

**TESTIMONY 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

April 21, 2012

Good Morning, Mr. Chairman Neguse, Ranking Member Fulcher, and Subcommittee members.

My name is Robert (Bob) Fuchigami. I live in Evergreen, Colorado.

I am an Amache survivor. I am also a Navy veteran and served in the Korean War. All four of my older brothers served in the U.S. military. I am a former educator—having taught students at the grade school and University levels, with expertise in Special Education.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak before you today in support of the Amache National Historic Site Act. House bill number 2497. Thank you especially to Chairman Neguse and to Congressman Buck for leading this bipartisan bill.

Amache is a traumatic subject. It is very personal to me and has been for most of my life. The story cannot be told in the five minutes allotted me for this hearing. Hundreds of books and thousands of articles about the tragic episode are available for readers.

Along with many other survivors and descendants, I have long advocated for Amache to be protected and preserved as a national park site so that this history can no longer be ignored, forgotten or remain invisible.

My parents, first generation immigrants to America, would have been pleased to see a Congressional bill in support of making Amache a national park.

While incarcerated, my parents' health declined -- my mother had a stroke, and my father suffered a debilitating spine injury after falling off a work truck. Neither recovered. These are memories that are painful to this day but important to share.

I was only 11 years old in 1942, when my family was ordered by the military to leave our home and combination fruit and vegetable farm. The time frame was less than one week! We were told to report to the local train depot with only what we could carry. No destination given. No reason given except two vague words: military necessity. No charges were leveled against us. No trial. No hearings. We were loyal, patriotic, law abiding citizens who had never done anything wrong. Why were we treated this way? Forty years later, a Congressional commission

determined that “military necessity” was false, and we should have never been evicted and incarcerated.

I did not understand what was happening. I was told to leave my rabbits, say goodbye to our dog, and get on a truck with the rest of the family with a small suitcase my older sister had packed for me. I never saw my dog or rabbits again. My father had made an agreement with a local high school teacher to watch over the farm and belongings, but ultimately, that did not happen. While in Amache, we lost everything: Home, furnishings, land, farm equipment... everything.

We were assigned to a flimsy military barrack that would be our "home" for the next three years. Each of the barracks had been cut into six rooms. Our family of ten was given two rooms: each 20 feet by 20 feet. Each room held five canvas cots, a single light bulb hanging from the ceiling, no running water or toilet, and a pot-bellied stove for heat. No furniture. The walls and windows were so poorly constructed they left a gap allowing dust and snow to blow in. Temperatures ranged from below zero in winter to well above 100 degrees in summer. Dust storms were frequent. Mess halls, toilets, showers, were communal. No privacy. The camp was surrounded by barbed wire with eight guard towers manned by military police on duty 24 hours a day. They had orders to shoot anyone trying to escape.

Over time, our sense of family, of purpose, and future was destroyed.

Even amid this tragedy, the people imprisoned at Amache created an entire town, and interacted regularly with the nearby town of Granada - one of the many unique qualities of the site. Many even volunteered to serve in the military during the war - the highest percentage of the ten incarceration camps.

953 men and women from Amache joined the military. Thirty-one men were killed in action, including those serving as part of the highly decorated 442nd Regimental Combat Team. One of those killed was Private Kiyoshi Muranaga eventually awarded the Medal of Honor. Women from Amache served in the Women’s Army Corp as Army Nurses. Amache also had a silk screen shop that produced posters for the U.S. Navy.

Returning to the site, even after all these years, is still very emotional.

There is no substitute for experiencing Amache other than being at the actual site. All foundations are preserved, allowing survivors and their descendants to stand exactly where they once were forced to call “home”. A guard tower, water tower and replication of an original barrack have been painstakingly reconstructed. Local Granada High School students watch over the cemetery and land to help preserve the area.

But they cannot do it alone. They need the National Park Service’s help to ensure this place is protected, preserved, and interpreted for future generations. A visitor’s center is needed to explain what happened to these 7,500 Americans during wartime.

The Amache story is not over. Asians in America, including some of the most vulnerable, are still discriminated, treated as invisible, and suffer from hate crimes to this day. Designating Amache a national park site would shine a light on our forgotten history and help tell a more complete story of America.

Amache is our collective story. It is an American story.

I urge the committee, and all of Congress, to pass the Amache National Historic Site Act as soon as possible. I have been waiting for this to happen for a long, long time.

Thank you.