

MATSUI ON THE LEGACY OF FRED KOREMATSU

MATSUI ON THE LEGACY OF FRED KOREMATSU

April 16, 2005

Saturday, April 16, 2005

[Printable Version \(PDF\)](#)

SACRAMENTO, CA – Representative Doris O. Matsui (D-CA) called Fred Korematsu a “true American patriot” during a memorial service for the late civil rights leader on Saturday. Rep. Matsui’s remarks were before the First Presbyterian Church in Oakland, California. The full text of those remarks is included below.

“I want to begin by thanking the Korematsu family for inviting me here today, and offering me the chance to pay tribute to a man whose name is synonymous with the fight for equality and justice here in our great country. It is truly a privilege to be with you for this celebration of Fred’s life.

“Because of his work Fred Korematsu has left a tremendous legacy and I have no doubt that his life and work will be studied in schools and universities for generations to come. And when students study Fred Korematsu, they will learn of a true American patriot, whose story embodies the finest values and aspirations of our country.

“Standing before his friends and family today, there is no need for me to recount Fred’s struggle as a Japanese American in the face of internment. The details of his truly heroic fight are familiar to us all.

“But we would be remiss if we did not honor, and in our own lives, seek to replicate his uncommon courage, and his unwavering commitment to justice.

“Like some of you here today, I was born in an internment camp in Arizona towards the end of World War II. My late husband was an infant – six months old – when he and his family were sent to the camp where they lived for a number of years.

“It was an experience that forever impacted my family, and the families of thousands of Japanese Americans. However, discussing this tragic time in American history has never been easy. Those who experienced this indefensible wrong have little desire to relive such painful times.

“But at a time when our country faces unprecedented challenges, we must all lend our voices, our stories and our experiences to the chorus of Americans who speak out against acts of injustice, large and small.

“Because telling our stories is critical to ensuring the nation we all love so dearly does not repeat the mistakes of the past. Fred knew that, and even in the last years of his life, continued to speak out against discrimination and prejudice in all its forms.

“We know, and Fred demonstrated, that opposing injustice is difficult. Defending what is right in the face of what is popular is often a lonely pursuit.

“But Fred Korematsu proved that the fight is always worthwhile. He showed us the value of never giving up, no matter how dire the circumstances may seem. And he taught us how important it is to persevere, even in the face of defeat.

“That legacy is a tremendous comfort to us all. Because when we tell our stories and speak out for justice, we know that we are not alone. And while he no longer walks with us, Fred Korematsu shall forever remain a friend to those who take on the tough fights.

“So when we leave here today, I hope we all go with a renewed commitment to the values that Fred cherished. There is no doubt that for the rest of our Nation’s history, those values – justice, equality, and the courage to speak truth to power –

will be synonymous with the Korematsu name.

"When President Clinton awarded Fred the Presidential Medal of Freedom, he noted that the Korematsu name belonged to one of America's proudest lineages -- ordinary citizens brave enough to accept an extraordinary role in our country's constant search for justice. People with names like Homer Plessy, Oliver Brown, Rosa Parks and Fred Korematsu."

###