

18 December 80

Dear *Friends,*

I am certain that you are aware that the so-called Redress bill is now Public Law 317 which empowers the President to assemble a commission consisting of two Congresspersons and several public citizens to examine and investigate the 1942 disaster, Evacuation. The commission hearings will be held in urban centers with high density of Japanese Americans.

You also know that this legislative miracle was pulled off by JACL, an organization respected by some but an anathema to many. For a generation I have harbored a slow burn about the role of JACL before and during that unhappy period. On the other hand, I should remind you that American Civil Liberties Union and other civil rights and ethnic groups did not provide support for us when it was most needed during the early months of the crisis.

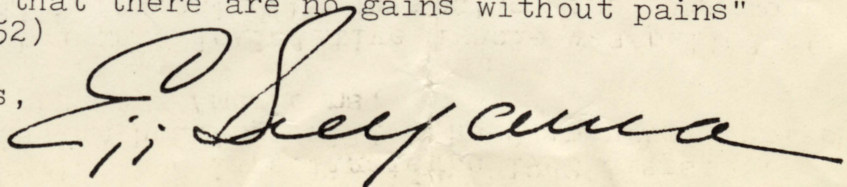
Hence the recurrent question over the years has been "What did you do or, rather, what would you have done?" "Every man has a question which terrifies him, and to the avoidance of which he gives himself with an energy that help shape his life" (R.G.Stern). We have "arrived" at this juncture and now may be the last opportunity to express our outrage and demand resolution. Some of you object to the idea of reparation--I do--but there are many who have legitimate claims. For a minority of us, the goals are more basic and because they involve ideas, attainment may be more difficult. The issues are clear and they have been joined for 38 years: (1) How did the Supreme Court avoid adjudicating the massive violation of basic constitutional rights; (2) If it wasn't racism, why was a coloured ethnic group incarcerated for 3 years; (3) Was there abuse of the constitutional limits of the War Powers of the President?

To resolve these issues, the entire matter must be returned to the Federal courts and this can be done by special congressional legislation. Hence the plenary importance of the hearings. If they can be resolved favorably in the courts, we will have left landmark decisions to bar or, at least, deter such violations again. Would this not be a worthy contribution to the Republic and a memorial for us?

The New England chapter of JACL, organized in anticipatory skepticism, is anxiously waiting for the national strategy to unfold. They must insist that disparate voices, ideas and organizations (e.g. National Coalition for Redress, etc) be heard and allowed to participate during the hearings. Furthermore, they should press for a hearing in Boston. The chapter needs your ideas, new members (you can join just for the duration) and, of course, monies.

Want to postpone your options again? Instead "lets tell them the truth, that there are no gains without pains" (Adlai Stevenson, 1952)

Sincerely yours,



Eji Suyama, M.D..