



Remembering: "Star Trek" actor George Takei (left) and Norman Mineta, former secretary of transportation, pose for a photo after announcing the launch of the Remembrance Project, a website documenting the wartime internment of Japanese-Americans, in Los Angeles on Saturday. KYODO

Japanese-Americans call for action on internment anniversary

Kyodo

LOS ANGELES — Japanese-Americans marked the 70th anniversary of their World War II internment Saturday with a call to action and the launch of a new website designed to share stories with a wider audience.

The event took place a day before the anniversary of the 1942 presidential order that led to the forced removal of around 120,000 Japanese-Americans from the West Coast to camps in remote parts of the country.

In his keynote speech at the event, Robin Toma, executive director of the Los Angeles County Human Relations Commission, drew parallels between the Feb. 19, 1942, order by Franklin D. Roosevelt and a law signed by President Barack Obama last December.

The 2012 National Defense Authorization Act "has provisions that allow our president to authorize indefinite detention of any person in the U.S. or abroad. . . . I think that is an immediate connection to what we are doing here today," Toma said.

Toma was apparently referring to the law's provisions related to counterterrorism, which allow the president to authorize the indefinite detention of people suspected of involvement in terrorism.

"We have a special responsibility (to speak out against the law) because we know what could happen," Toma said at the Japanese-American National Museum.

On the same day, the museum launched the Remembrance Project, a website where people can pay tribute to those affected by the internment and read stories others have posted.

"We want to send out the message 'never forget.' But the interesting thing is that huge numbers of our fellow Americans never knew," said actor George Takei, one of the cochairmen of the project.

When Takei was 5 years old, his family was made to leave their home and sent to an internment camp in Rohwer, Arkansas. After the war, they found themselves living in Skid Row, a district of Los Angeles notorious for drugs and homelessness.

By allowing people to share their stories through the site, the museum is hoping to make the history of internment more accessible to a broader, younger audience.

"We paid a price we should never have had to pay to secure our rights. But having paid that price, this project is an effort to ensure that the price we paid always counts for something," said Norman Mineta, former U.S. secretary of transportation and a cochairman of the Remembrance Project.

Mineta was interned with his family at a camp in Heart Mountain, Wyoming.

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