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# Another Chance for Healing

Staff Sgt. Kazuo Masuda, a member of the Army's 442nd Regimental Combat Team, earned a Distinguished Service Cross when he was killed leading a night patrol across the Arno River in 1944. His parents and sisters were informed of his death while they were living behind barbed wire, in a Japanese-American internment camp in Arizona. When the family later tried to return to their farm in Orange County, they encountered threats and discrimination from neighbors still hostile to Japanese-Americans; a local cemetery refused at first to bury Masuda. In December, 1945, Maj. Gen. Joseph W. (Vinegar Joe) Stilwell heard of the family's troubles and visited their farm to award Masuda's medal posthumously.

Accompanying Stilwell was a retired Army captain who, later that day, commended Kazuo Masuda and other Japanese-Americans for their patriotism in a rally at Santa Ana Bowl. "The blood that has soaked into the sands of the beaches is all one color," the captain said. That captain was a movie star named Ronald Reagan. To this day, Kazuo Masuda's relatives remember how touched they were by Stilwell's act, how healing Reagan's comments were, how important it was to have men of that stature on their side. "Their presence really affected the community at a crucial time," Masuda's sister, June Masuda Goto, said the other day.

Attitudes have changed in four decades—there's now a Kazuo Masuda Middle School in Fountain Valley, his hometown—but for the Japanese-Americans who were ousted from their homes on the West Coast, labeled potential subversives and dispatched to relocation camps, World War II has never quite ended. Even as they have gotten

on with their lives, the shame has endured.

Ronald Reagan now has another chance to help heal old wounds and to redress one of the great injustices in American history. Coming to his desk in the next few weeks is a bill that calls for a formal apology and a \$20,000 payment for each of the estimated 60,000 Japanese-American internees still living. We think he should ignore the advice he is receiving from some members of his staff, who object primarily to the \$1.3-billion price tag, and sign it into law.

Some may think of the bill as settling an old debt, as Sen. Daniel K. Inouye (D-Hawaii), another veteran of the 442nd, put it. But a check for \$20,000 doesn't begin to cover the financial losses of Japanese-Americans who lost their homes and their businesses. We prefer to think of the redress bill as a way to correct the historical record.

By signing the bill, President Reagan would put the presidential stamp on the findings of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians. After an exhaustive study, the commission five years ago concluded that there was no military justification for the detention of Japanese-Americans and that no Japanese-Americans were ever implicated in spying. The expulsions were ordered in 1942 because of "race prejudice, war hysteria and failure of political leadership," the commission found.

Although all this may sound like ancient history to those Americans born since World War II, we think redressing this old injustice is vital because it will make official what Japanese-Americans have been saying ever since they were so cruelly imprisoned—that they did nothing wrong.