



## UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS

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1331 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW • Suite 1150 • Washington, DC 20425 [www.usccr.gov](http://www.usccr.gov)

February 2, 2015

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write on behalf of the United States Commission on Civil Rights (“the Commission”) to follow up on our letter to you dated March 28, 2014 and renew our request for federal recognition of January 30th as a national holiday to recognize National Fred Korematsu Day. Recognizing this day would be a fitting tribute to Fred T. Korematsu’s courage to stand up for civil rights and liberties by challenging President Franklin Roosevelt’s Executive Order 9066 which authorized the removal of Japanese Americans from their homes and placement into internment camps during World War II.

As we previously mentioned, the legacy of Mr. Korematsu has a very personal connection to the Commission—even more so than last year. The families of Commissioners Michael Yaki and Karen Narasaki were both interned during World War II due to their Japanese ancestry. It is a testament to the beauty and ideals of the United States that the children of interned Japanese Americans are now serving on a federal commission dedicated to ensuring the civil rights of all Americans.

Mr. Korematsu’s actions are truly inspiring. Arrested and convicted for defying Executive Order 9066, he took his case all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court which upheld his conviction in one of the Court’s most infamous decisions. He never gave up, and nearly 40 years later a federal court overturned his conviction after a historian discovered that the government intentionally concealed evidence that Japanese Americans did not pose a military threat. Mr. Korematsu continued to be an outspoken civil rights activist, seeking redress for interned Japanese Americans, receiving the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Clinton, and fighting discrimination against the Muslim American community after 9/11.

Fred Korematsu Day is celebrated every January 30<sup>th</sup> on Mr. Korematsu’s birthday. Since we last wrote you, the number of states who have recognized Fred Korematsu Day is now up to five, with the most recent being Georgia.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, state representatives in three additional states

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<sup>1</sup> Fred Korematsu Day in Georgia, <http://korematsuinstitute.org/2014/01/fred-korematsu-day-in-georgia/>.



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have introduced resolutions to recognize the holiday.<sup>2</sup> Federal recognition of Fred Korematsu Day would foster greater awareness of not only Mr. Korematsu's life, but the ideals of equality and justice that he sought for all Americans.

We thank you for your consideration and look forward to continued cooperation in advancing civil rights for all.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Martin R. Castro in black ink.

Chairman Martin R. Castro

Handwritten signature of Patricia Timmons-Goodson in black ink.

Vice Chair Patricia Timmons-Goodson

Handwritten signature of Robert Achtenberg in black ink.

Commissioner Robert Achtenberg

Handwritten signature of David Kladney in blue ink.

Commissioner David Kladney

Handwritten signature of Karen K. Narasaki in black ink.

Commissioner Karen K. Narasaki

Handwritten signature of Michael Yaki in black ink.

Commissioner Michael Yaki

\*This letter is signed by the majority of Commissioners serving on the Commission as of January 29, 2015.

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<sup>2</sup> Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. About Fred Korematsu Day, <http://korematsuinstitute.org/fredkorematsumday/about/>.