

May 19, 1980

Mr. William J. Yoshino  
Japanese American Citizens League  
5415 North Clark Street  
Chicago, Illinois 60640

Dear Mr. Yoshino:

Mr. Rosen has shared your letter of May 7 with me. I have enclosed for your information an ADL statement directed to Senator Ribicoff which outlines the ADL position re H.R.5499 and S.1647. As Mr. Rosen indicated to you, the ADL fully supports those bills. If I can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Very truly yours,



Debra H. Nesselson  
Midwest Counsel

DHN:abs  
enclosure

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Anti-Defamation League  
Washington, D.C. Office



DAVID A. BRODY  
Director

MARVIN S. RAPPAPORT  
Assistant Director

March 26, 1980

Hon. Abraham A. Ribicoff  
Committee on Governmental Affairs  
3308 Dirksen Building  
Washington, D. C. 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith welcomes this opportunity to give you its comments in support of S. 1647, a bill introduced by Senators Inouye, Matsunaga, Hayakawa, Cranston, McClure and Church, to establish a commission to look into the events surrounding the relocation and internment of over a hundred thousand civilians of Japanese ancestry during World War II. More specifically, the bill would "establish a factfinding commission to determine whether a wrong was committed against those American citizens and permanent resident aliens relocated and/or interned as a result of Executive Order 9066 and other associated acts of the Federal government, and to recommend appropriate remedies."

B'nai B'rith, founded in 1843, is the oldest and largest Jewish service organization in the United States. Its educational arm, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), was organized in 1913 to advance good will and mutual understanding among all Americans and to combat discrimination against Jews and other religious, racial and ethnic groups. It has had a long history of working together with the Japanese American Citizens League and other civil rights groups to assure that every individual receives equal treatment under the law, regardless of race, creed, color, sex or national origin.

March 26, 1980

On February 19, 1942, shortly after America's entry into World War II, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 which empowered military commanders to prescribe certain "military areas" from which they could exclude any and all persons. The order did not mention any specific group of persons. Yet, during the following four years, this authority was used by officials of the United States government to remove and incarcerate some 77,000 American citizens of Japanese ancestry, and 43,000 Japanese nationals, most of whom were permanent U.S. residents.

Many people believe the attack on Pearl Harbor was the justification for this relocation of Japanese Americans. In fact, military necessity was the reason given by the government for this action. But, if national security was the rationale, why were Japanese Americans in Hawaii not similarly interned, and why were German and Italian aliens not subjected to similar restrictions? Why were Japanese Americans subjected to wholesale internment when no person of Japanese ancestry living in the United States, or the then-territories of Alaska and Hawaii, had ever been charged with any act of espionage or sabotage prior to the issuance of the Executive Order nor, indeed, at any time thereafter? Why, therefore, was this group of civilians singled out and deprived of liberty and property without criminal charges or a trial of any kind?

What motivated this removal and internment of unprecedented numbers of Japanese Americans and permanent resident aliens of Japanese ancestry? Was it necessary to insulate Japanese Americans from the possible effects of a wartime hysteria? Was it the consequence of prejudice and discrimination against persons of Japanese ancestry which was built up over a long period of time? These are some of the questions which still remain unanswered some forty years after these events took place.

As President Ford said when he rescinded Executive Order 9066, exactly 34 years after its issuance, "An honest reckoning, however, must include a recognition of our national mistakes as well as our national achievements. Learning from our mistakes is not pleasant, but as a great philosopher once admonished, we must do so if we want to avoid repeating them."

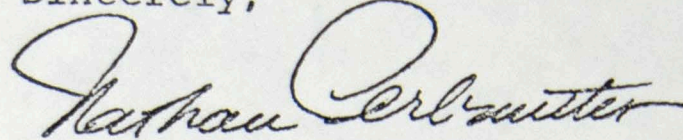
Hon. Abraham A. Ribicoff

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Committed as we are by our charter adopted in 1913, "to secure justice and fair treatment for all citizens alike," the Anti-Defamation League believes it is time for our government to look into and focus its attention on the events surrounding this mass incarceration. Therefore, the Anti-Defamation League urges early passage of S.1647.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nathan Perlmutter". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Nathan Perlmutter  
National Director

NP:dlc