

Sacramento Committee for Redress / Reparations

April 23, 1981

Joan Z. Bernstein, Chairwoman
Commission on Wartime Relocation
and Internment of Civilians
1300 19th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

Dear Ms. Bernstein:

The Sacramento Committee for Redress/Reparations respectfully requests the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians to conduct public hearings in Sacramento, California. The Committee is composed of members from the National Coalition for Redress and Reparations (NCRR), Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) and concerned individuals currently organizing and mobilizing the Japanese American community for the upcoming Commission hearings.

We understand the Commission will soon conduct public hearings to collect information and testimony concerning the facts and circumstances of the evacuation orders and subsequent relocation and incarceration of Japanese Americans in concentration camps. We also understand that California public hearings will definitely be conducted in San Francisco and Los Angeles and possibly be held in two additional rural settings. We feel that to recommend adequate remedies the Commission must hear the concerns of the substantial Japanese American community in the Sacramento valley and surrounding areas.

According to figures from a 1975 special census, conducted by the Sacramento Regional Area Planning Commission, and figures from the 1970 U.S. Census Bureau, a total of 15,468 Japanese Americans and persons of Japanese ancestry resides in the Sacramento valley and surrounding areas. This total figure has probably increased since as of this time the 1980 census final tabulations of Japanese Americans residing in the areas has not been completed.

In addition to the significant number of Japanese Americans in the Sacramento valley and surrounding areas, the events which transpired at the Tule Lake concentration camp must be heard by the Commission. Initially, all of the Nikkei from the Sacramento area, Butte and Placer counties were relocated to Tule Lake. In 1943, Tule Lake became a segregated camp. All those evacuees believed to be loyal to Japan or disloyal to the United States were relocated to Tule Lake.

Internees in all camps were required to answer questions 28 and 29, the loyalty questions. Persons who answered "yes,yes" were classified as loyal. Those persons who refused to answer or answered "no,no" to the questions were branded as disloyal and relocated to Tule Lake. Also included were those persons who applied for repatriation or expatriation to Japan and those persons whose loyalty was believed to be questionable by the camp director.

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Ms. Joan Bernstein
Page Two
April 23, 1981

It was at Tule Lake, the only segregated camp, where the loyalty questions brought the most intense struggles among Japanese Americans, many times to the point of raising barriers between family members and friends.

I remember different answers to the oath caused changes in attitudes towards each other. Even close friends who answered differently never quite got over it. It lasts today still. I don't have contact with friends who went the other way. Some families were broken up also; Brothers, sisters, parents and grandfathers. It was unfair to subject people to such questions.

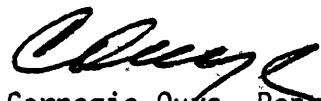
There were other aspects to the loyalty oath. It was done under false pretenses. We were told that if you signed "yes,yes" we could get out and go wherever we wanted. If we signed "no,no" we would be automatically expatriated. It was not true, but a lot of us signed one way or the other because of it.

This climate, combined with the deplorable health, housing and sanitation facilities as well as the abuses from camp officers, created a situation ripe for upheaval. A work stoppage, near riot, and heated confrontations between internees and camp administrators triggered the invasion of Tule Lake by the Army to restore "order." The order restored was one of mass repression and regimentation.

These themes and many other experiences of the Sacramento area Nikkei incarcerated at Tule Lake are among the compelling and vital reasons the Commission must conduct public hearings in Sacramento.

Your consideration of our request and assistance in the matter will be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,



Carnegie Ouye, Representative
Sacramento Chapter-Japanese American Citizens League



Kathy Shiroy, Representative
Sacramento Regional-National Coalition for Redress and Reparations