

For immediate release
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**House Subcommittee to vote on bill that would investigate
U.S. treatment of Japanese Latin Americans during World War II**
CFJ urges the public to contact their member of Congress to support the passage of H.R. 42

LOS ANGELES, CA – July 21, 2009 - Japanese Latin Americans (JLAs) who were interned by the United States government during World War II have waited more than sixty years for a full investigation of their experiences, but their wait may soon be over. A bill entitled the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Latin Americans of Japanese Descent Act (HR. 42 and S. 69), introduced in both the House of Representatives and the Senate, this past January, is now scheduled for discussion and editing, or “markup,” this Thursday by the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration, Citizenship, Refugees, Border Security and International Law.

The JLA Commission bill would establish a federal commission to investigate and determine the facts surrounding the wartime deportation, internment and relocation of Latin Americans of Japanese descent by the U.S. government and recommend any appropriate remedies based on their findings.

Former internees and their families, along with activists and supporters, are calling for public outreach to House Judiciary Subcommittee members for their support this Thursday in passing and moving the bill onto the Judiciary Committee. “We believe that passage of H.R. 42 this year and establishment of the commission are crucial because soon there will be no survivors left to give their testimony,” says Grace Shimizu, daughter of a late former Japanese Peruvian internee and Director of the Japanese Peruvian Oral History Project.

While many Americans are aware of the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II, few know about our government’s activities in certain non-combatant countries against people of Japanese ancestry. Approximately 2,264 Japanese Latin Americans were uprooted from their homes and forcibly transported to the United States to be held in internment camps, and among whom hundreds were used by the U.S. government for hostage exchanges with Japan.

“These men, women and children were robbed of their freedom as they were removed from nations not directly involved in the war and stripped of their rights without due process,” says Christine Oh, Legislative Director of Campaign for Justice (CFJ). “They were classified as ‘illegal aliens’ by the U.S. government despite being forcibly brought to the U.S., and were subject to deportation during and after the war, in violation of their most fundamental civil and human rights.”

Although a previous commission in the 1980’s studied the internment of Japanese Americans during the war, there has yet to be a comprehensive study of the U.S. wartime enemy alien

program and the civil and human rights violations suffered by Japanese Latin Americans. “We urge the Immigration Subcommittee members to do the right thing and vote in favor of H.R. 42, which would call for a full examination of this part of our history and, in turn, only make us a stronger nation,” says Oh.

On March 19, 2009, the Subcommittee held a hearing focusing on the treatment of Latin Americans of Japanese and German descent, European Americans, and Jewish refugees during World War II, providing a platform for JLAs to lay a historical foundation for the need for a commission investigation into these wartime government violations. Witnesses who testified at the hearing included Libia Yamamoto (former Japanese Peruvian internee), Grace Shimizu, and Daniel Masterson (Professor of History at the U.S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland).

CFJ now urges particularly all Democratic members of the Subcommittee to attend the markup session this Thursday and vote for H.R. 42. We also strongly ask supporters along with their family and friends to please immediately contact their members of Congress who sit on the Subcommittee to express their support for passage of the bill, which has bipartisan co-sponsorship. Subcommittee member contact information can be found at <http://judiciary.house.gov/about/subimmigration.html>.

Members of the House Judiciary Subcommittee are as follows:

California: Howard Berman (D-CA-28), Elton Gallegly (R-CA-24), Zoe Lofgren (Subcommittee Chair, D-CA-16), Dan Lungren (R-CA-3), Linda Sanchez (D-CA-39), Maxine Waters (D-CA-35);

Illinois: Luis Gutierrez (D-IL-4);

Iowa: Steven King (R-IA-5);

Massachusetts: Bill Delahunt (D-MA-10);

Mississippi: Gregg Harper (R-MS-3);

New York: Anthony Weiner (D-NY-9);

Puerto Rico: Pedro Pierluisi (D-PR);

Texas: Ted Poe (R-TX-2), Charles Gonzalez (D-TX-20), Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX-18);

Utah: Jason Chaffetz (R-UT-3).

For more information, please contact Christine Oh, CFJ Legislative Director at (213) 500-9346 or info@campaignforjusticejla.org. Visit the website at www.campaignforjusticejla.org.

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