
For Interracial Tolerance

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MISSOURI
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
SIXTY-SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

1307 Benton Avenue
Springfield, Missouri

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My dear friend Dr. Boss:

The fight was on whether we should bar a Japanese-American doctor from employment in our Tubercular Sanatorium. Dr. Fujikawa was employed there some weeks ago. One of our bitter-end haters of all things Jap resolved to throw him out. I took him on, and we licked the proposition clean.

There are anxious days ahead. Best wishes,

Faithfully,
(Signed)

O. K. ARMSTRONG

For Interracial Tolerance

Speech of Representative O. K. Armstrong,* in the Missouri House of Representatives, March 30, 1944, opposing an amendment that would have barred a doctor of Japanese descent from practicing in the Missouri State Sanatorium (tuberculosis).

Mr. Speaker, Ladies and Gentlemen of the House:

IRISE to oppose this amendment. It would bar an American doctor of Japanese descent from employment in our State Tubercular Sanatorium. Why does the author of this amendment seek to do this? He admits that Doctor Fujikawa was born in the United States. He does not accuse him of disloyalty. But, he says, surely we need not employ a Jap. He expresses his hatred for this race.

This raises a question far beyond the simple matter of whom our state shall employ in its institutions. The question is whether we shall discriminate against a man because of his race, or whether we shall lift our voices here and now to defeat this glaring evidence of racial intolerance.

It is true that this doctor was born of Japanese parents, in California. But he has an honorable record. He entered a great and noble profession, that of physician. I hold in my hand a letter from the president of our Eleemosynary Board, showing that he was thoroughly investigated by the F.B.I., and found to be intensely loyal to his native country, the United States. He volunteered to serve our institution rather than remain in comparative idleness in the Relocation Center. He was badly needed at the Sanatorium. Had he not come, one hundred fifty tubercular patients might have been sent home, and some of them would have died for lack of proper attention.

Mr. Speaker, this amendment would stop Dr. Fujikawa from administering his healing arts—merely because he is descendant from Oriental parents. The sponsor says we must be on guard against the Japs. Yet while we debate this question, Japanese-American soldiers are on guard for us—batallions of them fighting bravely with our troops in Italy!

*The Honorable O. K. Armstrong fought in the A.E.F. in France, and is nationally known in The American Legion.

Of course we have a determined enemy to fight. As father of a boy in the service, I know, as you members all know, how serious is the task of winning this war. But should we show hatred for our fellow citizens because of their racial descent? No, Mr. Speaker, it would not be worthy of those who fight for liberty and justice. Hatred should have no part in our task.

During the last war, some things happened which we veterans of that war are ashamed of. We hoped they would never happen again. Right here in Missouri, some houses were painted with streaks of yellow, by cowards in the night—because the families had German names and it seemed popular to hate all things German. Yet those families may have been as loyal as you or I.

If we prevent a man from pursuing his honorable profession because his ancestors were Oriental, we would be starting something we could not stop. We would be fanning coals of racial prejudice that might burst into raging flames. Already we are distressed by outcroppings of interracial friction. Already we hear it said, "When this war is over, we'll put the Negro back in his place."

Where, Mr. Speaker, is the Negro's place? In this land of freedom, his place is at whatever level he proves himself worthy to stand. We have a Negro member of this House, from St. Louis. Mr. Kenswil has served quietly and without offense to anyone. He has been an industrious member of the committee of which I have the honor to be chairman. I now say publicly what I have said many times in private conversation, that this man has served ably and well not only the people of his race, but all the people of Missouri. I say to you that there is room in this great state for law-abiding citizens of both the white and colored races, and we should co-operate to banish interracial discord.

Already we hear in this country mutterings and threats against the Jews. We are told that they must be made to suffer after this war. Would barbarous methods, borrowed from tyrants who have plunged this world into strife, solve any of the problems which concern members of this race, in this nation or beyond its borders? Would we advance the causes for which our boys are fighting and dying, by anti-Semitic demonstrations? And what about the Italians? We

are at war with their mother country. Should we discriminate against families of Italian descent? Many of them are respected citizens of our state.

Mr. Speaker, this illustrates how easily the passions of war arouse interracial hatred and ill-will. Let us guard against them. Let us not punish the innocent victims of war for the crimes of those who are the enemies of freedom. Dr. Fujikawa is not responsible for our war with Japan. For that matter, the people of the Japanese Empire had no voice in their destiny, no control over the mad warlords who launched the attack at Pearl Harbor. Let us realize that the common man is the victim of war everywhere. As our forces fight for freedom, let us resolve that victory must bring freedom not only to those who fight with us, but to the peoples of Germany, of Italy, of Japan, and wherever else tyranny tramples upon the rights of mankind.

Mr. Speaker, there can be no world peace unless it be founded upon the principles of justice, mercy and understanding among all peoples. Let us then deny the implication that white Americans are the super race. Grateful as I am for my heritage, I cannot take credit for being born a white man. That was God's will. And if I were a Japanese, or the son of any other race, and could be born in this land of liberty, I would thank God that I am an American citizen.

Let us lift our voices against any moves toward discrimination because of color or creed. If interracial bigotry and intolerance raise their ugly heads and lift their reeking banners in other lands, or even in other states of this Union, let Missouri remain forever a refuge for tolerance, a haven of good will toward men.



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