

April 28, 2004

The Honorable Carl K. Thibodeaux  
123 South 6th Street  
Orange, Texas 77630

Re: Jap Lane

Dear Judge Thibodeaux:

Far from Texas, I have been following the controversy in your jurisdiction over Jap Lane with incredulity. It is beyond my comprehension how some people today cannot understand that the term "Jap" is derogatory and extremely offensive.

The term is derogatory to both Japanese and Japanese-Americans. To say that the term is used honorifically is nothing more than a backhanded compliment. It is a word that is hate-filled and always used disparagingly. It is a word that stings.

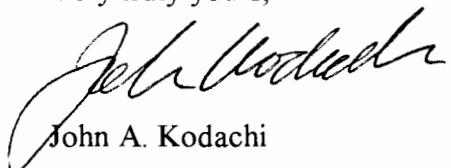
As a Japanese-American, who grew up in Portland, Oregon, I can personally assure your residents that I never had someone say the word to me as a term of endearment. The people who use the term are always strangers; they are not my friends or acquaintances. When a stranger has said it, it was either angrily yelled from the back of a passing pick-up truck or slyly whispered as I entered a room, and usually preceded by the term "God damn."

I find it truly amazing that as Oregonians enthusiastically celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of U.S. and Japan relations, and look to strengthening relations in the future, some Texans vigorously cling to what can only be described as a racial epithet of the past. The contrast is quite remarkable.

If the residents in your jurisdiction still cannot understand the offensiveness of the term, I suggest that they personally invite workers from Toyota's \$800 million manufacturing plant in San Antonio to send their Jap officials to drive their Jap cars on Jap Lane. The hostile reaction they will receive will help them begin to understand that many others, including fellow Texans, have a completely different understanding about the word "Jap."

Thank you for your consideration.

Very truly yours,



John A. Kodachi

Cc: Houston Chapter of the  
Japanese American Citizens League