

To the Friends of Michi Weglyn and the NCRR members present at the Tribute to Michi meetings

I would like to thank the various members of the committee for allowing me to participate in the recent Tribute to Michi Weglyn. It is rare moment in history when the various political factions can put their egos and agendas aside for one moment and agree to honor one of it's **heroes** during their life time. It is for this reason that I coordinated the efforts of various professionals in their respected fields to work for the good of the community and donate much of their services for the chance to thank Michi and pay our respects to the **mother of the redress movement**.. All Japanese Americans should be required to study her books and know their own history. This is especially true for the third and fourth generations whom I believe have been sheltered from some of the most important issues and problems which occurred in our past.

I believe that the Friends of Michi Weglyn did their best to achieve the goals mentioned above under difficult and stressful times. I am also of the opinion that unfortunately much of the problems and delays were the result of the NCRR inability to work with another group with the exception of Frank Emi, who I have the utmost respect and admiration for. Having said the obvious which no one wants to have to say, especially in the Japanese community, I would like to put forth the following list of issues and problems which I hope the **NCRR** can digest and perhaps in the future work to solve these problems and become the major force in the JA community which they so obviously desire to be.

1. Your leaders need to be **qualified** to make important decisions concerning technical and planning problems. Some examples of the delays are the constant petty bickering about their title position on the poster and then their inability to decide what the theme was and who they were honoring, **themselves or Michi Weglyn**. This lack of direction and constant changing of theme, type size, and posturing was all an attempt to manipulate the various elements of this tribute to serve themselves with very little regard for the feelings and hard work which the FOM put forth. I believe in the time worn theory that you get the best people for the job, those who have the skills and qualifications for this event. Unfortunately the NCRR still believes in a egalitarian system of selecting individuals who are not experienced in the areas for which they were chosen to perform. Certain leaders used the rational that this was their event and that they had done this event for eighteen years and therefore knew what they were doing. I reply that the very fact that they have done this event for eighteen years and still could not provide real leadership skills or any insights proves my position that they are **amateurs** and have not learned much in eighteen years. If their events before were so stimulating and educational why is it that after mailing out 1500 flyers for this event to their membership they were only able to obtain donations from less than 20 people. This proved so embarrassing that they were forced to join the FOM list of donors on the program which far surpassed their donations to cover their inadequate public support. Maybe it is time for the **NCRR** to send out a flyer with a list of possible ways to improve your support network and have the 1500 valued members make suggestions and comments on your direction for the new millenium. Perhaps this survey will ground your thoughts and provide with a clearer picture of your role in the future.

2. I have heard certain members of the **NCRR** state that they do not care what the general JA community opinions are and that frankly their opinions are the only one's which matter, and then when it served their agenda they were suddenly a grassroots organization who's role was to represent the JA community in its times of difficulty. I personal find this mentality to be hypocritical and most of all I am deeply sadden by this pompous attitude of the leadership. My hope is that in the future the **NCRR** will find its **Heart** is really in the JA community and that by serving their people, new blood will pulse through it's veins and hopefully the community will support their vision for the future. My proof of this mentality is their poorly planned attempts at a publicity campaign which failed to see any reason why they should hang posters for this event in J Town, JANM and major colleges which have Asian American studies programs. Also when a respected author and

renowned Asian American historian Frank Chin offered to provide them with a complete plan for a publicity campaign to cover media, print, and possible live TV coverage by a major network to promote this event, the ignorant **NCCR** leadership could not allow an outsider to show them how to promote their event. The **NCCR** needs to do their **homework**. They don't even know when they are presented with a gift and the importance of the messenger who knows more about JA history than all of them put together!!! Another point that I find disturbing is the fact that some of the leadership of the **NCCR** who were empowered with making important decisions about this event had not even taken the time to read Michi's book until several weeks before the event took place after most of the major decisions had been resolved. These people, had they taken the time to read the book and truly absorb the information would not have been so eager to downplay her importance within the redress movement to the point of making the ill conceived plan of sharing the award with another group of individuals at the very last minute. A poignant example of the **NCCR** leadership is the way Geo Maruyama, was led down the darkened aisle of the JA Theatre to personally deliver his **donation** of expensive and beautifully arranged bouquet of roses that sat in front of the podium. This man who was obviously **visually and physically handicapped** was led down the aisle of the darkened theatre shortly before the event by one of your leaders and instead of being assisted up the stairs to the stage level, this **NCCR** leader stopped short and watched this wretched old man fall down the stairs and drop his carefully arranged bouquet of roses which was strewn across the stage. I was in the middle of directing the lighting of the stage and quickly ran over to assist him and help pick up the broken and dripping vase as other stage hands went to get a mop and bucket. In the middle of this pandemonium while trying to keep the stage dry for safety reasons and trying to help the poor man back down the stage, I saw this **NCCR** leader turn around without even an apology and quickly walk back up the aisle so that she might return to her duties of **collecting donations** for the **NCCR**. My only relief to this whole painful incident was the fact that there were very few people in the audience to witness this total lack of compassion and cruelty. I could not believe what had just taken place. Now I ask those **few** who read this letter, how can I respect the **NCCR** leadership when I witness first hand the disrespect and insincerity for the JA community they purport to represent or rather bluntly put, what it can provide for their **coffers**. I sincerely hope that this incident was an aberration, but I cannot in good conscience let this go without commenting on the importance of your **public persona** and hope in the future that your leaders will have **better judgement** and **respect** for the community at large. I'm sure Geo Maruyama will not soon forget this incident nor the members of the stage crew who witnessed it.

In conclusion, I hope those who take the time to read this letter will be compelled to search their conscience and ask the tough question. Do we the members of the **NCCR** have the best interests of the JA Community in the deepest recess of our hearts or have we become another stodgy group of elitist out to prove they know what's best for the JA community, disregarding who they trample in the process. If this sounds vaguely familiar to another JA community group which is unable to publicly admit their past mistakes, it is intentional! There is another point of contention which I personally would like to see resolved. In the recent past, Paul Tsuneishi and I met with Richard Katsuda at the local school board and to make a long story short, Richard felt that the **NCCR** should be represented as being a co/host, an **equal partner in the sharing of any credits** for the hosting of this event. In my opinion, although as I have stated above my outlook maybe different, I am willing to accept this equal partnership arrangement as long as the **NCCR** also accepts **EQUAL** responsibility for **one half of the expenses** incurred during the production of this Tribute. Therefore I **challenge** the **NCCR** to put their money where their mouth is. I'm sure Paul will be happy to provide you with a copy of the expenses to date and what your **equal share** comes to. In return the FOM will provide you with an unedited beta video copy **at cost** which will include the transfer process and the expense of purchasing blank beta tape for the transfer of the entire Michi Weglyn Tribute at the JA theatre. **I'm sure that Michi Weglyn would be extremely gratefully upon learning of your generous donation to her endowment fund.**

I would personally like to thank **Paul Tsuneishi** for his amazing gift of energy and his ability to

raise substantial funds for this event. Also **Frank Chin** for his grace at knowing when to bow out, allowing the **NCRR** their ego space and his influence due to **mutual respect** from Michi which allowed FOM to bring her out of seclusion and into the limelight she so rightly deserves.

I hope that the Leadership of the **NCRR** can accept this letter of criticism in the spirit it was intended although I seriously doubt any real changes will occur as a result. What is this spirit I speak of ? Well I'm glad you asked because it is now 3:00AM in the morning on Thursday and I need to get some sleep, so if any of this letter strikes a tender spot in your gut that was my intention. I realize that the **NCRR** feels that the **DAY OF REMEMBRANCE** is their baby so to speak, and just as a child must grow into adulthood one day, so too must this event. This event has the **potential** to be of major historical significance ,certainly more than something thrown together at the last minute by people too busy with their own important life functions like making a living. Please don't let your vision of this event be so small and insignificant. Instead, I hope you can awaken in time to let the **creative energy** in the **JA Community** built this day into something far beyond your limited expectations and you can truly be the **proud parents** of this historic day.

An old film teacher of mine once said to me when commenting on one of my marginal film projects, **It is better to dream too large and fail hundred times than to dream too small and succeed for what have you truly achieved but mediocrity.**

From a **big dreamer** hoping you will join him,



Brian Tatsuno.

