surrounding E.O.#9066. Its findings were issued in February 1983, concluding that "a grave injustice was done to American citizens and resident aliens of Japanese ancestry." It established that the evacuation was not justified by military necessity, and that the decisions made at that time were shaped by race prejudice, war hysteria and a failure of political leadership.

In June 1983, the Commission issued its recommendations for an apology on behalf of the nation to those Americans of Japanese ancestry who were interned, for the establishment of a trust fund for educational and humanitarian purposes, and for monetary compensation for surviving internees, including Aleutians. These are now embodied in legislation before Congress. This year, on January 3, Congressman Jim Wright, House Majority Leader, introduced the Civil Liberties Act of 1985 into the 99th Congress. This bill, H.R.442, has 100 co-sponsors, 26 more than in the 98th Congress. The Senate version, to be numbered S.100, will be reintroduced by Senators Inouye and Matsunaga, among others; it had 20 co-sponsors in the 98th Congress.

In the Greater New York Metropolitan area, many individuals and organizations are involved in this struggle for justice and the movement to see that this never happens again to anyone, whatever their national or ethnic origins. Our local Committee is composed of representatives from the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF), Asian American Mental Health Project-Japanese Unit (Japanese American Counseling Center), Concerned Japanese Americans (CJA), 442 Veterans Association, Japanese American Citizens League (JACL)-New York Chapter, Japanese American Social Services, Inc. (JASSI), and Japanese American United Church. New York State is believed to be the first state to go on record with a resolution supporting a federal law to enact the findings of the CWRIC; it was passed unanimously by the State Assembly on June 30, 1984, and the State Senate on December 6, 1984. Robert Machida, of Glen Cove, L.I., was the driving force behind this resolution.

There is still a great deal to be done. We need your support at this time:

1. We invite you to attend our Day of Remembrance Program this year on February 23 at the New York Buddhist Church (332 Riverside Drive, near 105th Street), from 1 - 3 pm, and ask your help in publicizing the event. (Flyers enclosed; call if you would like more.)

2. We request a letter from you or your organization endorsing the redress and reparations effort, that we may use in further outreach and education. If we receive it by February 23, or if someone from your organization could call us by then, we would be pleased to announce your support at our Program.

3. Join our letter-writing campaign to your Representative and Senators in Congress asking them to support the Civil Liberties Act of 1985, H.R.442 and S.100. Send us a copy of your letters.

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

4. Use the tear-off section below to let us know if you would like to have a speaker for your group or would like more information. We welcome additions to our mailing list and suggestions of other organizations or forums where we may do more education on this issue.

PLEASE JOIN US!

For more information, call: (days) Phil Tajitsu Nash (212) 966-5932
Bill Kochiyama (212) 926-7412
(evenings) Leslee Inaba Wong (212) 964-6226
Lani Sanjek (212) 865-8134

Return to: 1985 Day of Remembrance Committee for Japanese American Redress (c/o Apt. 3G, 320 Riverside Drive, NY 10025)

NAME/ORGANIZATION _____

ADDRESS _____

_____ zipcode _____

TELEPHONE _____

CONTACT PERSON(S) _____

____ Send more information. ____ Contact us about a speaker.

____ Add the following to your mailing list: