

HOKUBEI MAINICHI

Friday, January 1, 1982

Our Readers Respond to Questionnaire on JA Redress

QUESTIONNAIRE

For New Year's Special Issue

The Presidential Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, having completed hearings in several American cities, will make its recommendations to Congress shortly regarding disposal of the American tragedy created by the forced evacuation of Japanese Americans some 40 years ago.

The Hokubei Mainichi feels it is politically unrealistic to expect a favorable consideration by Congress to meet the demand for payment of \$25,000 to each of the more than 120,000 evacuees as proposed by some of the organizations in our community. Because we feel it is almost impossible to make a fair and equitable distribution of the reparations, administratively speaking, at this late date;

We wish to suggest a Con-

gressional action to create a Japanese American Foundation to settle the redress issue. Such a Foundation would use the monies (mainly, bank interest) derived from the principal to give financial assistance to needy Japanese American students in the form of annual scholarships, and also to help operate welfare organizations, such as Kimochi in San Francisco, thus helping the community as a whole.

The Hokubei Mainichi would like to hear your reactions, pro and con, to our suggestion: establishment of a Japanese American Foundation to rectify the wrongdoing perpetrated by our American government some 40 years ago.

The Editors

Redress Is Not Welfare

RAYMOND OKAMURA
Berkeley, Calif.

The creation of a "Japanese Foundation" by Congress is not a suitable remedy for the redress issue. Individual men, women, and children suffered losses as a result of an abuse of government power; and it is these specific individuals named in the records (or their heirs) who are entitled to redress. No one else is eligible. Compensation which is due to the victims cannot properly be diverted to a third party or surrogate organization--especially one which did not exist at the time--without the express consent of each and every aggrieved person.

Any indemnification must go to the individual claimant: otherwise, the payment is a fraud. Government funding of a foundation--no matter how worthy its purpose--with money which should have gone to the injured parties would amount to grand larceny. Victims living outside of the Japanese American population centers on the West Coast stand very little chance of receiving tangible benefits from a foundation program. Since everyone has different needs and values, no one--including the editor of Hokubei Mainichi--should dictate how another person's share should be spent.

Actually, it may turn out that most redress recipients will want

to donate their share to charity or the proposed foundation, but that choice must be left completely to personal discretion. Thus, while it would be acceptable for a "Japanese American Foundation" to become an indirect beneficiary of redress via voluntary contribution, it would be totally inappropriate for such a foundation to receive a direct government grant in lieu of individual payments.

An important point to keep in mind is that redress is not welfare. The incarceration affected the rich as well as the poor. Redress is not based on poverty or need; instead, it is based on restitution for a wrong committed, and the victim's present financial condition has no relevance to the issue. Every individual who was imprisoned or otherwise adversely affected by Executive Order 9066 has a right to redress, regardless of need.

There are many philanthropic projects deserving of support, but redress must not degenerate into a crass fund raising campaign for community welfare organizations and scholarship committees. Redress involves a loftier principle: the preservation of basic constitutional rights through the precedent of adequate compensation for the denial of those rights. This principle must not be compromised by an expedient payoff of charity. In effect, the foundation proposal is a red herring.

HOKUBEI  MAINICHI

Friday, January 1, 1982

Short-Sighted Not Fair

DONALD NAKAHATA, D.D.S.
San Francisco

Your proposal, no matter how well-meaning, is short sighted and has some things in it that are not fair. Let's not say "shikata ga nai" and settle for something that's not really going to help the people hurt by the Evacuation. We all agree that the wrongs of 40 years ago need some form of redress that means something today. But, your idea to make a "Japanese American Foundation" to disburse redress funds on various projects that "benefit the community" should be part of the solution only when the Evacuees living now or their immediate heirs cannot be identified.

Even though the Constitutional rights and protections of Americans of Japanese ancestry as a group were denied by the Evacuation and Internment, each of us as individual lived through those years and were affected by those experiences in our own way. So, each of us now still living, or our immediately surviving heirs, should receive some form of direct payment. Just to make a community "Foundation" denies the fact that the injustices and injuries were individual and personal.

Your suggestion assumes that a kindly and well meaning "Foundation" will really and honestly repay everyone who should benefit. Maybe! But that's not necessarily so! It is unfortunate but true that often the people who control "Foundations" like the one you suggest get the money and benefit from them instead of the people the "Foundation" is supposed to help.

Finally, you seem to think that the "Foundation" in its collective wisdom will act more wisely with a redress award than the individual Evacuees. Maybe - maybe not! What's really great about our Country is that we respect the individual and guard his rights.....and that's what Redress really is all about!

Let Individuals Decide

MORSE SAITO
Kobe, Japan

We will never get \$25,000 per internee. Yet is there a person among us who did not suffer more in financial losses? Interrupted schooling, broken homes, lost businesses, property stolen including some deemed legal, and the abuse we faced because many in our former hometowns thought "they must have been guilty of something or else they would never have been "interned" Certainly the \$25,000 is not "fair and equitable" but it is a minimum figure to consider for "redress".

I am against a special Japanese American Foundation set up by the government to then determine as it wishes "financial assistance to needy Japanese American students" or a government sponsored foundation to aid such worthy groups as Kimochi. This does not rectify wrongdoings of 40 years ago.

The important issue is redress; a Constitutionally guaranteed right of all people. We do not seek any particular lump sum of pay-off. I, too, am tired of hakuji friends who remark, "Hey, you're gonna get rich, ain't cha?" If there is any other way to get redress and our part in America's history put into a positive way, then I would take it. Unfortunately, that is not possible. A cash payment comes closest to the "liberty and JUSTICE for all" that we seek.

Like many, my first reaction to the \$25,000 proposal was to collect it and return in front of those who offered it. Second, to refuse it and let those trying to buy me off continue to think about our democracy and justice.

If we did collect, I think it would be best if individuals gave to the Japanese American Foundation and such organization as Kimochi. May I suggest a few other organizations which continue to fight for justice we seek: the American Civil Liberties Union, the American Friends Service Committee (remember who helped us with hostels and monitored the camps?), or those in the on-going struggle such as the Southern Leadership Conference, the NAACP or Urban League, CORE and any of a dozen organizations one might name.

The choice should be left to each of us and no one would be unjustified in keeping his/her redress money.

HOKUBEI  MAINICHI

 Wednesday, January 6, 1982

Letter to Editor
**WOULD ACCEPT
\$25,000 GRACIOUSLY**

Dear Editor:

After having read Readers Respond to JA Redress, Hokubei Mainichi Friday, January 1, 1982, I am in total agreement with Raymond Okamura of Berkeley. While I believe that the Hokubei's idea for a JA Foundation is a noble suggestion; to help needy JA students and help operate welfare organizations, etc., I for one would rather have the money made out to me and I dispense of it as I see fit.

Our family suffered as did many during those times. My father being sent off to detention camp for 2 and half years, my sister and I almost became orphans. My mother suffered a stroke just before we left camp, so you see life was very difficult for us at the time.

In 1952 my mother suffered a second stroke and became partially paralyzed. My sister and I cared for her at home while we were both high school students for reasons of communication (she spoke Japanese only), a faster recovery in a home situation, and of course financial. We brought Mama home while she was still in a coma. We couldn't afford to pay future hospital and doctor bills at my father's salary as a farm laborer.

A county nurse never came by to advise us on the care of Mama—my sister and I badly needed advice but became instant nurses and organization interested in helping us. Sometime later when mama was able to sit in a wheelchair we had a Japanese ladies group visit us. *Noone* offered assistance.

Presently my husband and I have two children in college, a third will be graduating from high school in June and entering college, and the fourth entering high school in the fall. First on my list of priorities would be to see all my children graduate from college and perhaps post graduate work for two of them and should there be anything left, then would I consider a charity of my choice.

So you see, if anyone handed me \$25,000 for redress I would most graciously accept it. This would be my choice as a free thinking *American!*

*Miyoko Toko Yamamoto
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