

EAST COAST JAPANESE AMERICANS FOR REDRESS

224 East 48th Street, New York, New York 10017

212/732-3467 201/886-0550

Contact: 926-7412
Bill and Yuri Kochiyama

November 12, 1981

For immediate release

The Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians has announced that an all-day hearing on the circumstances surrounding the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II will be held in New York City on Monday, November 23 at the Roosevelt Hotel on 45th Street and Madison Avenue.

On February 19, 1942, an Executive Order 9066 was proclaimed by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt which uprooted all persons of Japanese ancestry, some 120,000 American citizens and their alien parents, from the West coast of United States.

Within a matter of months, the entire Japanese population was evacuated to 10 major concentration camps in isolated areas in the desert, mountains, and swamplands of Arkansas, Wyoming, Idaho, Utah, Colorado, and Arizona. Only 2 of the camps were located in the Eastern outskirts of California. Detainees were also held in North Dakota, Montana, New Mexico, and Texas. The confinement lasted for the duration of the war, at the end of which time property losses were estimated at 400 million. Six internees were shot and killed by U.S. soldiers from guard towers. 1862 inmates died during the incarceration from illnesses or due to inadequate medical care. More than 1000 more were later hospitalized in mental institutions and tuberculosis hospitals. Most of the nation knew little of this wartime episode.

Nearly 40 years have elapsed, but the Japanese Americans could not forget. For the last 10 years annual pilgrimages to the 2 California camps have been taking place. Seven years ago the

issue of redress began to be discussed in Seattle, Washington; Chicago, Illinois; and throughout California. Three years ago the momentum grew into a redress/reparation movement wherever sizeable numbers of Japanese resided.

Finally a commission (CWRIC) was established at the end of the Carter administration through a bill passed by Congress to hear grievances of Japanese Americans and Aleuts from the Aleutian and Pribilof Islands off Alaska. The Aleutians were also removed from their island homes in 1942 by U.S. military authorities and taken to abandoned canneries in Alaska.

This year, on July 14 the first of the hearings began in Washington, D.C. and continued in Los Angeles; San Francisco; Seattle; Anchorage, Alaska; Aleutian Islands; Pribilof Islands; and most recently in Chicago. Among the last of the hearings will be the one in New York City.

On September 13, a coalition called East Coast Japanese Americans for Redress was formed to organize for the hearings here, reaching out to former internees throughout New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, and Pennsylvania. They are also inviting well known organizations and prominent individuals who are knowledgeable about the war-time internment to come forward to give statements of support.

Letters may be sent to Co-Chairpersons Michi Kobi or Sasha Hohri, East Coast Japanese Americans for Redress, 224 East 48th Street, New York, New York 10017. Phone calls may be made to: (212) 732-3467 or (201) 886-0550.