



NATIONAL COALITION FOR REDRESS/REPARATIONS
244 S. San Pedro #406, Los Angeles, CA 90012

Testimony of June Kizu for
National Coalition for Redress/Reparations
Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians
August 5, 1991

Good afternoon Commissioners and welcome to Los Angeles.

I am June Kizu, representing the Southern California Chapter of the National Coalition for Redress and Reparations (NCRR).

We are a grassroots organization which began here in Los Angeles in July, 1980 when several community groups joined together to form the Coalition. We now have organizations and individual members from New England States to the South to Alaska and Hawaii. We have played a major role in relating the attitudes and views of the community on this issue.

We have based our principles upon the strong feelings of the community and on the wealth of literature and documents which are already available.

We have heard vivid and moving testimonies describing the violation of Constitutional rights, abuses of governmental power and machinery, racism, economic motives, and media manipulation.

The question we put to this Commission is: how does the government intend to measure the effect and scope of the evacuation and how will it enact proper legislation to remedy the injustice?

The measurement and scope of the damages must be determined largely by this Commission. Please keep in mind that real property loss estimates have been grossly underestimated; that psychological,



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emotional and sociological damages; three years of peoples lives; and the violations of Constitutional rights are tremendous losses.

We demand that the United States government return the three years out of our lives.

We demand that the United States government mend our family and cultural ties.

We demand that the United States government return our Issei parents who died in camp.

We demand that the United States government restore our pride and dignity for our years of living under this stigma.

But we know these things are not fully realizable.

The National Coalition for Redress and Reparations firmly believes that this Commission should place the priority on correcting the injustice and submit the following concrete solutions to Congress.

FIRST, we ask the continuing education of the public about the truth of this event so that American people of today and in the future may learn from and not repeat past mistakes.

SECOND, we ask the Commission to recommend whatever is necessary and appropriate to overturn the legal basis for the evacuation order so that no branch of government can arbitrarily strip away the freedom and civil liberties of any group of people.



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THIRD, we insist that the government include those of other races and nationalities who suffered similar unjust actions of the government including the Aleutian/Pribiloff Islanders and Peruvians.

FOURTH, we ask for a community fund to help compensate for the sociological damages done by the evacuation.

AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, we strongly call for direct monetary compensation to each victim of the concentration camps, or to their heirs who were affected by Executive Order 9066. \$25,000 for each individual should be the minimum, I repeat the minimum starting point for the figure of compensation, taking into consideration the total effect and scope of the damages upon the victims, community and succeeding generations.

There has been some discussion of reparation in the form of returning some of the land that was taken from the Japanese during WWII - land that was cultivated and brought to fertility by loving and laboring Japanese hands. This is an issue that is undergoing further investigation and discussion.

The Rafu Shimpo Newspaper, with a readership of 30,000, conducted a survey on Japanese American attitudes on Redress and Reparations. The results which were published on July 22, 1981 confirmed that the testimonies up to now have been affirming and reaffirming. Of the 3,749 people who responded:

95% (3,700) supported redress
89,5% called for direct individual monetary payment



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The most often heard reason for not offering monetary compensation is that it is unrealistic considering the political nature of our present budget-minded Congress. We maintain that this is not a political budget item. We believe the government has the money to grant Japanese Americans just compensation. It is a matter of priorities, and this is of the highest priority. A large chunk of the federal budget is spent on the military while drastic cuts in health, education, and welfare affect millions of Americans.

Another argument against monetary payment is "Yes, a wrong was done, but the Japanese have all made it anyway." We do not think the present economic status of Japanese Americans has any relevance to whether or not we should be compensated for what was already worked for by the Issei, and was lost. Secondly, to set the record straight, we are not all professionals. Most of us are working people - gardeners, produce workers, clerical, small business people who have worked to rebuild our lives after the camps.

Another argument is that "heirs" should not receive monetary compensation. Most "heirs" in this case are Nisei who were profoundly affected for the Rest of their lives in terms of quality of life, jobs, and income. What the Isseis worked hard to pass on to their families was stripped away.

We believe that direct monetary reparations to individuals is the most principled and expeditious method of compensation.



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It would re-affirm that this is a nation of laws and that citizenship has meaning. It would have the effect on our governmental machinery of strengthening the ideals that the real laws of our country do not violate the human rights of its citizens.

The National Coalition for Redress and Reparations has struggled hard to make these Hearings more meaningful to the community. There are aspects of the Hearing that still need to be improved, but there were some concessions we were able to win such as:

evening meetings

simultaneous translations for Issei during Hearings

a Hearing in a community setting

We feel that although these Commission Hearings are much needed, the work our organization had to put in (arranging for simultaneous translations, seating people, organizing schedule, notifying all testifiers of changes in scheduling), - these are areas that should have received more attention from the Commission.

We would strongly urge that the Commissioners return in person to each hearing site to explain their recommendations and follow-up to the community before submitting their final one.

You Commissioners must seriously consider the responsibility you have undertaken. This is a historic and significant event, and the people involved and the ultimate recommendations will be recorded for and judged by history.

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We strongly urge you to challenge the Congress to have the moral courage to correct this blot in our American history and to move with urgency and resolution to obtain proper, substantive redress and reparations now. Any compromised recommendation will be a compromise of justice. Thank you.