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# Japanese American Citizens League

Seattle Chapter

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## SEATTLE CHAPTER

## JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZEN LEAGUE

### TESTIMONY BEFORE

### U. S. COMMISSION ON

### WARTIME RELOCATION AND INTERNMENT OF CIVILIANS

BY:

LLOYD F. HARA, PRESIDENT

SEPTEMBER 11, 1981

I am Lloyd Hara, Chapter President of the Seattle Japanese American Citizens League and very proud to be speaking on behalf of its 800 members before this distinguished body. This year, the Seattle Chapter will be celebrating its 60th Anniversary. We are one of the founding JACL chapters.

We have a long history of representing members of the Japanese American community. In Seattle, JACL is an active organization with a history of promoting and involving Nikkei in its community, such as the protection of human rights, programming for youth activities, elderly and aging, supporting cultural activities, community education, and other socio economic programming. In recent years, a major activity has been the Redress Issue.

Many members of the Seattle Chapter, like Henry Miyatake, Shosuke Sasaki, Chuck Kato, Mike Nakata, Ken Nakano, Tom Kiozumi, the late Mas Tomita and others brought the issues of Redress to the Seattle Chapter's attention in 1973. These are the pioneers of the present Redress movement. Through their perseverance, the Redress Issue was presented to the National JACL Board in 1974. The Redress Issue was formally presented to the 1976 JACL National Biennial Convention. It became a National JACL Project with its highest priority.

Initially there were 3 basic objectives for Redress:

- (1) REVOCATION OF EXECUTIVE ORDER 9066
- (2) COMPENSATORY PAYMENTS
- (3) REVERSAL OF THE EFFECTS OF THE SUPREME COURT DECISIONS -  
THE KOREMATSU AND HIRABAYASHI CASES

We have successfully revoked Executive Order 9066 through the efforts of Washington State Justice James Dolliver and former Governor Daniel J. Evans, who worked with President Gerald Ford to issue the Revocation Order.

I am before you today to follow through on our 1973 goals to reverse the effects of the decisions of the 2 wartime cases and to seek compensatory payments.

As an outgrowth of the earlier efforts in Seattle and the growing support from other JACL chapters throughout the country, I find myself before the committee today to "right a wrong."

We believe that 120,000 civilians of Japanese ancestry, most of whom were native born American citizens, were wrongfully and unjustly relocated and detained in concentration camps pursuant to Executive Order 9066. You will hear the personal experiences of the injustices perpetuated on the west coast Japanese Americans and will soon discover the evacuation was not for security purposes but out of economic greed and racial prejudices.

I want to convey that we believe that our constitutional rights were in fact violated, especially the 5th Amendment which states, ". . no person shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law.." We did not receive "due process." There should be no question that we in Seattle suffered economic hardships, but also had its toll in the social and psychological impact on the internees and their families.

There are many things the Commission could recommend as appropriate Redress, a clear violation of the rights of Japanese Americans, such as a public apology to the Japanese American Community by the President and Congress; the correction of American History textbooks about the Japanese American experience, the passage of laws to assure a similar incident will never occur again...



However, the Seattle JACL strongly supports the above, but places it's priority with the position of:

- (1) INDIVIDUAL MONETARY REDRESS PAYMENT FOR THOSE PERSONS WRONGFULLY AND UNJUSTLY IMPRISONED IN CONCENTRATION CAMPS DURING WORLD WAR II.

This community has responded to a community opinion poll showing that 91% want monetary redress of which 36% want individual payments; 58% specified either individual or block grant payments.

Monetary redress is important because, in the American system of justice, monetary compensation has been the traditional means to satisfy a wrong. We have already seen the Alaska Natives, American Indians and others bring their cases before Congress to right past wrongs with monetary compensation. Monetary Redress can be equated as a faithful attempt by the American Government to be just.

- (2) THAT MONETARY REDRESS SHOULD BE PASSED BY CONGRESS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

- (3) THAT THE AMOUNT OF MONETARY REDRESS SHALL BE WITHIN THE FOLLOWING:

- (a) As proposed in 7th District Congressman Mike Lowry's Bill, (D Washington) the "World War II Japanese American Human Rights Violation Redress Act", which is \$15,000 plus \$15 for each day of internment.
- (b) The tax allocation method whereby \$15,000 plus \$15 for each day of internment, whereby those persons choosing payment of their individual Federal Income Tax would check off and allocate their portion of tax for Redress payments.
- (c) A payment of a \$25,000 payment for all citizens interned or forced to evacuate from their residence.

We support legislation to Congress for any one of these three methods of payment.

This is a small amount to request for the price of injustice on the part of the United States Government.

The total amount requested is only equal to the present value of the real property lost in 1942. The Federal Reserve Bank conservatively estimated \$400 million, but today, based again on the Federal Reserve Bank inflator since 1942, the \$400 million escalates to approximately \$3.0 billion. Again this is a very conservative figure, since real estate values have escalated substantially greater than the inflation rate especially since most land owned by Japanese Americans was located in the urban areas.

Additionally, no provisions were made for lost incomes for those interned in the camps. Many persons lost or greatly reduced their incomes after the war because they lost their businesses, their former jobs and accepted menial jobs. Some persons were never able to acquire sufficient capital to restart their businesses. Lost income just from 1942 - 1945 for those interned is estimated to be \$260 million, which becomes approximately \$2.0 billion in 1981 dollars.

Other losses such as personal property was not taken into consideration by the United States Government. The "opportunity losses" during a period of prosperity during World War II and into the 1950's were tremendous. Most Japanese Americans had to start all over and it was not until the middle 1960's and into the 1970's before sufficient income could be amassed to again more fully utilize their potential to prosper.

In closing, we believe it has been the American tradition of making monetary payments to "right a wrong." We will never be fully compensated for the total economic losses, the social suffering and humiliation, and the basic loss of human liberties. It is under crisis situations when our constitutional rights become vulnerable and are truly tested. Even recent episodes such as the Iranian hostage crisis where certain Americans were calling for the locking up of Iranians and the deportation of Iranian aliens living in this country, raises the specter that it could happen again to other Americans, especially those of color. The loss of individual freedoms under the protection of our constitution and the story of the concentration camps for any United States citizen or legal alien must not be repeated again. We cannot turn away from what is just and right. I would expect the Commission also to support our position.

Thank you.