

### 5. Journalist James M. Omura Condemns the Mass Exclusion of Japanese Americans, 1942

I requested to be heard here due largely to the fact that I am strongly opposed to mass evacuation of American-born Japanese. . . . 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. . . . I specifically refer to the J.A.C.L. 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. . . .

It is doubtlessly rather difficult for Caucasian Americans to properly comprehend and believe in what we say. Our citizenship has even been attacked as an evil cloak under which we expect immunity for the nefarious purpose of conspiring to destroy the American way of life. To us—who have been born, raised, and educated in American institutions and in our system of public schools, knowing and owing no other allegiance than to the United States—such a thought is manifestly unfair and ambiguous.

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. . . .

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 right in normal times can be torn from us in times of war? We in America are intensely proud of our individual rights and willing, I am sure, to defend those rights with our very lives. I venture to say that the great majority of Nisei Americans, too, will do the same against any aggressor nation—though that nation be Japan. Citizenship to us is no small heritage; it is very precious and jealous right. You have only to look back on our records in social welfare and community contributions to understand that.

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.

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From Testimony of James M. Omura, House Select Committee Investigating Defense Migration, 77th Cong., 2nd Sess. (1942), 11229; reprinted in *Asian Americans: Opposing Viewpoints*, ed. William Dudley (San Diego: Greenhaven Press, 1997), 156-159.