

were rewarded for their loyalty with the recognition they deserve for having served this country and having always considered it their love.

This year happens to mark the 25th anniversary of the 1981 hearings by the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians. This commission concluded in 1983 that the internment of Japanese Americans was a result of racism and wartime hysteria back in the 1940s.

Five years after publishing its findings, then-President Ronald Reagan signed the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 that provided an official apology and financial redress to most of the Japanese Americans who were subjected to wrongdoing and who were confined in U.S. internment camps during World War II.

Those loyal Americans were vindicated finally by the fact that we have never once found even a single case of sabotage or espionage involving a Japanese American during World War II. The Civil Liberties Act of 1988 was a culmination of half a century of struggle to bring justice to those whom it had been denied. I am proud that our Nation did the right thing.

But 18 years after the passage of the Civil Liberties Act, there still remains unfinished work to completely rectify and close this regrettable chapter in our Nation's history.

Between December 1941 and February 1948, approximately 2,300 men, women and children of Japanese ancestry became the victims of mass abduction and forced deportation from 13 Latin American countries to the U.S.

During World War II, the U.S. Government orchestrated and financed the deportation of Japanese Latin Americans to be used as hostages in exchange for Americans held by Japan. Over 800 individuals were included in two prisoner-of-war exchanges between the U.S. and Japan. The remaining Japanese Latin Americans were imprisoned in internment camps without the benefit of due process rights until after the end of the war.

□ 1700

Japanese Latin Americans were not only subjected to gross violations of civil rights in the U.S. by being forced into internment camps much like their Japanese American counterparts, but additionally, they were victims of human rights abuses merely because of their ethnic origin.

Today, I want to announce that I soon will be introducing legislation that will create a commission to study the relocation, internment, and deportation of Japanese Latin Americans. It is the right thing to do to affirm our commitment to democracy and the rule of law by exploring this unclosed chapter in our history.

Just 2 weeks ago, I had the privilege of joining with citizens in Los Angeles, in my home city, at the Japanese American National Museum to commemorate the Day of Remembrance.

This day, first observed in 1978 in Seattle, has become very important in the Japanese American community. It is a time to reflect, to educate, and to act.

As we meet today to remember and reflect on the tragedy that innocent people experienced during World War II, it is my hope our government will continue to strive to right any wrongs and to prove once again that the strength of our national values and our eye towards redemption will continue to guide us. A necessary first step to achieving this altruistic goal is swift passage of the legislation which I will soon be introducing.

Mr. Speaker, today we should remember because many Americans have.

THE DAY OF REMEMBRANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WESTMORELAND). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. MATSUI) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. MATSUI. Mr. Speaker, 64 years ago, on February 19, 1942, tens of thousands of Japanese Americans were forcibly removed from their homes and communities in one of the great suspensions of liberty in our Nation's history. We recall the day President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 as a Day of Remembrance. This was the day the constitutional rights of Japanese Americans and legal residents along the West Coast were suspended and they were incarcerated during World War II.

Families and communities were uprooted from the life they had known. This memory is actually quite bitter-sweet for me and my family. My grandparents and parents were uprooted from their communities, their lives, their homes, their businesses, despite the fact that they were American citizens. My parents actually met and married at the Poston Internment Camp, my birthplace. In fact, my father says that that was probably the only good thing that came out of that camp.

Growing up, my parents protected me from the experience they went through of having the loyalty they held for this Nation being questioned. And as I was growing up, my parents made a concerted effort to teach me to believe in this country and love this country despite what it did to them.

I shared this sense of patriotism with my husband, Bob, who despite spending his toddler years in a camp, grew up to have a staunch and steadfast belief in our country and our Constitution, including the ideals of justice and equality firmly embedded in both.

Because of the implications of this incarceration, my grandparents, my parents like Bob's and so many others of this generation, did not speak of their experience in the internment camp. It wasn't until my father was much older that this time period was brought up.

But this is an experience that we cannot allow to fade. The government at all levels was blinded by war, and it is imperative that we learn the lesson this moment in history has taught us, including this Nation's ability to recognize and acknowledge our mistakes.

As we mark this tragic anniversary, I hope every American will take this day to affirm their commitment to our Constitution and the rights and protections it guarantees for all of us.

CELEBRATING COMMUNITY: A TRIBUTE TO BLACK FRATERNAL, SOCIAL AND CIVIC INSTITUTIONS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I just want to join my colleagues tonight, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. MATSUI) and the gentleman from California (Mr. HONDA) in reminding us of the terrible scar on our Nation's history: the internment of Japanese Americans. And I want to say to them that as an African American, as a person of color in our country, from California, that we join you in making sure that this body continues to remind the entire country that never again shall we allow such a gross violation of the human rights of any, any people in our country and throughout the world.

So thank you, Mr. HONDA and Ms. MATSUI, for once again allowing us to participate and reminding us of this great atrocity.

I want to also add tonight my voice to those of my colleagues in the Congressional Black Caucus in honoring an organization whose fight against the oppression and discrimination that all of us have felt in this country, whether we were directly victimized by it or not, it affected all of us, which gave birth to the modern-day civil rights movement, and that is the NAACP.

Today, this body unanimously passed H. Con. Res. 355, which was a bipartisan resolution honoring the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People on their 97th anniversary. This is the largest and the oldest civil rights organization in our country.

Late last night, we concluded Black History Month by commemorating this month with activities led by the Congressional Black Caucus Chair, our great leader, Chairman MEL WATT, on the floor. But it was very late last night, and I hope people had an opportunity to listen to the few Members who were here to talk about the glorious history of African Americans in America.

Today, in keeping with the ideals of Black History Month and the tradition of our ancestors, we must recommit ourselves to a plan of action. For generations, the NAACP has provided the blueprint for organizing the African American community and other communities, communities of color,