



OBSTRUCTING JUSTICE

~ Shosuke Sasaki ~

Any proposal to provide individual monetary redress payments by the United States Government to Japanese Americans for the violation of their Constitutional rights during World War II usually arouses some opposition among the older white voters who were brain-washed by the intense anti-Japanese propaganda during the first half of this century.

Faced with this situation, the five Japanese American legislators now serving in Congress noticeably withheld even their slightest gesture of support for the "World War II Japanese American Human Rights Violations Redress Act" (H.R. 5977) which was introduced by Congressman Mike Lowry in November 1979. Instead, the five politicians, in a maneuver to avoid confronting the basic Constitutional issues involved and risking the ire of some of the older Caucasian voters, have at last succeeded in getting their "Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians Act" enacted into law.

It is apparent from the large number of names of Caucasian co-sponsors that much effort had gone into lobbying for the latter bill. Equally significant is the fact that at the June 2, 1980 hearing by the House Subcommittee, lobbyist Mike Masaoka was allowed the role of principal speaker and used 25 minutes to make his presentation while all others were limited to 10 minutes each. Not content with limiting his remarks to urging the approval of the bill to establish a study commission, he vigorously attacked the Lowry Redress Bill.

The stark contrast between Masaoka's speech strongly endorsing redress at the 1976 National J.A.C.L. convention in Sacramento and his present position on the Lowry bill probably reflects Masaoka's response to the fears of the five Japanese American legislators over the possible threat to their own political fortunes if the proposal for individual monetary redress ever becomes a reality. To Masaoka, their remaining in office appears to be of overriding importance.

While claiming to represent something called the Nisei Lobby, a considerable portion of Masaoka's speech was devoted to establishing his own credibility by heavily emphasizing his past connection with the Japanese American Citizens League and his and his brothers' service in the United States Army in Europe during World War II. No claim was made, however, that he had ever lived in the concentration camps. It is my understanding that Masaoka never spent any time as a regular inmate in the prison camps which were built as a result of Executive Order 9066. If this is the case, it would help to explain his seeming inability to understand what imprisonment in those camps really meant to the victims.

"The Japanese American Creed", which was included by Masaoka as a part of his written presentation at the House Subcommittee hearing on June 2nd, is said to have been written by him and to contain an important part of his personal political philosophy. Its first sentence states, "I am proud that I am an American citizen of Japanese ancestry for my very background makes me appreciate more fully the wonderful advantages of this Nation." It then continues with such humble and fulsome praise of almost everything about America that many white Americans find reading it embarrassing.

It might be suitable as a declaration made to some king by a newly freed race of former slaves proclaiming their total subservience and loyalty to their ruler for his kindness to so unworthy a group. The United States, however, is supposed to be a democracy where sovereignty rests in all its citizens and all persons are equal before its laws. Masaoka's "Creed", therefore, amounts to an apologetic self-declaration of the imagined racial or ethnic inferiority of Japanese Americans and a promise of complete submission to and utter trust in the white majority.

Masaoka's Nisei Lobby is something which practically no one had heard of before he appeared at the June 2nd hearing. His claim that the J.A.C.L. also opposes the Lowry bill has subsequently twice been denied by Ron Wakabayashi of the J.A.C.L. National Committee for Redress. Masaoka's claim to be speaking for all Japanese Americans is of even more questionable validity.

The right to speak for any group of people can only be given by the freely expressed will of a majority of such group or by their freely elected representatives. No such vote or election of any kind was ever held at any time which gave the right to speak for all Japanese Americans to either Masaoka or the J.A.C.L.!

With the arrest and internment by the F.B.I. of almost all the real leaders of the Japanese American communities in the days following December 7, 1941, practically all Japanese American organizations, except the J.A.C.L., ceased to function. The J.A.C.L. was the only Japanese American organization whose existence the United States Government seemed to approve and was the only one which Government officials chose to deal with as "representing" Japanese Americans.

The J.A.C.L., it should be noted, is primarily a social organization. Many of its chapters meet only once or twice a year. Its paid-up membership of around 24,000 constitutes approximately three percent of the total Japanese American population of the United States. On the basis of these figures alone, any posturing by J.A.C.L. leaders as being representative of all Japanese Americans is obvious nonsense.

Contrary to Masaoka's statements, the Japanese Americans went to the camps quietly because in the face of the threat of the use of military force by the Government, effective resistance was plainly not possible. To describe the behavior of the victims, as Masaoka has done, as "a disciplined display of loyalty and faith in the American way unmatched in history" is a grotesque falsification of the heart-rending truth.

Masaoka seems unaware that the essence of Americanism is resistance to tyranny. It is not weak-kneed submission to tyranny and crawling for the approval of Government officials.

In attacking the Lowry bill's attempt to provide some correlation between the amounts to be paid and the time spent in the camps, the Nisei Lobby has revealed a smug indifference to the sufferings of the Issei (first generation Japanese Americans). Masaoka sounds outraged that the Lowry bill would result in larger payments to "those who deliberately stayed in camp and took advantage of the government's food and clothing allowances" and that the young who left camp early would be "penalized"

by receiving less. Let the Nisei Lobby and its lobbyist be reminded that practically no one went to those camps by choice or stayed in them because he loved the places. Those who were able to leave early because they had the youth, ability, or financial resources to do so are not likely to object to the \$15 a day paid to those unfortunates whose circumstances forced them to remain in those prison camps until the end.

His other objections to the Lowry bill display a similar quality of logic.

Instead of speaking for all Japanese Americans as Masaoka has claimed, he seems really to be speaking for only a very limited group. Quite often such persons are relatively successful in their fields and have reached middle class status. During their careers, they have found that they were aided in some way by a white person who knew of the World War II exile and imprisonment of Japanese Americans and who out of a sense of vicarious guilt over the injustice went out of his way to do his bit to redress the wrong by favoring the Japanese American when an opportunity arose.

If a meaningful redress bill such as Lowry's H.R. 5977 were enacted into law, such vicarious guilt feelings among Caucasians would tend to disappear. To some Japanese Americans the elimination of such guilt feelings could be a far greater loss to their present and future earnings possibilities than could be offset by a mere \$30,000 redress check from the Government. Maybe this is what the Nisei Lobby really has in mind when its lobbyist claims that the Lowry bill "cheapens what happened to us" and that "no amount of money can compensate us for what we endured in those tragic times."

It is significant that the Commission bill which was passed does not even mention the possible consideration of individual compensation and that the word "redress" is totally excluded from its text. Although the bill provides for the creation of a seven-man Commission "to review the facts and circumstances surrounding Executive Order 9066, issued February 19, 1942, and the impact of such Executive Order on American citizens and permanent resident aliens and to recommend appropriate remedies", totally excluded are any suggestions or hints of what "remedies" might be desirable or appropriate.

The only certain outcome of this bill will be to delay any possible passage of a genuine redress bill for at least two more years. It thus serves to deny even token justice to the many rapidly aging victims of the Evacuation Orders who will die during that time.

Masaoka's Nisei Lobby appears to be dogmatically opposed to individual monetary redress and the five Japanese American legislators in Congress have coldly ignored the forthright redress bill introduced by Congressman Lowry. Let us hope that the persons appointed to the Commission will have the wisdom and concern for justice to see through the arguments and motives of those opposed to individual monetary redress and address themselves to making the recommendations which will prove to the world that this nation's Constitution is a living document and that each individual who has been wronged by our Government's violating the provisions of our Constitution is rightfully entitled to just and reasonable redress.



National Council for Japanese American Redress

925 West Diversey Parkway, Chicago, Illinois 60614

August 27, 1980

Dear Friends,

There was a New Yorker cartoon a few years back which depicted one of those prophets who normally preaches doomsday from his singular picket sign. Only this time the sad-faced, sack-clothed man's sign reads, "It's just going to go on and on."

And so it is with redress.

Shosuke Sasaki has written a much-needed rebuttal to the Mike Masaoka-Nisei Lobby attack on redress. It is unfortunate that so many Nikkei think that the opposition to redress is going to come from red-necked racists, when, in fact, the strongest opposition is coming from within the ranks of the Nikkei establishment. In response to our telephone inquiry, the Nisei Lobby has informed us that they are unequivocally opposed to individual monetary payments -- i.e., redress.

(Moreover, we are told that the Lobby collects no dues, holds no meetings, that its membership consists of old guard JA CLers, and that it was formed around 1970.)

Meanwhile, the JA CL, while praising Masaoka's House testimony in their newspaper, The Pacific Citizen, legalistically state that he speaks only for the Nisei Lobby and not for the JA CL. But on August 1st, the JA CL's National Convention passed a new set of guidelines on redress. The guidelines are analyzed in this issue. They contain concepts which seem influenced by Nisei Lobby positions.

We are also publishing a set of principles agreed upon by a newly emerging group, "The National Coalition on Redress/Reparations." NCJAR will join this coalition. But we will maintain our own identity and style. We seem to be the only member of that coalition which is working at change through the political process and which is interracial in structure and which is working with mainline institutions such as the United Methodist Church, American Friends Service Committee, ACLU, and others. A major conference is planned for Los Angeles in November.

We have some good news, too. There is a movement afoot within major Protestant denominations to submit the name of Charles Z. Smith to President Carter as a member of the Study Commission. Mr. Smith has impressive credentials, including a professorship in the Law School of the University of Washington, former judge, an expert on the JA internment, active involvement in the Seattle JA community, former president of the American Baptist Churches U.S.A. His appointment could change the character of the Commission.

And we're selling a couple of hot items. We have copies of the Autumn 1979 issue of Rikka available for \$1.25. This issue of Rikka is devoted to the topic of redress and has many good articles. Much has happened since then, but the articles provide a good historical perspective.

I met George Yamada, Rikka's publisher, a few weeks ago in Toronto. George was a rare Nisei conscientious objector during WWII and spent time in a civilian public service camp. We had a great time, eating an excellent Chinese dinner, walking around, gawking at Toronto's exceptional architecture, riding the subway and bus, and sitting barefooted in the grass outside the public library.

We also have on sale the best book ever on the internment experience, Years of Infamy by Michi Weglyn. It is absolutely must reading if you want to know what redress is all about. It goes for \$5.95. Illinois residents, please include 6% sales tax for both.

Another big reason Years of Infamy is so important is the emergence of books such as East to America, a recent publication written by Robert A. Wilson and Bill Hosokawa. The subtitle is "A History of the Japanese Americans in the United States." It leaves out a much-needed qualifier, "Revisionist". It begins with a foreword by Shigeo Wakamatsu, who states, ". . . the Japanese Americans . . . marched into U.S.-style concentration camps as their sacrifice to hasten victory. . ."

That, of course, is an absurdity and a damned lie. It was also the party line of the JACL in 1942 (echoed today by the Nisei Lobby). (Is he a member?) It may help to demystify the absurdness by pointing out that the book is sponsored by the JACL's Japanese American Research Project.

Parts of the book are quite interesting and informative. And that's the trap. In the middle, the authors cite another author/authority, William Peterson, who states:

"One important reason that Japanese Americans overcame their extraordinary hardships is that they truly believed (as do Jews) that they are innately superior, that others are inferior."

I have a brother who has the gift of truthfulness. I remember his recounting his inner reaction to his rejection for employment because of race as, "Excuse me for being a Jap." It just ain't human for people not to feel inferior under the consistent and pervasive negative images of racial epithets, hatred, injustice, and physical oppression.

Then under the guise of being a history, the authors use several pages in a defense of Bill Hosokawa's use of the subtitle, "The Quiet American" in his book Nisei. By page count, that miniscule flap becomes more important than the Manzanar and Poston riots put together. And, of all things, the defense winds up by quoting one of S. I. Hayakawa's distorted and vicious descriptions of Sansei radicals. The use of a people's history for such a self-serving purpose is just plain gross.

And yet it has on its jacket praise from Daniel K. Inouye, Norman Y. Mineta, Edwin O. Reischauer, and Mike Mansfield. Another reason, I guess, why it goes on and on.

Peace
William Hohri

August 9, 1980

An Analysis of the July 30, 1980 Guidelines of the JACL's National Committee for Redress which were approved by the JACL's National Council on August 1, 1980

These guidelines apparently update the ones written in August, 1978, following the last JACL National Council meeting. These guidelines are to guide the JACL's presentations before the Study Commission. That in itself is ominous. We do live in a democratic society and individuals must be allowed to state their opinions without the intimidation of guidelines. Worse yet, I find the guidelines seriously flawed in their use of the English language and perilously and probably deliberately ambiguous in key areas and damnably unjust and exclusive.

1. Under "Eligibility" the limitation of military action and action flowing from E.O. 9066 exclude those who were interned by the Dept. of Justice, such as my father and the fathers of thousands of families. And it was the Dept. of State that, I believe, caused thousands of Latin Americans of the Japanese ancestry to be interned in U.S. camps. They, too, are excluded.
2. "Beneficiaries of any remedies enacted by Congress" is vague. One can be the beneficiary of anything from a redress payment to a formal apology.
3. The expression "reparations will be based upon the damages and injuries incurred by each individual . . . , which amount shall be . . ." describe damages and injuries as amounts. In other words, those who suffered damages and injuries which were not monetary, such persons as infants and the poor, will receive nothing while those who lost lots of money will receive substantial amounts. This is clearly unequal justice.
4. Moreover, this method will clearly disregard the long years of incarceration spent by the no-no folks in Tule Lake and elsewhere and the draft resisters. The more you study these guidelines, the more you are reminded of Mike Masaoka's House Judiciary speech. ("Are you going to give the same amount to infants as to adults?")
5. "We (JACL) reserve the right . . ." For whom does the JACL speak? To speak for its membership is one thing. To presume to speak for all Japanese Americans is quite another.
6. ". . . it being explicitly understood that individual payments may be made from such fund. . ." No where else in this document is there mention of individual payments. So, is this how individual payments are to be made? Through a JACL-controlled trust fund?
7. I even disagree with the primary purpose. There isn't a helluva lot we can do about future occurrences of injustice. We ought to concentrate on the current case of injustice: the internment of Japanese Americans and the failure by the government to compensate the victims.



JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE

NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR REDRESS

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John Y. Tateishi, Chairman — Ronald J. Ikejiri, Washington Representative

RECOMMENDED GUIDELINES

July 30, 1980

I. Eligibility

Beneficiaries of any remedies enacted by Congress, in connection with the exclusion and subsequent internment of civilians during World War II, 1941-46, shall include not only those who were forcibly expelled by the military and detained, or who were compelled to move because of military orders in force or pending, but shall also include all those who were adversely and directly affected by Executive Order 9066, and governmental actions taken pursuant thereto, and who show proximate consequences resulting therefrom;

II. Monetary Reparations

The overwhelming consensus of those who underwent the unprecedented experiences of deprivation of their liberty and civil rights as a result of the exclusion and internment, is that a significant and substantial reparations must be appropriated by the Congress of the United States. These reparations will be based upon the damages and injuries incurred by each individual at the time of the forced expulsion and incarceration, and subsequent, which amount shall be appropriately adjusted for accruable interest over the intervening years and for the determinable inflation rates since 1941;

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Recommended Guidelines

III. Trust Fund

There shall be established a trust fund, to be administered by a perpetual, non-profit, Japanese American Foundation to be created and established by Act of Congress. We (JACL) reserve the right to judge the appropriateness of such terms and conditions.

Disbursements from such fund shall be in accordance with such rules and regulations to be established by said Foundation, it being explicitly understood that individual payments may be made from such fund, as well as other disbursements, such as social, civil rights, educational, and welfare programs.

IV. Purpose

The primary purpose of such Congressional action shall be to deter the reoccurrence of such arbitrary action by the government in the future which is contrary to the principles upon which this nation is founded.

Uniting in a Common Cause

On July 12, 1980, individuals and organizational representatives from Nikkei communities throughout the nation met in Los Angeles to establish the National Coalition on Redress/Reparations. This meeting was significant in that a broad coalition of community groups was forged in beginning a nation-wide campaign for justice.

The National Coalition on Redress/Reparations has two broad aims: 1) to seek restitution for losses and injuries suffered by Nikkei and others who were unjustly evacuated and incarcerated during World War II, and 2) to seek preventive steps to insure that similar racist acts and violations of constitutional rights will not occur again.

The following five points have been established as the basis for organizations and individuals joining the efforts of the coalition:

1. Redress/Reparations means monetary compensation to individuals incarcerated or their heirs.

A minimum of \$15,000 per person is sought for all individuals who were forced to relocate, voluntarily or involuntarily, due to the actions of the U.S. government during World War II. The exact amount of funds to be sought will be determined on the basis of additional investigation. This demand for monetary compensation includes persons taken from Central and South American countries, Hawaii, Alaskan Aleuts, and others forcibly removed from their homes.

2. Redress/Reparations means restitution to the Japanese American community--- the exact form to be determined by the needs of each respective community.

We seek the immediate establishment of a fund that can speed payment to the Issei. We also

seek a fund that will address the losses suffered by the Japanese American community as a result of the destruction and dispersal of "Nihonmachi" created by the evacuation.

3. Redress/Reparations means the overturning of the legal basis that has justified the evacuation and the camps.

We seek to test the legality of the camps. We will be investigating possible legal remedies such as class action suits or forms of remedial legislation.

4. Redress/Reparations means supporting others who have or are suffering from unjust actions taken by the U.S. government.

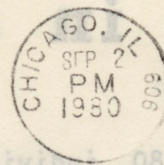
We seek to work with others to insure that they will understand and support our efforts and that we will also support their efforts to obtain justice for wrongful acts taken by the government against a people.

5. Redress/Reparations means that we seek the education of the American public so that future generations may learn from the mistakes of the past and not knowingly allow them to happen again.

It is during times of crisis that extra steps must be taken to guarantee the democratic rights of all individuals. We seek to incorporate the lessons of the camps into the American educational process to insure that similar acts against an identifiable group can be prevented.

The National Coalition on Redress/Reparations will be working during the coming months to engage in educational outreach, mobilize public support, establish a national communication network, and seek and influence appropriate legislation. A national conference on Redress/Reparations is planned for this fall and will be used to finalize our perspectives and launch a nation-wide campaign.

NATIONAL COUNCIL for
JAPANESE AMERICAN REDRESS
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Einstein
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MS SASHA

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Support Mike Lowry for Congress!

Support the congressman who supports you — Mike Lowry.

Mike Lowry is the congressman who has demonstrated his courage

and commitment to simple justice by introducing his redress bill.

**He's running in a tough campaign. He helped us. We
should help him.**

Send your check to:

**Citizens for Mike Lowry
2450 - 34th Avenue South
Seattle, WA 98144**