

ABOUT CAMPAIGN FOR JUSTICE

Campaign for Justice was founded in 1996 as a collaborative effort by individuals and organizations including the American Civil Liberties Union-Southern California, Nikkei for Civil Rights & Redress (formerly known as, the National Coalition for Redress & Reparations), and the Japanese Peruvian Oral History Project.

Campaign for Justice has two primary goals. First, it continues to help former Japanese Latin American internees secure proper redress. Second, it works to educate the public about the experiences of the Japanese Latin Americans.

For more information, or to make a donation payable to “Campaign for Justice,” please contact:

Campaign For Justice
P.O. Box 1384
El Cerrito, CA 94530
(510) 528-7288
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Historical information provided by the Japanese Peruvian Oral History Project.

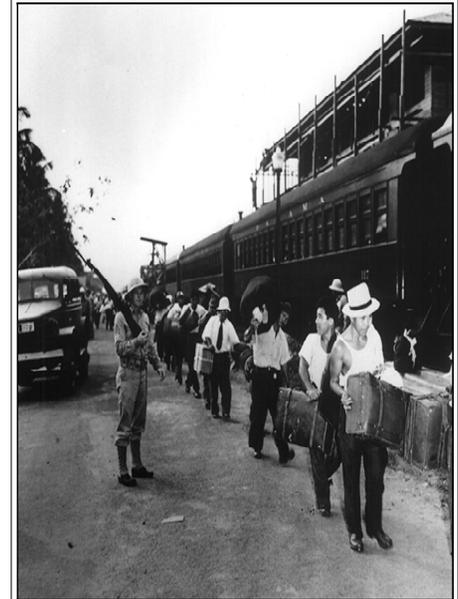
Campaign For Justice: Redress Now for Japanese Latin Americans!

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**Redress Now For
Japanese Latin Americans!**



Panama Canal Zone: Japanese Peruvians en route to U.S. Internment Camps. April 2, 1942. U.S. Army Signal Corps Photo. National Archive. Courtesy of NJAHS.

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HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

From December 1941 to February 1948, the U.S. government orchestrated and financed the mass abduction and forcible deportation of 2,264 men, women, and children of Japanese ancestry from 13 Latin American countries to be used as hostages in exchange for Americans held by Japan. Over 800 Japanese Latin Americans were included in two prisoner of war exchanges between the U.S. and Japan. The remaining Japanese Latin Americans were imprisoned without due process of law in U.S. Department of Justice internment camps until after the end of the war.

Stripped of their passports en route to the U.S. and declared "illegal aliens", most of the incarcerated Japanese Latin Americans were forced to leave the U.S. after their release from camp. However, since many were barred from returning to their home countries, more than 900 Japanese Latin Americans were deported to war devastated Japan. Over 350 Japanese Latin Americans remained in the U.S. and fought deportation in the courts. Eventually, about 100 were able to return to Latin America. It was not until 1952 that those who stayed were allowed to begin the process of becoming U.S. permanent residents. Many later became U.S. citizens.

Japanese Latin Americans were subjected to gross violations of civil and human rights by the U.S. government during WWII. These violations were not justified by a security threat to Allied interests. Rather, it was the outcome of historical racism, anti-foreign prejudice, economic competition, and political opportunism. The U.S. government has yet to properly acknowledge this wrongdoing against the Japanese Latin Americans.

CIVIL LIBERTIES ACT OF 1988

Like Japanese Americans, Japanese Latin Americans have played an integral part in the struggle for acknowledgement and redress by the U.S. government for its unjust treatment of people of Japanese ancestry in the U.S. As a result, Congress enacted the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 to make the U.S. credible in the eyes of the world on human rights issues. To accomplish this, the Act provided for an official apology and token reparations of \$20,000 to eligible individuals of Japanese ancestry. It also created a fund to educate the public about the internment to prevent the recurrence of similar events.

However, under this Act, individuals were eligible for reparations only if they were U.S. citizens or permanent resident aliens at the time of internment. Since the U.S. maintains the fabrication that Japanese Latin Americans were "illegal aliens", they were excluded from the Act. Only 189 Japanese Latin Americans were given redress under the Act because they were either born in camp or granted retroactive permanent residency.

THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES

The fight for justice continues today for Japanese Latin Americans in litigation and in legislation. Campaign for Justice is currently seeking comprehensive legislation that would serve to fulfill the education and compensation mandate of the Civil Liberties Act and to resolve the unfinished redress business.

We urge our communities to support these efforts to acknowledge and redress the fundamental injustices suffered by Japanese Latin American during WWII. We cannot allow this chapter of American history to close until our government makes proper amends for its actions.

LAWSUIT

In 1996, a class action lawsuit, Mochizuki v. U.S.A., was filed against the U.S. government on behalf of all Japanese Latin American internees who were denied redress under the Act. A settlement agreement was reached in 1998 that provided for an official apology and the possibility of \$5,000 in compensation payments to eligible Japanese Latin Americans. This settlement was controversial because it did not fully acknowledge the severity of their human rights violations. It did, however, contain essential provisions that allowed internees to opt-out of the settlement and continue litigation, and also allowed internees to pursue redress equity through legislative efforts.

Under the Mochizuki settlement, the token reparations, which were only one quarter of what Japanese Americans received, was not guaranteed. Despite assurances that all Japanese Latin Americans would receive redress payments, only 145 were paid before the funds were depleted. It was only after community effort and pressure for additional funding that supplemental appropriations were given by Congress to allow the remaining Mochizuki claimants to be paid. In addition, less than two months notification was allowed for Japanese Latin Americans to apply and the government refused to release applicant information to internee attorneys to ensure proper processing.

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