

KOREMATSU INSTITUTE

FOR CIVIL RIGHTS AND EDUCATION

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California to celebrate first annual Fred Korematsu Day with an event featuring Rev. Jesse Jackson and K-12 curriculum

San Francisco – January 30th marks the first annual Fred Korematsu Day in California, the first day in U.S. history named after an Asian American. The Fred Korematsu Day bill, signed into California law in September 2010, honors an American civil rights hero from Oakland, CA who bravely resisted the government's incarceration of 120,000 Japanese Americans during World War II.

Several hundred people are expected to attend the first annual Fred Korematsu Day celebration on Sunday at UC Berkeley's Wheeler auditorium. The program, sponsored by the Korematsu Institute, includes:

- Keynote speaker Reverend Jesse Jackson
- Def Poetry Jam spoken word artist Beau Sia
- Karen Korematsu, daughter of Fred Korematsu
- California Assemblymember Warren Furutani (D – South Los Angeles) co-sponsor of the Fred Korematsu Day bill
- California Assemblymember Marty Block (D – San Diego), co-sponsor of the Fred Korematsu Day bill
- Speeches from students who attend schools named after Fred Korematsu
- A video message from Rep. Keith Ellison of Minnesota, the first Muslim elected to U.S. Congress.

Earlier this month, the Korematsu Institute shipped hundreds of Korematsu teaching kits to K-12 classrooms as far north as McKinleyville, CA and as far south as Chula Vista, CA. Kits included the Institute's 2011 Korematsu Teacher's Guide, complete with lesson plans and suggested activities, as well as several educational videos, bookmarks and a Fred Korematsu Day poster. In the days and weeks after January 30, which falls on a Sunday, teachers with kits plan to teach their students about Fred Korematsu's legacy and the importance of speaking up when they see something that is unfair or discriminatory.

"As the first day in the U.S. named after an Asian American, Fred Korematsu Day is a historic milestone for all Americans," says Ling Woo Liu, Director of the Korematsu Institute. "Fred Korematsu Day has opened up a learning opportunity for California students to better understand the importance of protecting civil liberties."

On September 23, 2010, former Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger signed into California law Assembly Bill 1775, establishing January 30 as Fred Korematsu Day of Civil Liberties and the Constitution, a day of special recognition when schools are encouraged to teach students about Korematsu's story and its contemporary relevance.

"Fred Korematsu was an ordinary man who did an extraordinary thing during a time when his constitutional rights were violated, and as a consequence, changed the course of history. Fred Korematsu Day will provide an important teaching moment for California and its students," says Assemblyman Warren Furutani.

"As a trailblazer of civil rights who stood against the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II, Fred Korematsu's legacy reminds us that we must use this dark period in our history as a teaching tool to educate future generations on the importance of preserving civil liberties for everyone," says Assemblymember Marty Block.

During World War II, Korematsu was a 23-year-old welder in Oakland, California who defied military orders that ultimately led to the evacuation and incarceration of 120,000 Japanese Americans. After he was arrested and convicted of defying the military's incarceration order, he took his case to the U.S. Supreme Court, which in 1944 upheld his conviction on the ground that the forced removal of Japanese Americans was justified due to "military necessity." That decision has been widely condemned as one of the darkest chapters in American legal history.

After four decades of having to live with a "disloyalty" conviction on his record that limited him from securing full-time work, Korematsu filed suit to reopen his case on proof that the government, when arguing his case during the war, had suppressed, altered, and destroyed material evidence that contradicted the government's claim of military necessity. In 1983, the Federal District Court for the Northern District of California granted his petition for a writ of *error coram nobis* (a notice of error) and overturned his conviction. It was a pivotal moment in civil rights history that helped lead to the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, whereby the U.S. Government paid \$20,000 to each survivor of the Japanese American incarceration camps.

"After my father's conviction was overturned in 1983, his focus and mission was education," says Karen Korematsu. "He believed it was important to teach about his struggle for justice and the Japanese American incarceration so that the mistakes of history would not be repeated in the future. This day enables students to learn and discuss the lessons of American history and their relevance to current discussions regarding the Constitution."

Korematsu went on to champion the cause of civil liberties, not only seeking redress for Japanese Americans who were wrongfully incarcerated, but also traveling the country to advocate for the civil rights of other victims of excessive government action, especially after 9/11. He passed away in 2005 at the age of 86.

Sunday, January 30

1st Annual Fred Korematsu Day Celebration

Wheeler auditorium

UC Berkeley campus, Berkeley, CA

2:00-3:00pm: Main Program

3:00-4:00pm: General reception

4:00-5:00pm: Screening of the Emmy Award-winning film *Of Civil Wrongs and Rights: the Fred Korematsu Story*

Tickets: \$25 general, \$15 discount tickets for teachers, nonprofit employees and senior citizens,
\$5 students

For more information: fredkorematuesday.org

Days and Weeks after January 30

Celebrating Fred Korematsu Day in the Classrooms

Teachers all over California will be using the Korematsu Institute's teaching kits and 2011 Korematsu Teacher's Guide to educate students, from kindergarden to 12th grade, about the legacy of Fred Korematsu and how individuals can stand up for their own rights, as well as the rights of those around them. To download the 2011 Korematsu Teacher's Guide, go to: <http://korematsuinstitute.org/korematsu-day/korematsu-day-curriculum/>. The Korematsu Institute can also put reporters in touch with teachers in various cities who are planning to teach the Korematsu story to their students.

The Fred T. Korematsu Institute for Civil Rights and Education, a program of the Asian Law Caucus, is dedicated to advancing pan-ethnic civil rights and human rights through education, activism and leadership development.

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