

United States Senate

May 11, 2015

The President
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I am writing to recommend Mitsuye Endo for the Presidential Medal of Freedom for her bravery and patriotism which led to the historic U.S. Supreme Court decision that ended the unjust incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II. Awarding the Presidential Medal of Freedom to Mitsuye Endo would provide long overdue recognition of the courage and sacrifice of a civil rights heroine whose low-key demeanor belied her steadfast pursuit of justice during World War II.

Like thousands of Japanese Americans, Ms. Endo was interned for no other reason than her ancestry. She was an American citizen, she spoke only English and no Japanese, she served as a state government employee, and she had a brother serving in the U.S. Army. Still after Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, Ms. Endo was fired from her job, and she and her family were forcibly removed from their home in Sacramento and sent to internment sites—first the Tule Lake War Relocation Camp in California and later to the Topaz War Relocation Camp in Utah. She spent three years living behind barbed wire.

Four Japanese Americans challenged the legality of their relocation and internment all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. Mitsuye Endo was the only woman among them and the only named plaintiff to win a case. While her case proceeded, Ms. Endo rejected an offer from the government to release her as long as she agreed not to return to the West Coast. Instead, she chose to remain incarcerated to allow her case to continue through the court system.

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled 9-0 in favor of Ms. Endo, stating in part:

A citizen who is concededly loyal presents no problem of espionage or sabotage. Loyalty is a matter of the heart and mind, not of race, creed, or color. He who is loyal is by definition not a spy or a saboteur. When the power to detain is derived from the power to protect the war effort against espionage and sabotage, detention which has no relationship to the objective is unauthorized..." *Ex Parte Endo*, 323 U.S. 283 (1944)

The Roosevelt Administration, alerted in advance of the decision, preempted the release of the court's opinion and rescinded Executive Order 9066 on December 17, 1944—the day before the Endo ruling was handed down. The internment camps were closed and Japanese Americans began to be freed two weeks later on January 2, 1945.

Ms. Endo was an ordinary person who made the extraordinary choice to forego her own freedom in order to secure the rights of 120,000 Japanese Americans who were wrongfully imprisoned without the benefit of due process. Her story exemplifies a core American principle; we are a nation of laws where one person can stand up against an injustice and alter the course of our democracy.

Thank you for your continued leadership and your consideration of this request.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brian Schatz". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized "S" at the end.