

**The Honorable Patricia Saiki**  
U.S. Representative of Hawaii (1987–1991)

**Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress**

**“Compensation for Those Who Were Interned”**

Representative Saiki provides a behind-the-scenes account of her efforts to convince her colleagues to support the Civil Liberties Act of 1988.

*Interview recorded September 20, 2018*

The fact is that there were efforts by the Democrats—especially in the Senate—to pass a bill called the reparations act to not only provide some kind of compensation for those who were interned and also an apology from the state—from the, from the, from the United States. I told my fellow colleagues in the House of Representatives to imagine themselves as American citizens to be uprooted in their homes, taken with their families to a foreign state—a different state like Topaz, Utah—and installed there in a horse barn to survive while they had to pay the penalty for what happened in the World War II. And I gave them all of the details of what it was like because I had an uncle and his family treated thus far. Now, Californians were, were interned in much more numbers than in Hawaii, but the Hawaii people that I knew of were treated in the worst ever—the very worst way that could possibly happen to anybody. And they had no recourse. There was no legal recourse to this. They were taken by families and shipped out and all of their belongings were taken, all of their holdings, all their land, all their investments were taken from them. So everybody sat there rather stunned because I learned quickly that one of the reasons why the reparations act could not pass is because the Republicans were against it. And I said, “I don’t think you’re against it. I think that maybe you don’t understand the situation and now that I’m providing you this information I hope you will open your eyes and your hearts to see that this is not the United States. It’s not our government. It’s not like us to violate even the Constitution, violate the rights of our people and intern them in such horrible—under horrible conditions.”