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Japanese American Citizens League
The Effect of World War II Relocation Camps

Senior Thesis
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Abstract

The Japanese American Citizens League was established at a time when life for Americans of Japanese descent was very difficult. They were facing discrimination from Americans of all other ancestries and from the government. In establishing the League, the founders hoped to be able to fight for their rights and show that they were Americans no matter what ethnicity they were. The League fought for a number of different rights in the 1920s and 1930s, mostly concerning the granting of citizenship. After the United States entered World War II, life for those of Japanese ancestry changed in a number of ways when they were ordered to enter relocation camps. With the change of their lives, the objective of the Japanese American Citizens League changed as well. For four decades the main task of the League was to set right the actions of the government and get redress for what evacuees had experienced. Examining this change in the organization will be the focus of this paper.

Breaking the Silence
honored by our ancestors
is a lamentation;
not of battles lost or won,
but a remembrance of the lives of those
 who have passed before us. . . .
Breaking the silence
Is also a tribute to their perseverance. . . .
We do this,
not to rake up old coals,
but to see with new eyes:
the past
can no more be denied.

--- Nikki Nojima Louis,
*Breaking the Silence*¹

¹ Yasuko I. Takezawa, *Breaking the Silence: Redress and Japanese American Ethnicity*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), vii.

I am proud that I am an American citizen of Japanese ancestry, for my very background makes me appreciate more fully the wonderful advantage of this nation. I believe in her institutions, ideals, and traditions; I glory in her heritage; I boast of her history; I trust in her future. She has granted me liberties and opportunities such as no individual enjoys in this world today. She has given me an education befitting kings. She has entrusted me with the responsibilities of the franchise. She has permitted me to build a home, to earn a livelihood, to worship, think, speak, and act as I please - as a free man equal to every other man. Although some individuals may discriminate against me, I shall never become bitter or lose faith, for I know that such persons are not representative of the majority of the American people. True; I shall do all in my power to discourage such practices; but I shall do it in the American way, above board, in the open, through courts of law, by education, by proving myself to be worthy of equal treatment and consideration. I am firm in my belief that American sportsmanship and attitude of fair play will judge citizenship on the basis of action and achievement and not on the basis of physical characteristics. Because I believe in America, and I trust she believes in me, and because I have received innumerable benefits from her, I pledge myself to do honor to her at all times and in all places, to support her Constitution, to obey her laws, to respect her Flag, to defend her against all enemies foreign or domestic and to actively assume my duties and obligations as a citizen, cheerfully and without any reservation whatsoever, in the hope that I may become a better American in a greater America.

■ - JACL Creed, 1941²

² Portland JACL, *JACL Creed*; available from <http://www.pdxjacl.org/Portland/Creed.html>; Internet; accessed 25 October 2009.

Introduction

Nisei are second generation Japanese Americans, those who were born in America, but whose parents were born in Japan. Issei are those born in Japan who have immigrated to America. The Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) is an organization which was formed in the late 1920s by a small group of Nisei who recognized that some Americans discriminated against them based on their ethnicity, but as the JACL Creed says, “[would] do all in [their] power to discourage.” A second thing the JACL was formed to do was prove the loyalty of Nisei to the United States. As can be seen, nearly half of the JACL Creed confirms this loyalty by giving thanks for living in such a giving nation with so many opportunities at making their citizens’ lives better.³ As the Second World War approached, things began to change, ultimately taking a turn for the worst. After the war, the goals of the JACL changed significantly. No longer was there a focus on numerous points of discrimination, there was a focus on a single point: the struggle for redress after the use of Japanese American relocation camps of WWII.

I believe that in a sense, it can be said that this huge change in the League’s goals was brought on by one specific thing, Executive Order 9066. Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 on February 19, 1942, just two months and twelve days after the United States entered World War II. This order stated that those of Japanese ethnicity were to be placed in inland relocation camps. These camps changed the lives of those Americans of Japanese ethnicity forever; affecting their trust in the US government, depleting them of financial wealth,

³ Ibid.

and leaving many with severe psychological problems. Because of such problems, a large number of evacuees were unable to remain silent about the harm done to them during the war. This can be seen in the poem above by Nikki Nojima Louis. Louis states that they can no longer be silent and that they are breaking the silence not only for themselves but for those evacuees who have already passed.

The 'breaking of the silence' by many can be seen in the goals and actions of the Japanese American Citizens League following the war.

Immigration and Discrimination Begins

The Chinese were the first recorded Asian immigrants to the United States, coming in the mid-1800s. Settling largely on the West Coast, they mostly worked in the fishing industry and building railroads. Probably the largest reason for why they started settling in America is because they were wanted in the country. In the mid-1800s Americans began to take the Oregon Trail to the West, realizing the profit that could be made there. Also, it was realized that with cities now along the West Coast, cargo ships could be loaded and sent to Asia from there, rather than starting in New England and sailing around Cape Horn in South America. However, a source of transportation was needed to carry goods from the East Coast to the West Coast: a railroad. Also, California also needed to become an agricultural land to raise food and products for settlers and for exporting so that they did not need to rely on expensive goods from the East Coast. American settlers realized that they would need help with this and decided it would be best to bring Chinese into the country to do just that. Aaron H. Palmer, a counselor for the U.S. Supreme Court in the early twentieth century, stated, "no people in all

the East are so well adapted for clearing wild lands and raising every species of agricultural product. . . as the Chinese.”⁴

Soon after Chinese began immigrating to the country, Asians of other ethnicities began to follow. It was the age of “manifest destiny”, and America and other European countries were broadening their horizons. As previously stated, America began opening trade relations with China after simplifying exportation by building a railroad to connect both coasts of North America. Following soon after, America opened relations with other oriental countries, Japan included. This opening created a chance for Asians to leave their homelands and start a new life in America. Before long, Angel Island in San Francisco was almost as busy bringing in Asian immigrants as Ellis Island was bringing in European immigrants in New York City. However, as more Asians immigrated to the country every day, tensions between Asians and Americans rose.⁵

Asian immigrants to the United States have had a long history of being poorly treated. White settlers to California began discriminating against the Chinese immigrants first, not allowing them to take part in the activities communities offered. When the Japanese began to immigrate to the country in the 1890s, treatment was no different. After some schools were destroyed due to the San Francisco earthquake of 1906, children were forced to walk for dozens of blocks through San Francisco to attend an Oriental school, when there was a school for white children two blocks from their house. When those living in Tokyo heard of the mistreatment of students in San Francisco, they immediately complained to the U.S.

⁴ Jean Yu-Wen Shen Wu & Min Song, ed., *Asian American Studies*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 17.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

government. President Theodore Roosevelt was unsuccessful in persuading the school district to change its policy, therefore they settled upon a compromise. The school district would allow Japanese Americans into public schools if Japan would discontinue awarding passports to laborers.⁶

Unlike immigrants of other nationalities who were granted citizenship after a number of years of residency, the U.S. government refused to grant Issei citizenship. With a national law stating only citizens could own land, this meant Issei could not own land, a major factor in making it impossible to live the “American dream.”⁷ Therefore, those Japanese who had come to America in hopes of using their skills on their very own farm, which was a large percentage, could do no such thing. Instead, they became farmworkers for Caucasian land owners throughout rural California, setting themselves up for a heap of discrimination. In one particular case, in a small town in the San Joaquin Valley, in 1921, a number of Japanese were forced out of their homes in the middle of the night and driven to an area far outside of town, and told that if they were seen in the town again they would be lynched.⁸ After an unsurprising loss in court, where the racist men were acquitted, many people of Japanese ethnicity realized that if they were to survive in America, they would have to fight for this right to citizenship.

By the late 1910s and early 1920s, the number of Nisei along the West Coast had grown significantly, and many had become young adults. In large cities such as San Francisco and Seattle, Nisei began to meet in small groups to discuss the politics limiting the rights of those of Japanese ethnicity. In San Francisco, what started as unorganized lunches, led to organized

⁶ Ibid., 61.

⁷ Bill Hosokawa, *JACL in Quest of Justice*, (New York: William Morrow & Co., Inc, 1982), 15.

⁸ Wu & Song, *Asian American Studies*, 54-55.

meetings at night to discuss the issues facing those of Japanese ethnicity. One Nisei who attended these lunches and meetings, Dr Thomas T. Yatabe, created the American Loyalty League in the early 1920s.⁹ In Seattle, in 1923, Henry H. Okuda and Chusaburo Ito created a similar organization called the Seattle Progressive Citizens League. These two organizations were not very effective initially, as it was very difficult to find Nisei willing to step forward and agree to fight for the rights they had as American citizens. Much of the reason for the hesitation of the Nisei was that those of Asian descent were a small minority, while many of the Caucasian population could trace their ancestral backgrounds in America back many generations. Already facing discrimination, they were afraid what Caucasians would do when it became known that Nisei were fighting for their rights. Yet another reason for the lack of success of these two organizations is that very few were willing to mark themselves as leaders. Specifically, when an organization's leader moved to another city, the group would fall apart; those who led the organizations truly held them together.¹⁰

The Early JACL

With the maturity of the Nisei population, as previously noted, these young adults began to gain more interest in the rights of Japanese Americans. Due to this, the organizations in San Francisco and Seattle, among those in other cities, began to grow more drastically. Organizations began communicating with those in other cities, hoping to have more of an impact on political issues if more people supported the same ideas as them. In 1928, a convention was held in San Francisco for all Nisei organizations that chose to take part. During

⁹ Dr Yatabe was twenty-two years old when the American Loyalty League was established. He was a recent graduate from the University of California, with a degree from the dental school.

¹⁰ Hosokawa, *JACL*, 20-22.

this convention, Clarence Takeya-Arai, from Seattle, suggested the formation of one large organization, with chapters throughout the West Coast and the nation. Arai's suggestion was discussed, debated, and eventually approved; with this, the National Council of Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) was born. Almost unanimously, Arai was elected as the first president of the League.

Following the League's establishment, a committee was formed to create a sort of 'constitution' for the League to follow. There were thirteen articles to outline the goals of the organization. The official name of the organization was stated, with an article stating that a chapter need not use the same name, but must follow the regulations of the JACL. To be a member of the organization one must have been a member of one of the organization's chapters and must be a Nisei. (Issei were not allowed to join the JACL). The constitution outlined that there would be five officers: a president, a vice-president, a recording secretary, a corresponding secretary, and a treasurer; the duties of each officer were also outlined in the constitution. These officers, along with representatives from each chapter made up the National Council. The chapters were formed into district councils, with five originally formed. The constitution also stated that dues must be paid by each chapter annually.¹¹

The rest of the articles in the constitution related to the organization's conventions. The organization decided that a convention would be held every two years, with the location decided two years in advance at the preceding convention. This new location then became the city where the main office could be found until the next convention was being planned. Other articles discussed legislative items, such as what constitutes a quorum, that is, how many

¹¹ Ibid., 44-45.

members needed to be present to make organization decisions. It also stated that a majority vote was needed for an item to pass unless there was a constitutional amendment, which required a two-thirds vote.¹²

After the formation of the JACL, chapters began to spread throughout the West Coast and were even seen on the East Coast, particularly in New York City. However, as chapters were not required to use the name of the JACL, many made their own names. For example, in Los Angeles, the JACL chapter went by the name of the Japanese American Citizens Association. In the future, this would make it difficult to determine which organizations were actually parts of the JACL, and which simply held similar views, but were not part of the League.¹³

It was not until the JACL convention of 1930, held in Seattle that the League felt itself completely united and official. At the Seattle convention, unfortunately attendance was low due to the many League chapters still being small and without financial means of sending a delegate to the convention. However, at the next convention, held in Los Angeles in 1932, a nearly tripled chapter representation was in attendance, from eight chapters in 1930 to twenty-two in 1932. The reasons for the League's slow growth, as pointed out by S. Frank Miyamoto of the Seattle chapter, were (1) the leaders of the JACL were inexperienced, unsure of how to go about accomplishing their goals, and (2) Nisei were undecided as to whether they should be in the League. While the prerequisite of being an American citizen was met, in their hearts many felt as though joining the JACL would bring disappointment to their parents.¹⁴

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., 33.

¹⁴ Ibid., 57.

During the convention, a pamphlet distributed to the attendees summed up what the

JACL pursued to do:

. . . At this opportune time all petty prejudices must be buried and forgotten, forever, if possible. The time has come when all American citizens of Japanese ancestry must pull together for a common cause – the cause of the second generation and the untold generations yet to come. All our thought and action must be guided with the future in mind. To do the best work everyone must work together in unity, harmony and cooperation. The dead weights of faction and partisanship must be dropped.¹⁵

A statement such as this, in the beginning years of the Great Depression, says much to a person. The League leaders wanted to continue addressing political moves that directly affect those of their ethnic background. Yet, they are also aware that at a time when the entire nation is suffering, they must assure to work in “unity, harmony and cooperation” not only within the League, but with all Americans. Unity was needed, not only because there was an economic depression in which the entire nation must come together to survive, but because this showed the JACL’s loyalty to their new homeland.

Besides working in “unity, harmony and cooperation” the pre-war JACL had many objectives they wished to pursue. During the first thirteen years of the League’s existence there were three large objectives worth stating, all related to the issue of citizenship. The first of these was a conflict that had been present since the beginning of Japanese immigration to America. By the end of the nineteenth century it was understood that all people of American citizenship could own land. While most aliens were able to apply for citizenship after a few years, the U.S. government would not grant any Issei citizenship regardless of how long they

¹⁵ Ibid., 60.

had lived in the country. Because of this, Issei were unable to own land, something they had hoped to do, and instead were forced to work the land of others.

A second conflict facing the JACL at the time dealt with citizenship and World War I veterans. Upon joining the army, Japanese aliens were guaranteed citizenship after the war. However, after the war Japanese aliens remained aliens; the government had gone back on its promise. They argued that because the law only mentioned “free white persons and persons of African nativity,” the Japanese could not be granted citizenship. Through the JACL’s efforts in Washington, D.C., veterans were granted citizenship through the Nye-Lea Bill passed in 1935.¹⁶

A last conflict facing the League involved Nisei women and marriage. Nisei women were citizens at birth. In 1922 the government passed the Cable Act, which stated that any U.S. woman who married an alien would lose her citizenship. They could regain their citizenship only through divorce, annulment or death. However, because Japanese were not granted citizenship unless born in the country, the government stated the second part of the act could not apply to Nisei women. The Cable Act was amended in 1931, stating that any woman of American citizenship could not have her citizenship taken away from her, regardless of race. The JACL, while openly arguing for an amendment to the Act, did not play a large role in making the amendment pass.¹⁷

The first generation Japanese noticed changes being made among their children and with this distance between the Issei and Nisei began to grow. The Nisei, in working towards unity with the nation, accustomed themselves to the culture of Americans, leaving behind the Japanese culture of the Issei. Many of the Issei were upset and worried that the Japanese

¹⁶ Ibid., 42-55.

¹⁷ Ibid., 49-51.

culture they had been raised in would be lost. With this, the Issei became divided; some felt the JACL was doing well in fighting for the rights of people of their ethnicity, while others believe the JACL was partially attempting to pull the Nisei away from their families.

However, even with a distinct separation between some of the Issei and Nisei, many still found ways to try to remain close and help each other in times of need. For example, in 1940 the JACL was experiencing financial problems which made it difficult to pursue their goals. An Issei organization, the Japanese Association of North America, was very willing to aide the League in their financial problems. The newly elected League president, Saburo Kido, thanked the Association for wanting to help but turned down the offer. He reasoned that with tensions between Japan and the United States slowly rising, it would be best for the Nisei to distance themselves from Japanese groups as much as possible. Kido also distanced the Nisei from the Japanese when he turned down an offer for a trip to Japan's celebration of the country's 28,600th year of existence.¹⁸

As the year 1941 began, the tension between the United States and Japan grew. Saburo Kido was aware of this tension and realized that actions must be taken. He suggested a hiring of an executive secretary, working in public relations. He believed that the qualifications needed for this secretary were someone fluent in English and Japanese with good public speaking skills. They must be able to keep their poise when meeting with government officials. Finally, they must have an understanding of the psychological differences between the Nisei and Issei and must be knowledgeable in the history of Japanese Americans. When the idea of hiring an executive secretary was approved at the district convention in Northern California,

¹⁸ Ibid., 126.

Kido already had an idea of who he wished to nominate for the job: Mike Masaoka. Mike was only twenty-five when Kido offered him the job, but he did not see himself working for the JACL. Having recently graduated from the University of Utah, Masaoka was looking to get into politics. While thinking over the offer Masaoka talked to his friend, Senator Elbert D. Thomas, a member of the committee on Foreign Relations. Senator Thomas foresaw hard times for Japanese Americans and convinced Masaoka that the JACL needed his talents in the tough times to follow.¹⁹

Mike Masaoka set out to persuade the JACL and other Japanese Americans that the government was not an enemy, and that they were actually available to help them with the problems they were facing. However, much of Masaoka's job, with help from other League officers, was to attempt to ease the tensions between the U.S. government and the Japanese American population in the time leading up to war with Japan. He wanted to ask the government to remind Americans of the difference between Japanese Americans and the Japanese in Japan. He felt that doing this would relieve some of the tension already being felt and especially relieve the tension if the U.S. went to war with Japan. With the friendship of Senator Thomas, Masaoka had a voice to speak in Congress. He repeatedly reassured Congress of the Nisei's loyalty to the country, stating that under no circumstances would it change. They assured military officers of the same loyalty. The officers inquired about the loyalty of the Issei as well. Masaoka assured them that although he could not speak directly for the generation, he

¹⁹ Ibid., 125-27.

knew that they did have some sort of connection to their former homeland, but he was most sure that they would remain loyal to their new homeland, the United States.²⁰

World War Two Relocation

December 7, 1941. In the early hours of the first Sunday of December, Japanese military waged war on Pearl Harbor, Hawai'i. When news of the attack reached the mainland, many JACL chapters were in meeting in their hometowns. All were in shock when word got to them about what happened. While the Nisei were disheartened just like every other American, they had much more on their minds. An attack on Pearl Harbor by the Japanese meant war would be declared officially. They knew that a war with Japan would only bring bad things for them and their families. Within the day, JACL officers had telegraphed President Franklin D Roosevelt assuring him of their loyalty to the United States, offering their help in the Armed Forces.

Following the attack, Japanese Americans immediately began to be singled out and discriminated against because of their ethnic background. For example, representative of the JACL, Mike Masaoka, had been in Nebraska that morning, assuring Americans of Nisei loyalty. When word reached the Midwest about the attack, police arrested Masaoka and held him in jail on no charges other than being a Japanese American. Fortunately, government officials whom Masaoka had befriended were able to get police to release him. Yet Masaoka would be arrested two more times on his return trip to California, based on the same charges.

Not all discrimination was from police and other government officials. Other Americans attempted to shut out the Issei and Nisei from the world. Many were fired from jobs or lost all

²⁰ Ibid., 128.

Caucasian business in their stores. Insurance agencies cancelled the policies of Japanese American customers. Bank accounts were frozen, leaving many without money. Perhaps worst of all, Japanese Americans had to deal with the harsh words of their fellow citizens; they had to listen as they were accused of disloyalty and treason. Even government officials admitted their skeptical views of Japanese Americans. Attorney General Francis Biddle, on December 7th, announced that the federal government would not interfere with the lives of the Japanese Americans so long as they remained loyal. In fact, he stated, the government would do everything possible to protect them from harsh American citizens. However, he then stated in the same speech his skepticism: "...Inevitably, there are some among our alien population who are disloyal..."²¹

Of course there were Americans who did not see the Japanese Americans as disloyal citizens. Clarice Chase, a graduate from the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire's education program, observed the discrimination throughout the nation and decided to do all she could to show the Japanese Americans that not all looked down on them. As she recalled two years later, "I knew the Nisei-American children would be hurt...and become embittered by it...that it would damage their faith in people...and in America." Once the government announced its plan to place Japanese Americans in relocation camps, Chase knew she wanted to be an English teacher in the camps. She felt that even though she was one person, Nisei children would still be able to know that they are not disliked by the entire country. As she stated, "This is my small share...to keep the brotherhood of man free from race hatred."²² (See figure 1).

²¹ Ibid., 137.

²² Newspaper clip, April 1943, Clarice Chase Dunn Papers, 1942-2001, UHC 268, Special Collections & Archives, McIntyre Library, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Eau Claire, WI.

In response to such accusations of disloyalty, Japanese Americans formed special groups to succeed in showing their loyalty to America practically overnight. These groups, while not part of the JACL, had many JACL members. In Los Angeles, the Anti-Axis Committee was formed, while the JACL Emergency Defense Committee was formed in Seattle.²³ The groups would meet with various government officials to assure them of Issei and Nisei loyalty.

With continued discrimination towards the Japanese Americans and wartime hysteria sweeping through the nation, the government realized that something must be done to ease the worries of the people. This was done on February 19, 1942, when President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 into action. E.O. 9066 stated that there was a need to put all Japanese Americans living on the West coast into relocation camps farther inland. E.O. 9066 was approved of by many people, including most politicians. As Congressman Al J. Dingeman stated later that year:

The Japanese have proven to be treacherous and untrustworthy as a race. Because it is impossible to ascertain their degree of loyalty to this country, I am against their retaining a foothold that they had before Pearl Harbor. In order to insure the safety of our country at all times, I am in favor of deporting those Japanese in the United States as soon as possible.²⁴

To carry out these orders the president issued another executive order, number 9102, creating the War Relocation Authority (WRA). The WRA's job was to carry out these orders, not only relocating the Japanese Americans but also maintaining and supervising the camps. Evacuees were giving little notice as to when they were to leave, therefore leaving little time to pack bags

²³ While the organization's title included 'JACL', this was not actually an official branch of the JACL. However, the JACL did support this organization, and many JACL members were also a part of this group.

²⁴ "Deportation of U.S. Japanese Made Issue," *Pacific Citizen*, Vol. 15 No. 21, 22 October 1942, Clarice Chase Dunn Papers, 1942-2001, UHC 268, Special Collections & Archives, McIntyre Library, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Eau Claire, WI.

or make note of what they were leaving behind. While waiting for relocation camps to be built, evacuees would be placed in community locations, such as fairgrounds.²⁵ When evacuees arrived at the camps, they found a city surrounding with barbed-wire fencing and buildings similar to those found at a military base, lined up in rows. Numerous families lived in each building, leaving little room for a four or five person family to live comfortably. (See figures 1 and 2).

Throughout the deportation of Japanese Americans, the JACL supported all WRA decisions. In one newspaper article from the same year, JACL officers commented that they appreciated all of the officials in the WRA and the way they were handling the deportation task. They believed the WRA was treating the evacuees well, and they believed the WRA to be doing a high-quality job in planning into the future.²⁶ There were two reasons for the JACL's cooperation with the WRA. First, the JACL knew that if there was any chance of them helping to release the evacuees, they must first prove their loyalty to the U.S. government. The best way possible to do this was to show that they agreed relocation was a good idea. And many did think it was safe for them to be relocated inland. Because wartime hysteria was high, American views of Japan, particularly on the West Coast were unpleasant. As they moved farther inland the discrimination faded away very much.

However, many evacuees did not see the JACL's cooperation with the WRA as a good thing. Instead of viewing the cooperation as showing loyalty to the U.S. government, they

²⁵ War Relocation Authority, United States Department of the Interior, *The Relocation Program* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, n.d.) 4.

²⁶ "WRA Policy Discussed at Salt Lake JACL Meet," *Heart Mountain Sentinel*, Vol. 1 No. 5, 21 November 1942, Clarice Chase Dunn Papers, 1942-2001, UHC 268, Special Collections & Archives, McIntyre Library, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Eau Claire, WI.

viewed it as disloyalty to Japanese Americans. This feeling left many Japanese Americans turning their backs to the JACL, thinking they were looking for the League at not the people they represent. Support for the JACL dropped greatly during the war and would not return to a large number until just before redress began to take hold.

Once Japanese Americans were removed from cities along the West Coast and inland relocation camps were filled, sources of communication dropped significantly. In particular, it was difficult to communicate with those living in other camps. While the evacuees had a decent amount of access to national and local news, they did not have an easy way to learn of news specifically related to Japanese Americans. However, there was one source that made communication possible during the time, the JACL-funded newspaper, *Pacific Citizen*. This Japanese American-based newspaper was created in 1930 as the official voice of the JACL. However, even those who were not League members often read the newspaper simply to keep well informed. This was the main way of communicating with other evacuees at the time. However, during the war newspaper demand decreased mostly because of a strong disapproval of the JACL's actions when dealing with the U.S. government.²⁷

Government Confusion

During the time spent in the relocation camps, evacuees' opinions of the government started to plummet. They began to lose hope in America, both its political leaders and citizens. The main reason for this was the silence of the majority in relation to the actions being carried out in the camps. The longer they remained in the camps, the more they felt the need to fight for themselves.

²⁷ Hosokawa, *JACL*, 66.

One reason for this need to fight was the frustration brought on by the government's actions. Throughout the war, Supreme Court cases brought against the government by Japanese Americans were continually defeated, with the Supreme Court justices stating that the actions against the Japanese Americans were constitutional due to the wartime hysteria occurring around the country. Evacuees began to question whether Americans lived in a true democracy, or if it was simply partial. Within the first year of the existence of relocation camps, an evacuee by the name of Jos. H. Smart interviewed a number of people in the camps, both young and old, asking their opinions of the democracy in which they appeared to be living. Adults in the camps grew confused by the government's actions. One told Smart, "I am told that I have the rights of a citizen, yet I cannot freely leave the community center. If you think you are a citizen, just try to walk out the front gate and see what happens to you."²⁸

Children were confused by the government as well. A young Japanese American boy told Smart he was confused by the actions of the government. He did not understand how he could be a citizen of the country, yet be put in a camp similar to a prison for no apparent reason other than his ethnicity. (See figure 4). He asked Smart, "What privilege, then, is it to be an American?" This young boy represents the views of many children in the camps. Parents, seeing their confusion, wanted the government to make things right again, something they worked hard to do after the war.²⁹

Children were not just confused about the democracy of the government. Many did not realize what the relocation camps meant. They questioned their parents over why they left

²⁸ Jos. H. Smart, "Democracy in Relocation Centers," 8 October 1942, Clarice Chase Dunn Papers, 1942-2001, UHC 268, Special Collections & Archives, McIntyre Library, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Eau Claire, WI.

²⁹ Ibid.

their homes, their toys, and their pets behind. And what is more, many did not realize that they would not be going back home after a few days, that this was not a vacation. One child taken from an average American community and placed in an assembly center with hundreds of other Japanese Americans to wait to be placed in a relocation camp, told his mother after several days, "Mama, I don't want to stay here in Japan. Let's go back to America." Living in a community with families of other races, he had never been with so many of his same ethnicity in his lifetime.³⁰

Economic Damage

In being evacuated from their homes along the west coast, Japanese Americans were forced to give up all they had. Many lost their homes and everything else they owned. A fair number of Japanese Americans owned farms or businesses; they lost these as well. However, estimates of the dollar amount lost were debated. In 1942, just after people had been evacuated to relocation camps, the Federal Reserve Bank in San Francisco estimated that a minimum of \$400 million in property was lost.³¹ Immediately following the war, the WRA released a statement in regards to financial losses:

"It is too early yet for any sort of financial estimate to be made of actual financial and property losses sustained by the Japanese Americas because of the enforced evacuation, but it is recognized that their losses have been heavy. Some lost everything they had; many lost most of what they had. Many lost their chance of income and security in their old age through inability to keep up payments on insurance policies. Others lost property through inability to pay taxes. Individual losses vary in amount from a few hundred to many thousands of dollars."

³⁰ Shig Masunaga, "Heart Mountain, Wyoming Reports", 1942, pg. 2, Clarice Chase Dunn Papers, 1942-2001, UHC 268, Special Collections & Archives, McIntyre Library, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Eau Claire, WI.

³¹ Position statement of the JACL National Committee for Redress, 1979, Clarice Chase Dunn Papers, 1942-2001, UHC 268, Special Collections & Archives, McIntyre Library, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Eau Claire, WI.

This same statement estimated losses as only \$200 million.³² During the Senate hearings for Japanese American Evacuation Redress, estimated losses in 1945 dollars ranged from \$63.2 million to \$228.1 million. This was converted to value of dollars in 1983 as between \$352.3 million and \$1.2541 billion dollars.³³

As evacuee Toshi Akimoto stated, people lost their economic and financial lives in the years they were in camps. All that they had worked for in the years preceding the camps was completely lost, and after leaving camps they had to “start all over from scratch.”³⁴

However, one thing upset the evacuees just as much. The jobs which evacuees had did not support their families well. They were all paid an equal amount, regardless of the job they had. Important jobs such as doctors, teachers and such were rarely set aside for evacuees, even though there were many who had experience in these areas. What is more, Caucasians working in the camps earned far more money each year than the evacuees. As the Caucasians were each paid an equal amount also, regardless of their job, it is easy to compare incomes per year. Each Caucasian **employee** at the camp would receive their income broken down as such:

Salary at \$19/mo for one year	\$220
Food at 45 cents/day for one year	\$164
Clothing allowance at \$3.75/mo	\$45
TOTAL	\$429.25

³² War Relocation Authority, U.S. Department of the Interior, *People in Motion: The Postwar Adjustment of the Evacuated Japanese Americans*, (Washington, D.C.: GPO, [n.d.]), 52.

³³ Congress, Senate, Subcommittee on Administrative Practice and Procedure of the Committee on the Judiciary United States Senate, *Japanese American Evacuation Redress*; 98th Cong., 1st sess., 27 July 1983, 105-107.

³⁴ Takezawa, *Breaking the Silence*, 110.

For the 1940s, the amount is fairly reasonable. On the other hand, each Japanese American **family** received their income broken down this way:

Head of family working, his wages \$16/mo	\$192
Clothing allowance \$3.75/mo	\$45
Wife's clothing allowance \$3.75/mo	\$45
2 older children's clothing allowance \$5.50/mo	\$66
Small child's clothing allowance \$2.25/mo	\$27
TOTAL	\$375

As can be seen, each Caucasian employee received over fifty dollars more than a five person Japanese American family.³⁵

Psychological Damage

Along with heavy economic loss, evacuees experienced psychological damage. For most, this was even more devastating than the financial losses they experienced. Many who fought for redress stated the psychological damage as being their main reason for confronting the government about making right the wrongs they had committed. For years to follow, evacuees would seek professional help for mental and emotional health issues.

Most would be devastated by the way they were treated in the camps. Living in a camp where they were supervised continuously for years, they tried to defend themselves in numerous ways. Some tried using rationalization, telling themselves that being in camps was the best thing for them; others denied the government's reasoning for creating camps at all. Some tried to look at the situation from the Caucasians' point of view. Whichever way the evacuees looked at the situation, most of them took on a submissive character and went through each day not necessarily living, but going through the actions. As social worker Amy

³⁵ "A Thought on Relocation," [n.d.], Clarice Chase Dunn Papers, 1942-2001, UHC 268, Special Collections & Archives, McIntyre Library, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Eau Claire, WI.

Mass states, many evacuees lost their sense of self-worth while in the camps, and many were never able to find it again.³⁶

Others dealt with images of everyday camp life dominating their thoughts on a regular basis. John Y. Tateishi a child during World War II, writes in his memories of Manzanar Relocation Camp in California:

It is the images that still occasionally haunt my thoughts of those years: the guard towers, the fence, the soldiers with their rifles, the searchlight sweeping the camp at night, lonely Issei men staring blankly into an unknown distance more distant than the mountains or the desert floor.³⁷

Thoughts of mistreatment and camp images during the War made it difficult for many to speak out against the government immediately after being released from internment. Most could not speak of their time in the camps for many years to follow. Slowly evacuees, particularly Nisei who were children at the time, could no longer take the discrimination from other Americans, and no longer holding back their feelings, decided to join the JACL in fighting for redress.

Constitutionality

Japanese Americans were questioning their government's so-called democratic actions, and some of these people went straight to the government to argue against the constitutionality of the governmental discrimination of Japanese Americans and against E.O. 9066. Four cases were brought before the Supreme Court: *Hirabayashi v. US*, *Yasui v. US*, *Korematsu v. US*, and *Ex rel Mitsuye Endo*. In the period between the signing of E.O. 9066 and

³⁶ Mitchell T. Maki, et al, *Achieving the Impossible Dream: How Japanese Americans Obtained Redress*, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 45.

³⁷ John Y. Tateishi, "Memories from Behind Barbed Wire," in *Last Witnesses: Reflections on the Wartime Internment of Japanese Americans*, ed. Erica Harth, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 130.

the beginning of evacuation, Japanese Americans were under a lot of rules to keep them from uniting in a protest against the government. One way this was prevented was by creating a curfew forcing Japanese Americans to return to their homes by a certain time each night. Hirabayashi and Yasui both fought against this act; both cases favored the U.S. government. When actual evacuation began, Korematsu argued the constitutionality of this act; he also lost his case to the U.S. government.

Why were actions that seem so unconstitutional today decreed constitutional? The main reasons were wartime hysteria and long-term discrimination of the Japanese Americans. As stated above, after Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor, discrimination against Japanese Americans rose greatly. After witnessing Japan attack numerous military bases in the Pacific belonging to Allies, the U.S. military strongly believed that Japan would lay a full-fledged attack on America's west coast. Another military reason given by the Supreme Court was that the Constitution gives the government power to wage war. Interpreting this broadly, they stated that within this power they were able to do whatever was needed to make the war successful. As stated by the court, "It includes the power to interfere very greatly with the lives and free movement of citizens and alien residents where the interference is a necessary step in waging war."³⁸ In response to a precedent from 1866, *Ex parte Milligan*, Supreme Court justices argued that certain small differences between the two cases made the *Milligan* case inapplicable. *Ex parte Milligan* stated that civilians cannot be arrested or confined by military tribunals while there are functioning civil courts. The Supreme Court argued that Japanese

³⁸ War Relocation Authority, U.S. Department of the Interior, *Legal and Constitutional Phases of the WRA Program*, (Washington, D.C.: GPO, [n.d.]), 5-7.

American confinement in camps was not by military tribunals, but were military orders and that “their jailors did not wear uniforms,” therefore the camps were hardly military-like.³⁹

Besides wartime hysteria being a reason for the constitutionality of camps, the court also cited discrimination throughout the country as a reason for constitutionality. Particularly along the west coast, which had the highest population density of Japanese Americans in the country, discrimination by those of all other ethnicities increased greatly when war was declared against Japan. Rumors spread that many of Japanese ancestry were spies for Japan or that if Japan attacked the west coast they would help to fight the Americans. These rumors were supported by the fact that there were schools teaching Japanese language and organizations to celebrate Japanese culture. According to those engaging in discrimination, these types of things proved their loyalty to Japan. Discrimination had made its way into the court system as well. Supreme Court Justice Denman was quoted after *Korematsu v. US* was decided, “all Japanese-descended people are treacherous because Japan began an undeclared war at Pearl Harbor.”⁴⁰

However, evacuees knew that while the Supreme Court confirmed the constitutionality of relocation camps, it could not be so. The JACL stated that seven of the ten articles within the Bill of Rights were abused by the government. These were: (1) the free exercise clause; (2) the right to keep and bear arms; (4) protections from unreasonable search and seizure; (5) due process; (6) the right to a speedy, public trial; (7) civil trial by jury; and (8) prohibition of

³⁹ Eugene Rostow, *Japanese American Cases- A Disaster*, Clarice Chase Dunn Papers, 1942-2001, UHC 268, Special Collections & Archives, McIntyre Library, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Eau Claire, WI.

⁴⁰ “Evacuation Question Goes to Supreme Court,” *Heart Mountain Sentinel*, Vol. II, No. 34, 10 April 1943, Clarice Chase Dunn Papers, 1942-2001, UHC 268, Special Collections & Archives, McIntyre Library, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Eau Claire, WI.

excessive bail and cruel and unusual punishment.⁴¹ A small number of Supreme Court justices, such as Justice Frank Murphy, agreed that the government's actions were unconstitutional and that evacuees were being deprived of the rights listed above. In his dissenting opinion of the *Korematsu* case, Justice Murphy hinted that this choice made by the Court would come to haunt the government in the future. But if the Court had declared the actions unconstitutional the situation would be declared in history books as nothing more than a military mistake.⁴²

In the end of 1944, Mitsuye Endo, a woman in the Tule Lake relocation camp, took her case to the Supreme Court. *Ex rel Mitsuye Endo* focused solely on the detention within the camps, and the rights not granted, particularly the right to leave the camp without permission. Endo won her case, and the Supreme Court ordered the end of forced internment.

Distrust in government, constitutionality, financial losses, and psychological damage were the main reasons for the evacuees' want of redress, but there were other reasons as well.

Evacuees had been told after the government released them from camps that they would be allowed to continue living in the camps and that the WRA would maintain the camps. In actuality, the WRA did not follow through with this; the camps slowly dwindled away, until only one camp was left open, Tule Lake. After leaving the camps Japanese Americans were hard-pressed to find housing and insurance mostly because of their ancestry. Finally, Buddhism was nearly excluded from the west coast, a large issue for an ethnicity where so many are Buddhist.

⁴¹ "Redress Question & Answer Fact Sheet," JACL, Clarice Chase Dunn Papers, 1942-2001, UHC 268, Special Collections & Archives, McIntyre Library, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Eau Claire, WI.

⁴² Jacobus tenBroek, Edward N. Barnshart, & Floyd W. Matson, "The Supreme Court's Dismal Failure to Protect Constitutional Rights," in *Japanese American Internment Camps*, ed. William Dudley (San Diego: Greenhaven Press, Inc., 2002), 93.

Because of such issues as housing, insurance and religion, nearly six out of ten Japanese Americans did not return to the west coast after the war.⁴³

These four scenarios during the evacuees' time spent in the relocation camps brought about a change in the evacuees' views of life. They still cared about specific issues related to court cases fighting discrimination, or Japanese American women remaining citizens once married to an immigrant, but they began to see that what the U.S. government did was wrong, and that they could not stand back and remain silent. However, they knew that they must unite to succeed, and they needed a spokesperson. This is when those whose opinion of the JACL began to change, with the realization that the League was just what was needed to make things right between evacuees and the federal government.

Post-War Redress

After the win in Mitsuye Endo's case, the JACL began assisting Japanese Americans in finding new homes and jobs. Many evacuees decided to leave behind the West Coast and start their lives over in the Midwest and along the East Coast. This assistance given by the JACL was essential in Japanese Americans regaining approval after support for the League diminished during the war. President Kido mentioned this in the beginning of 1946 at the National Convention held in Denver. He thanked all JACL members who had supported the League during the war. Then he ended by saying that even those who grew to dislike the League could not deny "the contribution that JACL made by continuing its work for the general welfare."⁴⁴

The organization planned to continue its "work for the general welfare" after the war ended. Just as they had in the pre-war organization, the League put together a list of objectives

⁴³ War Relocation Authority, *The Relocation Program*, 53-54.

⁴⁴ Hosokawa, *JACL*, 275.

they hoped to pursue. This list consisted of fourteen points the League hoped to address within the following decade. Many of the points were the same as before the war, such as reviewing the naturalization and citizenship of immigrants; consulting the national government about racialism and equality; helping new immigrants to become more 'Americanized'; and making an effort to be seen in the public eye as an organization loyal to the nation. However, the second point was a completely new objective resulting from the relocation camps during the war. The League wanted to make the U.S. Congress see that the actions of the government towards the Japanese Americans during the war were completely discriminatory and that evacuees should be compensated for their losses.⁴⁵

With this particular objective, opinions of the Japanese American Citizens League took a turn for the better. During the war, the JACL had simply tried to keep things between the WRA and Japanese Americans composed. While evacuees certainly benefited from this, it was not what they had wanted to see from the JACL. They had hoped for less cooperation and more protesting; this would be more beneficial. With the new list of objectives, particularly that relating to redress, evacuees began to see a huge personal benefit possible from supporting the JACL's goals.

Success with this objective began to be seen shortly after the war's end. Only months after Japan surrendered to the United States, the two houses of Congress began to discuss a form of property loss claims for the evacuees. S.R. 2127 and H.R. 6780, were proposed in the Senate and House of Representatives, respectively in the beginning of 1946. Both bills suggested an evacuation claims commission be formed to pay for the property losses of the

⁴⁵ Hosokawa, *JACL*, 276-277.

Japanese American evacuees. President Harry S. Truman gave his approval to both bills. The Senate passed the bill in the summer of 1946 with only minor amendments. However, the bill died in the House. The following summer, a revised version of the bill, now titled H.R. 3999, passed unanimously in the House. The following summer, on July 2, 1948, President Truman signed the Japanese-American Evacuations Claims Act.⁴⁶

The Claims Act had many restrictions on it, which made it difficult for many evacuees to collect any claims for property losses. Also, of those who did submit claims none were given a monetary amount close to their actual losses. This can be blamed on two main reasons. First, the act only allowed evacuees to submit claims for physical losses. In other words, the government would only take into account the actual property lost. Losses in income and mental or physical distress could not be included in this claim. Because the claims only applied to physical losses, most evacuees could not submit claims to the government. Second, most were rushed from their homes to be taken to relocation camps and were not able to make record of what property was being left behind and the monetary worth of it. With these two reasons in mind, it is not all that unexpected to see that only 26,568 claims were made to the government out of the 110,000 evacuees displaced.⁴⁷

The people who filed claims did not receive the complete monetary sum of what evacuees had claimed to have lost. Altogether the claims made asked for a total of approximately \$130 million. According to the Federal Reserve Bank at the time, this was about one-third of the actual monetary losses of these evacuees. The main reason for this relates

⁴⁶ Mitchell T. Maki, Harry H. L. Kitano, & S. Megan Berthold, *Achieving the Impossible Dream: How Japanese Americans Obtained Redress*, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 53-4.

⁴⁷ Leslie T. Hatamiya, *Righting a Wrong: Japanese Americans and the Passage of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 51.

again to the idea of the evacuees having to leave their homes in such a hurry. Most evacuees who filed only made claims for losses of property used daily, such as pots and pans. Other items only used occasionally were forgotten. With the government having a difficult time settling most claims, practically every filed evacuee received a great deal less than what they had claimed. Of the \$130 million in claims, the government only granted \$34 million, approximately 8.5% of actual financial losses. The government began settling these claims in 1952 and did not finish until the end of 1965.⁴⁸

Beginning in the 1960s and 1970s Japanese American evacuees began trying again to gain the redress they felt they deserved. This time, they had more people to help in this fight. Sansei evacuees, or children with Nisei parents, who had lived their early years in the camps began coming of age in a time when social activism was taking a hold on the United States. The Civil Rights Movement and Second Wave Feminism were making a huge impact on the country, and both movements were fighting for the rights of those who had been discriminated against for centuries. The two movements inspired the evacuees to work harder to reach their goal of redress.⁴⁹

Not only were Sansei wanting redress for themselves, they particularly wanted redress for their parents, who had spent prime young adult years in the camps. Although most Issei had passed away by this time, Nisei with parents still alive wanted to gain redress for their parents just as badly. In the situation with Issei evacuees, the task of getting redress proved

⁴⁸ Redress Question & Answer Fact Sheet, JACL, Clarice Chase Dunn Papers, 1942-2001, UHC 268, Special Collections & Archives, McIntyre Library, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Eau Claire, WI.

⁴⁹ Gary Y. Okihiro, "The Japanese-American Community and the Struggle for Redress," in *Japanese American Internment Camps*, ed. William Dudley (San Diego: Greenhaven Press, Inc., 2002), 116-117.

even more difficult because these people were not citizens of the country, not by choice but by force. As one Nisei evacuee explained to Clarice Chase Dunn, "Our parents aren't citizens. They're helpless to do anything about their future. Because we are citizens, we can. Nothing will be done for them unless we do it."⁵⁰

While the Civil Rights Movement was fighting for equal rights for all minorities, Japanese Americans included, most evacuees felt that they could not truly feel they were treated equally unless they were given redress. Even after the Civil Rights Act of 1965 passed, many still did not feel satisfied with the government's actions. In 1968 Jerry Jiro Enomoto, president of the JACL in the 1960s, commented on this unsatisfied feeling many were facing and stated that the best way to turn it into satisfaction was to stop being silent and start their own movement based on their suffering in World War II. His address on the subject was quoted in the *Pacific Citizen*: "It may pay off to remember that, in a very real sense, we are paying the price for years of failing to care enough to set certain wrongs right in America."⁵¹

Following Enomoto's address on the subject, the JACL formed the National Committee for Redress which confronted the government on their wrongdoings and also worked to encourage all evacuees to take part in the movement. The main way they did this was through pamphlets stating their position on the situation and answering frequently asked questions. Their position gave four actions that Congress should take in relation to the situation: (1) they should admit that the actions taken against Japanese Americans in World War II were unconstitutional; (2) they should "award damages to the victims"; (3) they should create a

⁵⁰ Clarice Chase Dunn, "Heart Mountain: A School Behind Barbed Wire," *Wisconsin Academy Review* 27 (December 1980), Clarice Chase Dunn Papers, 1942-2001, UHC 268, Special Collections & Archives, McIntyre Library, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Eau Claire, WI.

⁵¹ Hosowaka, *JACL*, 322.

memorial to remind American citizens what had happened in hopes that that sort of mistake will not be made again; and finally, (4) to make known throughout the world that the United States does carry out the ideas stated in the Declaration of Independence, Constitution, and Bill of Rights."⁵²

People grabbed hold of this position statement and began making their own statements on why they believed redress needed to be granted. Most talked of their economic and psychological problems faced after the war. Kenneth Hansen, an economist who supported the JACL's movement discussed the economic losses suffered by the evacuees. He reminded that the government had not yet paid for the losses and that the losses grow more every day.⁵³ Many had lost farmland when relocated; the worth of this land grows and grows each day. They lost the money that the land would be worth today, plus the amount of money they could have made by using the land for agriculture.

The situation of evacuees was compared to a more recent scenario that had taken place during the Vietnam War involving peace demonstrators. In 1971 over one thousand of these people were falsely imprisoned for two to three days because of protesting the war going on overseas. In response to the wrongness of the situation, the government granted each one of these people \$10,000.⁵⁴

⁵² Position statement of the JACL National Committee for Redress, JACL, 1979, Clarice Chase Dunn Papers, 1942-2001, UHC 268, Special Collections & Archives, McIntyre Library, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Eau Claire, WI.

⁵³ Audrie Girdner and Anne Loftis, *The Great Betrayal: The Evacuation of the Japanese-Americans during World War II*, (London: The Macmillan Company, 1969), 436-437.

⁵⁴ Redress Question & Answer Fact Sheet, JACL, [n.d.], Clarice Chase Dunn Papers, 1942-2001, UHC 268, Special Collections & Archives, McIntyre Library, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Eau Claire, WI.

Most evacuees involved in the movement had a large amount of hope that government would easily agree with what the JACL was asking of them. However, there were mixed feelings in Washington, D.C. about granting redress. Dr. Milton S. Eisenhower, the first director of the WRA admitted in 1982 that he had thought twice about the actions he was carrying out for the government in the beginning of the war. He saw injured Japanese American veterans returning from the war, and then joining their families “behind the bars” of the relocation camps. However, he made a point to say that he was not for redress. He says, “If we set such a precedent, we would have to pay vast sums to Indians and all other minorities.”⁵⁵ Also, in the early 1970s three out of the six Supreme Court justices still alive were questioned as to whether they would make the same decisions on the court cases involving relocation camps. Three of the six justices reaffirmed their decision that the government’s actions were still constitutional.⁵⁶

Besides such thoughts as Eisenhower’s and the Supreme Court justices there were many politicians who still discriminated against the Japanese Americans and believed they got what they deserved. They believed that while the JACL stated their loyalty and Americanism, they were actually doing the opposite. They believed the JACL was tearing apart the nation and all of their values.⁵⁷ Many Americans agreed with this thought and were still highly racist against those of Japanese ethnicity. Some Caucasians tried at all costs to not associate themselves with

⁵⁵ Subcommittee on Administrative Practice and Procedure of the Committee on the Judiciary United States Senate, *Japanese American Evacuation Redress*, 135.

⁵⁶ Eugene Rostow, *Japanese American Cases- A Disaster*, Clarice Chase Dunn Papers, 1942-2001, UHC 268, Special Collections & Archives, McIntyre Library, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Eau Claire, WI.

⁵⁷ Subcommittee on Administrative Practice and Procedure of the Committee on the Judiciary United States Senate, *Japanese American Evacuation Redress*, 275.

them. This can be seen well in a song written by Congressman James R. Mann of South Carolina, entitled "The Import Blues". One verse of the poem states: "Buying Jap-made products so sleazy to see/Is a damn fool thing for you and me/And I'm fighting back because I won't run/From the slant-eyed people of the Risin' Sun".⁵⁸

Conclusion: Redress Granted

On August 10, 1988, Japanese Americans finally got what they had been fighting for. Nearly fifty years after the signing of E.O. 9066 President Ronald Reagan signed H.R. 442, also known as the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, which would give redress to those Japanese Americans who had suffered in relocation camps during World War II. Japanese Americans throughout the country celebrated, even those who were not victims. A goal sought after for a number of decades had finally been achieved.

However, receiving redress was not as easy as signing a piece of paper. President Reagan was nearing the end of his term, and the realization set in of being a lame duck. For the fiscal year of 1990, Reagan only set aside \$20 million in the budget for redress. This was nowhere near enough money to compensate for damages to victims; an estimated \$250 million was needed to accomplish this. With the amount in the 1990 budget, approximately one thousand of the eighty thousand surviving victims would receive their redress. However, Congress had a difficult time deciding how much money should be set aside for each fiscal year. After Reagan's suggestion the House recommended raising the amount to \$250 million, the full amount needed to compensate the victims. However, to come to an agreement in Congress,

⁵⁸ Norman Pearlstine, *The Wall Street Journal* (New York), 8 August 1972, Clarice Chase Dunn Papers, 1942-2001, UHC 268, Special Collections & Archives, McIntyre Library, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Eau Claire, WI.

the amount had to be lowered again and again until it was decided that no money would be allocated for fiscal year 1990. An entitlement program was established stating that beginning in October 1990, when fiscal year 1991 started, the government would have allocated double the amount of money needed to give redress each year.⁵⁹

Part of the reason the appropriations took so long to be finalized was because there were still many Americans who disapproved of 'awarding' monetary redress to Japanese Americans. A couple common excuses for not needing to redress victims were: (1) America did not have enough money, or the Japanese Americans did not need more money; and (2) Japanese Americans were relocated because the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor; therefore, Japan should redress the victims.⁶⁰

In October 1990, the U.S. government began issuing redress checks, starting with the oldest living victims. Accompanying the checks was an impersonalized, copied letter from President George H. W. Bush, expressing his apologies:

A monetary sum and words alone cannot restore lost years or erase painful memories; neither can they fully convey our Nation's resolve to rectify injustice and to uphold the rights of individuals. We can never fully right the wrongs of the past. But we can take a clear stand for justice and recognize that serious injustices were done to Japanese Americans during World War II.⁶¹

After the JACL succeeded in gaining redress for those Japanese American evacuees still living, it did not disappear. The JACL is still in existence today, fighting for the rights of people of their ethnicity. Their objectives are now similar to what they were before World War II, in

⁵⁹ Takezawa, *Breaking the Silence*, 57-58.

⁶⁰ Roger Daniels, "Redress Achieved, 1983-1990," in *Asian Americans and the Law: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Charles McClain (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1994) 389-90.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 392.

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that they fight for a number of different rights, with an equal amount of effort on each objective. They are no longer focusing most of their efforts on one particular objective.

I believe this evidence shows that World War II relocation camps had a huge impact on the objectives of the JACL immediately following the end of the war. After the war the JACL's efforts to set right a number of discriminatory actions decreased and focused particularly on gaining redress for evacuees. Much of the reason for this focus is the desire of a majority of JACL members to fix the government's wrong. They wanted the government to know that while the JACL cooperated with the government during relocation, the League did not believe what the government was doing was right. They also wanted the government to admit the constitutional wrongs regarding the Supreme Court cases made by Japanese Americans during the war. They wanted redress for the economic and psychological suffering they had gone through during World War II and in the years following. And finally, they wanted to make sure people knew what evacuees had gone through during their time in camps.



Figure 1. Clarice Chase with her English students at Heart Mountain Relocation Camp. Clarice Chase Dunn Collection, Box 1, Folder 5. Reproduced with permission of University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, McIntyre Library.



Figure 2. Heart Mountain Relocation Camp. Clarice Chase Dunn Collection, Box 1, Folder 5. Reproduced with permission of University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, McIntyre Library.



Figure 3. Heart Mountain Relocation Camp. Clarice Chase Dunn Collection, Box 1, Folder 5. Reproduced with permission of University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, McIntyre Library.



Figure 4. Children outside a school building at Heart Mountain Relocation Camp. Clarice Chase Dunn Collection, Box 1, Folder 5. Reproduced with permission of University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, McIntyre Library.

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