



National Council for Japanese American Redress

925 West Diversey Parkway, Chicago, Illinois 60614

September 9, 1981

Dear Friends,

The Chicago hearings of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (CWRIC) are almost upon us. They are to be held at Northeastern Illinois University's Alumni Hall on September 22-23. They arrive with a sense of a dramatic climax. It's the last of the community hearings. But will it be comic or tragic?

The mighty New York Times has spoken and proffers an apology. We rebut. But to what effect? Frank Chin, playwright and long-time advocate of compensatory redress, has written the second act, about the second hearings, the first from the community in Los Angeles, calling them a "circus of freaks." It's a hard truth which draws a strong reaction, including overtones of anti-Chinese racism. I've heard that the third act in San Francisco was a partisan affair, with the National Coalition on Redress/Reparations (NCRR) dueling with JACL by holding rival sideshows and with testifiers identifying themselves with the five (or is it six?) points of unity. (Nothing like a little partisan unity.)

Then there is the Commission staff itself. On August 31st, a second key person resigned, Associate Director Dr. Tom Taketa. (Earlier we reported that Cheryl Yamamoto has resigned.) Most recently, Executive Director Paul Bannai resigned effective September 20th. This leaves the staff leaderless except for recently hired Charles Smith, Director of Research and now acting Executive Director. The Bannai resignation may signal the end of these defections. All this in a period of less than six months.

The Chicago hearings may also be a "circus of freaks." According to a Chicago Tribune article, the JACL is counselling its witnesses to "spill their guts." But there are some other dramatic elements. NCJAR is working to establish two panels of witnesses. One is of United Methodists, including Bishop Jesse DeWitt, Northern Illinois Conference, Rev. Martin Deppe, General Board of Church and Society, Rev. Martha Coursey, Parish of the Holy Covenant, and Rev. Greg Dell, Methodist Federation for Social Action. Each of these bodies has taken a position on redress. Two is of persons who were active in their support of internees, including Professor emeritus Maynard C. Krueger, who visited most of the camps as a leader of the Socialist Party, Ms. Jan Linfield, who was a teacher at Poston, and Mr. Harold Flitcraft, a Quaker who helped during the relocation period. There are also a number of people who are speaking as independents and are quite critical of the hearings. Two of these will be from NCJAR. But our presence will be felt in its own way.

We will be conducting a gentle demonstration within the hearings, both to protest their insensitivity at inviting victims to testify and to honor the victims who do testify and attend the hearings. We will stand for a brief period at the beginning of each victim's testimony. Our statement is included in this issue. Any reader interested in having his or her name listed in support of the statement is invited to respond.

There will be several events surrounding the hearings. On September 14th, I'll be participating in WCFC-TV's "Metroview" along with Professors Shirley Castelnuovo and Daniel Kuzuhara of Northeastern Illinois University. On the 19th, at 10:00 AM or thereabouts, I'll be part of a conference at Northeastern on the subject of redress. On the 20th, I'll be preaching at Parish of the Holy Covenant, 925 W. Diversey Parkway, Chicago at its 10:15 AM worship service. On the 21st, I'll be taping a Studs Terkel interview for WFMT radio with Min Yasui. It'll be broadcast later, maybe on the 22nd. And there should be other media attention as well.

Meanwhile, on the front that really matters, we continue to raise funds for the Redress Legal Fund. We've passed \$47,000. Our goal remains \$75,000. We've acquired more Ronin. (A Ronin is one who contributes \$1,000.) Our most recent is a woman from New York NY who prefers anonymity. She says quietly that her contribution is not a sacrifice. That's refreshing. We have about 400 contributors. One is tempted to emphasize the role of the Ronin. They are important. But wouldn't it be something if we were to grow to 4,000 supporters?

I think it's becoming fairly clear that our lawsuit is the only real alternative available. The congressional route seems doomed to failure with the heavy hand of David Stockman and Reaganomics. The lawsuit remains a high risk venture. But as the Schlitz commercial used to say, "You only go around once in life."

So, send your contribution today. Spread the word.

See ya at the hearings -- standing up.

Peace,

William Hohri



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September 22-23, 1981 at the Chicago Hearings of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians.

Sisters and Brothers:

We express our profound regret at the insensitivity of these hearings in seeking testimony from the victims of America's WWII concentration camps in order "to determine whether any wrong was committed," as though placing on them the burden of proof. Further, we believe that this unfortunate spectacle obscures the real need for documentary research and for interrogation of those individuals, still active, who initiated and authorized the program of unlawful exclusion and internment.

We respect the Commissioners as distinguished and conscientious persons. We respect those who have come to testify. We honor especially the victims themselves, both those who speak and those who listen.

But we believe the evidence abounds, making the wrong apparent. The racism of the times combined with our wartime hysteria, the panic of military defeats, and the calculated actions by our government to make victims of 120,000 persons with Japanese faces.

The desolation, the barbed wire fences and guard towers are evidence enough!

The infant internees, children, innocent women and men, the elderly internees and the disabled are evidence enough!

The absence of any effort to provide even the semblance of due process, the absence of trials or hearings is evidence enough!

Why, then, must the victims be invited to recount and re-live their years of travail? Why must they submit to this public display? Why must they suffer the abuses of Lillian Baker and Senator Hayakawa?

The purpose of this Commission is to review the facts and to recommend appropriate remedies. The facts are available in government files and may be obtained through patient research. The facts, both published and unpublished, reveal the official foreknowledge of Japanese-American loyalty, the deliberate government efforts to use the victims as draft labor, the strategy to circumvent the Fifth Amendment, and extensive deliberations to suspend the writ of habeas corpus.

If the Commission is serious, it must request an extension considerably beyond its January, 1982 deadline.

The facts are also available through two key former officials, John J. McCloy and Karl R. Bendetsen. Most major decisions involving the internment program were reviewed and authorized by McCloy in his capacity as Assistant Secretary of War. Col. Bendetsen was instrumental in drafting the infamous Executive Order 9066 and legislation to suspend the writ of habeas corpus.

Mr. McCloy declined to appear before the Commission in July and has not submitted a public statement. (His excuse was a visit to Europe; but Lillian Baker travelled 2700 miles at her own expense to appear.)

Mr. Bendetsen also declined to appear, but did submit a written statement.

It is a complete and total cop-out:

"I did not recommend such action."

It is a cover-up by means of the Fast Shuffle:

"Ultimately, an Executive Order was prepared in the Justice Department, not the War Department."

It is an obscene distortion:

"Under my direction the relocation centers were built and furnished with residential equipment, bedding, beds, dressers, tables, chairs, schoolrooms and teaching equipment, infirmaries, dormitories, bathing and sanitary facilities, as well as kitchens and dining halls, fully equipped."

If the Commission is serious, it will subpoena McCloy and Bendetsen and require their sworn testimony under penalty of perjury.

It is not for the victims to testify. It is for them, instead, to be granted reparations!

In order to express our regret and to show honor for the victims who do testify, we shall stand for a brief period at the beginning of each victim's testimony. We invite you to join with us.

Peace be with you!

(Persons who wish to have their names appear as supporters of this statement should contact William Hohri by phone (312)588-8483 or by mail: 4717 N. Albany, Chicago, IL 60625.)

NATIONAL COUNCIL for
JAPANESE AMERICAN REDRESS
925 West Diversey Parkway
Chicago, Illinois 60614



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Make Your Contribution and Join the Class Action Now!

Please make your contribution payable to:

Redress Legal Fund
1428 West Thorndale
Chicago, Illinois 60660

Your contribution is tax-deductible. The Redress Legal Fund is a program of the Northern Illinois Conference of the United Methodist Church.

We ask you to consider being one of our Forty-seven Ronin. (You may recall the famous story of the Forty-seven Ronin, masterless samurai, who obtained justice through their self-sacrifice.) For us a Ronin is a person who will contribute the sacrificial amount of \$1,000 or more.

We also have accepted, with great humility, the sacrificial gifts of much smaller amounts from the disabled, the unemployed, and the retired.

We offer the following amounts for your consideration (check one):

___ \$1,000 as one of the Forty-seven Ronin.

___ \$500 as a measure of my commitment.

___ \$100 and my hope that hundreds more will do the same.

___ \$ _____ and my very best wishes for success.

name: _____

street: _____

city: _____ state: _____ zip: _____

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