



National Japanese American United Methodist Caucus

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JAPANESE AMERICAN UNITED METHODISTS SUPPORT IMMIGRATION TASK FORCE

July 19, 2019

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The National Japanese American Caucus of The United Methodist Church expresses its appreciation and support for the call to action issued on July 9, 2019 by the United Methodist Immigration Task Force¹, the General Board of Church and Society, the General Board of Global Ministries, and the United Methodist Women in response to the plight of migrants. We particularly support the call for “Sacred Resistance” to raids and deportations and pledge our visible and vocal opposition to these governmental policies.

Our caucus represents churches which have a common immigration experience to the U.S. most prominently at the turn of the last century. We are survivors and children of those who survived exclusionary immigration policies directed specifically at our communities in 1924², as well the mass incarceration of our people mandated by Executive Order 9066 issued in 1942³. Those policies are being echoed and enforced by the current administration.

In recent times, our specific history has been used to justify exclusionary immigration policies against Muslim and Arab communities as well as migrants crossing the southern border of Mexico. On June 12, 2019 the federal government announced its intention to convert Fort Sill in Oklahoma into a detention center for migrant children. Fort Sill was used as a detention center to house Japanese Americans during World War II.

From our unique perspective, we are experiencing history repeating itself in a downward spiral leading us towards spiritual bankruptcy and societal chaos. The U.S. Congress issued an apology to Japanese Americans for the wartime mass incarceration through the passage of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988. In the apology three factors were named as the causes of the incarceration; “pre-existing racial prejudice, wartime hysteria, and lack of political leadership.”

As a caucus we can see history repeating itself in the racial demonization of migrants, the portrayal of them as enemy aliens invading our country, and governmental leaders using innocent children and families as fodder for political purposes. While Japanese Americans had few political and religious leaders speak up for them in their time of trial, we live in a different time in history – and one informed by our collective past. In our ethnic history we have adopted the phrase, “Never Again” as a clarion call to not repeat our peculiar history. Our “never again” is happening now. The Civil Liberties Act of 1988 was not just for our community but for all people who deserve to be treated with dignity, respect, and sacred worth. As we support the call to action of our immigration task force, we also invoke the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 as a historical reference point to assure that the spiral of history moves us collectively towards a spiritually higher ground where we ensure justice for all God's people in this world.

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Footnotes:

¹ “A Call to Action for United Methodist in Response to the Plight of Migrant – July 9, 2019”. - http://calnev-email.brtaapp.com/files/galleries/acs19/friday%2c+june+21/awards/2019_+july+8_immigration+um+call+to+action+final+2.pdf

² Immigration Act of 1924 ended further immigration from Japan, while restricting the number of immigrants of the U.S. from southern and eastern Europe. Echoing the phrase, "aliens ineligible for citizenship," from the [Alien Land Law](#) of 1913 and the 1922 Supreme Court decision in [Ozawa v. United States](#), a special anti-Japanese provision was inserted to exclude the Japanese who were barred from naturalization. - <https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Immigration%20Act%20of%201924/>

³ The internment of Japanese Americans in the United States during World War II was the forced relocation and incarceration in concentration camps in the western interior of the country of between 110,000 and 120,000 people of Japanese ancestry, most of whom lived on the Pacific Coast. 62% of the internees were United States citizens. These actions were ordered by President Franklin D. Roosevelt shortly after Imperial Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internment_of_Japanese_Americans