

ARGUMENTS FOR REDRESS

Your group wants the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians to recommend an apology and financial compensation to Japanese Americans who were incarcerated during World War II. Decide how much money the government should give each Japanese American, then argue your case before the class.

Arguments for granting redress:

- It was wrong to strip Japanese Americans of everything they had.
- The government must be punished severely enough to prevent an incarceration based on ethnicity from happening again.
- This was the first group of U.S. citizens to be jailed solely because of their ethnicity.
- Japanese Americans were left with no other recourse after court cases failed.
- The 1948 Evacuation Claims Act was insufficient.
- When one person harms another, the courts force the person who does wrong to compensate the victim. Shouldn't the same logic hold for governments?
- The time spent in camp took years of education or useful work experience away from Japanese Americans, making it harder for them to do what they wanted and to get good jobs after they left the camps and returned to a "normal" life.
- Some people died in the camps because of malnutrition, psychological stress, and other hardships.
- The mass removal of Japanese Americans from the West Coast was unnecessary because they were not a military threat.
- Thousands of Japanese Americans served, and many died for the U.S. military during World War II—showing their loyalty to the United States.
- There was not one act of espionage committed by a Japanese American against the United States, yet they suffered the humiliation of being in incarceration camps.
- The U.S. government compensates citizens who are forced to move out of their homes and relocate due to other federal projects, such as construction of a dam.

ARGUMENTS AGAINST REDRESS

Your group opposes granting any redress—an apology or financial compensation—to Japanese Americans who were incarcerated during World War II. Decide what your argument against redress will be, then argue your case before the class.

Arguments against granting redress:

- Granting redress sets a dangerous precedent: every group could clamor for money from the government.
- The economy is in recession, and it would be unwise to pay compensation when the government is so badly in debt.
- Equating money with suffering and hardship "cheapens" the difficulties Japanese Americans faced.
- There is no way of knowing who was or wasn't loyal among Japanese Americans.
- There is no legal precedent for providing redress.
- Japanese Americans already had a chance for compensation with the 1948 Evacuation Claims Act.
- The incarceration actually protected Japanese Americans because they would have been victims of attacks had they remained in their homes.
- Others who suffered both psychologically and financially from the war—such as the families of non-Japanese American soldiers who were killed—received no apology or compensation.
- In the war environment, the United States could take no chances and had to intern Japanese Americans as a security precaution.
- Most Japanese Americans have recovered their homes, businesses, and finances in the 40 years since the war, so there is no need to compensate them.
- It's logistically impossible to figure out how much money to pay.
- No matter how much money the government gives those who were incarcerated, some will say it's too much, others will say that it's too little.
- Some Japanese Americans don't want the money—there is no consensus among those who were incarcerated.

DEBATE PROCEDURES

1. Introduction by the Moderator (3 minutes)
2. Opening statements and proposals by each side (5 minutes each)
 - for redress
 - against redress
3. Rebuttal by each side (3 minutes each)
 - for redress
 - against redress
4. Questions from audience (5 minutes)
5. Open discussion (10 minutes)
6. Final statements (2 minutes each)
 - for redress
 - against redress
7. Deliberation (3 minutes)
8. Audience vote (1 minute)
9. Concluding remarks by the Moderator (3 minutes)
10. Adjournment

[Total Time: 45 minutes]

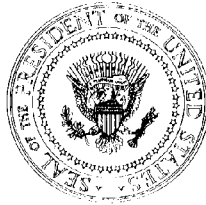
OUTCOME OF THE REDRESS DEBATE

In 1983, the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians presented its recommendations to Congress. The commission recommended that:

- Congress pass a joint resolution that "recognizes that a grave injustice was done to people of Japanese ancestry and offers the apologies of the nation for the acts of exclusion, removal, and detention."
- The president pardons those convicted of violating the curfew imposed on people of Japanese ancestry, those who refused to report to assembly areas, and others whose offenses were based on their refusal to be discriminated against because of their ethnicity.
- Congress and other government agencies deal liberally with people of Japanese ancestry who apply for restitutions of positions or entitlements lost because of wartime prejudice or discrimination (for example, Japanese-American soldiers dismissed from the military after the attack on Pearl Harbor).
- Congress set aside money for a special foundation that will sponsor research and public educational activities about what happened to people of Japanese ancestry during World War II.
- Congress pay a one-time, tax-free compensation payment of \$20,000 to each of the estimated 60,000 surviving people of Japanese ancestry who were forced to move from their homes under Executive Order 9066.

These suggestions were incorporated into the civil rights act approved by Congress in 1988. In 1990, government officials presented the first redress payments of \$20,000, along with letters of apology signed by President George Bush.

This was summarized from *Ancestry is Not a Crime: The Internment of People of Japanese Descent During World War II* (Hawaii: Department of Education, 1994) p. 186.



THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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.

In enacting a law calling for restitution and offering a sincere apology, your fellow Americans have, in a very real sense, renewed their traditional commitment to the ideals of freedom, equality, and justice. You and your family have our best wishes for the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "G. W. Bush".

GEORGE BUSH
PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

OCTOBER 1990