

"You fought, not only the enemy but you fought prejudice, and you have won." Let us not also forget that Americans of Japanese, Korean, Chinese, and Filipino descent, along with Alaskan natives, all faced the same blind prejudice.

That is why we are proud to honor here today the service of Second Lieutenant Rudolph B. Davila, an American of Filipino and Spanish descent, who risked his life to help break through the German lines near Anzio; and Captain Francis Wai, an American of Chinese descent, who gave his life securing an important beachhead in the Philippine Islands.

Americans of Asian descent did much more than prove they were Americans. They made our Nation more American. They pushed us toward that more perfect Union of our Founders' dreams.

The report of the Presidential Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, some 20 years ago now, called internment an injustice, based on "race prejudice, war hysteria, and a failure of political leadership." It prescribed several steps for redress, including an apology from the Congress and the President.

Some years later, many leaders backed legislation sponsored by Senator Daniel Akaka to review the combat records of Asian-Americans in World War II to determine if any deserving service members had been passed over for the Medal of Honor. The review found, indeed, that some extraordinarily brave soldiers never did receive the honors they clearly had earned.

So today America awards 22 of them the Medal of Honor. They risked their lives on their own initiative, sometimes even against orders, to take out machine guns, give aid to wounded soldiers, draw fire, pinpoint the enemy, protect their own. People who can agree on nothing else fall silent before that kind of courage.

But it is long past time to break the silence about their courage, to put faces and names with the courage, and to honor it by name: Davila, Hajiro, Hayashi, Inouye, Kobashigawa, Okutsu, Sakato, Hasemoto, Hayashi, Kuroda, Moto, Muranaga, Nakae, Nakamine, Nakamura, Nishimoto, Ohata, Okubo, Ono, Otani, Tanouye, Wai. These American soldiers, with names we at long last recognize as American names, made an impact that soars beyond the force of any battle. They left a lasting imprint on the meaning of America. They didn't give up on our country, even when too many of their countrymen and women had given up on them. They deserve, at the least, the most we can give—the Medal of Honor.

I would like now to ask the military aides to read the citations.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:45 p.m. in a pavilion on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Brig. Gen. David H. Hicks, chaplain, USA, who gave the invocation; Secretary Cohen's wife, Janet Langhart Cohen; and Secretary West's wife, Gail.

Videotaped Remarks to Scripps Howard National Spelling Bee Participants *June 21, 2000*

I'm glad to have this opportunity to welcome all of you to Washington and to the 73d annual National Spelling Bee.

In 1961, when I was about your age, President Kennedy said we should think of education as a private hope and dream, which fulfilled can benefit everyone and strengthen our Nation. That's even more true today. Your long list of accomplishments, uncommon dedication, and commitment to learning will serve as a lifelong asset to you and to your communities.

Regardless of who wins today, you should all be proud of your achievements. You've come

a long way. So I join your parents and your teachers in congratulating you. Your commitment to excellence spells success in the years ahead, not just for you but for all America.

Thank you, and good luck today.

NOTE: The remarks were videotaped at approximately 5:30 p.m. on May 11 in the Map Room for later broadcast. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.