

## TESTIMONY OF MIKE J. MASAOKA

National Secretary and Field Executive  
Japanese American Citizens League

### PREPARED STATEMENT

We [the Japanese American Citizens League] have been invited by you to make clear our stand regarding the proposed evacuation of all Japanese from the West Coast. When the President's recent executive order was issued, we welcomed it as definitely centralizing and coordinating defense efforts relative to the evacuation problem. Later interpretations of the order, however, seem to indicate that it is aimed primarily at the Japanese, American citizens as well as alien nationals. As your committee continues its investigations in this and subsequent hearings, we hope and trust that you will recommend to the proper authorities that no undue discrimination be shown to American citizens of Japanese descent....

If, in the judgment of military and Federal authorities, evacuation of Japanese residents from the West Coast is a primary step toward assuring the safety of this Nation, we will have no hesitation in complying with the necessities implicit in that judgment. But, if, on the other hand, such evacuation is primarily a measure whose surface urgency cloaks the desires of political or other pressure groups who want us to leave merely from motives of self-interest, we feel that we have every right to protest and to demand equitable judgment on our merits as American citizens....

At this hearing, we Americans of Japanese descent have been accused of being disloyal to these United States. As an American citizen, I resent these accusations and deny their validity....

In this emergency, as in the past, we are not asking for special privileges or concessions. We ask only for the opportunity and the right of sharing the common lot of all Americans, whether it be in peace or in war.

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REP. SPARKMAN (R-ALABAMA): Do I understand that it is your attitude that the Japanese-American citizens do not protest necessarily against an evacuation? They simply want to lodge their claims to consideration?

MR. MASAOKA: Yes.

REP. SPARKMAN: But in the event the evacuation is deemed necessary by those having charge of the defenses, as loyal Americans you are willing to prove your loyalty by cooperating?

MR. MASAOKA: Yes. I think it should be...

REP. SPARKMAN (interposing): Even at a sacrifice?

MR. MASAOKA: Oh, yes; definitely. I think that all of us are called upon to make sacrifices. I think that we will be called upon to make greater sacrifices than any others. But I think sincerely, if the military say "Move Out," we will be glad to move, because we recognize that even behind evacuation there is not just national security but also a thought as to our own welfare and security because we may be subject to mob violence and otherwise if we are permitted to remain.

REP. SPARKMAN: And it affords you, as a matter of fact, perhaps the best test of your own loyalty?

MR. MASAOKA: Provided that the military or the people charged with the responsibility are cognizant of all the facts.

REP. SPARKMAN: Certainly. That is assumed.

[Source: *Hearings Before the Committee Investigating National Defense Migration*, Part 29, February 21 and 23, 1942 (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1942) 11137–11148]

## TESTIMONY OF JAMES M. OMURA

Editor and Publisher, *Current Life*, San Francisco, California

MR. OMURA: I requested to be heard here due largely to the fact that I am strongly opposed to mass evacuation of American-born Japanese. It is my honest belief that such an action would not solve the question of Nisei loyalty. If any such action is taken I believe that we would be only procrastinating on the question of loyalty, that we are afraid to deal with it, and that at this, our first opportunity, we are trying to strip the Nisei of their opportunity to prove their loyalty.

I do not believe there has ever been, or ever could be again, a situation of this kind where the Nisei can prove their loyalty.

I suppose you understand that I am in some measure opposed to what some of the other representatives of the Japanese community have said here before this committee. Unfortunately, I wasn't here, and I have no report on it, so I do not know actually what was said, but I do know generally what they are promoting.

I specifically refer to the JACL. It is a matter of public record among the Japanese community that I have been consistently opposed to the Japanese American Citizen League. I have not been opposed to that organization primarily in regards to its principles, but I have felt that the leaders were leading the American-born Japanese along the wrong channels, and I have not minced words in saying so publicly....

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## PREPARED STATEMENT

(taken from an editorial in a San Francisco magazine for Japanese Americans):

The Nisei Americans, the unfortunate children of destiny in this Pacific War, are mere stepping stones for political aspirants and self-seekers. They are being utilized today as political footballs for ambitious officeholders and aspiring demagogues who find it quite opportune to grind their personal axes on the fate of these oft-vilified and persecuted voiceless Americans. The extent to which bigotry and racial antipathy can go in denying civil liberties—a vital cornerstone of democracy—to a segment of the population is witnessed in the summary dismissal of Nisei civil-service employees in the city and county of Los Angeles.

Racialism doubtlessly will play a significant and important role in the war over the Pacific. And the brunt of the guilt for the criminal act of December 7, at Pearl Harbor seems destined to fall upon the guiltless brow of the poor, hapless Nisei—merely because they wear the outward features of the race whose people committed the now historic crime. For that act, the Caucasian population on the Pacific coast will find fiendish glee in exacting punishment upon citizen Americans with Japanese faces. What could be more unjust and un-American?...

Should [the Nisei be forced to relocate], the history of our American Republic will never again stand high in the council chambers of justice and tolerance. Democracy will suffer deeply by it. The forceful evacuation of citizen Americans on the synthetic theory of racial fidelity—"Once a Jap, always a Jap"—would be an indictment against every racial minority in the United States. It would usher in the bigoted and misguided belief that Americanism is a racial attribute and not a national symbol. The scar that will be left will be broad and deep—a stigma of eternal shame.

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(The following material was received subsequent to the hearing and accepted for the record.)

MR. OMURA: I would like to ask the committee: Has the Gestapo come to America? Have we not risen in righteous anger at Hitler's mistreatments of the Jews? Then, is it not incongruous that citizen Americans of Japanese descent should be similarly mistreated and persecuted? I speak from a humanitarian standpoint and from a realistic and not a theoretical point of view. This view, I believe, does not endanger the national security of this country nor jeopardize our war efforts.

... We [Nisei] cannot understand why General DeWitt can make exceptions for families of German and Italian soldiers in the armed forces of the United States while ignoring the civil rights of Nisei Americans. Are we to be condemned merely on the basis of our racial origin? Is citizenship such a light and transient thing that that which is our inalienable in normal times can be torn from us in times of war?...

May I ask the committee members if any or all of you are acquainted with the Nisei? I believe that much of this distrust of citizen Japanese is based on ignorance. It would seem more compatible in the sense of fair play and justice that we should not be prejudged and that racialism should not be the yardstick by which our loyalty is measured. Our words, in current times, have no meaning, and so I ask you to examine our records, for there I believe that to a large measure, if not necessarily so, lies the true determination of our oft-questioned loyalty.

[Source: *Hearings Before the Committee Investigating National Defense Migration*, Part 29, February 21 and 23, 1942 (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1942) pp. 11229–11232]

## TASK SHEET

It is March 1942. Imagine that you are members of a Japanese American family living on the West Coast. The "House Select Committee Investigating National Defense Migration," composed of members of the U.S. House of Representatives, is holding a hearing in your town. You decide to testify at the hearing to let the committee know your thoughts on whether the government should incarcerate Japanese Americans. You also want to give your opinion on how Japanese Americans should react to the possible forced removal and incarceration.

Keeping in mind the two testimonies you've read, construct your own testimony to be given to the Select Committee. Do you tend to agree with one of the given perspectives more than the other? If so, why? Carefully construct your own position on the issue.

Your group will be called upon to read its testimony to the Select Committee, which will only accept testimonies between two and four minutes in length. After reading your testimony, you must submit a written copy to the Committee Head so that it can be inserted into the official record. When all testimonies have been collected, the Committee will vote on what course of action to take regarding Japanese Americans living on the West Coast.

## OPTIONS FOR THE SELECT COMMITTEE

What course of action will you recommend to Congress regarding Japanese Americans living in West Coast states?

**Option 1:**

In areas where Japanese Americans already live, create incarceration camps patrolled by the National Guard. However, Japanese Americans may continue to work within a reasonable distance from the camps, provided they observe a curfew.

**Option 2:**

Japanese Americans pose no security threat. Impose no restrictions on them.

**Option 3:**

Order all Japanese Americans to leave their homes and live in patrolled incarceration camps in the interior of the country.

**Option 4:**

Forcibly deport all Japanese Americans to Japan.

**Option 5:**

Administer a questionnaire to all Japanese Americans asking them to declare their loyalty to the United States. Incarcerate (in camps run by the Department of Justice) all Japanese Americans who fail to appropriately answer questions testing their loyalty.

**Option 6:**

Request Japanese Americans to voluntarily relocate to government-run incarceration camps.

**Option 7:**

Allow Japanese Americans to choose between migration to non-West Coast states OR incarceration in government-run camps.

**Option 8 (other):**