

Questions for the Record responses of
BOB FUCHIGAMI
In support of the
Amache National Historic Site Act (H.R. 2497)
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands
Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
May 3, 2021

1. Congresswoman DeGette: *Given the rise in anti-Asian sentiments, why is it important that we protect sites like Amache as units of the National Park System?*

Congresswoman DeGette, thank you for this question. Reflecting on my verbal testimony, I noted that “[t]he Amache story is not over”, that the trauma I and others feel continues to this day, and that with this legislation we face an opportunity together that we cannot let pass.

Your question reminds us that protecting and honoring a place like Amache speaks not only to the past and present but also to the future. Designating Amache a national park site—which so many have wanted for so long—provides opportunity for learning, reflection, connections, and healing. The National Park Service is our nation’s official protector of cultural and historic resources and is our nation’s largest classroom, where we can learn about our past through the power of place. What it chooses to preserve and the stories it chooses to tell—including the complex and difficult—reflects our values as a nation.

Amache as a unit of the National Park System would provide an opportunity for our country to own this history, to interrogate and re-interrogate this history with the expertise of Park Service interpreters, historians, and archivists, in partnership with the Amache community nationwide. This is what we need in a 21st Century Park System—a fuller representation of the American story.

This opportunity speaks to the power of place. The Amache park site would serve as a visible, lasting reminder for all Americans and visitors that anti-Asian sentiments have been part of our nation’s history for a very long time. That national action regarding Asian American Pacific Islander hate crimes is long overdue. Many Americans think that anti-Asian sentiments in America began with Pearl Harbor, but they started long before.

In the mid-1800s, anti-Asian sentiments were directed toward the Chinese whose labor helped build our railroads, dug wealth from our mines, cleared forests to build our homes and produced food from farms and fisheries. Their rewards were insults, hurled stones, robberies, and murders culminating with exclusionary laws that said “the Chinese must go” back to China. Attention was then shifted to immigrants from Japan whose labor replaced the Chinese in the late 1800s and early 1900s. The rewards were similar, with discriminatory legislation preventing them from becoming citizens,

preventing them from owning land, and limiting socialization to other Japanese. For my family and so many others, these actions culminated in their exclusion from homes, farms, and businesses from the West Coast states into camps like Amache.

A National Park Site designation for Amache would be powerfully significant to our communal health and healing not only as a nation, but also globally— reflecting on all individuals who, to this day, continue to suffer similar fates at the hands of their governments. I am delighted that the Amache National Historic Site Act (H.R. 2497) has been introduced and it is my greatest hope that the bill passes very soon. I also hope I have answered your very thoughtful question.

2. Congresswoman DeGette: In your opinion, how would designating Amache as a National Historic Site allow survivors, descendants, and visitors gain a more comprehensive understanding of the unjust imprisonment of Japanese nationals and Japanese Americans during World War II?

Congresswoman DeGette, thank you for this question. The unjust actions taken by our nation through Executive Order 9066 against American citizens of Japanese ancestry in 1942 clearly needs to be remembered by all Americans for it is an American story. America is a nation of immigrants trying to build a more perfect union of states. In the late 1700s, the founding fathers bonded together to produce documents that spoke of an ideal nation based on values such as freedom, equality, liberty, and justice for all. The documents were widely distributed. They attracted persons who immigrated to America – and still do. The promise of America to become a more perfect union of states continues despite a Civil War that almost tore it apart, despicable activities like slavery, unforgiveable acts against American Indians, and unconstitutional exclusion and incarceration of Japanese Americans.

Over the years, books, films, and other media have tried to tell the story of America – the good, the bad, and sometimes ugly. The story of Amache needs to be told as others have been. Nothing is more powerful than to visit sites like Amache to learn about persons of Japanese ancestry who had done no wrong and about their incarceration. It would be the same as visiting historic sites in Washington D.C. where great museums have been built telling stories about American Indians, African Americans, and Jews at the Holocaust Museum.

The main concern is to ensure that what was done to Japanese Americans can never be repeated with any other group of American citizens, and with the expertise and management of the National Park Service in partnership with Amache stakeholders, we can go far in building hope and a more resilient, representative America for now and future generations to come. It is my hope that Congress does not delay in passing this important bill—America needs the Amache National Historic Site Act (H.R. 2497) and needs the support of leaders like yourself.

I appreciate this thoughtful question and am available for follow-up as needed.

Thank you.