

Dear Sir/Madam:

Upon the suggestion of a staff person who works with the Oregon State Senate, I am submitting my written testimony in favor of Senate Concurrent Resolution 14, as follows:

Senator Burdick and Members of the Senate Rules Committee, thank you for allowing me to present written testimony in support of Senate Concurrent Resolution 14.

My name is Homer Yasui, and I am Minoru Yasui's youngest brother. Originally there were nine Yasui children, but today, only my youngest sister, Yuka Yasui Fujikura, and I remain. Yuka is 90 years old, and I am 92.

My mother, sister Yuka, and I were the only Yasui children then living at our home in Hood River when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. My father, Masuo Yasui, was arrested by the FBI on December 12, 1941, and taken away to some place which the authorities refused to tell us. He would not be freed until January 14, 1946 — five months after the war with Japan was over.

The Yasui Brother's Store in Hood River was immediately closed down, and thereafter for several weeks, at least one U.S. Treasury Department officer remained on watch on the premises. We were not allowed to take anything out of our store — not even perishable food items like loaves of bread — without the express permission of the Treasury officer. Our store never re-opened, and it was sold for a loss in 1945.

My father and mother were immigrants from Japan, and because American law did not allow them to become naturalized United States citizens, they remained aliens until the Walter-McCarran Act was passed in 1952. My mother became an American citizen in 1952 and my father became an American citizen in 1953. My father became a teacher of American Civics — in English — to his fellow Japanese countrymen and women who were studying for their U.S. naturalization examinations.

Those were hard times for my family and for tens of thousands of other persons of Japanese ancestry then living on the West Coast. Most Americans had developed an intense dislike for anything Japanese, and too many of our political leaders and newspapers fanned the flames of hatred even more. A common saying, a feeling, among the populace, was, "*a viper is nonetheless a viper regardless of where the egg is hatched*". So by that logic, any Japanese anywhere was an enemy. . . . or so it was believed.

Except that it wasn't true.

Over 20,000 Nisei (the first group of Japanese Americans to be born in the U.S.) served in the Armed Forces of the United States during WWII, and over 800 of them were killed in action fighting the enemies of the United States.

No person of Japanese ancestry was ever convicted of espionage or sabotage in the United States during the war . . . and it was not because "all of the Japs" had been put away in the detention camps. There were around 150,000 people of Japanese ancestry at liberty in the rest of the Continental United States and in Hawaii during WWII, and no bad things happened to our nation because they were allowed to be free.

The removal of the Japanese Americans was an unnecessary hardship inflicted on an innocent and relatively unknown people. The effects of this tragic affair is still felt today, and it reverberates personally with me, because my father committed suicide in 1957, after he became progressively mentally ill, thinking that the wartime authorities were coming after him once again, to put him away for years, for something that he did not do.

So I ask that you please pass this Resolution to remember this day, when many years ago, a lot of good people did nothing to help a hapless people. Maybe a resolution of this sort might help prevent needless tragedies in the future.

Respectfully submitted,

Homer Yasui

February 10, 2017