

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Enclosed is the outline of an idea for a weekend celebration of Japanese American history and culture-on November 27, 1999, called JAMES OMURA DAY. Nov. 27th is his birthday.

Dr. Clifford Uyeda writes that the young in the Japanese American Historical Society are sick and tired of the Nisei and WWII. They want to talk about the history they are making. Unfortunately the issues of the Nisei and WWII are the definitive issues of Japanese America, and the reason the Japanese Americans are still talking about them is that they are still unresolved. The Japanese Americans themselves have not settled with Japanese American history.

Even now, most Japanese Americans believe Japanese American history is what the JACL and Roger Daniels says it is.

Before the war, in his magazine, CURRENT LIFE, James Omura took a stand on protecting Nisei civil rights as being more important to Japanese American security and history, than submitting to white racism to prove Nisei loyalty. He was actively sharing his vision of Japanese America in the variety of the dialog and debate between authors of Nisei ideas and Nisei arts.

If there is a James Omura Day it is appropriate to honor all of the Nisei who committed acts of civil disobedience to test the constitutionality of the Evacuation and Internment. He is most associated with the organized draft resistance led by Heart Mountain Fair Play Committee. He was the lone Nisei voice reporting and sympathetically criticizing all the resistance movements in camp.

The two day James Omura Day would have a ceremony and a program of workshops or discussion groups honoring all the Nisei who committed acts of civil disobedience between 1941 and 1945. The second day would honor the finest Nisei poet writing before the war, Toyo Suyemoto, (now 83) and a program of the surviving writers Omura published in Current Life, and Japanese American editors talking about Japanese American history, Japanese American journalism, Japanese American art, and the pre-war Nisei vision of themselves as the generation chosen to lead Japanese America into achievement, recognition, and equality.

Where this would happen, I have no idea. It's just an idea. I'm looking for people interested in talking about this idea, with the idea of making it happen. If it happens that you take this idea and talk it up and make it happen without me, that's okay by me.

Wouldn't it be something though, to see Japanese American making a stand, a declaration of their history by naming a day after a Japanese American hero. After fifty years of being labeled as the enemy and being sent to internment camps, it is time for Japanese America to say they are all proud Jimmie Omura was one of them.

Best,

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