

NARR BANNER



NARR, 244 S. San Pedro, Rm. 406, Los Angeles, CA. 90012
or 1858 Sutter St., San Francisco, CA. 94115

Vol. 1, No. 2

MAY 1981

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Here it is! Our second edition of THE BANNER! Through this newsletter (which we hope to publish every month or so), we look forward to helping keep Japanese Americans throughout the country informed of NARR activities and opinions as well as some of the goings on within the redress/reparations movement as a whole.

We encourage all of our readers to contribute by reading and passing along THE BANNER to friends and relatives and by sending in your thoughts and suggestions.

Most important, we hope that THE BANNER can help stimulate Nikkei to take those first steps to get involved -- because it's going to take all of us, in a unified effort to win redress/reparations and justice!

EDITOR - NAOMI KUBOTA

NARR SPOKESPERSON, BERT NAKANO, SPEAKS OUT ON COMMISSION HEARINGS

The word is that the Commission hearings may begin sometime in late June, with the first to be held in Washington, D. C. before Congress adjourns. The purpose of the series of hearings is to "determine whether or not a wrong was committed" (meaning the camps) and to make recommendations based on these investigations.

Like many former inmates of the concentration camps during the war, I don't feel that we Japanese Americans have to "prove" anything. To me, the camps were a racist attack on our whole people, more extreme perhaps, but not unlike other experiences our issei parents went through. The government was at fault, not Nikkei.

But as a concerned JA, I feel that it is our responsibility to fully participate at the hearings. Why? To impress upon the government, via the Commission, our demands and to reiterate the devastating effects the camps had on every generation of Japanese Americans. Furthermore, organizing for the hearings will help our cause to grow, involving new people, and educating the community and broader public about what happened. This is important, since our fight will no doubt continue beyond the Commission process.

But what should we advocate at the hearings? I, for one, don't think we should advocate a mild, apologetic, or "need to convince the Commission" approach. Great personal losses were suffered as a result of the camps. Our communities, and with them, much of our culture, language and identity was dismantled. Of course we know that no amount of money can repay us for losses suffered. But at the same time, we have

every right to fight for compensation and damages and to make these demands known to the Commission. Thus, NARR's principles specifically emphasizes direct monetary payments (we feel at least \$25,000 per individual) and a Japanese Community Fund. Our stand should be firm, and our voices, many. This will certainly help "educate" the Commission and Congress by sending a message that Japanese people demand redress/reparations.

This brings us to this present period of preparation for the hearings. The NARR has been very busy working with individuals and community and student groups who wish to testify, in addition to preparing its own testimony. Again, we are keeping up the house meetings, community programs, street petitioning and leafletting, speaking engagements and liaison work with other groups. This is all part of our efforts to directly involve and organize the grassroots people themselves in this crucial issue.

At the hearings we can expect some racists to come out against r/r with the justification that "all Japs were the enemy". We may also see some of our "community leaders" also oppose reparations because they feel that the camps were good for us because it helped us to "assimilate", or that for those of us who have "made it", monetary compensation smacks of greediness. The hearings are one chance we have to dispel these myths by bringing out the truth about what happened during WWII. And equally, if not more important, we should claim what is rightfully ours - monetary compensation, not only because we deserve it, but because such a "fine" paid out by the government will surely make it think twice about doing such a thing again to any group. (cont. pg. 2)

During the hearings, we will hold a variety of educational rallies and activities to enhance the importance of this historical issue, make known the community's sentiments, and support the testifiers inside.

Winning monetary compensation in this present conservative period will certainly be difficult. But we will show that we can stand united behind our demands. Our resolve and determination in the fight for justice and reparations will prevail throughout the hearings and beyond. A packed attendance at the hearings, inside and out, will be the first step!

RACISM REARS ITS UGLY FACE... IS IT 1942 AGAIN?

As we and others from the Japanese communities have spoken out about our history and the camps, we have been facing an opposition. I am talking about a deep racism toward Nikkei stemming from "anti-Jap" sentiments from World War II and Pearl Harbor. It is important that we examine and confront these anti-Japanese stands, as we will be encountering this more and more in our fight for redress/reparations. In doing so, we will be educating others of this racist logic and distortion of history.

During a San Diego television presentation on redress/reparations, several comments were received by the switchboard, for example, "How are they going to give me restitution? My son was killed in Pearl Harbor!" "Those Japs are lying. I was a courier for the FBI and I saw how they lived. In alot of cases they were living better than Americans."

These comments speak for themselves, but there are a couple of points that are consistently raised. First their hysteria--they fail to make a distinction between Nikkei in this country and lump us in with the "international Japanese imperial army" who killed their sons or husbands. Nikkei have been in this country from the mid-1800's and have contributed substantially to the building of the West Coast economy!

The second point is that these people make sure Nikkei don't fall into the category of being "American". They use words like, "they were living better than Americans". They are making us seem like aliens and that we should have no rights in this country.

This racism was shown again during a San Francisco talk show when three Nisei veterans from the U.S. 442nd Regimental Combat Team were being interviewed. It was reported that over one-third of the calls received were anti-Nisei. I wonder how can these ignorant people fail to recognize that Nikkei fought courageously against facism in the U.S. Army. But no, Nikkei are not part of "America" and are blamed for "bombing Pearl Harbor".

Another comment from the Dear Abby newspaper column referred to a letter in which Abby had mentioned the camps we were held in: "I was shocked and disappointed that you would use the term, "concentration camps" since the connotation of the term is "death camp"...

--Lillian Baker

And perhaps a more extreme example reminiscent of WWII occurred this past Winter in Chicago. A Nikkei professor's office at the University of Chicago was burned and swastikas and "Jap go home" were written on the wall!

Overall, we must continue to expect these types of racist attitudes and ideas. We must be prepared to confront them, especially as the U.S. government is fanning up anti-Japanese import sentiments. Through the Redress/Reparations movement, conducting broad outreach about the camps and working to insure this never happens again, we are educating the larger public who perhaps know little or nothing of the camps and re-educating those who are misinformed.

Furthermore, we should understand that these arguments are the same ones that the U.S. government used to lock us up to begin with. The position of the government has not changed to this day. It is not an accident that the public is misinformed as to the real history of JAs, since it has rarely been integrated into the educational system. We should be prepared to defend our proud history and the truth about what happened to our people.

CONCERNED JAPANESE-AMERICANS (CJA) JOINS NCRR

Over one hundred people attended a successful CJA sponsored redress/reparations event on April 12, in New York City. The highlights of the program included music, poetry, and a delicious potluck dinner. Keynote speaker was NCRR spokesperson, Bert Nakano, who spoke on NCRR's perspectives, activities and a Commission update, while adding some of his own personal camps experiences. Nakano's statement on behalf of the NCRR emphasized the importance of Japanese Americans rallying behind this issue. During a lively Q and A period, a broad range of questions concerning JAs and the community's role in the issue ensued. Upon returning to Los Angeles, Nakano announced CJA's formal membership into the NCRR, whereupon everyone responded with cheers. Bert, in acknowledging his appreciation to CJA for making this meeting possible, shared that meeting and talking with NY folks during the entire weekend was not only exciting and inspiring, but a valuable learning experience altogether.

TESTIFY!!!!

The NCRR is encouraging individuals and organizations to present testimony (written, oral or taped) to the Commission. We are providing assistance to anyone needing help in writing their biographies and testimonies and will submit them to the Commission.

The Commission staff will screen the requests for oral testimony and will choose those that will be given slots at the hearings. They will be looking for a diverse range of testimony, covering various aspects of the issue. However, even if yours is not chosen for an oral presentation, all written testimonies are acceptable and will become part of the official record. It is important to include the demand for redress/reparations

On February 25, 1981, the nine Commissioners met together for their first official meeting. Their final report of findings and recommendations is due 15 months from this date. Ms. Joan Z. Bernstein, lawyer and former chief counsel of the Department of Health and Human Services, is the Chair person with Congressman Daniel Lungren from Long Beach as Vice-Chair. (See box for complete list of Commissioners and addresses)

The NCRR staff sent out packets to all the Commissioners on March 23rd which included our concerns around the hearings such as the need for translations; additional hearing sites (particularly in California); scheduling of hearings to accommodate working people; town meeting format and others; additional funds for logistical and other needs of individual testifiers; and tapes and video presentations in addition to individual testimonies. We also sent our recommendations for the staff positions; copies of the San Jose, Sacramento, and San Diego petitions for hearing sites; and copies of NCRR press releases, newscoverage and literature. Congressman Lungren, Mr. Brooke, Dr. Flemming and Ambass. Goldberg have replied back thanking us for the information and assuring that they would bring up our concerns at the next Commission meeting.

The Commission has hired an Executive Administrator, Lois Wilzewske, and is in the process of hiring the staff director. The Director will make recommendations to the Commission on staff hiring. It appears the staff will be small and will contract research out to other groups. The Commission also has an office now: The Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians Suite 2020, New Executive Bldg. 726 Jackson Place N.W. Washington, D.C. 20506 (202)395-5615

On April 4th, Ms. Bernstein spoke in Los Angeles at a JAFL tri-district conference. The NCRR had an opportunity to meet with her personally the following day. In regard to the hearings, she said they will hold as many as time and money allows, but they will have a better idea when allocation of money is decided upon. Basically she seemed open to all of the NCRR's suggestions and concerns, however, the actual functioning of the Commission and the hearings is yet to be seen. For example, we've heard there might be only three hearing sites on the West Coast!

In terms of the timetable for the hearings, the Commission would like to have a full hearing in Washington, D.C. before Congress adjourns so that they may have officials participating. This would put it at around mid-June with the other hearings following thereafter. Hearings outside of Washington would not have a full forum of Commissioners as it would be logistically unrealistic, according to Ms. Bernstein.

The Commission will generally operate in three phases: 1) research phase, 2) hearings phase, and 3) report and recommendations (final phase). The NCRR staff will be following up on the Commissioners to keep abreast on new developments.

Joan Z. Bernstein: (202) 828-1200	1300 19th Street, NW Washington, D.C. 20036 (Chair)
Rep. Daniel Lungren: (202) 225-2415	328 Cannon Office Building Washington, D.C. 20515 (Vice-Chair)
Edward W. Brooke: (202) 887-1400	c/o O'Connor and Hannan 1919 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Washington, D.C. 20006
Father Robert F. Drinan: (202) 624-8000	University of Georgetown Law Center 600 New Jersey Avenue, NW Washington, D.C.
Dr. Arthur S. Flemming: (202) 254-7378	Chairman, U.S. Comm. on Civil Rights 1120 Vermont Avenue, NW Washington, D.C. 20125
Ambass. Arthur J. Goldberg: (202) 293-2868	2401 New Mexico Ave., Suite #1104, NW Washington, D.C. 20007
Hugh B. Mitchell: (206) 575-6800	c/o Mitchell Moving & Storage P.O. Box 88728 Seattle, WA 98188
Ismael Grommof: (907) 581-1222	P.O. Box 40 Unalaska, Alaska 99685
Judge William Marutani: (215) 686-2963	307 One East Pennsylvania Square Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19107

S.F.'S J.C.P.A. SPEAKS OUT ON COMMUNITY FUND

The Japanese Community Progressive Alliance (JCPA) wishes to share with BANNER readers some thoughts regarding the NCRR's 2nd Principle of Unity, "Redress/Reparations means restitution to the Japanese Community." As an 8-year old organization in San Francisco's Nihonmachi, and a founding member of the NCRR, we feel that this is a vital aspect to the entire campaign to win redress and reparations.

We strongly support the NCRR's Principles, especially that which calls for the establishment of a Community Fund, because we believe we must maintain and build our Japanese community for future generations.

Since its establishment in 1907, the San Francisco Japanese community has undergone tremendous change, yet it has always remained a center for Japanese people in the San Francisco/Bay Area and for JAs throughout Northern California. In the 1920's and 1930's it reached its peak of growth and development. But this process was abruptly halted when the camps happened. Overnight, this vital center of community life became a hollow shell. The community's cohesion and support system which it offered to JAs, and its source of continuity of our culture and traditions -- all these things were taken away from Japanese along with their property, homes and businesses.

Within a few years upon returning to the community, Japanese people again were told to leave by the government. Redevelopment and "urban renewal" for the past 25 years has continued to chip away and disperse our community.

But despite the fact that our community has become smaller, it is still ours. Japanese still work and live here. Many of our children attend Japanese school and day care. Nihonmachi is the only place where Japanese can receive services that meet our needs, e. g. hot meals for issei (serving real Japanese food!). We can come

...of activities, or just to meet old friends.

Today, our community continues to face threats. One threat is the continuing re-development whose final phases may wipe out the last few units of low-rent housing, small businesses and community space. Another threat comes from the general "economic crisis" and especially, President Reagan's budget cuts.

The impact of these cuts has been felt throughout the entire community. CETA (Comprehensive Employment Training Act) positions have already been eliminated from several community organizations. For example, Japantown Art & Media Workshop lost one art and culture worker, and will no doubt lose funds from the National Endowment of the Arts; the United Japanese Community Services lost three positions and with it, their Employment Program. Kimochi Kai (issei services) got cut six positions which affects their nutrition and transportation programs and Nihonmachi Little Friends childcare center lost two teaching positions.

We in JCPA feel our community is too precious to just let disappear! Isn't it time to struggle together to reverse 40 years of dispersal, evictions, destruction, and now cutbacks? A Community Fund out of the R/R campaign - established and administered by a wide cross-section of the community - we don't only need it, we deserve it! This fund could be used for housing for issei and families. Or to expand services like the ones mentioned above. Another idea might be for educational projects about the camps and Japanese American history. There is no lack of ideas for what the fund could be used for!

Our communities are the mirror of our people's strength and accomplishments in this country. From them, we derive our sense of heritage and our identity. We gain pride from our forefathers' struggles and our very rich culture. Finally, our communities are our source of strength because they draw Japanese together for common goals and to assert our rights.

We need to raise a strong unified voice for redress and reparations! We must ensure that our community will not just barely exist, but will grow and prosper for many generations to come!

Recently, the NCRR had the good opportunity to strengthen friendship and ties with the r/r movement in the Pacific Northwest region.

Dr. Gordon Hirabayashi, a well-known plaintiff in the constitutional test case on curfew-WWII and Co-chair of the Seattle Community Committee on Redress/Reparations, recently made a brief visit to Los Angeles to attend the Whittier College R/R Conference.

Gordon took time from his busy schedule to meet with some of us from the NCRR (LA Regional) and the Little Tokyo People's Rights Organization at an informal dinner meeting.

In his usual affable manner, Gordon shared with us the many activities of the Seattle group, explaining that the committee's primary objective is to prepare the community for the upcoming hearings. They have held a series of workshops on specific topics, such as the media, personal testimonies, oral presentations and lastly, on the subject of remedies. The Committee's activities also include surveys and solicitation of testifiers, communication with Commissioners Hugh Mitchell and Arthur Fleming and the further expanding of their network in the Washington/Oregon area.

NCRR spokesperson, Bert Nakano, expressed NCRR's desire to visit and meet with the Seattle group in the near future.

CAMPAIGN FOR HEARING SITES

We've heard there might be only three hearing sites on the West Coast! If your area would like to be chosen for a hearing site, we encourage you to begin a campaign now. Start a petition drive, write letters to the Commissioners, phone or write your Congress representatives, etc. Now is the time to act!

NCRR REGIONALS

Los Angeles

Bert (213) 532-9527/ Merrilyn 267-0299

San Diego

Jan (714) 280-5263

Sacramento

Kathy (916) 323-2302

San Francisco

Cathy or Don (415) 921-8841

San Jose

Julie (408) 287-9710

New York

Sasha (212) 732-3467

MEMBERSHIP/DONATION FORM

YES, I WOULD LIKE TO JOIN THE NCRR _____
YES, I WOULD LIKE TO MAKE A DONATION _____ AMOUNT _____

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

(INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP IS \$5.00, ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBERSHIP IS \$25.00)