



Peace and Justice  
Commission

15

CONSENT CALENDAR  
February 8, 2022

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council  
From: Peace and Justice Commission  
Submitted by: George Lippman, Chairperson, Peace and Justice Commission  
Subject: Japanese American Day of Remembrance

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a Resolution calling on leaders to denounce anti-Asian racism, and for the City to collaborate with AAPI communities and community-based organizations to promote community building and safety, and to address systemic barriers for reporting anti-Asian hate crimes.

Adopt in perpetuity February 19 as the Japanese American Day of Remembrance in Berkeley in recognition of the mass incarceration of Japanese Americans and Japanese Latin Americans during World War II.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION

Minimal impact to staff time.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

On the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Executive Order 9066, it is important to remember the unconstitutional and ethnically discriminatory incarceration of 120,000 people of Japanese ancestry at the onset of World War II.

Up to the present day, the U.S. government has failed to meet international obligations to make reparation for wartime human rights violations to over 2200 Japanese Latin Americans forcibly deported to the U.S.

The incarceration of Japanese Americans and Japanese Latin Americans is part of a long history of racial prejudice and hate that continues to today. In 2020, there was a rise in anti-Asian hate and violence across the United States, resulting in people of AAPI ancestry being killed, beaten, and harassed without provocation.

At its regular meeting of December 13, 2021, the Peace and Justice Commission unanimously proposed the attached resolution for the City Council to address anti-Asian racism, and to adopt in perpetuity February 19 as the Japanese American Day of Remembrance in Berkeley.

M/S/C: (Morizawa/Rodriguez)

Ayes: Bohn, Gussman, Lippman, Maran, Morizawa, Rodriguez

Noes: None.

Abstain: None.

### BACKGROUND

On February 19, 1942, President Franklin Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which resulted in the federal government forcibly removing and incarcerating around 120,000 people of Japanese ancestry, including 75,000 United States citizens and 1,300 Berkeley residents solely because of their Japanese ancestry.

Despite thousands of Japanese Americans losing their homes and economic livelihoods, many thousands of young Japanese American people bravely took up arms and sacrificed their lives to defend this country which wrongly incarcerated them.

The US government instituted an extraordinary rendition program during World War II whereby over 2200 people of Japanese ancestry were seized from 13 Latin American countries, transported to the US and interned in Department of Justice camps, and over 800 were used in hostage exchanges for US citizens.

The Civil Liberties Act of 1988, signed into law by President Ronald Reagan, states that the United States apologizes for the forced removal and incarceration of the Japanese Americans.

In 2017, the City of Berkeley acknowledged a day of remembrance for those affected by Japanese American mass incarceration and recognized the Japanese community's rich history and profound contributions to the City of Berkeley.

While racism and scapegoating increased in 2020-21, it is not new and is part of an over 150-year history of violence and hate against AAPI people and even longer for other communities who continue to be marginalized.

The unjust incarceration of around 120,000 Japanese Americans without charge or a fair hearing must serve as a potent reminder that this nation's character is reflected in how it treats its citizens, immigrant residents, and those seeking safety and refuge from violence, hate, and climate change.

### ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE IMPACTS

No identifiable impact.

RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

The Peace and Justice Commission is charged in its mandate to “advise the City Council and Berkeley Unified School District on all matters relating to peace and social justice...support for human rights and self-determination around the world...help develop proposals for the City Council and the School Board for actions in furtherance of the goals of peace and justice, and help publicize such actions in the community...initiate and develop cultural and educational foreign exchange.”

Reconciliation must come from speaking truth. Without recognition of the human rights violations that our government committed against Japanese Americans 80 years ago, we cannot hope to end the continuing pattern of anti-Asian racism in the community.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS CONSIDERED

None

CITY MANAGER

The City Manager takes no position on the content and recommendations of the Commission’s Report.

CONTACT PERSON

Okeya Vance-Dozier, Peace and Justice Commission Secretary, City Manager’s Office, (510) 529-5376

Attachments:

1: Resolution

RESOLUTION NO. ##,###-N.S.

JAPANESE AMERICAN DAY OF REMEMBRANCE

WHEREAS, the Peace and Justice Commission advises the City Council on all matters relating to the City of Berkeley's role in issues of peace and social justice (Berkeley Municipal Code Chapter 3.68.070); and

WHEREAS, 80 years ago, on February 19, 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which resulted in the federal government forcibly removing and incarcerating around 120,000 people of Japanese ancestry, including 75,000 United States citizens and 1,300 Berkeley residents solely because of their Japanese ancestry; and

WHEREAS, this Executive Order was in violation of United States Constitutional rights and human rights, the government removed and incarcerated an entire ethnicity claiming it was on the grounds of national security and military necessity; and

WHEREAS, despite thousands of Japanese Americans losing their homes and economic livelihoods, many thousands of young Japanese American people bravely took up arms and sacrificed their lives to defend this country which wrongly incarcerated them; and

WHEREAS, the US government instituted an extraordinary rendition program during World War II whereby over 2200 people of Japanese ancestry were seized from 13 Latin American countries, transported to the US and interned in Department of Justice camps, and over 800 were used in hostage exchanges for US citizens;<sup>1</sup> and

WHEREAS, after WWII, while most interned Japanese Latin Americans were forcibly deported to US-occupied Japan, over 300 were able to remain in the US, some in the San Francisco Bay Area, including in the city of Berkeley; and

WHEREAS, in 1983, the federal Commission on the Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians found that the incarceration of Japanese Americans was not justified by military necessity and were not based in military analysis; instead, the unjust incarceration was based on "race prejudice, war hysteria, and a failure of political leadership;" and

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<sup>1</sup> For more information see "Americans Forgotten Internment," *Politico*, December 5, 2021, <https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2021/12/05/japanese-latinos-us-war-hostages-history-523711>

WHEREAS, the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, signed into law by President Ronald Reagan, states that the United States apologizes for the forced removal and incarceration of the Japanese Americans; and

WHEREAS, the US government failed to include Japanese Latin American internees in its initial redress bill and continues to disregard the 2019 decision of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (a body of the Organization of American States) affirming its obligation to make reparation for both “material and moral dimensions” of wartime human rights violations perpetrated against Japanese Latin Americans; and

WHEREAS, in 2017, the City of Berkeley acknowledged a day of remembrance for those affected by Japanese American mass incarceration and recognized the Japanese community’s rich history and profound contributions to the City of Berkeley; and

WHEREAS, the incarceration of Japanese Americans and Japanese Latin Americans is part of a long history of racial prejudice and hate that continues to today; in 2020, there was a rise in anti-Asian hate and violence across the United States, resulting in people of AAPI ancestry being killed, beaten, and harassed without provocation; and

WHEREAS, this rise in racial prejudice and hate was due to the media and rhetoric used by past political leaders resulting in the first spike in hate crimes in March and April 2020, whereas the reported hate crimes against AAPI people in 16 of the United States’ largest cities and counties were up 145% in 2020.<sup>2</sup>

WHEREAS, Stop AAPI Hate, a national coalition aimed at addressing anti-Asian discrimination amid the pandemic, documented 10,370 incidents of hate incidents from March 19, 2020, to September 30, 2021; and

WHEREAS, while racism and scapegoating increased in 2020-21, it is not new and is part of an over 150-year history of violence and hate against AAPI people and even longer for other communities who continue to be marginalized; and

WHEREAS, for decades, systemic oppression and implicit bias against people of AAPI ancestry has resulted in the silencing of AAPI voices, the stifling of careers, and contributing to the invisibility of AAPI achievements and struggles; and

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<sup>2</sup> Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at California State University, San Bernardino.  
<https://search.yahoo.com/yhs/search?hspart=mnet&hsimp=yhs-001&type=type9099612-spa-3503-84593&param1=3503&param2=84593&p=Center+for+the+Study+of+Hate+and+Extremism+at+California+State+University%2C+San+Bernardino>

WHEREAS, in 1882, the Chinese Exclusion Act banned all Chinese people from immigrating to the United States, which led to the Immigration Act of 1924, which banned immigration from all Asian or Pacific countries; and

WHEREAS, throughout the United States' history, this prejudice, discrimination, and violence have impacted all people of AAPI descent; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. government, including law enforcement, has discriminated against the AAPI, Black, Latin, Native American, LGBTQ+ and other marginalized communities, escalating the hate and violence they are supposed to prevent; and

WHEREAS, the incarceration of around 120,000 Japanese Americans without charge or a fair hearing must serve as a potent reminder that this nation's character is reflected in how it treats its citizens, immigrant residents, and those seeking safety and refuge from violence, hate, and climate change; and

WHEREAS, the Berkeley Chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League and the UC Berkeley Nikkei Student Union have requested that the Berkeley City Council take this action.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City of Berkeley that Berkeley calls on local and national media outlets, elected officials, and community leaders to denounce racial discrimination, white supremacy, and xenophobia and continue to highlight stories of achievements and experiences of hate crimes, violence, and harassment based on one's ancestry or appearance.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED by the Council of the City of Berkeley that Berkeley collaborate with AAPI communities, including Pacific Islanders, Native Hawaiians, and all immigrant communities, as well as all marginalized communities to create community programs and advocate for policy and legislation that will support community building and safety.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED by the Council of the City of Berkeley that Berkeley collaborate with community-based organizations to address systemic barriers for reporting anti-Asian hate crimes by mitigating language or cultural barriers, or fear of immigration status repercussions.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED by the Council of the City of Berkeley that Berkeley adopt in perpetuity February 19 as the Japanese American Day of Remembrance in recognition of Japanese Americans and Japanese Latin Americans who were victims of mass incarceration in this country; and in 2022 urge Berkeley residents to tour the UC Bancroft Library exhibit, *Uprooted: The Incarceration of Japanese Americans* and attend the UC Berkeley Nikkei Student Union (<https://nsu.berkeley.edu/>) and the Bay Area annual Day of Remembrance ([njahs.org](http://njahs.org)) commemorations.