

# VINDICATION



President Ronald Reagan signs the Civil Liberties Act of 1988. He referred to H.R. 442, the Redress Bill, as appropriately honoring the 442nd Regimental Combat Team and recounted his part in presenting Mary Masuda with Sgt. Kazuo Masuda's distinguished service cross. Also pictured are Sen. Spark Matsunaga, Rep. Norman Y. Mineta, Rep. Patricia F. Saiki, Sen. Pete Wilson, Rep. Dan Young, Rep. Robert T. Matsui, Rep. Bill Lowery and JACL National President Harry Kajihara. Robert T. Matsui Legacy



Ceremonial presentation of the first letters of apology and redress payments delivered to the oldest recipients in Central California at the U.S. Federal District Court, October 12, 1990. Assistant Attorney General John R. Dunne presented letters to Sumino Yemoto (age 97), George Sakai (age 92), Fuji Hashimoto (age 102), Miyo Nishino (age 93), Yone Ota (age 96), and Shigeto Thomas Ito (age 92, not pictured). Standing in back row are Dale Ikeda, Cressey Nakagawa, Bob Bratt, Peggy Sasashima Liggett, John R. Dunne, Mae Takahashi and Ken Yokota. Dale Ikeda Collection

*"Congress shall make no law ... abridging ... the right of the people ... to petition the government for a redress of grievances."*  
**First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States**



Mine Matsumoto, Clovis High School Class of 1942  
 Mine (Matsumoto) Ikeda

In 2004, California Assembly Bill 781 was adopted creating the Nisei Diploma Project. The Bill authorized any high schools to retroactively issue high school diplomas to any person of Japanese descent whose high school education was interrupted due to their forced removal from California during World War II. The intent of the legislation was to honor these Nisei and provide an opportunity for healing from this grave injustice and the loss of critical school years and experiences during their youth.

Many school districts in Fresno County conducted graduation ceremonies in conjunction with the internees' original schools' ceremonies and a number of surviving students from the classes of 1942 - 1945, such as Mine (Matsumoto) Ikeda of Clovis High were finally able to attend their graduation ceremony.



Mine (Matsumoto) Ikeda with the Clovis High School Class of 2006.  
 John D. Hix



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,

GEORGE BUSH  
 PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

OCTOBER 1990

Letter of Apology from President George H.W. Bush.

The Japanese American Citizens League, the oldest and largest Asian American civil rights organization in America, began a legislative campaign to redress the injustice of internment in 1970. It would take 20 years to secure passage and funding of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 with a coalition of many organizations and individuals. The case for Redress was enhanced by the outstanding record of the Japanese American soldiers during World War II and the successful coram nobis petitions vacating the criminal convictions of Fred Korematsu, Gordon Hirabayashi and Minoru Yasui.

President Jimmy Carter created the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians in 1980. The Commission reviewed the historical record and conducted hearings in ten major cities in America. Internees tearfully told their stories of the humiliation of internment, often for the first time. The proceedings educated the American public, galvanized the Japanese American community in support of the Redress movement and began the process of healing the buried wounds of the past. The Commission found that "military necessity" did not warrant the exclusion and detention of Japanese Americans and that "a grave injustice was done to American citizens and resident aliens of Japanese ancestry." The Commission concluded, "The broad historical causes which shaped these decisions were race prejudice, war hysteria and a failure of political leadership."

The Civil Liberties Act provided a Presidential apology, token monetary payments to those surviving victims of the government's policies, and the creation of an educational trust fund. Senators Daniel K. Inouye and Spark Matsunaga in the Senate and Representatives Norman Y. Mineta and Robert T. Matsui in the House of Representatives were the principal sponsors of the Act. There were many co-sponsors, including seventy in the Senate. The House bill, H.R. 442, was passed on September 17, 1987, the 200th anniversary of the Constitution. President Ronald Reagan signed the Civil Liberties Act into law on August 10, 1988. The first redress payments were made in 1990.



Pinedale internees Jim Namba, Suyeto (Sid) Arase, Lily Suda, Jack Hata, George Shibata, James Hirabayashi, Sam Hirabayashi and Ted Kobata break ground at Remembrance Plaza on February 19, 2007, the 65th anniversary of Executive Order No. 9066. Howard K. Watkins

*"The legislation that I am about to sign provides for a restitution payment to each of the 60,000 surviving Japanese Americans, of the 120,000 who were relocated or detained. Yet no payment can make up for those three lost years. So what is most important in this bill has less to do with property than with honor. For here we admit a wrong. Here we reaffirm our commitment as a Nation to equal justice under the law. The ideal of liberty and justice for all, that is still the American way."* President Ronald Reagan, August 10, 1988

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