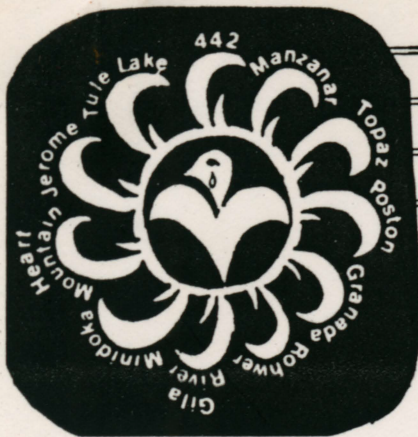


EAST COAST JAPANESE AMERICANS FOR REDRESS



November 9, 1981

Mr. Angus McBeth
Staff Director, Special Counsel
Commission on Wartime Relocation
and Internment of Civilians
726 Jackson Place, NW
Suite 2020
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. McBeth:

We were grateful for the opportunity to meet with two of your staff people last week. We appreciate their time and the effort involved in meeting with us.

We would like to take this opportunity to formally convey to you and all of your staff concerned, our understanding of the thrust of the Commission's wishes regarding the New York hearing; and the priorities and program proposal of East Coast Japanese Americans for Redress

The priorities and program proposal attached have been fully discussed within the coordinating committee. It reflects what we want to see in the program and incorporates broad input from the community at large. The process of developing this agenda has been a difficult one with community organizations working on volunteer time supporting and helping individuals sharpen and develop their testimony. We hope the Commission and staff will be sensitive to this effort.

Lastly, we would like to stress the importance of the ECJAR input into the agenda decisions of the staff, as representing the interests of the community. The purpose of these hearings is to address the question of injustice to Japanese people. It would seem appropriate that our input would be vital and necessary. Please afford the suggested program your serious attention and consideration. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Sasha Hohri

Sasha Hohri
Co-Chair with Michi Kobi

Sum Up of Meeting

We understand from our meeting with Toro Hirose and Kitty Shores on October 30 that the nature of the hearing in New York is to be different from the hearings that have been held so far. We understand the basic difference is that the Commissioners wish to have more time for dialogue and exchange with the testifiers and have therefore limited the number of testifiers to 25 to facilitate this process. We also understand that the Commission and staff request us to prioritize our requests to focus on the unique aspects of Japanese American experience on the East Coast. Further, we understand that the staff will work jointly with the ECJAR in ironing out a mutually agreed upon agenda. Hence we are submitting this proposal which we think encompasses the requests of the Commission and staff.

NEW YORK HEARING PROPOSAL

I. Scope

The Commission is formally charged with the responsibility of conducting a comprehensive study of the events and impact of the issuance of Executive Order 9066; and the task of recommending appropriate remedies. Alongside the Japanese American experience which is in itself unique, there are also individuals and organizations whose national headquarters are within the New York City Area that have expressed their interest in and support for the cause of redress for Japanese Americans. We feel their testimony falls within the responsibility of the Commission and further, that their testimony cannot be obtained elsewhere. We therefore propose that the NY hearing encompass both the experience of the East Coast Nikkei community, and the testimony of concerned non-Nikkei from the greater New York metropolitan area.

II. Format

Most of the testimonies should be groups and delivered by category. Each panel would have individual statements, except the Sansei. We suggest that each person give their testimony and then the panel be questioned as a whole to alleviate the nervousness and anxiety many Nikkei testifiers are feeling about being questioned. For example, in the East Coast Experience During World War II panel, Mr. Kochiyama and Ms. Ports would first give their testimony, then have the Commissioners ask them questions. We urge the Commission and Staff to be sensitive to this problem in setting the agenda.

Some of the testimonies (Mitsu Kamada, Masato Takashige, etc.) are so unique they cannot really be grouped in a panel; therefore we are suggesting that they be put on the agenda individually.

A diverse group of Sansei are working on a joint statement. One statement would be read by one person of a panel of 5, who would then help in answering questions.

The last non-Nikkei panel of "Other Asian" would be short support statements from diverse groups in other Asian communities. Because JA's are such a small minority on the East Coast, we value and seek out support from Asians and other nationalities. We are still in the process of seeking out statements and would appreciate flexibility by the staff regarding the allowance of time in the agenda for this. (We see 5-10 (max) organizations presenting 2-3 minute statements. Time: 15-30 minutes)

Lastly, Mine Okubo, a well-known artist and painter has consented to have some of her camp work shown at the hearing. To show her work will be a question of logistics - i.e. how to hang her work and insurance. Please give us your feedback as soon as possible on this idea.

III. Priority Areas for Agenda

A. Nikkei

Figures and statistics given in testimony at the California hearings illustrated the dramatic weakening and shrinking of the Japanese communities there after the war. Many Japanese Americans relocated east from California, leaving their communities, friends and family homes. Forced out of their communities by virulent anti-Japanese racism and discrimination, Japanese Americans left behind the existing slender threads of mutual support, cultural and social life that ethnic communities generate. Further, it was clear through the camp leave clearance procedure, that former internees, upon leaving camp, were to disassociate themselves from other Japanese. To be of Japanese ancestry became a cause for shame and guilt. These conditions forced assimilation and loss of identity upon Japanese Americans.

The experience of and reasons why Japanese Americans relocated east; and the impact of their isolation once settled here are prime factors in shaping the characteristics of East Coast Nikkei:

1. Psychological Emotional Impact:

Due to the camp experience, combined with the discrimination and forced dispersal, the resulting isolation has had psychological and emotional impact on many people.

Testifiers:

Sumi Koide
Yuriko Porter
Mae Kanazawa

2. Relocation Experience:

Many JA's relocated east on the outbreak of the war or after camp, forced to leave their communities by the heated racist atmosphere in California. On coming to the East Coast, resettlement problems were aggravated by hostility towards Japanese and isolation.

Testifiers:

Min Matsuda
Motoko Spiegel
Masato Takashige (testimony enclosed)
Charles Nagao (Seabrook)

3. East Coast Experience During World War II:

Japanese and Japanese Americans on the East Coast underwent hardships and discrimination that few people are aware of. Some community leaders were incarcerated in Ellis Island. Others were subject to harassment.

Testifiers:

William Kochiyama
Suki Ports (summary enclosed)
George Fujimoto (summary enclosed)

4. Issei

We understand that this is a priority area for the Commission. It is also one of ours.

Testifiers:

Karl Akiya (Kibei)

Kinnosuke Hashimoto (summary enclosed)

Tsuyako Shimizu

Henry Sugimoto (summary enclosed)

George Shimamoto (Chairman of the Board of the New York Buddhist Church and President of the Japanese American Association)

5. Ellis Island

Two Issei have consented to speak on their direct experience being imprisoned in Ellis Island.

Testifiers:

Isaku Kida (Editor Japanese side NY Nichibei)

Dr. Kinichi Iwamoto (summary attached)

6. Sansei

Sansei, who were not imprisoned, as their parents and grandparents were have been profoundly affected by the camps. The forced dispersal and lack of community here have intensified the cultural deprivation and lack of identity problems of the Sansei.

Panel (summary enclosed):

Eric Koide,

Greg Morozumi

Joy Kanazawa

Toni Morozumi

Pat or Mike Nakai

7. Individuals

All of the individuals listed below have strong testimony which does not fall into the categories above:

Mitsu Kamada

Eddie Shimano

Setsuko Nishi

Masato Takashige

Mr. Tsufura

8. Japanese American Organizations

We would like to leave the option open for different community organizations to testify about the conditions of Japanese Americans on the east coast and their suggestions for r/r.

Organizations (so far)

NY Japanese American Citizens League

Concerned Japanese Americans

III. B. NON - Nikkei

In order to facilitate the overall purpose of the Commission viz seeking appropriate remedies, and conducting as broad a study as possible, we suggest the following categories of "expert" testimony for your consideration. (These categories have been focused down based on their importance and willingness of individuals to testify.)

1. Resettlement/Relocation

We have found sympathy and support from people who helped former internees relocate and think their testimony can add another important dimension to understand the impact of the camps.

Testifiers:

Ruth Gage Colby
Rev. Diana Arakawa
Haru Akamatsu
Emlen Woodruff
Muriel Schapp

2. Religious/Moral

In our initial feelers to various national leadership figures and organizations in this area, religious leaders have been very responsive. The role of organized religion at that time and the present day view of Church leadership on the religious and moral questions of the evacuation are important areas of concern.

Testifiers:

Rev. John Coventry Smith
Bishop C. Dale White
Rev. Arthur Kamitsuka

3. Civil Rights/Legal/Human Rights

There are individuals in this area who are available and willing to testify who have long histories or expertise in dealing with civil and human rights issues, and who have studied the Constitutional and legal questions involved in the evacuation. The civil and human rights issues, as well as legal and Constitutional issues are important to address.

Testifiers:

Ramsey Clark
Prof. Lawrence Sayger
Prof. Heywood Burns

4. Other Ethnic Support

We think it is important to gather support from other ethnic minorities who can sympathize and support our cause, having undergone discrimination in the past.

Testifiers:

Seymour Samet, American Jewish Committee
Justin Finger, Anti-Defamation League

5. Other Asian

This was discussed under section II Format.