



JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE

1730 Rhode Island Avenue, N.W., Suite 204
Washington, D.C. 20036
(202) 223-1240

National Headquarters:
San Francisco, CA.

January 8, 1986

The Honorable Walter F. Mondale
Winston and Strawn
2550 M Street, N.W.
Suite 500
Washington, D.C. 20037

Dear Mr. Mondale;

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me yesterday. We appreciate your concern in the efforts of the Japanese American Citizens League to obtain redress for the terrible injustices suffered by Americans of Japanese ancestry and by this nation's Constitution during World War II.

The Japanese American Citizens League was founded in 1929 by progressive young Nisei (second generation Japanese Americans) eager to assume the full responsibilities and have the full opportunities of American citizens. The organization has struggled over the past 57 years for civil rights. It is now the oldest and largest Japanese American organization in the country, and is in effect the only national organization of Japanese Americans, boasting 114 chapters located in 24 states and the District of Columbia. For the past ten years, the organization has aimed its full resources at a resolution of the issue of wartime internment. As Americans, we are determined to make a contribution by seeing that this fracture in our Constitutional history is made whole. The lessons of history are fragile. They can disappear and be forgotten, and thus become destined to be repeated. As victims who know the pain and suffering of terrible injustice, we are obligated to insure that this lesson is never forgotten. As victims, we can teach others that the unjustified and wrongful suffering of any group of its people weakens the very fabric of a democracy.

The JACL, by having American citizenship as a requirement for membership, was a young organization at the outbreak of war. The average age of the Nisei was only eighteen. When racial animosity and war hysteria led all three branches of our government to bring about the forced removal of 120,000 Japanese Americans from homes on the West Coast, we were first removed to temporary Assembly Centers in fairgrounds and racetracks, and finally to ten desolate camps in the interior of the United States.

Our community, while behind barbed wire, under the watch of armed military personnel, and with their welfare and even very survival unclear, responded to their treatment in a most remarkable way. You are familiar with the history of the Nisei soldier. The book I left with you, Go For Broke, captures that story more vividly than I can here. The men of the 100th Battalion, the 442nd RCT, and the Military Intelligence service made profound contributions to our war effort. This demonstration of loyalty to country was made while leaving their families at home under armed guards. The com-

bined 100th/442nd RCT, as you are aware, became the most decorated unit in all American military history for its size and length of service. The Military Intelligence Unit, which trained at Ft. Snelling and whose emblem is the Minnesota gopher, was credited by General Wiloughby, the head of General MacArthur's G-2, for shortening the war in the Pacific by two years and saving over a million allied lives.

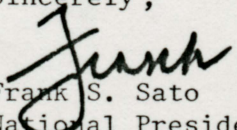
After the war, the efforts of the JACL were focused on achieving full acceptance of Japanese Americans as Americans. We utilized the initiative process to have rescinded those laws which had prohibited our parents from owning land. We lobbied in Washington to obtain the right of naturalization for our parents. We brought litigation before the Supreme Court to remove antiquated and harmful restrictions to our participation as citizens. In 1976, while the Bicentennial of the United States was being celebrated, Gerald Ford, then President, acted at our request to formally rescind Executive Order 9066 which had provided the authority for our exclusion from our homes and our subsequent incarceration in the camps until after the war.

In 1980, under the leadership of President Carter and yourself, the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians was formed to study the causes of those traumatic and terrible decisions and actions. For the first time, documents which had been classified or otherwise unavailable became publicly known and examined. What the Commission found, based on these documents and the hearings which they held, was that there was no military necessity for the exclusion and internment. Rather, the decisions were made on the basis of racism and wartime hysteria and at the instigation of certain West Coast groups and individuals. The CWRIC proposed a series of measures which would redress the wrongs done, and these proposals form the basis for H.R. 442 and S. 1053, which are currently before committees of this Congress. The booklet, Personal Justice Denied, Summary and Recommendations of the CWRIC, which I also left with you, presents the findings in a moving and succinct manner. I hope that you have an opportunity to look through it soon.

I am hopeful that you will be able to assist us in our efforts. In 1987 this nation will celebrate the Bicentennial of its Constitution. During that bicentennial year, we will experience the most expansive civics lesson in this country's history. As part of that celebration, the Smithsonian Institution will present a major exhibit on the Internment of Japanese Americans. A network mini-series on the Internment will air at approximately the same time. The story of the internment will at last be told to a broad audience. Wouldn't it be wonderful to have the remedy and resolution to such an epoch tale available at the same time?

We would be most grateful if you would agree to sign the proposed letter which I left with you yesterday. Be sure that in whatever manner you may be able to assist this effort, your support will be much appreciated. I look forward to your early reply.

Sincerely,


Frank S. Sato
National President
Japanese American Citizens League