



JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE/JACL

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December 19, 2011

Ms. Jill Abramson
Executive Editor
The New York Times
620 Eighth Avenue
New York, NY 10018

Dear Ms. Abramson:

The Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) is gravely concerned by an article entitled “The How of an Internment, but Not All the Whys,” written by Edward Rothstein and printed in *The New York Times* on December 10, 2011. While we appreciate the author’s recognition of the historical significance of the Heart Mountain Interpretive Center, his critiques of the museum contain problematic views on the Japanese American community’s role in World War II.

Time and time again it has been proven that the internment of Americans of Japanese descent was not a military necessity, but the result of wartime hysteria and racism. In 1983 the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (CWRIC), a group appointed by Congress, found that the Japanese American community was not a sufficient threat to national security to justify internment and called the decision to incarcerate Japanese Americans a failure of political leadership. The United States Government has condemned its actions and paid redress to those affected by internment. Just last month Congress bestowed the Congressional Medal of Honor to the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, the 100th Battalion, and the Military Intelligence Service. These all-Japanese American units were recognized for their courage in risking their lives for a country that did not accept them.

Mr. Rothstein’s review perpetuates a damaging and misleading notion that conflates Japanese Americans with the Japanese and calls their loyalty and patriotism into question. If Mr. Rothstein found the information at Heart Mountain insufficient to explain the context of internment, he could have consulted academic literature before insinuating that the information at Heart Mountain is overlooking a threatening connection between Japanese Americans and Japanese enemies during World War II. These insinuations have no place in 2011, especially in a major news outlet such as *The New York Times*.

Insinuations that raise suspicions—such as Mr. Rothstein’s—are a critical issue; Congress has seen fit to pass legislation allowing the same kind of neglect of due process with the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2012. Again we see the same failure to recognize that war is not an excuse to overlook the Constitution and rely on race and religion to determine a person's right to basic civil rights. Due process and equal protection under the law are core values of this nation that must not be compromised by innuendo.

We call on *The New York Times* to publish information on Japanese internment that is informed by rigorous, academic research. It is essential in this political climate that we have media that uphold the truth and provide fair characterizations of its subjects.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "S. Floyd Mori". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

S. Floyd Mori
National Executive Director

The Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) is the nation's oldest and largest Asian American civil and human rights organization. Visit the JACL website for information or to join the organization: www.jacl.org.