

Last fall Congressional bill S. 1647 was submitted to U.S. Senate "To establish a commission to gather facts to determine whether any wrong was committed against those American citizens and permanent resident aliens affected by Executive Order Numbered 9066 and for other purposes".

In 1942 E.O. 9066 sanctioned under the "war powers" of the President, suspension of civil and constitutional rights of 112,000 Japanese Americans and incarcerate them in concentration camps for three years.

However the present consciousness on general issues of civil and constitutional rights began not with the 1942 happening but with the landmark decision, Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka (1954) resulting in gains for Blacks and subsequently for other racial minorities, women, Catholics and Jews and even the "indigenous" people, the American Indians. Despite these gains, it is not recognized that these rights can be usurped or suspended during "martial emergencies" external or internal and those groups most vulnerable will be the ethnic minorities and predictably the colored or racial minorities.

Why are there "prophetic parallels" which we Japanese Americans see in the sweeping denials of civil and constitutional rights to a suspect minority in times such emergencies? The warning was first sounded by Supreme Court Justice Robert M. Jackson in his dissent in KOREMATSU v. U.S. (1944):

"a military order, however unconstitutional, is not apt to last longer than military emergency....but once a judicial opinion rationalizes such order to show that it conforms to the constitution.....the Court for all time has validated the principle of racial discriminations in criminal procedure and of transplanting American citizens. The principle then lies about like a loaded weapon ready for the hand of any authority that can bring forward a plausible claim of an urgent need."

So is it fortuitous that lines of connection between the WW II "incident" and the current Iranian hostage crisis should intersect? The racial and ethnic rhetoric directed at Iranian Americans and nationals almost words for words,

slogan for slogan are echoes of 1942 when Japanese Americans were detained and incarcerated.

On Aug. 2, 1979 Senate bill S.1647 was introduced sponsored by the Japanese American Citizens League. The event went unnoticed for the most part. Two months later on Nov. 4, 1979 Americans were seized by Iranian militants---the media coverage was overwhelming which continues to this day.

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