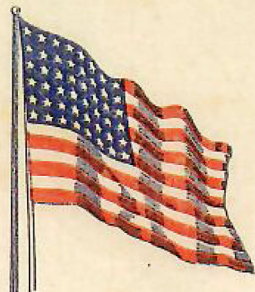


Ikuko

The Japanese American Creed



I am proud that I am an American citizen of Japanese ancestry, for my very background makes me appreciate more fully the wonderful advantages of this nation. I believe in her institutions, ideals, and traditions; I glory in her heritage; I boast of her history; I trust in her future. She has granted me liberties and opportunities such as no individual enjoys in this world today. She has given me an education befitting kings. She has entrusted me with the responsibilities of the franchise. She has permitted me to build a home, to earn a livelihood, to worship, think, speak, and act as I please—as a free man equal to every other man.

Although some individuals may discriminate against me, I shall never become bitter or lose faith, for I know that such persons are not representative of the majority of the American people. True, I shall do all in my power to discourage such practices, but I shall do it in the American way: above-board, in the open, through courts of law, by education, by proving myself to be worthy of equal treatment and consideration. I am firm in my belief that American sportsmanship and attitude of fair play will judge citizenship and patriotism on the basis of action and achievement, and not on the basis of physical characteristics.

Because I believe in America, and I trust she believes in me, and because I have received innumerable benefits from her, I pledge myself to do honor to her at all times and in all places; to support her constitution; to obey her laws; to respect her flag; to defend her against all enemies, foreign or domestic; to actively assume my duties and obligations as a citizen, cheerfully and without any reservations whatsoever, in the hope that I may become a better American in a greater America.

—Mike Masaoka.

As read before the United States Senate and printed in the Congressional Record, May 9, 1941

Alamedans during WWII Takano's Call to Action

Long before Pearl Harbor,” recalled Mike Masaoka of the JACL* in 1982, “a man by the name of Munson, purportedly representing the State Department and White House, came out to the West Coast and he spent three days with Mr. (Saburo) Kido and me discussing the possibilities of war. In August, mind you, in 1941, and saying that the government wanted to protect all people of Japanese ancestry on the West Coast from any violence if there should be any kind of attack or declaration of war between the two countries.”



Masaoka 1981

Just two months later, a concerned Masaoka contacted a 12-year-old Nisei girl from Alameda, CA., named Ikuko Takano, to do her patriotic duty, and read the JACL creed over radio station KROW in Oakland.



Ikuko “Cookie” Takano
Takeshita in 2022

“There were about four or five men who came over,” Ikuko, later known as Cookie, recalled in 2023. “They said that things were not going to be good for the Japanese people. They asked my father if I could read the creed. I showed my mother to read. “My mother was so proud, but she didn’t understand a word of it! They were 100% Issei. They barely spoke English.”

Concerned about her new task, Ikuko went to her grammar school teacher for help. “The day before I was to read it, I asked Miss Buckley, I have to read something over the radio, I want to make sure I pronounce everything correctly,” Ikuko said. “She said it was the most beautiful thing she’d ever heard, how wonderful, I have to show it to the Principal,” who was so enamored with it he shared it with the faculty. “They told the whole faculty. My father was so proud.”

When the Takano family went to their World War II incarceration camp in Amache, Colorado, Iku-ko’s mother, Ineko, took the creed with her. “After the war, I found it,” Ikuko said. “My mother thought it was important, so I’m glad she kept it. I have it framed and it sits in the living room.”

*Founded in 1929, the **Japanese American Citizens League** is the oldest and largest Asian American civil rights organization in the United States. Photo of Mike Masaoka courtesy of Frank Abe, Densho. Masaoka quote courtesy Resisters.com: [click here!](#)