

## **Rep. Mike Honda calls for U.S. apology for Chinese Exclusion Act**

San Jose Mercury News (California)

February 20, 2011 Sunday

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**Section:** BREAKING; Politics; Communities; San Jose - Valley; Special Reports; Education; Crime; News; National; Local

**Length:** 485 words

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### **Body**

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On Sunday, a day after the 69th anniversary of the executive order incarcerating Japanese-Americans, **Rep. Mike Honda** **called** on Americans to end the blaming of immigrants and **called** for an official **U.S. apology** for the **Chinese Exclusion Act** of 1882.

**Honda**, D-San Jose, spoke to about 200 people gathered for the "Day of Remembrance" that solemnly commemorated federal Executive Order 9066, issued Feb. 19, 1942. It authorized the imprisonment of 120,000 Japanese and Japanese-Americans during World War II in internment camps.

Sounding like the high-school teacher he once was, **Honda** tied together events from American history. Years of scapegoating foreigners for economic woes, he said, led in 1882 to the **Chinese Exclusion Act**. "1882 was the culmination of things that happened before," he said.

He **called** for an official **U.S. apology** for the **act**, which suspended **Chinese** immigration, made **Chinese** living here permanent aliens ineligible for citizenship, and later was extended to other Asians and to bar aliens from owning property.

He and other speakers at the forum at the San Jose Buddhist Church Betsuin noted the similarities between the treatment of Japanese-Americans 70 years ago and today's anti-immigrant sentiments as well as the post-Sept. 11, 2001, reaction against Muslims, Middle Easterners and South Asians in the **United States**.

"Imagine having to prove being an American, having to prove that you belong, and not knowing how to do so," said Zahra Biloo, executive director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, San Francisco Bay Area.

Many in the audience, including former internees, their families and Muslim community representatives, understood. Biloo **called** the **U.S. Patriot Act**, just renewed by Congress, the "modern day 9066" that creates a mentality of fear.

With a theme of "Fighting Against Fear," the program organized by the Nihonmachi Outreach committee invited parallels between 1942 and 2011. Yasmin Vanya of the South Bay Islamic Association thanked Japanese-American organizations, which she said were the first groups to reach out to the Muslim community in San Jose after the 2001 terror attacks. "You stepped up and are making sure this will not happen again," she said.

After hearing several speakers, the crowd participated in a candlelight procession around Japantown, accompanied by San Jose Taiko.

Samir Hamsafar, 20, toured the Japanese-American Museum with his De Anza College Asian-American studies class before the forum. Hamsafar's father, an Afghan immigrant, was questioned by the FBI after Sept. 11 because he came from a village where the Taliban was active.

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Even now, Hamsafar said, in the Afghan community, "people fear discrimination."

Biloo said that last year attacks on Muslims individually and in places of worship increased.

"We must fight this fear. We must learn from our history, and we should say never again."

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## Classification

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**Language:** ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Subject:** ASIAN AMERICANS (92%); IMMIGRATION (91%); MUSLIMS & ISLAM (89%); SEPTEMBER 11 ATTACK (89%); RELIGION (89%); ASSOCIATIONS & ORGANIZATIONS (86%); EXECUTIVE ORDERS (78%); CITIZENSHIP (78%); ANNIVERSARIES (78%); HISTORY (78%); US FEDERAL GOVERNMENT (77%); US PATRIOT ACT (77%); TALIBAN (75%); EXECUTIVES (73%); WORLD WAR II (71%); PRIMARY & SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS (70%); ETHNIC & CULTURAL STUDIES (70%); RELIGIOUS FACILITIES (66%); TERRORIST ATTACKS (65%); TERRORISM (65%); BUDDHISTS & BUDDHISM (52%)

**Company:** HONDA MOTOR CO LTD (93%)

**Ticker:** HMC (NYSE) (93%); 7267 (TSE) (93%)

**Industry:** MUSEUMS & GALLERIES (71%)

**Person:** MICHAEL M HONDA (78%)

**Geographic:** SAN JOSE, CA, USA (91%); SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA, CA, USA (88%); SAN FRANCISCO, CA, USA (79%); CALIFORNIA, USA (79%); UNITED STATES (99%)

**Load-Date:** February 21, 2011