



National Council for Japanese American Redress

925 West Diversey Parkway, Chicago, Illinois 60614

September 9, 1981

Dear Friends,

The Chicago hearings of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (CWRIC) are almost upon us. They are to be held at Northeastern Illinois University's Alumni Hall on September 22-23. They arrive with a sense of a dramatic climax. It's the last of the community hearings. But will it be comic or tragic?

The mighty New York Times has spoken and proffers an apology. We rebut. But to what effect? Frank Chin, playwright and long-time advocate of compensatory redress, has written the second act, about the second hearings, the first from the community in Los Angeles, calling them a "circus of freaks." It's a hard truth which draws a strong reaction, including overtones of anti-Chinese racism. I've heard that the third act in San Francisco was a partisan affair, with the National Coalition on Redress/Reparations (NCRP) dueling with JACL by holding rival sideshows and with testifiers identifying themselves with the five (or is it six?) points of unity. (Nothing like a little partisan unity.)

Then there is the Commission staff itself. On August 31st, a second key person resigned, Associate Director Dr. Tom Taketa. (Earlier we reported that Cheryl Yamamoto has resigned.) Most recently, Executive Director Paul Bannai resigned effective September 20th. This leaves the staff leaderless except for recently hired Charles Smith, Director of Research and now acting Executive Director. The Bannai resignation may signal the end of these defections. All this in a period of less than six months.

The Chicago hearings may also be a "circus of freaks." According to a Chicago Tribune article, the JACL is counselling its witnesses to "spill their guts." But there are some other dramatic elements. NCJAR is working to establish two panels of witnesses. One is of United Methodists, including Bishop Jesse DeWitt, Northern Illinois Conference, Rev. Martin Deppe, General Board of Church and Society, Rev. Martha Coursey, Parish of the Holy Covenant, and Rev. Greg Dell, Methodist Federation for Social Action. Each of these bodies has taken a position on redress. Two is of persons who were active in their support of internees, including Professor emeritus Maynard C. Krueger, who visited most of the camps as a leader of the Socialist Party, Ms. Jan Linfield, who was a teacher at Poston, and Mr. Harold Flitcraft, a Quaker who helped during the relocation period. There are also a number of people who are speaking as independents and are quite critical of the hearings. Two of these will be from NCJAR. But our presence will be felt in its own way.

We will be conducting a gentle demonstration within the hearings, both to protest their insensitivity at inviting victims to testify and to honor the victims who do testify and attend the hearings. We will stand for a brief period at the beginning of each victim's testimony. Our statement is included in this issue. Any reader interested in having his or her name listed in support of the statement is invited to respond.

Apologizing to the Internees

At 2 A.M. a blip on the radar screen alerted anti-aircraft gunners to a "bogey" bearing down on Los Angeles from the ocean. They called for a blackout, then blazed away at the California skies. In the morning, some claimed that as many as five unidentified aircraft had flown in, but others doubted there had been any at all: the radar blip was probably a weather balloon.

Such was the mood after Pearl Harbor, and it fed fears that Japanese-Americans on the West Coast would put ancestry over country, commit sabotage and espionage, and even guide invaders to America. So the United States Government removed 120,000 of them to internment camps, driving them from their property and interrupting their careers. After the war they resumed normal lives, many prospering and gaining political strength in some areas. But understandably, the bitterness persists.

In the 1970's, with activism in vogue, Japanese-American groups pressed new demands for redress. Some set a price: \$25,000 for every former internee. Their lobbying, and the nation's lingering remorse, pushed Congress to create a commission that is finally taking a close look at the 40-year-old affair.

However understandable the internment seemed at the time, historians have judged it a cruel and pointless surrender to panic. Japanese-Americans in Hawaii were not interned, with no adverse results; neither were Italian- or German-Americans in the East. Only racism now seems to explain the rush to mistrust the loyalty of Japanese-Americans.

When finally permitted to enlist in 1943, more than 33,000 of the Nisei generation — the children of immigrant Japanese — joined the armed forces and served honorably, especially in the celebrated, all-Japanese-American 442d Regimental Combat Team. Yet the internees suffered grievously. One estimate, in 1942, valued their lost property at \$400 million. In the hastily prepared camps, they lived behind barbed wire under armed guard, in rows of squalid tarpaper shacks.

The new commission wants to recommend steps that could avert such internment in the future and also resolve the question of compensation. Both are troublesome issues.

The Supreme Court eventually permitted the internments as justifiable in wartime. Could any peacetime law prevent a recurrence? Former Justice Abe Fortas testified that some thought should be given to limiting the military's power over civilians, especially in times of stress.

As for compensation, a 1948 claims act paid the internees a mere 10 cents for every dollar lost. But who would be recognized for new claims, and how long would new litigation drag on?

Fortunately, Japanese-Americans as a group have fared well in postwar America. Their lasting resentment is legitimate, but the injustice done them does not compare with that suffered by blacks or American Indians.

A more appropriate response would be a gesture of atonement. Some suggest a national monument to the 442d, but there are livelier possibilities: a Federal fund offering scholarships, support for cultural and community projects, perhaps even prizes for distinguished Japanese-Americans. Those would be feasible and meaningful ways to deliver an apology that is long overdue.

An Apology Can't Cure A 40-Year-Old Wrong

To the Editor:

I protest your comments on our efforts to redress the grievances of America's World War II concentration-camp victims. Nowhere in your Aug. 4 editorial "An Apology to the Internees" do you mention the denial of our constitutional and civil rights. It is true that we suffered grievously, but at the same time the legal basis of our society was seriously compromised.

When an internee, Mitsuye Endo, filed for a writ of habeas corpus in July of 1942, the War Department's response was massive: It drafted proposals to have Congress suspend the writ and cancel the citizenship of 70,000 Americans. That's more serious than citizen racism or the nervousness of a radar operator.

Fortunately for America, the writ was not suspended, even though it was ignored, and our citizenship remained intact. But it took the courts 29 months, till the waning months of the war, to grant Miss Endo her constitutional privilege and thereupon to prod the Government into closing the camps.

It is a testament to the human spirit that we, with the help of friends, managed to rebuild our shattered lives, and we did benefit from the civil rights movement and legislation of the 60's.

But despite our recovery and the advances made, we have yet to have our day in court. We have to be permitted to have repaired the damage inflicted on both us and our nation's laws. Surely you believe that it is for the courts to decide whether our complaint is sound and to act accordingly.

Why, then, would you have us accept an apology when it is justice that is long overdue?

WILLIAM HOHRI
Chairperson, National Council
for Japanese American Redress

Chicago, Aug. 6, 1981

THE NEW YORK TIMES, TUESDAY, AUGUST 4, 1981

THE NEW YORK TIMES, THURSDAY, AUGUST 20, 1981

It's clear the victims of the experience did not understand much beyond the immediate orbit of their family. They don't know what happened to anyone but themselves. And they're vague and full of protective rhetoric about that. They've read a few book and the *Pacific Citizen*, the Japanese American Citizens League weekly. They are neither technically nor temperamentally equipped to speak knowledgeably, factually and candidly about the depth, degree and kinds of damage they absorbed because of camp. They are victims still inhabiting the shock and horror of the unspeakable. They are not experts. No more experts than the victims of the Holocaust were experts on the Nazi's "Final Solution." The victims' testimony on damage done them by camp, is as expert as the testimony of the mentally retarded on retardation.

It is no accident that expert testimony has neither been sought nor encouraged by the commission. Unless the commission is so arrogant as to determine no experts on the camps and their effects on the various kinds and generation of Nikkei culture and history exist.

Michi Weglyn's research in the National Archives unearthed recently declassified government documents that confirm the Hollywood hint that the U.S. State Department looked on the camps as hostage reserves. The book she wrote with her research, "Years of Infamy," is universally recognized as the most original and thoroughly scholarly work on camps ever produced by a former internee. Ironically and sadly, she is not emotionally equipped to speak of her personal experience in the camps.

From the testimony heard in Washington, D.C. and Los Angeles, it's obvious everyone in the JACL, every Nikkei witness testifying before the commission, has read and memorized if not plagiarized whole sections of Weglyn's work. Her work is cited directly and indirectly in every piece written on the x camps since 1976. Michi Weglyn is a popularly recognized expert on the camps, the decision to create them and the damage they created.

She has neither briefed the staff or commissioners, nor appeared at the hearings. She was not even asked.

This is amazing, since no serious study of any aspect of the camps is complete without her.

Peter T. Suzuki, an anthropologist at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, has been doing a study on the camp anthropologists and sociologists for years. He finds all their social science "fishy." They and their Nisei "informants" and "assistants" manipulated behavior, created Issei fanatics, they reported the fanatics to military intelligence officers posted at the camps. The shoddiness of the published scientific work and the egregious violations of scientific methods and ethnics

are defended rather than denied by the former camp social scientists, not emeritus and the "establishment" of their disciplines Suzuki's scholarly article exposing the excesses and patriotically-motivated violations of scientific ethics have been kept out of the "American Anthropologist" by the former mad scientists of the camps.

The books by the former camp social scientists that Suzuki's work and research cast doubt upon, include Leighton's "The Governing of Men," Thomas and Nishimoto's "The Spoilage" and "The Salvage," Rosalie Hankey Wax's, "Doing Fieldwork," the Community Analysis Section reports to the War Relocation Authority and the resulting, "Impounded People," that form the foundation of all Japanese American social science. The foundation is rotten.

Suzuki's research in the National Archives and the papers of former Community Analysis Section chief, Spicer, at the University of Arizona archives seem especially germane to the commission's study of psychological and social damage to individual Nikkei and Nikkei social integrity. Suzuki is the only expert in the area of damage done Japanese America by the social scientists in the camps. But, he has not been asked to brief the staff or appear before the commission.

The only experts on the camp the commission seems to recognize are members of the JACL, an advocacy, public relations organization, like the Moral Majority, as opposed to an organization like, say, the ABA or the AMA or the AIA that represents a standard of professional training, expertise and ethics.

So, no expert witnesses, other than JACL blowhards using the commission to write their past sins and the impact of their loyalty oath out of history. Only victims with their pocketfuls of sobstories, and antique white racists. The hearings are being populated with grotesques and pglies. Everybody looks bad. The importance and the purpose of the commission are made incomprehensible in the fakey theatrics raised by all the performers. Applause.

Arthur Goldberg leaned back in his thickly-upholstered chair to make a brief statement before he left the L.A. hearings early, because of his slipped disc. He was disturbed by the "hatred" he saw on the faces of the crowd today. He said he wanted to remove the hatred, "Dillon Myer is not a racist," he said, and mentioning his long friendship with Myer. He said Myer was a "victim of circumstance. He had an impossible situation foisted on him. He didn't do as well as he wanted. They were camps. Don't quibble over the word, 'concentration.' They were camps. Japanese Americans were forced into camps, on as short as 24 hours notice. Massive property loss. Financial ruin. Mental anguish. Family insecurity. American citizens were imprisoned without being charged or given a hearing

in clear violation of the constitution. The basis for imprisonment was race. Those are the facts.

"I make an appeal," Goldberg continued. "Let's get rid of this hatred. Let's get rid of this division . . ." Goldberg carried on for 20 or 30 rambling grandfatherly mellowing minutes. He was the great grandpa scolding his beloved grandchildren, giving them a lesson in manners. He was also, indirectly, scolding Lungren for a sloppy hold on his gavel. Lungren was defeated, crestfallen. Perhaps it was jetlag. All he could do was drop flopsweat and and look around the room like a lost boy in need of his mother.

Goldberg repeated the facts of short notice, property loss, financial ruin, no habeas corpus, no charges, no hearings, mass imprisonment in many and wonderful ways. The plain facts took wonderful forms in his contemplative old man's drift, like plain bread and American cheese whip becoming an array of charming canapes. The crowd loved him. He cared. He loved them. And they gave him a standing ovation. After all his mellowing lessons in manners, the audience was still out of control. The chair was still weak and the hearings still unfocused.

—FRANK CHIN

Editor

Chinese American Frank Chin's write-up of the hearings as a "Circus of Freaks" and the accounts of the witnesses as "sob stories" is an appalling, shocking display of utter callousness and insensitivity on the part of a fellow Asian. He is the yellow counterpart of Lillian Baker with her historical inaccuracies and shrill anti-Jap sentiments. His sardonic ridicule of human suffering bared by the witnesses at the recent hearings reflect a bitter, angry man, scarcely qualifying him to write of the human condition. I wonder what in his own personal life fills him with such venom against other Asians? Does he not know that there were no social scientists in camp—the average age of Nisei in camp being under 20?

From my own experience as a physician, I know of the suicides and deaths of my fellow campmates, the shortened lives, the heart disease and cancers, the depressive states, all brought on by the terrible consequences of the Evacuation.

I have in my own practice three brothers with schizophrenia whose psychiatrist called me the day after the hearings to tell me that their psychosis was brought on by the camp experience. He told me that individual testimony does not have the impact that group statistics and hard facts demonstrate. Anyone knows that such hard facts take decades to accumulate—we are only beginning to delve into the effects of the degrading experience on ourselves and succeeding generations to come.

The only part of the entire article worth printing was the last three paragraphs pertaining to Justice Goldberg. Mr. Chin should stick to writing about his own chicken coop Chinamen. He lacks the sensitivity, perception and depth of character necessary to understand the Japanese Americans . . .

. . . I hope the day will come when all minorities, assisted by dedicated whites, will work for the common good rather than engage in petty, destructive inter-minority conflicts.

Friday, August 28, 1981

THE RAJU SHIMPO

Letters

Editor

We had mixed feelings about Frank Chin's satirical essay ("Unfocused L.A. Hearings: A Circus of Freaks"; R.S. 8-21-81). On the one hand, we feel it is important to criticize the political process, to expose it for what it is, and to warn ourselves of false hopes and our own vulnerabilities to paternalism, reacting) as oppressed people.

On the other hand we feel sad that in the process of sharing his thoughts and feelings he was insensitive toward the persons who testified and attended to hearings. His cynicism came across as demeaning.

It's ironic that in his criticism of the unfocused, dehumanizing process of the commission hearings he victimizes persons by his cynicism.

Susan Kuwaye
Amy Chuman
Agape Fellowship

Dr. Mary S. Oda
North Hollywood

Mr. McCloy declined to appear before the Commission in July and has not submitted a public statement. (His excuse was a visit to Europe; but Lillian Baker travelled 2700 miles at her own expense to appear.)

Mr. Bendetsen also declined to appear, but did submit a written statement.

It is a complete and total cop-out:

"I did not recommend such action."

It is a cover-up by means of the Fast Shuffle:

"Ultimately, an Executive Order was prepared in the Justice Department, not the War Department."

It is an obscene distortion:

"Under my direction the relocation centers were built and furnished with residential equipment, bedding, beds, dressers, tables, chairs, schoolrooms and teaching equipment, infirmaries, dormitories, bathing and sanitary facilities, as well as kitchens and dining halls, fully equipped."

If the Commission is serious, it will subpoena McCloy and Bendetsen and require their sworn testimony under penalty of perjury.

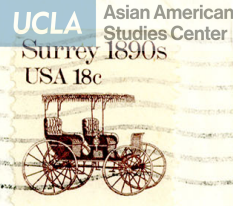
It is not for the victims to testify. It is for them, instead, to be granted reparations!

In order to express our regret and to show honor for the victims who do testify, we shall stand for a brief period at the beginning of each victim's testimony. We invite you to join with us.

Peace be with you!

(Persons who wish to have their names appear as supporters of this statement should contact William Hohri by phone (312)588-8483 or by mail: 4717 N. Albany, Chicago, IL 60625.)

NATIONAL COUNCIL for
JAPANESE AMERICAN REDRESS
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Make Your Contribution and Join the Class Action Now!

Please make your contribution payable to:

Redress Legal Fund
1428 West Thorndale
Chicago, Illinois 60660

Your contribution is tax-deductible. The Redress Legal Fund is a program of the Northern Illinois Conference of the United Methodist Church.

We ask you to consider being one of our Forty-seven Ronin. (You may recall the famous story of the Forty-seven Ronin, masterless samurai, who obtained justice through their self-sacrifice.) For us a Ronin is a person who will contribute the sacrificial amount of \$1,000 or more.

We also have accepted, with great humility, the sacrificial gifts of much smaller amounts from the disabled, the unemployed, and the retired.

We offer the following amounts for your consideration (check one):

☐ \$1,000 as one of the Forty-seven Ronin.

☐ \$500 as a measure of my commitment.

☐ \$100 and my hope that hundreds more will do the same.

☐ \$ _____ and my very best wishes for success.

name: _____

street: _____

city: _____ state: _____ zip: _____

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