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Testimony of David Ishii, Bookseller  
Before the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians  
For Days of Remembrance  
September 9, 1981

My name is David Ishii. I am a bookseller in Pioneer Square, Seattle. My family and I were forced to leave our home in Seattle as a result of Executive Order 9066 and to move to Wyoming, where we spent the war years.

In 1979, I gave my name and my bookstore as the contact for the group known as Days of Remembrance, a grassroots organization dedicated to obtaining redress from the U.S. government for its incarceration of Japanese America. We sought to bring together supporters of redress from all walks of life, from across the country. As you have already heard today, about 5,000 Nikkei came with their families to remember the camps and to stand for redress in Days of Remembrance events on the West Coast.

As part of our campaign to obtain redress, we also sought to retrieve our history from ignorance and myth. Some of the misconceptions surrounding the internment are:

- Japanese Americans bear the guilt for the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.
- Our internment was for our own protection against mob violence.
- Our internment was a justified, necessary sacrifice to the American war effort.
- Japanese Americans were safe while white American boys were being killed in action.
- The internment caused no lasting damage to Japanese America or to our laws.

Incredibly, a United States senator publicly expressed each one of these views in statements to the press in late 1978 and early 1979.

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In an interview with an ABC newsman circulated as a press release by his office, a man whose testimony you have already hear, S. I. Hayakawa, repeated all these falsehoods and swore to filibuster any redress bill in Congress.

We were shocked. We could not believe that merely for the color of his skin, this elected official could mislead the American public and do serious injury to the laws of our land. To get equal time before the public, to set the record straight, we raised \$10,000 and the signatures of 2,000 Nikkei and their friends. We took out a three-quarter page ad in the Washington POST on May 9, 1979, and called it An Open Letter to the Honorable S. I. Hayakawa from Japanese America.

I hereby submit this ad into the record.

The ad is signed by author Michi Weglyn, author Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston, actor George Takei, professor Harry Kitano, two thousand others, and the mayors of Seattle, Portland, and San Francisco. We stated firmly that Senator Hayakawa does not speak for us.

The text makes our position clear: "The redress we seek is not for property losses, but for the violation of civil rights, wrongful imprisonment, loss of income, and psychological, social, and cultural damages."

I personally feel that Congress should make a substantial reparation payment of \$25,000, plus interest, to each of us as individuals. The reparations will set a precedent. The precedent will be there so that is Congress ever gets the idea that it wants to incarcerate another group on a selective basis, they know that there will be a price to pay.

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Making redress now is the only guarantee.

So we took our case to the nation. These clippings show the response. We succeeded. We believe the ad was instrumental in getting the senator to sign the bill to create this very commission. before Japanese Americans had never/spoken out so clearly as this. As part of your fact-finding, please accept this document as evidence that, on this issue, we speak as one.

Thank you.