



KING COUNTY

1200 King County Courthouse
516 Third Avenue
Seattle, WA 98104

Signature Report

February 21, 2017

Motion 14808

Proposed No. 2017-0068.1

Sponsors Dembowski and Kohl-Welles

1 A MOTION commemorating and condemning the
2 imprisonment of Gordon Hirabayashi in the King County
3 Jail for defying the forced removal of Japanese-Americans
4 and Japanese immigrants during World War II, on the
5 seventy-fifth anniversary of his imprisonment.

6 WHEREAS, Gordon Hirabayashi was born in Seattle on April 23, 1918, to
7 Japanese immigrant parents, Shungo and Mitsuko Hirabayashi, and

8 WHEREAS, after moving as a child with his family to the White River valley in
9 south King County, Gordon Hirabayashi graduated from Auburn High School in 1935,
10 and

11 WHEREAS, Gordon Hirabayashi enrolled at the University of Washington as a
12 part-time student in 1937, and

13 WHEREAS, following the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, an
14 executive order signed by the president of the United States ordered the forced removal
15 of all Japanese-Americans and Japanese immigrants living on the west coast of the
16 United States, and

17 WHEREAS, Gordon Hirabayashi refused to register for incarceration or to
18 subject himself to the curfew that had been applied to people of Japanese ancestry, and

19 instead presented himself to the Federal Bureau of Investigation with a statement
20 objecting to incarceration and curfew, and

21 WHEREAS, on May 13, 1942, in preparation for his resistance and expected
22 imprisonment, Gordon Hirabayashi wrote a letter entitled, "Why I Refused to Register for
23 Evacuation," in which he stated, "This order for the mass evacuation of all persons of
24 Japanese descent denies them the right to live... This order limits to almost full extent
25 the creative expressions of these subjected. It kills the desire for a higher life. The very
26 qualities which are essential to a peaceful, creative community are being thrown out and
27 abused. Over sixty per cent are American citizens; yet they are denied on a wholesale
28 scale without due process of law the civil liberties which are theirs," and

29 WHEREAS, Gordon Hirabayashi was then arrested and confined in the King
30 County Jail, Tank 3C, which was at that time located in the King County Courthouse
31 building, where he spent nine months awaiting trial, from May 16, 1942, to February 11,
32 1943, and

33 WHEREAS, on July 4, 1942, while imprisoned in the King County Jail, Gordon
34 Hirabayashi wrote in his journal, "The risk is great; the consequences unpleasant. But
35 there is the vision of those seekers of independence. We must carry the torch. We must
36 live our lives," and

37 WHEREAS, the case against Gordon Hirabayashi eventually proceeded to the
38 United States Supreme Court, which ruled unanimously against him on June 21, 1943,
39 maintaining that the incarceration of Japanese-Americans and Japanese immigrants was
40 justified by military necessity, and

41 WHEREAS, on September 24, 1987, the United States Court of Appeals for the
42 Ninth Circuit ruled in favor of Gordon Hirabayashi, vacating the Supreme Court decision
43 and his previous conviction, on the basis that the government had withheld evidence
44 indicating that Japanese-Americans and Japanese immigrants were not a threat to the
45 United States during World War II, and

46 WHEREAS, Gordon Hirabayashi passed away on January 2, 2012, and

47 WHEREAS, on April 26, 2012, President Barack Obama named Gordon
48 Hirabayashi as a recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom, and

49 WHEREAS, in honor of Gordon Hirabayashi, an affordable housing development
50 named Hirabayashi Place was opened by InterIm CDA in early 2016 in the Nihonmachi,
51 or Japantown, neighborhood of Seattle, several blocks south of the King County
52 Courthouse, after receiving financial support from the sale of the King County-owned
53 Kingdome North Lot property, and

54 WHEREAS, through his resistance, imprisonment and quest to overturn the
55 executive order, Gordon Hirabayashi exemplified the values that are central to the
56 founding of the United States, its Constitution and the rule of law, and

57 WHEREAS, the imprisonment of Gordon Hirabayashi in the King County Jail
58 must be remembered so that government officials do not ever again repeat the injustice
59 that was perpetrated with the incarceration of Japanese-Americans and Japanese
60 immigrants;

61 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT MOVED by the Council of King County:

62 A. The imprisonment of Gordon Hirabayashi in the King County Jail is
63 commemorated and condemned, as is the incarceration of Japanese-Americans and
64 Japanese immigrants during World War II that Gordon Hirabayashi fought to overturn.

65 B. The executive and 4Culture are respectfully requested to assist in the
66 commemoration and condemnation of Gordon Hirabayashi's imprisonment in the King
67 County Jail by helping to identify the location of his jail cell within the current
68 configuration of the King County Courthouse and by preparing a plaque to summarize his
69 time in the King County Jail, as well as his quest for justice.

70

71 C. The plaque should be installed and the imprisonment of Gordon Hirabayashi
72 memorialized by May 16, 2017, the seventy-fifth anniversary of his imprisonment.
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Motion 14808 was introduced on 2/21/2017 and passed by the Metropolitan King County Council on 2/21/2017, by the following vote:

Yes: 9 - Mr. von Reichbauer, Mr. Gossett, Ms. Lambert, Mr. Dunn,
Mr. McDermott, Mr. Dembowski, Mr. Upthegrove, Ms. Kohl-Welles
and Ms. Balducci
No: 0
Excused: 0

KING COUNTY COUNCIL
KING COUNTY, WASHINGTON



J. Joseph McDermott, Chair

ATTEST:



Melani Pedroza, Acting Clerk of the Council

Attachments: None