

# NEWS

## UNITED METHODIST NEWS SERVICE

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Thomas S. McAnally, Director  
P.O. Box 320 Nashville, TN 37202  
Telephone 615-742-5470

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CONTACT: Linda Bloom  
New York, N.Y. (212) 663-8900

WASHINGTON (UMNS)--Congress is expected to approve soon a bill requiring the U.S. government to offer an apology and \$20,000 to each Japanese-American confined in an internment camp during World War II.

The Senate passed the bill April 20 on a 69-27 vote and a slightly different version was approved earlier by the House of Representatives.

Rep. Norman Y. Mineta, D-Calif., a United Methodist and sponsor of the House version, expects no problem reconciling the House and Senate bills, according to his press secretary, Eric Federling.

"There is no firm indication" yet about whether President Reagan will sign the bill, Mr. Federling added.

Mary Kochiyama, who works for the United Methodist Committee on Relief, said various organizations would be conducting a mailgram campaign, urging the president to sign the bill.

"We're really happy that it has reached this stage," said Naomi Southard, executive director of the National Federation of Asian American United Methodists and a Japanese American. "We have already sent a letter to President Reagan." She cautioned, however, that the president may prove to be the stumbling block for the bill.

A petition to the United Methodist General Conference, sponsored by the Board of Church and Society, addresses the issue of Japanese-American redress and supports implementation of public policy initiatives and other recommendations of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians.

The commission, created by Congress and signed by President Jimmy Carter in 1980, concluded that a grave injustice had been done to Japanese-Americans and recommended the nation make amends.

Ms. Kochiyama and her family were among 120,000 Japanese-Americans--about half of whom are thought to be still living--who were forced from their homes and put into 10 major camps in isolated geographic areas during World War II.

"We called them concentration camps, although the government called them relocation camps," she said.

At that time the U.S. government considered anyone of Japanese descent to be a national American security, even those who were U.S. citizens. "Japanese-Americans never bombed Pearl Harbor," Ms. Kochiyama pointed out. "We were Americans."

In fact, some Japanese-Americans were allowed to serve in the army and won many high military honors. Ms. Kochiyama's twin brother joined the 442nd Infantry Regimental Combat Team. But, at the same time, her father, who had been taken away from their San Pedro, Calif., home on Pearl Harbor Day, died a month and a half later. Since his detainment came immediately after being released from the hospital for ulcer problems, she said internment brought about his death.

Ms. Kochiyama, then in her early 20s, spent seven months at an assembly center in California and then two years at an internment camp in Jerome, Ark. In April 1944, she was released to work in a USO club for Japanese-Americans in Hattiesburg, Miss.

In 1976, President Gerald R. Ford issued a proclamation, "The American Promise," which recognized the mistake made in confining Japanese-Americans and said that kind of action should never be repeated. Since then, various bills on redress issue have been introduced in Congress.

Under the approved Senate bill, the taxfree \$20,000 would be given only to internees still living, with the elderly paid first. The money would be distributed over four years.

Although the issue of monetary compensation has been controversial, Ms. Southard said the majority of the Japanese-American community believes financial reparation would be an important symbol of national repentance.

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