

Terry Shima's Brief Remarks
Montgomery County Council
Rockville, MD
November 27, 2012

**Montgomery County Council President Berliner
County Executive Leggett
Honorable Members of the Council
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

We wish to thank the Montgomery County Council for issuing the Proclamation to recognize the 100th Battalion, 442nd Regimental Combat Team and the Military Intelligence Service. Also, I wish to thank the four students and principal of Spark Matsunaga Elementary School in Germantown for being present today. The students and faculty of the school, named in honor of US Senator Spark Matsunaga, also a veteran of the 100th Infantry battalion, have provided inspiration and support to JAVA.

I was invited to provide some brief remarks. The Proclamation discusses what the Japanese Americans did during WW II. Allow me to provide a little background to the WW II event and also Japanese American developments after WW II.

During the darkest days of Japanese American history immediately following the Pearl Harbor attack, when our loyalty was questioned and enlistments were prohibited, we petitioned the government to allow us to serve in combat. The Army responded by deploying the 100th Battalion, a segregated unit, to the Italian front

and subsequently activated the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, also a segregated Nisei unit. Following training the 442nd was deployed to Italy, where it merged with the 100th.

The Army gave us tough assignments in Italy and France, including the rescue of the trapped Texas Battalion in the Vosges forests of northeastern France in which the 442nd sustained huge casualties to save 211 Texans who were doomed for annihilation. At the same time some 3,000 Nisei served in the Asia Pacific theater as translators of captured enemy documents, interrogators of prisoners of war and as interceptors of enemy communications. They produced valuable intelligence information.

When the war was over America turned its attention to rebuilding the nation and the world. GEN Marshall reminded Washington there was still one issue to resolve, the “Japanese issue”, i.e. how to integrate the ethnic Japanese into the American society. The Army called on the 442nd. In the summer of 1946 the 442nd was returned from Italy, marched down Constitution Avenue, and was reviewed by President Truman at the Ellipse. Truman confirmed Japanese American loyalty by telling them “you fought the enemy abroad and prejudice at home – and you won.” That affirmation resonated across the land endorsed by editorials, one of which won the Pulitzer.

The combat performance record of the 442nd and the Tuskegee airmen, in part, caused Washington to reform the armed forces thereby leveling the playing field for any minority to compete for any position and rank. During WW II Japanese American assignments were limited mostly to the infantry and the highest rank of a Japanese American was major and there were only four. Fast forward to the Vietnam War. Japanese Americans were found in every branch of service, in the most sensitive war planning positions, in the cockpits of fighters and bombers as pilots and navigators with ranks of major. Lieutenant colonels and colonels. Following the Vietnam War some 35 Japanese Americans would be promoted to generals and admirals with one serving as the chief of staff of the US Army wearing four stars. Another 60 Asian Pacific Americans would achieve flag rank. There were reforms on the civilian side as well, such as the Commission on Wartime Relocation and the internment of Civilians which concluded internment was not necessary, that it was caused by war hysteria, racial prejudice and the failure of political leadership; the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 when President Reagan and the US Congress offered formal apologies for the incarceration of 120,000 ethnic Japanese. A few years ago the US senate selected from among them a Japanese American to serve as President Protempore of the US Senate, a position, constitutionally, that puts him third in line for the presidency. Only 70 years ago this same Nisei senator was classified 4-C, enemy alien unfit for military duty. Ladies and Gentlemen, the Japanese

**American story speaks of the Greatness of America.
God Bless the USA.**