

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 in New York.

NEW YORK HEARING PROPOSAL

I. Rationale

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 on the East Coast 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 of 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. Priority Areas of Concern

A. Nikkei

Figures and statistic 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 reasons why Japanese Americans relocated east; and the impact of their isolation once resettled here are prime factors in shaping the characteristics of East Coast Nikkei!

1. Psychological impact

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

*Sami
Gwiko
MRC*

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.

*Mint
Motoke Spirit*

3. East Coast Experience During World War 2

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.

*Bull
Suki*

4. Issei

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

5. 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 Sansei.