



POSITION STATEMENT OF THE JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR REDRESS

In the spring of 1942, over 120,000 men, women, children and infants—the vast majority of whom were native-born Americans—were abruptly and forcibly evicted from their homes in the West Coast states and herded into detention camps surrounded by barbed wire, watchtowers, searchlights, and armed guards.

No charges were ever filed. No hearings or trials were ever held. No credible claims of wrongdoing were lodged against these innocent victims. Yet, they were imprisoned for more than three and a half years. Their “crime”? They were Americans born of Japanese ancestry.

Never in the history of this nation has there been such blatant and gross violations of Constitutional guarantees. Seven of the ten articles of the Bill of Rights were arbitrarily suspended without supporting evidence. The actions were taken on the basis of race and race alone. As a consequence, an entire group of loyal Americans was deprived of their Constitutional rights.

Aside from the minimum of \$400 million in property losses alone estimated by the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco in 1942, there were other devastating damages: loss of individual freedom, destruction of personal human dignity, disintegration of family life, violations to religion and culture, loss of physical and mental health, defamation of character, and loss of income.

More than 37 years have passed since these outrages occurred. Time is a great healer. Yet, in a historical sense, America must rectify mistakes of the past to the greatest extent possible if we, as a nation, are to continue as the best hope for mankind.

At a time when America calls upon the world to cherish and protect individual human dignity, this blot on our own history cannot be permitted to remain without some meaningful measure of correction.

Today, Americans of Japanese ancestry seek remedial legislation as a means of promoting human rights and upholding the Constitution of the United States. The campaign is spearheaded by the Japanese American Citizens League, a human rights organization with a membership of over 30,000 Americans. We call upon fellow Americans to recognize this blemish in our national history and to join us in petitioning Congress to provide redress for this grave error committed against United States citizens and lawful permanent residents.

In striving for these goals, we should be reminded that the eviction of all Americans of Japanese ancestry from the West Coast and their subsequent incarceration was the consequence of Executive Order 9066, signed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt on February 19, 1942; and that the principle of exclusion based solely on race was upheld by the United States Supreme Court, and as Justice Robert Jackson stated in dissent: “The Court for all time has validated the principle of racial discrimination in criminal procedure.”

We are further reminded that a totally inadequate compensation amounting to 8½ cents on the dollar for property losses alone was paid by the government in 1948; and that President Gerald R. Ford, in rescinding Executive Order 9066 on February 19, 1976, acknowledged, “We now know what we should have known then—not only was the evacuation wrong, but Japanese Americans were and are loyal Americans.”

Accordingly, the Congress of the United States is called upon to:

1. Acknowledge as a nation that the actions taken against American citizens and legal residents of Japanese ancestry during 1942-46 were wrong and contrary to the Constitution of the United States.
2. Award damages to the victims.
3. Enact safeguards and provide a lasting memorial so that arbitrary governmental

repression will never again victimize any group of people in the United States.

4. Signal to all the people of the world that the United States does indeed carry out in practice the ideals embodied in our Declaration of Independence, Constitution, and Bill of Rights.

The mass expulsion and incarceration of Americans of Japanese ancestry stands as a dangerous precedent for all Americans. Redress for the victims of those governmental abuses is in the best interest of all the people and in the finest tradition of American justice.

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