

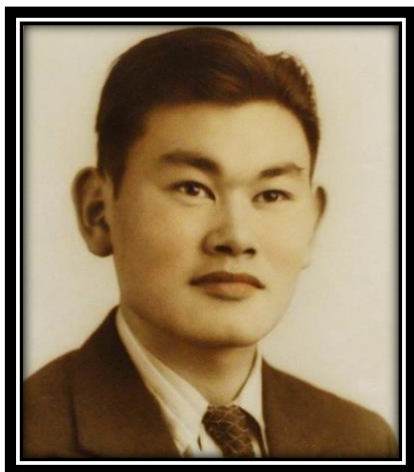
## PROFILE OF RESISTANCE

### Fred Korematsu

*Japanese American civil rights activist*

*“If you have the feeling that something is wrong, don’t be afraid to speak up.”*

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#### Background Information

Born: January 30th, 1919, Died: March 30th, 2005

Toyosaburo Korematsu was born in Oakland, California, on January 30, 1919. His parents were first-generation immigrants from Japan. He began using the name Fred after a teacher suggested his name was too difficult. Before WWII, the family owned and operated a plant nursery. When Japan bombed Pearl Harbor in December 1941, Japanese Americans felt an almost immediate Anti-Asian backlash.

#### Korematsu’s Resistance

In February 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066. The order allowed officials to remove Japanese Americans from the West Coast.<sup>i</sup> The order placed entire Japanese communities in detention centers or faraway internment camps. Unlike his family members, Fred refused to comply. Fred created a fake identity and had plastic surgery to change his appearance. Police ultimately arrested Fred on suspicion that he was Japanese and had not reported to a relocation center.<sup>ii</sup> Korematsu challenged his arrest and the entire executive order in court. He felt the order violated his rights as an American. In the Supreme Court case *Korematsu v. U.S.*, attorneys argued that the incarceration of Japanese Americans was unconstitutional.<sup>iii</sup> Supreme Court justices decided 6-3 that the detention was a “military necessity” not based on race.<sup>iv</sup> Although he was unsuccessful in court, the case was an important test against legalized discrimination. Korematsu became a pioneer in civil rights and wartime policies. On November 10, 1983, a federal judge overturned Korematsu’s conviction. Attorneys found that the U.S. legal team destroyed evidence that Japanese Americans were not a security threat after Pearl Harbor.<sup>v</sup> In an important move toward reconciliation, Fred advocated for Congress to pass the Civil Liberties Act of 1988. The act formally apologized and paid financial reparations to former Japanese American wartime hostages.

#### Achievements

Fred Korematsu earned the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1998. The Fred T. Korematsu Institute was founded to teach younger generations about Japanese American internment.<sup>vi</sup> January 30<sup>th</sup> is recognized as Fred Korematsu Day in the state of California.

## Essential Questions

1. In what ways did Fred resist against Executive Order 9066?
  - a. Why do you think his family complied with the order?
  - b. How can being a pioneer be a painful experience?
  
2. How did the United States government resolve Executive Order 9066's impact on Japanese Americans??
  - a. Do you think their actions were enough?
  
3. ***“If you have the feeling that something is wrong, don’t be afraid to speak up.”***
  - a. What does this quote mean to you?
  - b. How can you use this quote in your daily life?

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.nps.gov/people/fred-t-korematsu.htm>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/fred-korematsu-fought-against-japanese-internment-supreme-court-and-lost-180961967/>

<sup>iii</sup> <https://www.uscourts.gov/educational-resources/educational-activities/facts-and-case-summary-korematsu-v-us>

<sup>iv</sup> [ibid.](#)

<sup>v</sup> <https://www.nps.gov/people/fred-t-korematsu.htm>

<sup>vi</sup> <https://www.biography.com/activist/fred-korematsu>