

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 32

RESOLUTION CHAPTER 19

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 32—Relative to the Japanese YWCA in San Francisco.

[Filed with Secretary of State May 3, 1999.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

ACR 32, Honda. The Japanese YWCA in San Francisco.

This measure would declare that it shall be state policy to eradicate any vestiges of the racism of the California Alien Land Law that was repealed in 1956, and to take steps to ensure the enforcement of charitable trusts created in response to that law.

WHEREAS, The California Alien Land Law was enacted in 1913 in an atmosphere of racial prejudice and barred Japanese immigrants and their charitable and religious organizations from owning real property; and

WHEREAS, In response to the California Alien Land Law, Japanese Americans legally entered into trust agreements with non-Japanese to hold their property in another's name so they might establish their roots in this country and build a stable and lasting community; and

WHEREAS, Japanese immigrant women of the Soko Bukai, an association of Japanese Christian churches in San Francisco, established a Japanese YWCA in that city in 1912 to work with Japanese women and girls; and

WHEREAS, The San Francisco YWCA policy in the early 1900's forbade Japanese and other minority women and girls from living in their residence halls, and this discriminatory policy was adopted, enforced, and periodically reaffirmed by the San Francisco YWCA; and

WHEREAS, The Japanese YWCA, in response to this discriminatory policy, undertook a fundraising campaign to purchase a building that would serve as a residence hall for Japanese women and girls; and

WHEREAS, In 1920–21, the Japanese YWCA raised the funds to purchase the building and property, with the San Francisco YWCA Board agreeing to hold this property in trust for the permanent use of the Japanese YWCA; and

WHEREAS, Ten years later, noted architect Julia Morgan donated her services to design a new Japanese YWCA building as a tribute to the architectural heritage of Japan; and

WHEREAS, In 1932, the Japanese YWCA celebrated the opening of its building at 1830 Sutter Street in San Francisco and continuously and exclusively occupied, controlled, and provided services to Japanese women and girls from that building; and

WHEREAS, Programs and services of the Japanese YWCA were abruptly ended in 1942 when Executive Order Number 9066 forcibly removed all Japanese Americans from the West Coast to inland concentration camps; and

WHEREAS, The Japanese YWCA leased the building during the internment years to the American Friends Service Committee, which provided services to Japanese American internees; and

WHEREAS, Institutional memory of the trust agreement was lost during the four years of internment and the years that followed, with the Japanese YWCA never regaining control of their building; and

WHEREAS, The Japanese YWCA building is the only surviving prewar building constructed through the efforts, dedication, and vision of Japanese immigrant women and is their legacy to the Japanese American community; and

WHEREAS, In 1996 the San Francisco YWCA threatened the existence of the Japanese YWCA building by (1) attempting to sell the property at its highest commercial value , (2) rejecting the Japanese American community's request that the San Francisco YWCA honor the trust established by the Japanese immigrant (Issei) women , and (3) rejecting the community's good faith offer to purchase the Japanese YWCA property to preserve it for community service; and

WHEREAS, The Soko Bukai, whose Issei women members founded the Japanese YWCA, today reasserts the Japanese American community's claim to the Japanese YWCA building; and

WHEREAS, The San Francisco YWCA steadfastly disavows the existence of the trust agreement with the Japanese YWCA in spite of the minutes of the San Francisco YWCA Board of Directors from the 1920's and 1930's which document that agreement; and

WHEREAS, The San Francisco YWCA refuses to acknowledge any legal or moral obligations to the Japanese American community and has taken overt actions to prevent any enforcement of the trust agreement; and

WHEREAS, The San Francisco YWCA's refusal to honor the trust agreement and fulfill its duties as trustee allows the YWCA to profit from the racism of the California Alien Land Law; and

WHEREAS, The actions by the San Francisco YWCA are in direct contradiction to the YWCA's official imperative "to seek the elimination of racism wherever it exists and by any means necessary"; and

WHEREAS, The California Alien Land Law was ruled unconstitutional in 1952 and repealed by the California Legislature in 1956; now, therefore, be it



Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California, the Senate thereof concurring, That the Legislature of the State of California declares that it shall be the policy of the state to eradicate any vestiges of the racism of the California Alien Land Law and to take steps to ensure the enforcement of charitable trusts created in response to that law; and be it further

Resolved, That the Legislature pays tribute to the contributions, tenacity, and vision of the Issei women pioneers of the State of California; and be it further

Resolved, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies of this resolution to the Governor of the State of California, the State Library, the State Archives, and to the author for distribution.

