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An Important Lesson

For Japanese- Americans all across the country, the disastrous attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, meant prejudice. Indeed, soon after the attack, when President Roosevelt issued his next Executive Order, it was to intern the Japanese- Americans because of the possibility they might be spies ("Ex Parte Endo," n.d.). The wooden stalls in the camps which the Japanese- Americans lived in were scarcely furnished, with the exception of straw-filled mattresses. Last names were replaced by numbers, like 13660, for example (*Citizen 13660*, 1983). Two Japanese-American citizens, Gordon Hirabayashi and Fred Korematsu, disobeyed the Executive Order, were arrested, and had their cases heard by the Supreme Court. Representing many evacuees because of a strong impulse to help Japanese-Americans, Mitsuye Endo also had a case in the Supreme Court. Have we learned a lesson since Executive Order 9066?

Hirabayashi and Korematsu both bravely violated Executive Order 9066. As Hirabayashi had the strong opinion all American citizens had their rights, this order came as a shock. Hirabayashi decided he would not travel to the camp and obey the order. Instead, he turned himself in to the F.B.I. When agents forcefully arrested him, he spent five months in jail ("Korematsu vs. United States," n.d.). After Hirabayashi presented his case to the U.S. Court of Seattle, where he lost, he appealed to the Supreme Court. On June 21, 1943 in the case of *Hirabayashi v. United States*, the verdict was a unanimous decision against him (*A Principled Stand*, 2013).

Fred Korematsu took great measures to ensure he was not detected as Japanese-American. He underwent plastic surgery to appear non-Japanese and he told everyone he was a Spanish-Hawaiian whose name was Clyde Sarah ("From The Archives: Fred Korematsu, 86; Fought WW2 Internment of Japanese Americans," n.d.). Even so, Korematsu was arrested on May 30, 1942, for violating curfew ("From The Archives: Fred Korematsu, 86; Fought WW2 Internment of Japanese Americans," n.d.). His bold case, like Hirabayashi's, made it to the Supreme Court. But unlike Hirabayashi's, it was not a unanimous decision. Instead, in *Korematsu v. United States*, only six judges were against Korematsu, and three were in his favor ("Famous Dissents," n.d.). Could the Court possibly have been about to vote for the defendant?

Unlike Hirabayashi and Korematsu, Mitsuye Endo did not violate Executive Order 9066's curfew (*Korematsu v. United States*, 2006). Instead, she went willingly. In an attempt to free the Japanese-Americans, the president of the Japanese American Citizens League, asked a lawyer to help argue against the Order ("Ex Parte Endo," n.d.). The lawyer, James Purcell, chose Mitsuye Endo to represent the evacuees because Endo was Christian, had a brother in the U.S. Army, and could neither speak nor write in Japanese ("Ex Parte Endo," n.d.). Mitsuye Endo's case argued all the way up to the Supreme Court, where it was named *Ex Parte Endo*. The decision was unanimous, and the ruling was in Endo's favor. Executive Order 9066 was overturned, and eventually, the internment camps closed down.

Have we learned anything from these three court cases? In some ways, yes, we have. We have learned, as the court proved 40 years after Hirabayashi's case (*A Principled Stand*, 2013), and in Mitsuye Endo's case as well, that discrimination of all kinds is unconstitutional. Even in times of war, this stands, as our three court cases so strongly reminded us. In present-

day politics, President Trump has made an Executive Order much like President Roosevelt's, and the Government has made an important move. The government halted President Trump's Muslim Ban on immigration from seven Muslim countries by blocking part of the order ("What Trump's Executive Order Does and Doesn't Do," 2017). Maybe the Federal Appeals Panel had in mind the Japanese Internment of 1942, and the court cases against it when it responded to President Trump's ban on immigration. We have learned an important lesson since that day: discrimination will always be opposed.

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