

July 16, 1981,  
Washington, D.C.

TESTIMONY PRESENTED BY MINORU YASUI

TO

COMMISSION ON WARTIME RELOCATION AND INTERNMENT OF CIVILIANS

Minoru Yasui, Esq.,  
1150 So. Williams St.,  
Denver, Colorado 80210.

for

NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR REDRESS,  
JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE

I am Minoru Yasui of Denver, Colorado. I am speaking on behalf of the National Committee for Redress of the Japanese American Citizens League.

I am an attorney-at-law. At the present time, I am the executive director of the Commission on Community Relations for the City and County of Denver, which position I have held since 1967.

At the time of evacuation of persons of Japanese ancestry from the West Coast in 1942, I was in the private practice of law in Portland, Oregon. On March 28, 1942, I did deliberately and willfully violate the curfew order of the Western Defense Command, in order to initiate a test case as to the constitutionality of military orders distinguishing between United States citizens on the basis of ancestry. Ultimately, the case did go the United States Supreme Court, and in accordance with the decision in the Hirabayashi vs. United States, the curfew orders were sustained. As a result, I did serve nine months in solitary confinement in the Multnomah County Jail in Portland, Oregon.



Minoru Yasui for JACL

July 16, 1981

During the evacuation and relocation period, 1942-1946, I was confined at the North Portland WCCA center, and thereafter transferred to the Minidoka WRA camp in Hunt, Idaho, during about Sept. 1942. It was during the time when I was an inmate of the Minidoka WRA center that I served time in the Multnomah County Jail, from Nov 1942 until Aug. 1943. Thereafter, during about June, 1944, I did relocate to Chicago, Illinois. Subsequently, I moved to Denver, Colorado, during the fall of 1944. I was engaged in the private practice of law in Denver, Colorado, from 1946 until 1967.

As Chairman of the National Committee for Redress of the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), I set forth the declared purposes of the JACL, in regard to redress, as follows:

1. To again make known to the people of the United States the sorry events of 1942-1946, and the impact of federal governmental actions upon the fundamental bases of freedom, justice and liberty in these United States;
2. To continue to press for redress in the form of monetary compensation, to individuals as well as collectively, for the tremendous losses and damages incurred by persons of Japanese ancestry during 1942-1946; and
3. To assure that this kind of arbitrary, unwarranted and patently discriminatory federal actions shall never again occur to deprive innocent people of their basic human rights in the United States.

The JACL has long been engaged in this struggle, literally since the initial military orders were issued and enforced against United States citizens of Japanese ancestry in 1942, and again with concerted efforts beginning in 1946, resulting in the Evacuation Claims Act of 1948, which only partially compensated evacuees for losses which occurred in 1942. Moreover, national conventions of



Minoru Yasui for JACL

July 16, 1981

the JACL since 1970, and biennially thereafter, have been pressing for redress as a matter of national concern.

The work of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians can serve a most significant national purpose, not only to rectify a grave wrong that was committed by our government in 1942, but also to provide a permanent record of what transpired during those years so our national will not again fall into the same kind of error that then happened. Hopefully, in recommending substantive remedies to be enacted by the Congress of the United States, our nation will never again mistreat its own citizens in such fashion as occurred in 1942.

Basically, the issues involved are not merely to provide redress for Japanese Americans; the issues involve the fundamental rights of all American citizens. Redress is not merely a Japanese American issue; it is an American issue.

As long as the Hirabayashi and Korematsu cases remain as a part of our constitutional law, the rights of all United States citizens are threatened, like a "loaded gun pointed at the heads of all Americans" to be misused in the hands of an irresponsible military authority or an uncaring chief executive of the United States.

Because this is the fundamental issue involved, the Japanese American Citizens League, composed of dedicated, loyal, caring United States citizens, does press for redress of wrongs which were committed in the name of "military security" in 1942, et seq.