

Op-Ed Article for Redress Bill Announcement August 23, 1979 Second draft

On the morning of December 7, 1941, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor.

In the early evening, two men from the FBI appeared at our storefront home in North Hollywood and took my father away. He would not be released until

1945. There were no charges, no hearing, no trial. Three months later,

^{remaining} ^{travelled} our ~~entire~~ family went in a caravan of buses to a place called Manzanar, ^{California,}

a desolate site 200 miles north of Los Angeles in the Owens Valley. Again,

no charges. No hearing. No trial. ^{I would not be released until 1944} No due process. ^{Manzanar was the first}

of ten relocation centers to be built in America. They came complete with

tarpapered barracks, barbed wire fences, and guard towers. There was Or-

wellian deception ⁱⁿ is the term relocation center and vicious racism in its

rationale. We were Japs, therefore bestial, innately treacherous, [back stabbers,]

capable of the vilest deeds imaginable. According to the ^{U.S.} Supreme Court, we,

[by our very presence,] constituted a clear and present danger to America, ^{although} [This,

^{none of us had been charged with} despite the fact that ~~we had not~~ committed a single act of espionage or sabotage.

Thus, [the denial of] due process and habeas corpus did not ^{apply} [matter.] Besides,

according to official government films, we yellow devils were treated very

humanely in these relocation centers. ^{for three years.} Thirty-seven years later, a bill has

been introduced in Congress to redress this gross injustice.

The bill defines redress as 10,000 dollars per victim, plus 15 dollars for each day spent in camp. The rough estimate of the total is around three

billion dollars. The total is made large not by the individual award, which

is quite nominal, but by the large number of individuals: 120,000 ^s persons.

It certainly is not the most popular bill to be introduced this year. ^{The petition for} There

^{redress by Japanese American has generated} are many contrary reactions.

^{other} The denial of freedom is now humane.

Everyone favors justice!
it's the price tag that
bothers us.

needs
a couple
of
hundred
million
for
property
& income

1945
manila
English

First and foremost is the congressional cop-out. Senators Inouye, Matsunaga, and Hayakawa, a solid bloc of Japanese faces in the Senate, earlier introduced a bill (S.1647) for a Study Commission. The Commission is to gather facts to determine whether a wrong was committed against us. Whether a wrong was committed? Whether a wrong was committed at Manzanar, Tule Lake, Minidoka, Poston, Gila River, Heart Mountain, Topaz, Amache, Rohwer, and Jerome? ^{Presenting} Being a solid front of Japanese faces, they ^{convey} [present] the illusion of representing the wish of the Japanese American community. The bill, in addition, is supported by the Japanese American Citizens League, ^(CALL) the ^{established} traditional representative of Japanese America before Congress, thereby reinforcing the illusion. ^{A plainly} [An gross miscarriage of justice] injustice that is so plainly gross] suddenly becomes obscure, questionable, and in need of study. Justice becomes a commodity for barter. Senator Hayakawa, who strongly opposes redressing the injustice, barter with Senator Inouye, who supports the principle of redress but fears the cost. The result is a neutral -- neutered might be ^a better ^{word} [alternative] ^{bill}. ~~The faces betray Japanese~~ Americans. Many members of Congress will be deceived or will choose to be deceived by the faces and will vote for the study.

Another group of Americans will say that [we] Japanese Americans don't need the money, ^{and} therefore [we] shouldn't get it. We are, it is claimed, America's most successful minority. But does our success remedy the wrong? If my Volkswagen dents your Cadillac, am I absolved of paying damages because you can afford a Cadillac? ^{Redress is not} [The issue is one of simple justice, not] welfare.

Add: The faces are deceptive. Inouye & Matsunaga represent Hawaii, whose Japanese American population escaped mass incarceration.

Hayakawa was a citizen of Canada, residing in Chicago. His outspoken opposition to redress drew unprecedented public rebuttal from Japanese America in a large ad in the Wash. Post.

Would cut because it confuses readers unfamiliar w/ the intramural discussions re block grants vs individual payments.

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Others will say that we Japanese Americans, as the model minority, should not be so selfish. Why can't we continue to be noble and generous? This demand for redress, it is pointed out, makes us too much like those less desirable minorities. The racism is palpable. It is proposed that a fund be established for worthy causes and that redress be made to this fund. This appeal very subtly and very surely shifts the burden for redress from the perpetrator to ~~the~~ victim. Somehow, the victim must rise above the level of commonality to a nobility, thereby justifying redress.

But the issue is one of simple justice. The principle at stake is spelled out most clearly in Article 10 of the American Convention on Human Rights:

"Every person has the right to be compensated in accordance with the law in the event he has been sentenced by a final judgment through a miscarriage of justice."

Still others will say, with an arm around your shoulder, "We all know a mistake was made. It was wartime hysteria. The situation was extraordinary. Why bring it up now? Let sleeping dogs lie." Of course, those who ^{that} lived through ~~the~~ time will remember the virulent racism and the unrestrained hatred Americans expressed for all Japs, for all of us yellow bellied rats. They want that forgotten. And perhaps we should, ^{forget} But the law was severely violated and the Constitution threatened at its foundation. The right to due process and ~~the~~ habeas corpus is the foundation stone of our system of laws. For this violation, a remedy must be sought and obtained.

Most Americans will understand the need to redress the injustice of those concentration camps. Most Americans will realize that the Constitution must be applied equally to all if it is to apply to any of us. Most Americans agree that justice is not a commodity to be bought, sold, or bartered. The issue of redress for Japanese American victims is a completely American issue. It is not ethnic. Redress is an act of faith in the ability of a democracy to heal itself. It is something all responsible Americans support. Thirty-seven years is long enough.

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