



Name in English: Hung Wai Ching
Name in Chinese:
Name in Pinyin:
Gender: Male
Birth Year: 1905-2002
Birth Place: Honolulu, Hawaii

Civil Rights Leader

Profession(s): Businessman, Community Leader

Education: B.S., Civil Engineering, 1928, University of Hawaii; Master of Divinity, 1932, Yale Divinity School

Awards: 1986, Inducted into Hall of Fame, President William McKinley High School; 1989, Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters, University of Hawaii

Contribution (s): Upon graduation, Hung Wai Ching worked as a secretary in the Nuuanu YMCA and University YMCA in Honolulu, but he is most remembered for his World War II contributions advocating for Japanese Americans in Hawaii. With anti-Japanese sentiment brewing in the U.S. and war raging between China and Japan, it was common for the Chinese to grow up hating the Japanese. Ching stood against this and defended Japanese Americans because he had no questions about the loyalty of the Japanese he grew up with and knew his entire life in Hawaii. Through his work, Ching shaped the WWII history for Japanese Americans in Hawaii, enabled Japanese American soldiers to bear arms for their country, and prevented the mass evacuation and internment of Japanese Americans in Hawaii.

During the war, Ching was appointed to the Council on Interracial Unity's Morale Division, a liaison group of civilians and the military that directly reported to FBI Agent-in-Charge, Robert Shivers, and General Delos Emmons, head of Hawaii's wartime martial law government. Their job was "rooting out and denouncing unfounded rumors of espionage and sabotage, urging Japanese-Americans and others to outwardly display their patriotism and pushing for affirmation of the right of Japanese-Americans to fight for the U.S." Ching used his influence with Shivers and the FBI to help release or prevent the internment of many Japanese Americans and also supported General Emmons efforts to delay his orders from Washington to send all Japanese Americans to mainland internment camps. Ching lobbied Eleanor Roosevelt directly on behalf of the Japanese Americans during her visit to Hawaii in early 1943. During a later 1943 visit to the White House, Ching personally assured President Roosevelt about the loyalty of Japanese Americans. It was no accident that while over one hundreds thousand Japanese Americans were rounded up on the U.S. mainland, no mass internment happened in Hawaii or that in May 1943, President Roosevelt gave the order to start recruiting Japanese Americans for military service.

Ching was known as the “Father of the Varsity Victory Volunteers,” a group of University of Hawaii ROTC students who volunteered for non-combat wartime service following Ching’s calm advice. This was despite the bitterness they felt for having been discharged from the Hawaii Territorial Guard in 1942 because they were of Japanese descent. Ching used every opportunity he had to show the patriotism and loyalty of the VVVs and the U.S. soon announced its decision to form the 442nd, an all Japanese American regimental combat team that became the most decorated unit for its size in U.S. military history.

When word spread that the 442nd was training in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, anti-Japanese signs and newspaper editorials swept through the town, but Ching showed up in person and persuaded the newspapers and city police that the 442nd were patriotic Americans volunteering to serve their country. Official racist incitements stopped. After the war, Ching headed the Veterans Memorial Scholarship Fund, working to give returning 442nd veterans scholarship aid to complete their education and vocational training, job placement, and a fair chance to return to civilian life. In recognition, Ching was made one of the first honorary members of the 442nd Veterans Club. “The First Battle: The Battle for Equality in War-Time Hawaii,” a documentary about the Japanese in Hawaii during WWII, chronicles the contributions of Ching.

An esteemed real estate broker and land developer, Ching helped found Aloha Airlines, served as a University of Hawaii regent, held directorships with Liberty Bank, Pacific Insurance Company, Pacific Management Company, and the Honolulu Stadium, and was a trustee with several churches, hospitals, and charitable foundations in Hawaii.

External Links:

<http://archives.starbulletin.com/2002/02/22/news/story16.html>

http://www.javadc.org/hung_wai_ching.htm

<http://www.thefirstbattle.com/photogallery-Ching.html>

<http://the.honoluluadvertiser.com/article/2006/Sep/04/il/FP609040322.html>