



JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE/JACL

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JACL PRESS RELEASE

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POSTON AS NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK

Washington, D.C.— The National Park System Advisory Board Landmarks Committee met this afternoon in Washington, D.C. to consider the Poston Elementary School, Unit 1, as a National Historic Landmark. Poston was one of the ten main concentration camps in which Japanese Americans and their families were incarcerated during World War II. The Committee voted unanimously to recommend the site for National Historic Landmark designation. Poston was one of the largest of the camps and at the time was the third largest population center in Arizona.

National Executive Director of the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), Floyd Mori, testified before the Committee. He related how the camps at Manzanar, Minidoka, and Tule Lake were once designated and now have become an integral part of the National Park System, telling the story of the forced evacuation and incarceration of over 110,000 people of Japanese ancestry, most of them citizens of the United States. Mori urged the panel to support the designation.

Mori emphasized that, "These National Historic Landmarks now serve as lessons to all of America of the delicate nature of our guaranteed freedoms in times of national stress. These Landmarks are there as a lesson learned that we should never again repeat the admitted mistakes of 1942. The JACL and others use these sites to teach youth about the Constitution and to empower them to always be protective of the basic civil liberties guaranteed therein."

Marlene Shigekawa, who was born at the Poston camp, testified about the heartache and hardship experienced by her parents and grandparents. Shigekawa spoke of the uniting force the camp site has been in bringing diverse communities together for better understanding and tolerance.

Washington D.C. attorney, Warren Maruyama told the story of his family being uprooted and taken to an assembly center and then to two different camps. Maruyama has been an ardent supporter of Historic Landmark designation for all of the camps and has testified at numerous hearings.

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