

NCRRBANNER



NATIONAL COALITION FOR
REDRESS/REPARATIONS

DECEMBER 1988

JUSTICE NOW! REPARATIONS NOW! APPROPRIATIONS NOW!

by Miya Iwataki

On August 10, 1988 the community celebrated the signing of our bill into law by the President. On September 6, the Office of Reparations Administrations (ORA) opened its doors. On September 19, the ORA Hotline was set up. On October 11, a 90-day temporary ORA liaison office was established in San Francisco to access the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) files for current addresses. The ORA is also accessing the files of Social Security, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS); and they have all of the National Archive files - so people do not have to send in to the National Archives for their records. They have computerized 110,000 files from the ten camps and are now in the process of running them off against the IRS, Social Security, and DMV files for current addresses.

The ORA is part of the Office of Civil Rights of the Department of Justice. Robert Bratt, the Executive Director, sees their work in three phases:

1. **Identification - Location** (about 4-5 months)
2. **Verification - Notification** (about 6-10 months)
3. **Payment** - \$20,000 lump sum payment, to the eldest survivors first.

They are currently in the first phase, Identification-Location. They are working off the assumption that there are around 60,000 survivors. **Even though the burden of proof is on them, we should send our own information to the ORA to make sure we are eligible!** NCRRB has the ORA questionnaire forms. If you do not have all the information that is asked for on the forms, don't worry. Send it in with whatever information you have. Even if you can only fill out the name and current address, it helps them.

Eligibility Regulations

The first draft of the regulations which will determine who is eligible for \$20,000 has been finished. It is in-house only. The second draft should be finished by the time you receive this article.

After it leaves the ORA, it is sent to the Civil Rights Division. They then send it to the Office of Legal Counsel (for statutory interpretation, any federal questions, any constitutional problems, etc. It will probably take at least a month here.)

Finally, it goes to the Attorney General's desk. It may get to the Attorney General around transition time, January 20, 1989 (remember a new President is being sworn in). So it may get stuck there for a while. The earliest the regulations will be published in the Federal Register is early February, 1989. It is mandated by law that the regulations must be published; and that the public has 30 days on which to comment. NCRRB will notify our members immediately when the regulations come out.

Supplemental Appropriations

The President signed our bill into law **after Congress had passed the FY 89-90 budget**. What does this mean? It means that the money for our bill has not yet been included in the 1989 budget. Therefore, the earliest we can begin receiving payment is FY 90 or October 1989.

Can we get appropriations sooner? Yes. The ORA is requesting "**Supplemental Appropriations**" for reparations as part of the current budget. If this happens, the Issei could begin receiving reparations as early as April.

We Need to Lobby Again!

We need to lobby for two things:

1. Supplemental Appropriations for FY 89-90
2. We need to request \$500,000,000 the maximum amount that can be appropriated.

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Our lobbying targets are:

1. Your own Congressperson. Write to them or set up an office visit with them to share your concern about this, and ask them to support \$500 million in Supplemental Appropriations. Stress the fact that over half of the camp victims have passed on.

2. Organizations should write to:

Attorney General Richard Thornberg
Department of Justice
Constitution and 10th St., NW
Washington, DC 20530

and

Mr. Richard Darman, Director
Office of Management and Budget
Executive Office Building
Washington, DC 20503
(202) 395-3000

3. Individuals can write to: President George Bush
White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

Other addresses: Office of Redress Administration
Department of Justice
P.O. Box 66260
Washington, DC 20503-6260
1-800-228-8375

National Coalition for Redress/Reparations
244 S. San Pedro Street, Room 410
Los Angeles, CA 90012
NCRH Hotline - (213) 620-0761

COMMUNITY MEETING
ROBERT BRATT, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
OFFICE OF REDRESS ADMINISTRATION

WEDNESDAY, DEC, 14 AT 7:00 P.M.
CENTENARY METHODIST CHURCH
CENTRAL AND THIRD STREETS
NEW COMMUNITY HALL

SPONSORED BY: NCRH AND JAACL

MARK IT ON YOUR CALENDARS!!!

THE LONG AWAITED CELEBRATION

To celebrate the long awaited passage of the redress and reparations bill, the NCRH launched the Day of Celebration. On August 27, 1988, 1,200 people from all across the nation met in Los Angeles at the Japan America Theatre and the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center. Burt Nakano, NCRH national spokesperson, was the keynote speaker. In his speech, Nakano told the those gathered in the theatre that afternoon: "Today, is a day to celebrate the many lessons learned during our nine-year campaign for redress and reparations. Ours was a grassroots movement. Strength arose from the community. Throughout our struggle, NCRH forged its demands from the overwhelming sentiments of the community." While initiating petition drives promoting community testimony at the commission hearings, launching letter writing campaigns, organizing the delegation to Washington D.C., and hosting community meetings, NCRH successfully involved the entire community behind the struggle.

Unity was another essential component to achieving victory. Not only unity within the Japanese community, but also unity among other communities struggling for justice. The redress issue raised many individuals' sensitivity to all injustices. As a community, alliances have been formed with many significant movements. The nomination of Dan Lungren as treasurer of California was opposed and he was defeated. NCRH publicly deplored statements of Japanese government officials that reflected racism towards Black people. United with other groups who value civil rights, NCRH opposed the nomination to the Supreme Court of Robert Bork. NCRH also protested and rallied against the forced removal of Native Americans from Big Mountain.

These stands and alliances served as a positive force. According to Nakano, "Reagan's Justice Department opposed HR442 from the beginning. The political unity of our community, the historical record established by our own testimony at the commission hearings, our alliances with other communities, and the crucial work of our friends in Congress forced the Reagan Administration to take notice. It became politically impossible for President Reagan to veto the redress bill."

This struggle, demonstrating emergin potential as a political power, has awakened all Asian/Pacific Americans. "This is especially significant for the number of Asians in America [political power] continues to increase and never again will we tolerate anyone violating our rights." stated Janette Umemoto, NCRH activist. "But also," continued Umemoto, "we are aware that this power cannot be utilized selfishly. Having suffered deeply from injustice, we must continue to speak out forcefully against injustices inflicted upon others." Umemoto also spoke of additional positive ways HR442 impacts our society. "Our victory strikes a direct blow against racism and against governmental disregard of the constitutional rights of all people. The passage and the payment of reparations can be a deterrent and long term reminder to those that would commit similar injustices against other targets of racism and national hysteria whether they are Arab Americans, Iranians, or new immigrants from Asia or Latin America," said Umemoto.

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On August 27, 1988, all of us celebrated the hope for a brighter future. Although the dream of redress became a reality, Nakano urges each of us to remain united and determined. Nakano said, "We have won a tremendous victory for justice. But in the struggle for justice, there are many more battles to be fought. The struggle against anti-Asian racism, for respect, and for full empowerment continues...."

WE HAVE WON REPARATIONS— WE CAN WIN A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR ALL PEOPLE!"

HONORING THE SANSEIS

by Frank Emi

The Nisei members of NCRR sponsored a dinner/dance party for the Sansei members of NCRR at the Siyeon Korean Restaurant on Saturday, November 19. The purpose of the event was to thank those members born after the war (and who were therefore not interned in the camps) for their dedicated efforts in helping to make redress and reparations a reality.

In this age of "yuppie-ism," it is reassuring and refreshing to see the dedication of the Sanseis and Yonseis in their quest for justice and fair play. We truly appreciated their many, many hours and days of unselfish devotion to the task of obtaining redress and reparations for the Japanese-American internees, as well as for taking on the challenge against other racist issues (like the J.A.P.S.S. hair salon in '85).

We feel they should be recognized and appreciated by the Nikkei population in general. After all, most Sansei are not in line to receive any benefits from the Redress and Reparations (R&R) bill. Their's was a labor of love. A love for justice and fair play.

The party, attended by 100 past and present members (including the older Niseis) was a huge success. It served as a nice way for members both new and old, to get together and celebrate a long-sought after victory. A wonderful time was had by all.

Tom Shiroishi served as the emcee for a program that elicited the heretofore unknown talents of many members, like Linden Nishinaga who sang two songs, including the appropriate "My Way," which he changed to "Our Way." Miya Iwataki and Kay Ochi read testimonies given by women at the 1981 Commission hearings. Miya then read a self-written poem entitled "Gambare," and Kay gave her personal remembrance of the highlights of the redress effort over the past nine years.

The R&R-ettes - Sheri Miyashiro, Evelyn Yoshimura, and Kathy Nishimoto-Masaoka - sang a revised version of the old Impressions song "People Get Ready," and I sang "Koko Ni Sachiari."

Many people remarked to me afterwards that it was a great opportunity for the different generations to get together in a atmosphere of camaraderie and celebration, as we had never had a formal dinner like this before.

The idea for the party, which was organized by Tom and Toki Shiroishi, Sumi Seo Seki and myself, began at the Day of Celebration out door program on August 27. It was funded entirely by donations from the community and R&R supporters. Toki Shiroishi spearheaded the drive for the donations. Knock-

ing on doors and going from house to house, she collected over a thousand dollars in donations for the party. She was assisted by Sumi and myself through requests sent in the mail.

From the funds, we were also able to supply souvenir Parker jotter pens to the members who attended the party, as well as free drinks. Over 125 individuals made donations of up to \$500. Special mention should be given to NCRR member Jim Saito and his wife Katherine, who gave \$500, and Brooks and Sumi Iwakiri, who gave \$250.

The door prizes were also obtained through Toki Shiroishi's efforts.

The program was coordinated by our treasurer Jim Matsuoka in consolation with NCRR co-chair Kathy Nishimoto-Masaoka and myself.

I first met the members of the L.A. NCRR back in 1982, and was deeply impressed by the feeling of seriousness and dedication I sensed in them, to the R & R movement, D.O.R. and related activities. Six years later, I continue to be impressed by the same air of seriousness of purpose and commitment to matters affecting the rights and dignity of the Nikkei community and other minorities.

This dinner/dance party was one way of us Nisei to say "Thank you" to them for their steadfast determination and dedication to the R & R cause and for their efforts in helping to win the redress victory we continue to celebrate today.

OUTREACH UPDATE

With the dual purpose of public education and awareness building to the issue of redress and reparations for Japanese Americans, NCRR's outreach unit has been very active in the last few months providing these services to the Japanese American and larger communities.

These activities included:

- November 6, Alan Nishio and members of the JAACL, held a community meeting at the Ken Nakaoka Center
- November 10, radio talk show on KPCC-FM.
- November 13, a panel discussion on human rights sponsored by the Korean American Coalition and the JAACL.
- November 16, a presentation to the WLA Buddhist Church Western Regional Asian Americans Project Meeting.
- November 22, a student presentation at CSULA.

Plans for community information tables in the Japan America Theatre Plaza to get the current information around the appropriations process and distribution of funds out to the community are underway. We still need to lobby Congress and the President to have them support an early maximum payment of the \$500 million appropriations as called for in the bill.

NCRR needs the help of volunteers to man information tables and conduct presentations.

If you would like to get involved during this critical period of the campaign please call Aki at home (213) 667-2202 or work (714) 869-3258, or Kim at work (213) 293-6284. Your assistance and participation will be greatly appreciated.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!!!

Friday, December 9 at 3 p.m. - Stop Apartheid in Japan! Press Conference, in conjunction with International Human Rights Day, sponsored by NCRR and the Korean American Coalition on 1st Street and San Pedro Street.

Saturday, December 10 - International Human Rights Day.

Wednesday, December 14 at 7:00 p.m. - Community Meeting with Robert Bratt, Executive Director, Office of Redress Administration, Washington D.C.

at the Centenary Methodist Church, Central and Third Streets New Community Hall. Sponsored by NCRR and JAACL.

Saturday, January 7, 1989 at 11 a.m. - NCRR general meeting, 244 S. San Pedro Street, fourth floor.

Sunday, February 19, 1988 - Day of Remembrance - Details to be announced.