



JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE

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The following twelve presentations (pp 24-42)
are the 11th through the 22nd prepared as part of the
educational program to discuss the restitution issue
specifically for Japanese Americans.

They appeared in the PACIFIC CITIZEN each week,
beginning February 3, 1978.

Other presentations to follow.

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XI

WHAT'S IN THE NAME?

Clifford I. Uyeda.

The first ten articles dealt with the background materials we felt were necessary for the understanding of the reparation issue.

We believe we are now ready for the next phase in our continuing education on the reparation issue--the presentation of various views, many personal, some controversial.

The authors of the forthcoming articles, therefore, will be identified.

Let us begin with the term "reparation."

* * *

The Seattle group called themselves the Redress Committee. Others saw no reason to be hesitant about using the word "reparation."

Marvin J. Anderson, Dean of the Hasting Law School in San Francisco, in his meeting with JACL members in June 1976, stated that the word "reparation" should be avoided if at all possible.

The Federal Republic of Germany calls it "Restitution" as she paid and continues to pay billions of dollars in compensations to the Jewish victims of the Third Reich.

The issue is not over the definition of the word "reparation." That is clear to everyone. The issue for us is how to obtain endorsements for the concept from the American public, more specifically the United States Congress.

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The Nikkei have no objections to the use of the term "reparation." But how about the public? That is what counts in this campaign.

Are we sugar-coating the case away? Or are we over-emphasizing the label?

We cannot be hung up on our own feelings to the exclusion of all else. It is the "outsiders," the American public, who will ultimately decide whether we will or will not obtain compensations for the wartime injustices suffered at the hands of our own government.

"Redress," "Restitution," "Restoration," "Indemnification," or plain "Claims." Does it really matter? What is your preference?

Pacific Citizen.

Febr. 3, 1978.

XII

ARE WE READY?

Clifford I. Uyeda

Gordon Hirabayashi is a man of both principle and courage. He was a student at the University of Washington when World War II broke out.

He defied both the curfew and the evacuation orders. He was tried and sentenced to three months imprisonment on each charge, the sentences to run concurrently.

The Supreme Court upheld the curfew order, then said that there was no need to consider the violation of the evacuation order because the two sentences were concurrent. The Court, thus, in 1943, evaded the more important issue of the constitutionality of the evacuation.

"We must be prepared to receive insults and abuse from both within and without our group," he recently stated in discussing the reparation campaign.

Professor Gordon Hirabayashi defines a first class citizen as one who takes the risks and the responsibilities of his citizenship. The stance of the deprived, he states, is often by necessity and unfortunately that of a second class citizen.

We believe the Japanese Americans have now advanced to a point of becoming first class citizens. We must accept with it its responsibility and its risk.

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To continue the submissive stance, says Professor Hirabayashi, is tantamount to saying: We prefer to remain second class. Let someone else take the risk and the responsibility of the first class citizenship.

We believe that seeking reparation for Japanese Americans imprisoned during World War II by their own government without indictment or the proffer of charges is an important American issue. To act on it is the responsibility of a true first class citizen.

The reparation issue is not just a local Japanese American issue. It is an issue of vital concern for the civil and human rights of all Americans.

Critical views are essential to seeking truth. It is, however, often stated that among Japanese Americans there is excessive criticism of those within the group and an extreme pleasantness and a lack of criticism of those on the outside, particularly the majority.

It was true in the Issei and Nisei world for a very good reason--as a severely oppressed minority. Does the same reason still exist?

Pacific Citizen.

Febr. 10, 1978.

XIII

COMMENTS RECEIVED

We have survived. Be glad--and leave it at that. (Detroit)

Let bygones be bygones. Human suffering is a strengthening of self. (Female, 55)

I hope I am not still licking my wounds. Let's look forward, not backward. (Midwest)

* * *

Americans will not face up to the enormity of the crime against the basic human and civil rights until reparations are made. (N. Calif.)

\$300 received from the Evacuation Claims Act of 1948 is not justice for 4 years in camp, plus all our farm losses, houses, etc. (Male, 79)

Four years of economic void. Ten years of economic desruption. Had to start all over again from scratch--homeless and jobless with a family of four. (Male, 68)

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No price of reparation can replace what we have gone through. Receiving reparation would only cheapen the pain and the suffering we endured. (Male, 49, Oakland, CA)

Japanese community does not care to become involved in the degrading process of being "paid off" for the injustices.
(Midwest)

Shaking our fists and demanding cash reparations somehow cheapens the strength of Japanese spirit and pride--Yamato damashii! (Midwest)

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It is only to right the wrong. No argument should be made about needing the money. (Male, Seattle)

I feel only money will awaken the American public to the wrong. (Female, 53, Sacramento, CA)

My wife was ill. There was no doctor, medicine or facility. She died--without medical treatment whatsoever. (Male, 70)

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How can reparation get what I lost? Many are barely making a living now. Only college educated Nisei came out of the evacuation smelling like a rose. (Female, 61, Los Angeles)

There are many Issei and Nisei who need help now. (Detroit)

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These, and the comments to follow next week, were from the questionnaire returns.

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Pacific Citizen.

Febr. 17, 1978.

XIV

MORE COMMENTS RECEIVED

This will just only up old wounds and new hostility.
(Female, 25, N. Calif.)

Why become beggars. Leave it enough alone. You certainly
will use up the reservoir of good will. (Detroit)

Reparation will only serve to dig up bitterness which should
have been forgiven. It will only increase hatred rather than
hurt the conscience. I'm grateful to be living here.
(Female, 47, Seattle)

We do not want to go through the antagonism just to bring
about constitutional rights for all Americans and the "principle
involved." (Female, 59, San Francisco)

* * *

People today, both young and old, do not realize this can
happen or has happened in the U.S. This step is long overdue.
(Midwest)

I cannot forgive what the government did to us. (Cincinnati)

The Japanese have been too passive and goody-goody and got
us nowhere. (Female, 54, N. Calif.)

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The important point on evacuation now is to keep the fact
alive in our country's conscience and text books--not to seek
financial reparations. (Midwest)

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I will remove my JACL membership if you ask for reparation.
(Detroit)

A statement of apology by Congress is more than sufficient.
(Male, 54, San Mateo, CA)

I am highly insulted by your monetary demands. I have not
heard any Issei or Nisei who had been victims complain and
ask for reparations. (Chicago)

* * *

I thank you for your hard work that benefits all of us that
are the "do nothings." (Midwest)

It's so degrading for all the Issei and Nisei that helped
better the United States. (French Camp, CA)

This matter should be pursued vigorously because of the principle
involved. (Male, 52, Sacramento, CA)

If it happened once, it will happen again. (Midwest)

Please hurry it up. (Male, 63)

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We are coming under attack again and I'm concerned. This
time it is due to Japan's economic rather than military might.
(Male, 29)

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Pacific Citizen.

Febr. 24, 1978.

XV

MORE THE MERRIER

Clifford I. Uyeda

Let's quit living in the past, and expend our energies and resources on the now problems. (Detroit)

Opposed to JACL spending so much time on issues of the past at the expense of not working on current problems. (Chicago)

There are many other worthwhile projects JACL can devote their efforts at this time. (Male, 55, Sacramento, CA)

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There is a myth existing about any national organization that depends on volunteers to staff and move programs.

The myth is that an existence of one program diminishes the quality of another. That there are only limited number of volunteers who can get involved in the programs.

The bodies and talents out there are limitless. The problem is how to get them motivated enough to participate. The more participation the more effective the organization becomes.

JACL is involved in many programs--and more the merrier. Increase in programs means increase in membership participation.

Most programs are performed and accomplished on shoe-string budgets. When the blanket boycott tactic to save the whales resulted in racism toward Japanese and Japanese Americans,

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the JACL Whale Issue Committee fought this with vigorous educational programs.

Within the past six months all major U.S. conservation organizations have withdrawn their support of the boycott tactic. Over three years of intense campaigning has cost the JACL less than \$500. The only cost to JACL was in the use of the xerox machine and in mailing.

The entire activity of the JACL National Committee for Iva Toguri did not cost the JACL treasury a single cent. It was done with the work and contributions of hundreds of volunteers. And we were all enriched by the experience.

There are many more projects JACL should undertake. The greater the number of programs being worked on simultaneously, the healthier the organization. Membership participation enhances, enriches and strengthens JACL.

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Pacific Citizen.

March 3, 1978.

XVI

SUFFERING, WITH AND WITHOUT JUSTICE

Clifford I. Uyeda.

Suffering is not uncommon to life. It is a part of life. Human mind and body are capable of absorbing and still survive incredible abuses.

Harship becomes heroic when done in a cause one believes in. Misery in the knowledge that all citizens alike are sharing the same is tolerable without resentments.

What made the suffering intolerable for many persons of Japanese ancestry living in the United States during World War II is that it was an unjust suffering imposed only upon persons of Japanese descent. Any other American subjected to similar treatment by his own government would have been equally outraged.

The average Nisei, still below the voting age when World War II started, were a small minority stereotyped into an image of an inscrutable enemy by an organized small group whose business it was to increase and exploit racial tensions on the West Coast.

To lump together the suffering under such condition with the general hardship of waging a war is a complete ignoring of the human senses. History is replete with men going gladly into battles with a full knowledge of the painful consequences.

Many Nisei soldiers in the European and Pacific theaters of war were much more concerned and troubled by the treatment of their families incarcerated behind barbed wire fences in America

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than they were with the enemy firepower they faced.

Sure, there was a war going on. But to be regarded and treated as an enemy by one's own government without a shred of evidence, stripped of all constitutional and human rights, and then be told that your suffering is no different from those of any other American citizen--that is real pain.

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Pacific Citizen,

March 10, 1978.

XVII

NOT JUST A RECOVERY

Clifford I. Uyeda

There still exists a gross misconception among many that the redress we seek is an attempt to get back just what we lost.

How does one ever recover in full the loss of freedom or the injustices suffered? It just cannot be done.

The issue is not to recover what cannot be recovered. The issue is to obtain a meaningful redress and to make such injustice much less likely to occur in the future.

Justice means compensations for the victims of injustice. It will be a token compensation--no matter what the amount. But that is more than a verbal apology.

How meaningful is verbal admission of wrong doing? It can be as meaningful as the time it takes to say them. We are all familiar with the statements by some public officials. It can be painless, and need not necessarily come from the heart. And more important, the statement can be retracted as readily as it was made.

Incarceration of American citizens in detention camps again? That was 1942. It will never happen again, many say.

For those who lived through the 1942 experience, they recall vividly that amidst the rumors of evacuation and incarceration, many Nisei had a firm belief: "Not us. We're American citizens."

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Pacific Citizen,

March 17, 1978.

XVIII

WHAT IS OUR GOAL?

Clifford I. Uyeda

Is there more to our campaign than the seeking of justice for the injuries and the injustice suffered by Japanese Americans at the hands of our own government during World War II?

In the process of seeking justice there are certain notions held by the public that must be dispelled.

The first notion is that Japanese Americans were guilty of disloyalty to their country because of the actions taken against them by the United States. It is a difficult suspicion to dispell in spite of the lack of any evidence or record to support this concept.

The second notion that must be dispelled is that evacuation was both necessary and justified. It is a powerful belief upheld by the Supreme Court decision in the Korematsu case which held the evacuation constitutional.

Legal minds now decry this as one of the worst decisions by the United States Supreme Court. But there it stands for the apologists to justify the incarceration of American citizens in concentration camps without an indictment or even a charge.

Only the congressional action authorizing meaningful compensations for the victims of this unjust incarceration will ever erase these misconceptions from the public's minds.

Then there is the final and perhaps the most important goal of the campaign. A substantive compensation may be one of the most powerful deterrents against the recurrence of similar abrogation of human rights in the United States.

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Pacific Citizen,
March 24, 1978.

XIX

TIME TO MOVE AHEAD

Clifford I. Uyeda

The time for just talking is over. The time for action is here.

JACL has had a National Council mandate for eight years to move on the reparation issue. Hundreds of thousands of words have been spoken and written on the subject, some of which we summarized in our presentations.

We believe that the issue is clear--a restitution for the injuries and injustice suffered by Japanese Americans at the hands of their own government. It is our responsibility as an American citizen to pursue for a meaningful redress.

If the goal we seek is just, and we believe it is, we must move ahead. We cannot wait till everyone agrees. Justice does not require unanimity.

The campaign to repeal the Emergency Detention Act (Title II) or the campaign to seek presidential pardon and a restoration of American citizenship to Iva Toguri could never have been launched if we had waited for a majority consensus.

At the beginning they were not popular causes. There were apprehensions expressed by more than a few individuals on the possible public backlashes.

For those involved in the campaign, the cause was just. The rest was a matter of dogged pursuit of the goal.

Our campaign to seek redress for the manner in which Japanese Americans were treated by their own government during World War II is no different.

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Pacific Citizen,

March 31, 1978,

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THE REAL IDENTITY CRISIS

Clifford I. Uyeda

This has more to do with the manner in which the public perceives us than in our own understanding of ourselves. The public in general does not distinguish Japanese Americans from the Japanese nationals, not just in appearance but more significantly in their concepts.

We are Americans. The Japanese part of our definition is an accident of ancestry, a second identity retained by all Americans. We are more at a loss in Japan than in the United States. The language, the food, the customs, and more significantly the manner in which we think identify us as Americans, distinct from the Japanese nationals.

Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau went to Japan and apologized to the government officials there for the manner in which Canada treated their Japanese Canadians during World War II!

A public official in the San Francisco Bay area, a long time friend of Japanese Americans, said that the injustices suffered by Japanese Americans here in the United States had been more than repaid by the generous American contributions and aid to war devastated Japan!

There appears to be no consciousness on the part of many Americans that the expulsion and the incarceration of Japanese Americans were acts not directed against enemies but against their own people.

There is an incredible identity crisis in America which we thought had disappeared for good but which we now learn is very much alive and kicking.

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Pacific Citizen,
April 7, 1978.

XXI

JAPANESE ELDERLY

Clifford I. Uyeda

A prevalent myth is that Japanese Americans by hard work have achieved an income above that of the national average. What is hidden from view in the national median income figures is the plight of the Japanese elderly. One out of five have incomes less than poverty level.

The Japanese elderly at 8 percent approximates the national average. However, 41 percent of this group are age 75 and over. They're almost all Issei.

Among the 60 to 64 age group, three out of four were Nisei according to the 1970 U.S. Census figures. In the past eight years the proportion of Nisei over Issei has increased markedly. In addition, the Census Bureau has acknowledged an undercount, especially for persons 65 and over.

Unfortunately the Asian data are restricted to the outdated 1970 statistics. Up-to-date information is not provided for Asian Americans as for other minority groups such as Black and Spanish origin population.

Although the Japanese American families in 1969 had a median income of \$12,515 as compared to the national median income of \$9,956, the 47,000 Japanese 65 years and over had a lower median incomes than the total elderly population. It was \$2,482 a year for males and \$1,312 for females. Forty percent of the males and 63 percent of the females had income of less than \$2,000 per year.

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In spite of the lower income the elderly Japanese (and Chinese and Filipinos) received lower social security income benefits than families of other races.

Therefore, contrary to popular myth many elderly Japanese Americans have very low median income on which to subsist, many are below poverty level, and many live alone.

Much of this was due to their having been expelled from the West Coast at the height of their productive years. They not only could not save for the old age, they had lost everything they worked for.

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Pacific Citizen,

April 14, 1978.

XXII

OVERTURN KOREMATSU DECISION!

Clifford I. Uyeda

On December 18, 1944, in the Korematsu v. U.S., the United States Supreme Court ruled that the expulsion of Japanese Americans from the West Coast was constitutional.

Some Nisei have suggested that JACL focus its attention and energy on reversing this infamous decision rather than campaigning for reparations. There are precedents.

In 1954 the Supreme Court struck down the "separate but equal" doctrine upheld by the earlier Court. The Court has also reversed itself to enable indigent defendants in criminal cases to obtain free legal counsel. The same is true about not being compelled against one's conscience to salute the American flag. The one closer to home is the Court's decision which nullified the earlier ruling that prohibited Japanese aliens from the ownership of agricultural lands.

What are the chances of overturning the Korematsu case?
Almost none.

The United States Supreme Court is restricted by our Constitution to act only on actual cases.

The earlier court rulings that were later overturned were all continuing cases. The issues remained alive.

The Korematsu case is a dead issue. No one is threatening to exclude persons of Japanese ancestry from the West Coast today.

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Pacific Citizen,
April 21, 1978.