

OVER 2,000 PERSONS DENIED REDRESS

Even Some Born in Internment Camps Are Unfairly Excluded

While most eligible Japanese Americans have already received redress for the wartime internment, it is not widely known that the Office of Redress Administration (ORA) has so far denied redress to over 2,000 applicants. Many of these are appealing their cases.

The National Coalition for Redress/Reparations (NCRR) and other organizations believe that the ORA has wrongly denied redress in a significant number of these cases, due to an overly restrictive interpretation of the redress law. We appreciate the good work the ORA has done on the majority of cases, but we are working together with other groups to change the ORA's narrow interpretation.

NCRR supports all those who have legitimate claims because they were interned or otherwise unjustly deprived of liberty or property due to the exclusion, internment and related government wartime actions.

Children of the 442nd

The ORA's own regulations specifically state that persons born in an internment camp are eligible for redress. However, the ORA has denied redress to a number of individuals born in camps, saying that their mothers had left the camps and "voluntarily" re-entered camp.

Many of those born in camp were the children of men in the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, whose mothers left camp for a last visit with their husbands before the men left for the battlefield. Being pregnant and having no one to turn to outside the camps, the women in fact had no realistic choice but to return to the camps. Because of this, it is unfair to deny redress to their children.

Japanese Peruvians

There are also the Japanese Peruvians and other Latin Americans of Japanese ancestry who were forcibly brought here and interned for the purpose of prisoner of war exchange with Japan. Within some of these families, one person is eligible for redress but others are not -- even though they were interned at the same time and under the same conditions.

This discrepancy is due to the fact that the government considers eligible only those who were

later granted permanent residency status retroactive to their initial date of entry. All others are not eligible because the government claims that they were "illegally" in the U.S., even though they were brought here, admitted and incarcerated by official U.S. agencies.

Attorney General Janet Reno

We simply want to ensure that all those who legitimately deserve redress, actually get it. We think the best way to do this is to take our concerns directly to Attorney General Janet Reno. The ORA is part of the Justice Department that Reno heads up as Attorney General.

Reno has stated that she will approach every issue with the question, "What's the right thing to do?" and that she wants to "give every American a reason to believe that the Constitution is a living document that means something." For these and other reasons, we believe that she may be open to such a meeting.

Other Appeals Cases

We cannot describe all other appeal cases here, but they include: those born outside of internment camps who were interned when their mothers returned to camp; children internees who were involuntarily sent to Japan along with their parents as part of a prisoner of war exchange; families living just outside of the exclusion zone (e.g. near Phoenix) who were denied access to their jobs, schools and health care in the exclusion area.

Grassroots Action

To prevent a significant number of people from being unjustly excluded from the redress program will require a united community effort and grassroots action. It took some 10 years of hard work to win the redress law -- let's pull together to make sure that it is carried out fairly for all those it was intended for.

We ask you to support our letter writing campaign by spreading the word and giving letters to family and friends.

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