

# ORA Should Have Extended Eligibility Date for Those Born in Interior, Says NCCR

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National Coalition for Redress/Reparations is disappointed that only claimants born on or before Jan. 20, 1945, qualify for redress.

The National Coalition for Redress/Reparations (NCCR) was bitterly disappointed by an announcement earlier this week from the Office of Redress Administration (ORA) that Jan. 20, 1945 has been designated as the cutoff date determining potential redress eligibility for children born in the interior states after their parents either evacuated or were interned from the prohibited zones during World War II.

"I'm extremely disappointed that the ORA did not extend eligibility to the children born in the interior beyond January 20," commented Kay Ochi, vice president of NCCR.

"Their decision, based on the effective date of Proclamation No. 21, is troubling. After seven years of dialogue with the ORA about the cruel human tragedy of these years, I had hoped that they would give greater consideration to the context of the times and the terrible conditions families were forced to live in.

"They could not just get up and go home in two or three weeks."

In an update to community leaders, DeDe Greene, administrator of the ORA, announced that in the cases affected by the Ishida court decision, "an eligible claimant must have been born on or before January 20, 1945."

"This date was chosen since it was the effective date of Proclamation No. 21, which rescinded the exclusion orders for the last six prohibited zones on the West Coast and lifted the general civilian exclusion restrictions on persons of Japanese ancestry everywhere."

Attorney General Janet Reno gave the final approval by signing these regulations on April 14. The regulations were published in the Federal Register on April 24.

Greene indicated that after a 30-day public notice period, the ORA will begin notifying the claimants of their status. The ORA has about 1,400 claims under review. Payments for eligible Ishida claimants will begin in the fall.

According to Ochi, NCCR urged the ORA to use June 30, 1946, as the cutoff date. "We estimate that over 500 claimants will be found ineligible since they were born after Jan. 20, 1945."

Richard Katsuda, president of NCCR, criticized the Department

of Justice's decision to cling strictly to the letter of the law.

"They're only looking at what's 'legally sufficient' to determine an eligibility birthdate," he said. "NCCR has always believed that our community deserves much more than that, and we will continue to seek other avenues to secure redress for those who were born after the Jan. 20, 1945, cutoff date."

Greene also announced that two new categories of claimants have been found potentially eligible through administrative decision. The ORA reconsidered the claims of individuals who were born in an internment camp to a mother on visitor status or individuals who lived in camp as a "visitor" while still a minor.

Although these cases were once considered ineligible, recent administrative action made about 35 potentially eligible based on similar reasoning used with the minor relocatees. Just as the minors on the Gripshom could not voluntarily choose to relocate to Japan, ORA recognized that children born in internment camps to "visiting" mothers or brought into camp as minors could not voluntarily choose to enter camp.

Also, the ORA decided that "certain claimants who left the West Coast for graduate school in the non-prohibitive zone before the voluntary evacuation period are now eligible for redress. It was previously held that graduate students had voluntarily changed their permanent domicile," Greene said.

"A review of similar cases involving undergraduate students showed that individuals who left their homes in the prohibited zone to attend school in the interior did not necessarily change their permanent domicile. Applying this rationale to graduate students, an administrative decision reversed the ineligibility status of this small group of claimants. To date, four claims have been found potentially eligible," she said.

The ORA reported that the redress statistics as of April 29 are 80,304 cases paid, 2,861 individuals whose whereabouts are unknown, 1,396 ineligible and 1,420 cases affected by the Ishida decision.

Individuals interested in contacting the ORA should call their toll-free number: 1-888-219-6900. Callers are asked to leave a detailed message regarding their concerns. An ORA representative will return the call within two weeks, or sooner if immediate attention is needed.

For more information on NCCR, call (213) 680-3484.