

» CJA UPDATE «

Volume 1, #1 Concerned Japanese Americans, 545 W. 126th St., #3B, New York, NY 10027

NY COMMUNITY MEETING ON COMMISSION HEARINGS

"Money doesn't tarnish justice; injustice sullies justice."

From testimony by Yuri Kochiyama
Presented at Washington D.C. hearing
July 16, 1981

An excerpt from a moving testimony by Yuri Kochiyama recounting the effects of relocation of Japanese Americans during World War II on herself and her family opened a New York community meeting. It was held at the Japanese American United Church on Sunday, July 26, 1981 where approximately 65 people were in attendance to hear a report on the July 14 and 16 hearings held by the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians in Washington D.C. A filming crew from the New York Japanese TV station was on hand to record the meeting, which was later aired on Channel 47 on Saturday, August 1.

Members of Concerned Japanese Americans--Sasha Hohri, Janice Sakamoto and Lori Kitazono--gave various reports on the different individuals and groups that testified before the Commission. The panelists reported that throughout the 2-day hearings, strong and unified sentiment for monetary reparations was expressed by Japanese American individuals and national groups. The report concluded with a recording by Lillian Baker, representing a group opposed to redress/reparations called "Americans for Historical Accuracy". They denied there was any wrong doing on the part of the U.S. government.

The panelists then opened the floor for questions and comments. An active discussion centered around seeing the internment of Japanese Americans solely as a civil rights or constitutional issue. Concerned Japanese Americans believes that the incarceration encompassed all of these points, but that it should be viewed in the larger historical

picture of the prevailing racism and oppression existing towards Japanese Americans. Another question was raised concerning the funding for reparations, (should the commission recommend this course) and where the money would come from. Contrary to the belief that the funds would have to come out of "special taxation" and the "taxpayer's pocket", CJA feels that there is more than enough money in the Federal budget, and that it would only be a matter of allocation. For example, the present Federal budget contains an unprecedented amount for military spending.

UPDATE ON THE COMMISSION

Members of Concerned Japanese Americans who met with Ms. Joan Bernstein, Chairperson of the Commission found her to be genuinely supportive of the idea of an informal New York hearing.

Immediately after the Washington D.C. hearings, and just prior to the hearings in Los Angeles, Cheryl Yamamoto, Ms. Bernstein's administrative secretary resigned her post. This is indeed unfortunate, for CJA members who personally dealt with her found her open and responsive to many ideas they presented.

As of this bulletin, the Commission staff still remains undecided about conducting a hearing in New York. It is apparent that if we want such a hearing, we must mobilize the New York Japanese American Community. The Commission must fulfill its responsibility of including the unique experiences of the NY Issei, Nisei and Nikkei in their investigation.

To accomplish this goal, CJA is now in the process of forming a coalition of established NY Japanese American groups whose function would be to organize and prepare for a NY hearing. CJA proposes that it would be the coalition's responsibility to conduct a NY

hearing regardless of the Commission's decision to hold one. We are therefore inviting all interested Japanese American groups and individuals to work with us. If the Commission refuses our request for a concrete hearing date, our alternative plan is to video-tape the New York hearing and submit it to the Commission as testimony.

You can help us in our efforts by:

1. completing the enclosed Testifier's Form and returning it to CJA
2. writing letters to the Commission asking:
 - a. for a written commitment to hold an informal hearing in New York
 - b. that given the scope of their task, they extend the December 1981 deadline for their submission of recommendations to Congress

Send all correspondence to:

Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians
726 Jackson Place NW, Room 2020
New Executive Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20506

BUILD A STRONG MOVEMENT
FOR REDRESS/REPARATIONS!

Join the community coalition that will organize a New York hearing!

The first meeting will be:

Saturday, August 22, 1981

1:00 PM

Japanese American
United Church
255 7th Avenue
(bet. 24th & 25th Sts.)
New York, NY 10001

(212) 242-9444