

September 5, 1991

Robert K. Bratt
Administrator for Redress
U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Redress Administration
P.O. Box 66740
Washington, S.C. 20035-6740

Dear Mr. Bratt:

I would like to thank you for your kindness to my mother and myself when we attended a Redress workshop in Sacramento, Ca. on July 10, 1991. You may recall that we were inquiring into the status of non-Japanese spouses who have been denied redress because of their race. My mother, Dorothy Nakamura, had received a letter on September 14, 1990 signed by yourself notifying her that her eligibility had been finalized and payment would be forthwith. Instead, she received a letter from Paul Suddes stating that she was not of Japanese ancestry (a fact she has never denied or hidden) and therefore was not eligible. You apologized for the error and then explained that provisions for non-Japanese spouses would be included in the appropriations bill next year.

I was very impressed with your courtesy and patience, and I am sure that you are sincere. However, since that time I have done some "lobbying" on my own towards this cause. The congressional members I have contacted are just not interested at all. My representative, Robert Matsui, is now ignoring my calls. An acquaintance wrote to Representative Jim Kolbe, Arizona. I have enclosed a copy of his response. He states that according to the Department of Justice, the few non-Japanese persons who were denied redress were thought to pose a threat to the U.S. and were incarcerated due to security reasons! Based on your comments in Sacramento, I felt that the Department of Justice was our last hope. Needless to say, considering the above comment from your Department, I am quickly losing faith in the promise of justice in this instance.

You are the only government representative I have spoken with who seems to take this seriously. I have been laughed at, told I should be happy and grateful that other family members have received their redress and therefore I should let this go, and have heard comments that there are too few non-Japanese spouses for it to matter anymore. I am grateful that the U.S. government has instituted this program, but I can not watch my mother be ridiculed this way. She suffered too many abuses throughout her life in order to keep her family together to have the end result be this. I am appealing to you for any assistance or advice you may give us.

I am also enclosing a copy of a portion of the Adjudications of the Attorney General - precedent decisions under the Japanese-American evacuation claims act, 1950-56. The claim of Julius Downs, among other things, concerned his Caucasian wife and their daughter and discusses the matter of "eligibility." The court recognized a form of "constructive" Japanese ancestry for Mrs. Downs on the basis of her evacuation and of her "election" to evacuate by signing the "Waiver of non-excluded persons." I have highlighted the pertinent items and have included a copy of the waiver my mother signed at that time.

Since my mother's petition for redress and appeal were denied due to her ineligibility as a person of non-Japanese descent, I feel that this precedent decision is of import. It is my understanding that the principle of "stare decisis" would be applicable here. I am hopeful that you will find it in your heart to consider the things I have mentioned in this letter.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Yours truly,

Helen Napoleon
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