

WHO CAN OWN LAND?

LAWS RESTRICTING PROPERTY RIGHTS REFLECTED PREJUDICES



In 1934, **Kajiyo Oyama**, a Japanese immigrant, or Issei, purchased some Chula Vista land in the name of his American citizen child, six-year-old Fred. The state prosecuted the Oyamas for violating the Alien Land Law, which barred Issei from owning and leasing land. In 1948, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that Issei could buy land for their citizen children. Thereafter, the state supreme court invalidated the remaining part of the law preventing Issei from owning land in their own names.



ISSEI, LIKE KAJIYO OYAMA, WERE NOT ALLOWED TO BECOME CITIZENS AT THE TIME OF THE ALIEN LAND LAW.

“ I'M AN AMERICAN, AND I HAVEN'T PAID SECOND-CLASS TAXES. AND DURING MY 11 1/2 YEARS IN THE ARMY I DIDN'T FIGHT SECOND-CLASS WARS. ALL I WANT IS TO BE JUDGED BY MERIT. - SEABORN BURKS

In 1959, a San Francisco developer refused to sell **Seaborn and Jean Burks** a home because they were African Americans. The couple sued under the new California Civil Rights Act, which outlawed racial discrimination in all business establishments. Although the California Supreme Court ruled in their favor, housing discrimination remained widespread. In 1964, voters passed an initiative amending the California Constitution to authorize racial bias in home sales. The U.S. Supreme Court struck that down in 1967.



FOR DECADES, DEVELOPERS AND WHITE PROPERTY OWNERS ORGANIZED TO KEEP AFRICAN AMERICANS LIKE SEABORN AND JEAN BURKS FROM INTEGRATING NEIGHBORHOODS.

Oyama Clipping: Courtesy of the ACLU of San Diego and Imperial County
Seaborn & Jean Burks: Courtesy of the California Historical Society