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Title: Donald K. Tamaki Interview
Narrator: Donald K. Tamaki
Interviewer: Naoko Wake
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<Begin Segment 4>

NW: So when you say that your law firm—including individual lawyers—including yourself, have a long history of, uh, sort of, you know, engaging with civil rights issues, do you mean, then, to reverse that decision that's being made in 1944 and 1945, so that it could lead to the redress movement.

DT: Well—

NW: I'm trying to get the sense of exactly what kind of involvement that your law firm had. Because I realize that—so you are born in 1951—

DT: Right.

NW: So, um, I'm not sure in what year you started this, uh—

DT: Uh, this was in 19 . . . um, '82 we started.

NW: Okay.

DT: And it was quite by accident. A researcher-professor by the name of Peter Irons, um . . . basically stumbled upon secret wartime justice department memos.

NW: Uh-huh.

DT: Uh, written by . . . the people responsible for defending the government . . . against the challenges that Fred, Gordon, and Min were making.

NW: Mhm.

DT: And among them were memos basically saying, you know, we've, we've checked with every intelligence agency that had any responsibility over the so-called Japanese American problem.

NW: Mhm.

DT: And they all basically said what—that the Army's claims that Japanese Americans are engaging in espionage or sabotage are false.

NW: Mhm.

DT: And, we have a duty not to lie to the U.S. Supreme Court, what do we do? And there's this back and forth among, um, Justice Department lawyers and there's one group that wanted to, um, uh, just say, you know, we . . . this was wrong, and it was a mistake. But, there are another group of lawyers, um, in the Justice Department, uh, that engaged in a cover-up . . . of those, of that evidence. So, these were, were reports from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Army, Na—uh, Naval Intelligence, Federal Communications Commission. Uh, even Ar—Army Intelligence, and um, all of which basically said that Japanese Americans aren't doing anything wrong.

NW: Mhm.

DT: And al—and some said that the . . . rounding-up should never have happened, and um, they're no more dangerous than the German American or Italian American population, and should be treated no differently.

NW: Mhm.

DT: Uh, at the end of the day, in 1943 and '44, the government decided to—to suppress that—those findings.

NW: Mhm.

DT: And so, the Supreme Court never received this information. And so, that was discovered in the eighties, and it led to our—our ability to reopen those cases.

NW: Mhm. Mhm.

DT: And so, um, from there, we—we worked on that, and we've worked on other . . . matters of civil rights and human rights. So . . . yeah.

NW: Okay.

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