

Wall St. Journal
Aug. 11, 1978

Guilt Mongering

During its convention in Utah last month, an organization called the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), which claims to speak for the 600,000 Japanese-Americans, endorsed a proposal that the U.S. government provide "redress" to the 120,000 persons of Japanese ancestry who were removed from the West Coast during World War II. JACL is demanding \$25,000 per head or \$3 billion total in damages.

The "relocation" of the Japanese is generally considered one of the most shameful episodes in U.S. history. Immediately after Pearl Harbor, the FBI rounded up those few thousand Japanese nationals who were considered threats to security, as it did similar Germans and Italians. But there was agitation for more drastic action. One of the Pearl Harbor raiders crash-landed on a small island near Oahu and was assisted by the only resident Japanese. Certainly a factor was that in early 1942 the U.S. was suffering humiliating defeats at the hands of the Imperial forces, and there was a psychological need for a counterblow, however far fetched.

Most important was that the Japanese were commonly despised on the Pacific Coast and plenty of opportunists wished to loot their property. Under heavy pressure from politicians such as Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau and California Gov. Earl Warren, President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which resulted in the internment or relocation of 40,000 Japanese nationals and 80,000 U.S. citizens, mostly the children of the aliens.

Today, nearly everyone regards the Japanese-Americans as an exemplary group of citizens. Their crime

and welfare rates are infinitesimal. Their passion for upward mobility through hard work and education has led them to positions of prestige and power. Four of them sit in the Congress, including two from California. They are one of the most prosperous ethnic groups. Racial prejudice against them is almost dead.

Half of the third-generation Japanese-Americans are intermarrying. Tomorrow a relocatee's daughter—she a leading cardiologist and she a Wellesley graduate—will wed the son of the governor of Utah. The Japanese are being absorbed, and JACL is an organization without a future.

Why has the relocation issue come up now? Obviously, JACL has been inspired by the example of other self-appointed ethnic spokesmen snapping at compensation for ancient wrongs under the guise of "human rights." But the U.S. has already paid \$38 million for the property losses of the interned Japanese. If further redress is desirable, an appropriate vehicle would be to consider them like other war-time conscripts and provide them with veterans' benefits. But particularly unseemly is JACL's demand that the bonus for the 30,000 relocatees who have died be delivered to a trust fund "for the welfare and benefit of Japanese Americans" under the control of JACL.

Small wonder that Sen. S. I. Hayakawa labeled this proposal "absurd and ridiculous." But the fact that it is being made says something unflattering, not about the Japanese-Americans, but about a broader society in which collective guilt for past sins has become a commodity to be traded, mongered and exploited.

7004 Murray Avenue S.W., Apt. 401
Seattle, Washington 98136
August 21, 1978

Mr. Warren H. Phillips, Chairman and President
The Wall Street Journal
22 Cortlandt Street
New York, New York 10007

Dear Mr. Phillips:

As a subscriber to your paper for more than a quarter of a century, who has almost invariably enjoyed the editorials and feature articles in your editorial page, I am deeply disturbed by the misstatements of facts, innuendoes and assumptions, and the totally mistaken conclusions contained in the editorial of August 11th entitled "Guilt Mongering".

The economic and political system known as capitalism, to which I assume that you are as sincerely committed as I am, has been steadily retreating before the pressures of its enemies both foreign and domestic for more than four decades. In these defeats, no weapon used by its enemies has been more effective than the charge that capitalism promotes and perpetuates injustice in the societies where it exists. When the newspaper which is widely looked upon as the voice of American capitalism publishes an editorial which in essence places the newspaper in the position of decrying efforts by Japanese Americans to obtain some kind of justice for the wholly unjustified exile and imprisonment suffered at the hands of the American Government during World War II, it is handing the enemies of capitalism more of the same kind of ammunition with which they hope eventually to bury us.

In your editorial you seem to recognize that the forced exile and imprisonment of Japanese Americans on the basis of race was "one of the most shameful episodes in U. S. history". The paragraph ends, however, by stating that "in early 1942 the U. S. was suffering humiliating defeats at the hands of the Imperial forces, and there was a psychological need for a counterblow, however far fetched". Would you regard with equal disdain attempts to obtain monetary redress for an innocent family whose members had been forcibly robbed, evicted from their home, and held captive by a wrought-up mob because there was also a "psychological need" for the mob to administer a "counterblow"?

The unqualified assertion that "the Japanese were commonly despised on the Pacific Coast" is both misleading and an added insult to an already outrageously slandered minority. Schoolteachers, whites with whom we went to school, and our white neighbors generally respected us. We were hated only by those who wished to eliminate us as economic competitors and by many whites who were brain-washed by the vicious anti-Japanese hate propaganda frequently spread by many Pacific Coast newspapers in the forty years prior to World War II.

I am unable to see the connection between your account of the marriage of a daughter of a former inmate of those prison camps to the son of the Governor of Utah and the issue of justice which Japanese Americans are pressing. Are we supposed to feel so overwhelmed by this vicarious "honor" that we should now feel amply compensated for the injustices and losses we suffered during our imprisonment?

We are not as your editorial suggests "snapping at compensation for ancient wrongs". Most of the victims of that mass rape of human rights known euphemistically as "relocation" are still living. Despite some conspicuous examples of "successful" Japanese Americans of which the J.A.C.L. has boasted too much in the past, it is time to recognize that that "relocation" resulted in many more of its victims ending up as suicides, patients in insane asylums, and as poverty-stricken inmates of old-age homes whose support is paid for by welfare money.

The \$38 million already paid by the Government for the tangible property losses of the Japanese Americans is less than 10% of the \$400 million of such losses estimated by the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco in 1942. And even that \$38 million (which amounted to an average of around \$316 per person) was paid during the 1950s in dollars having substantially less purchasing power than in the early 1940s.

Your paper's condescending suggestion that "If further redress is desirable, an appropriate vehicle would be to consider them like war-time conscripts and provide them with veterans' benefits" reflects a strangely shallow sense of justice. Quite a number of the victims of the "relocation" were drafted from those concentration camps and forced to serve in the U. S. Army. Such men are already eligible for veterans' benefits. Most of the other survivors of those camps are now in their fifties and sixties and too old for such benefits to do much good. Moreover, the widows and families of the 30,000 deceased former inmates of those prison camps would remain in effect disinherited.

Your belief that the J.A.C.L. is demanding that the money for the 30,000 deceased former "relocatees" be given to a trust fund "for the welfare and benefit of Japanese Americans" controlled by the J.A.C.L. is incorrect. That was a proposal which at the Salt Lake City convention was not adopted. The proposal which was adopted provided that any money which would have been paid to former evacuees who are now dead would be paid to their next of kin. Only the money which would have gone to former evacuees for which there were no eligible claimants would be put into a fund to be used by Japanese American organizations for cultural, educational, and legal purposes.

Sen. Hayakawa's opposition to the J.A.C.L.'s redress proposal does not arise from misinformation about its provisions. He has from the beginning opposed the entire idea of redress for Japanese Americans by arguing that the exile and imprisonment of an innocent minority for roughly three years was "perfectly understandable" and done for the "safety of the Japanese". Before the American press allows itself to be completely taken in by Hayakawa's overblown reputation for "scholarship", for "courage" against unarmed student demonstrators, and for excessive sleeping and a flip tongue in the Senate, it should seriously take note of this Senator's undisguised contempt for the principle of the equal protection of the "unalienable rights" of all persons supposedly guaranteed by the Constitution. In effect, Hayakawa is telling his fellow Japanese Americans that since he "has got it made" (he was never in the concentration camps and never served in the armed forces), he fears the "rekindling of old resentments" and wants other Japanese Americans to forget about getting redress for a cruel and shameful injustice which he never was forced to suffer. In his smug satisfaction with himself, the efforts of Japanese American victims of American racism to seek justice arouse not sympathy but cold anger.

I shall await your reply with much interest.

Very truly yours,

Shosuke Sasaki.

Shosuke Sasaki

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

DOW JONES & COMPANY, INC.

Publishers

22 CORTLANDT STREET - NEW YORK, N. Y. 10007

ROBERT L. BARTLEY
EDITOR OF THE
EDITORIAL PAGE

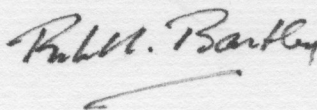
August 30, 1978

Mr. Shosuke Sasaki
7004 Murray Avenue, S.W.
Apartment 401
Seattle, Washington 98136

Dear Mr. Sasaki:

Thank you for your letter on our editorial "Guilt Mongering." We are always interested in the views of those who are concerned enough to write us, and I read your remarks with interest.

Sincerely,



RLB:me