



PACIFIC SOUTHWEST DISTRICT COUNCIL

JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE

244 South San Pedro Street, Room 507, Los Angeles, California 90012 • (213) 626-4471

"DAY OF REMEMBRANCE"

CLOSING STATEMENT

H. HITOSHI KAJIHARA

PACIFIC SOUTHWEST DISTRICT REDRESS CHAIR

FEBRUARY 19th, 1983

February 19th is a most significant day for Americans of Japanese ancestry. February 19th is the day that freedom, liberty, equality, and justice were withdrawn from 120,000 United States citizens and their legal resident parents.

February 19th is the day that the president of my country issued Executive Order 9066 which authorized, without due process, the enmasse uprooting and incarceration of 120,000 persons of Japanese ancestry into ten concentration camps of United States vintage located in ten barren, desolate wastelands of these United States.

It was no picnic, it was no holiday, it was no vacation. It was deprivation, it was humiliation, it was sadness, it was painful, it was frustration. It was a tragic day for the Americans of Japanese ancestry and a tragic day in the history of these United States.

Born out of this tragedy, the victims of Executive Order 9066 are once again marshalling their energies in a positive undertaking, with dedicated efforts by their Sanei and Yonsei children who want to right the wrong they feel were inflicted on their grandparents and parents. I refer to the Redress and Reparation effort now unfolding.

The Japanese Americans have undergone a unique experience in modern United States history. What other group can better give testimony to the delicate and fragile nature that is freedom, liberty, equality, and justice? It is indeed an obligation and duty of the Japanese Americans to give this testimony to make certain that the injustices and deprivation inflicted on one ethnic minority shall never ever happen again to any people in these United States.

I view the Redress and Reparation movement as a means of raising the consciousness and awareness of my fellow Americans. A formal declaration by my government is sought that the wholesale uprooting of the Japanese Americans during World War II by Executive Order 9066 was wrong. However, apologies alone will not get the attention of my fellow citizens, monetary awards will.

In this country, it is accepted practice that when a person, company or government commits a wrong, restitution is accomplished with money. In this instance, it is not possible to set a monetary figure to compensate for lost opportunities, lost wages, lost property, incarceration without due process, medical deprivation, psychological damage to some, and on and on. In terms of a dollar figure, a total loss of \$10,000 of 1942 money grows to three quarters of a million dollars of 1983 money. Therefore, redress money to the victims of Executive Order 9066 can only be a symbolic amount. What is a sufficient symbolic amount that will draw the attention of my fellow citizens? \$25,00.00? \$50,000.00? \$100,000.00?

Persons of Japanese ancestry have undergone a unique experience. This unique experience is enmasse denial of our cherished civil liberties and wholesale incarceration in concentration camps. It did happen in these United States. This fact must be indelibly etched in the minds of all Japanese Americans and our fellow citizens of my country. We must constantly and continuously maintain our vigilance to make certain that such tragic occurrence shall never ever happen again to any group of people in my country. This is my duty and responsibility. It is your duty and responsibility. Each of us who have come together to observe the 1983 "DAY OF REMEMBRANCE" must take with us a firm resolve to take all necessary actions to preserve and protect freedom, liberty, equality, and justice for all.