

JAPAN'S RESPONSE TO AFRICA FAMINE
(Article for Nichibei, New York, Dec. 26, 1984)

In the unprecedented response from the world to the holocaustal hunger/famine that has engulfed a great part of Africa, Japan too, has communicated to UNICEF that they have begun a "Save Africa" campaign.

Marcia McBroom Landis, a Board member of UNICEF, received word that a Japan-based organization called The Association to Send Blankets to Africa, launched by actor Hisae Morishige, has committed itself to a contribution of one million blankets to the people of Ethiopia. A public appeal was made in Japan on December 14, backed by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, asking the people to respond to Africa's urgent need.

"The greatest number of deaths takes place from midnight to 5 a.m.," said Ms. Landis, explaining that "the people are dying during the coldest hours from hypothermia--loss of body heat from lack of food. Thus, the need for blankets--"

On December 19th, Japan Air Lines issued a press release stating: The first shipment of 18,000 blankets was sent out by a joint freight operation by Japan Air Line, Lufthanza and Ethiopia Air Line with its 'precious cargo' to arrive on December 24th in Addis Abbaba, Ethiopia.

Ms. Landis added that "Japan expects the peoples' response will bring in the hoped-for goal of one million blankets." However, Ms. Landis's concern was the problem of shipping such a large amount, and inquired if the Japanese nationals and Japanese Americans in this country might be willing to work together in a solidarity with Japan and Ethiopia to^{help} raise the shipping cost that the airlifts could be made as soon as possible. The shipping cost estimate is 3 million dollars. Help is welcomed from all quarters and sources.

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 She further explained that UNICEF was beginning a Campaign for Blankets to Ethiopia. "\$4.00," she said, "would pay for the shipment of one blanket; thus the number of blankets times \$4.00 would be the figured cost of the total blankets. Every \$4.00 would be important, and would be in the means of the average person to give especially Third World peoples here." Monies from Japanese Americans and Nationals should be designated for the special airlift from Japan. Checks for contributions may be made out to and sent to:

New York Metro/UNICEF
 331 E. 38th Street, 4th floor
 New York City, N.Y. 10016

The envelope at the bottom of the left-hand corner should be ear-marked: Japanese blankets to Ethiopia. Attention: Marcia Landis. Ms. Landis would also appreciate the donor identifying (inside) if he/she is Japanese American or Japanese National.

A phone call ~~to~~ from Mr. Seiho Tajiri, President of the Japan/Black American Business Association, a prominent Japanese businessman in Atlanta who has had close relationships with Blacks in America for the past 20 years, also revealed that the Japanese Chamber of Commerce, Japanese Consulate and 100 Japanese businesses in Atlanta are already engaged in Ethiopia/Famine aid.

It was also learned that the small staff of employees of Japan Air Lines in the New York Office, alone, have collected over \$1500 for Ethiopia.

The hostess of the Fuji Television Show, Ms. Yoko Nakamura, ~~has~~ also on November 30th launched a campaign for her network to raise funds for UNICEF/Africa

Relief. On December 19 she made a presentation of 38 checks that have thus far come in, totalling \$2,500, to representatives of the UNICEF Board. Ms.

Nakamura has ^{also} done extensive fund-raising ~~even prior to her work in New York, having raised funds~~ for UNICEF in Japan for 10 years prior to her work here.

As for Nikkei involvement in aid to Africa, it was learned that Ms. Eleanor Kajiwara who was honored in November for her 30 years' service with the United Methodist Church and presented with a monetary award--quietly turned over the gift in its entirety to the United Methodist Committee on Relief's Special Ethiopia/Famine Fund.

The first Japanese American to call the devastating situation in Africa to the attention of the Japanese Community here ~~was~~ the distinguished Nisei author Michi Weglyn

whose "letter to the editor" on November 8 was captioned "Ethiopia Holocaust," ^{and also printed in other Nikkei papers.} United
 Rev. Mas Kawasaki ^{shime} of the Japanese American Christian Church also did

a mailing in November to his congregation, enclosing a Methodist call to "help alleviate World Hunger/Poverty," urging its members to send funds to: UMCOR, 475 Riverside Drive, Room 1374, New York City, N.Y. 10115, earmarking the check to a general world hunger number, UMCOR 982920. For a more specific updated code number directly to Ethiopia, the checks may be sent to the same address, but designated: UMCOR/Ethiopia Famine - 982500.

The human tragedy that is sweeping some 26 countries in Africa, is considered "the worst in living memory" according to the international community of churches and voluntary agencies in Africa. In Ethiopia alone, 200,000 people have died of starvation with a possible 6 million likely to perish if "extraordinary action" by all relief donors is not forthcoming. Although an avalanche of response in millions of dollars, tens of thousands of tons of food, seeds, medical equipment, fuel, ^{and} vehicles have been coming ^{from around the world} in ~~globally~~ in the past months, continued famine and death seem the only certainties because of climactic, economic and political vagaries.

Experts agree that nature alone is not to blame for the misery in Ethiopia as well as other African countries. Mismanagement of land, agricultural production towards external markets rather than food production

for local consumption; tripled cost of fertilizers, pesticides and fuel for farm machinery and irrigation; soil erosion; inadequate marketing and transport infrastructure; lack of adequate port off-loading facilities; civil strifes; poverty and inequality, and the refusal at the early stage of the famine by highly industrialized countries refusing to aid a Communist country--have been obstacles in the struggle for Ethiopia's survival.

Despite tremendous aid from the major religious and relief organizations--OXFAM, Catholic Relief, World Council of Churches, United Nation's Disaster Response Offices, Church World Service, Lutheran World Relief, Christian Relief and Development Organization, the U.S. government has continued slashing its annual relief appropriation by \$2 to \$3 million dollars. Sadly for the millions of ^{Africans} suffering and dying, the political and ideological issues that have blocked their access to food, are beyond their comprehension.

An excerpt from an Oxfam Report by its Director James Phillips gives a clearer focus on the vast differences of rich and poor:

"In 1974, less than 10 percent of the grain which rich countries fed to their cattle would have entirely eliminated the grain shortages of the poor countries for that year. Although the U.S. dominates the world's rice trade, one-half (50 percent) of U.S. rice production goes directly into making breakfast cereals."

"The poor countries have nearly 75 percent of the world's population, but consume only about 15 percent of the world's available energy. The two New York World Trade Center tower buildings in Manhattan consume more electricity in one night than the capital cities of many a poor countries consume in a month."

"North Americans spend more on chewing gum, tobacco and alcoholic beverages each year than the entire annual budgets of many poor countries."

Michi Weglyn's letter to the Japanese community through Nichibei was timely and appropriately provocative: "The magnitude of the tragedy (in Ethiopia) is too cruel for the human mind to contemplate. We are witnessing the wholesale destruction of a people. It is a holocaust. This is no time for inaction. We must respond and quickly."

What better way to manifest our concern by following the suggestion of UNICEF Board member, Marcia McBroom^{Landis,} by helping to shoulder the cost of the airlift of blankets from Japan to Ethiopia. Through this support, Japanese Americans and Japanese Nationals can demonstrate their solidarity with both Japan and Ethiopia.

Hope you can use this article ^{also} with an editorial which might help launch a significant response by NIKkeis and nationals to join the world-concerted effort toward Africa-in-crisis.

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