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Title: Donald K. Tamaki Interview  
Narrator: Donald K. Tamaki  
Interviewer: Naoko Wake  
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**<Begin Segment 11>**

NW: Speaking of bigger message, I think, uh, as a historian, one big message that I usually talk about when I teach, you know, '60s and '70s history, uh, of Asian American community, is that, um, there was a lot of interracial, interethnic collaborations. And it sounds like, uh, Asian Law Caucus is one of those organizations that really brought, uh, you know, not just singular ethnic group, as in Japanese Americans, or ethnic Chinese Americans, but . . . both of them. Or maybe more of them. Uh, do you—I know you feel—It sounds like you were engaged with Chinese American housing issues and labor issues as much as you were.

DT: Oh, absolutely. Yeah.

NW: Do you think that was reciprocated other—by other participating ethnic groups?

DT: That was?

NW: Reciprocated.

DT: Oh, I see. Well . . . you know, it just depends on what their focus was at. I mean, there are some, some groups that are just completely dedicated to their one group and the betterment of their one group, and. . . that, that's a good thing, you know. I'm not criticizing that at all. But personally, I'm more interested in. . . in issues that happen to arise out of communities that have access to, and being Japanese American I have access to the Japanese American community. But. . . they genera—they—there are bigger issues involved, so, Fred. . . Fred Korematsu is Japanese American. . . because he's at a—well, I was at the Asian Law Caucus at the time, it was very convenient. But it really raises a question about civil rights generally. And so, whether it involves, um, disabled people, or women, or um, lesbian or gay folks, uh, just the idea of being uh, or rounding people up or excluding them on a wholesale basis. It's very relevant. And so, um, similarly with the Asian Law Caucus, they're, uh, of course, it involved Japanese Americans who were interned, but ultimately, the issue is national security. How is national security policy formulated?

NW: Mhm.

DT: And that's particularly relevant today toward Muslims and Arab Americans. And so the Asian Law Caucus of today has um, lots of Indian Americans, um, Arab Americans, other people involved. And, Yeah. They, they've furthered this legacy of Fred's case, but the issue is ultimately national security. I mean in, in, um. . . in the case itself, it was described as military

necessity, you know. But that really, in today's, you know, terminology, it's really national security. And uh, um. . . uh. . . things that were justified under military necessity which were false and, and uh, really uh, racism, and for no good reason.

NW: Mhm.

DT: You know, is it—are you really more secure by um. . . you know, depriving people of their ability to fly, for tickets that they bought, just because they're the wrong color? You know, I mean, that's got nothing to do with national security. So, so—the—these, um. . . you know, the. . . the. . . you know, the government's right to, um, figure out what uh, you know, books people are reading in public libraries. Uh. . . things like that. I mean, those are really national security issues? So, um, the—it's policy but it just happened to be generated, at least in one case by someone who was Asian American or Japanese American. But. . . leads into broader issues.

NW: Right. Right.

DT: But I'm—you know. But the fact that—if you can ke—provide a job or housing or healthcare for a person, I think that's a good thing, you know, to the extent that it impacts a particular racial group. I think that to have a group that solely deals with that group or the rights of the disabled or gay students, or whatever. I think that's a good thing. But. . .

NW: Mhm.

DT: . . . I think ultimately the goal is to change policy in the middle. And um. . . so that's. . . if you can only do a little bit, 'cause, you know, you have very limited resources, then there are some cases that have better. . . potential than others. There are some issues that have better potential than others. FOH was one of those issues.

NW: Um, so, I—I really see how you sort of think about both what happened at the micro level in terms of what betterment can happen to an individual, as well as macro level, in bigger picture, how can you move the middle of the country politically. Um, speaking of that, one thing I was, uh, sort of curious to have your take on, if any, um, was how, um, survivors themselves thought about their standing in the country but also uh, vis-a-vis Japanese anti-nuclear movement?

DT: In Japan?

NW: In Japan. And, and I guess where my question was coming from is a few comments I received from people I interviewed, uh, that had something to do with how survivors themselves were cautious about not tangled up with politics. . . within the Japanese anti-nuclear movement. So they're a socialist party-supported group and then communist supported-groups and then I'm sure there are people in America who are Communist Party members, and in support of U.S. survivors. So, to me, there are this, you know, group of U.S. survivors who are not, you know, particularly skilled—many of them anyway—in dealing with those politic—politics of—both in America and Japan, and suddenly finding themselves in this very complicated, charged area of political issues. Have you ever encountered any of that tension. . . in your work?

DT: I don't remember, to be honest with you. It happened so many years ago, so. . . Um. . . I—you know, there were—my recollection was that they were just interested in telling a human story.

NW: Mm. Yes.

DT: And um. . .

NW: That's my impression, too. But yes.

DT: Yeah, so they were probably wary of any—any group that had an agenda. You know.

NW: Mhm.

DT: But, um. . . Yeah, I'm not the right person to answer that question. I just don't know.

NW: Ok. Yeah.

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