

JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE

NEW ENGLAND CHAPTER

PO Box 548
Cambridge, MA. 02138

Report of Business Meeting
July 22, 1980

Meeting held: 7:30 PM, July 22, 1980, at 8 Dorothy Rd., Arlington, MA.
Members present: David Sakura (President), presiding; Eiko Adachi,
Gary Glenn, Kei Kaneda, Mel Kawakami, Mary Ellen Sakura.

Review of 1979-1980 Program Year

A brief review of the 1979-80 program year was discussed. Five events, focussing on different aspects of the Japanese American experience in New England, highlighted the year: in September a special workshop was held concerning the construction of a Japanese house at the Boston Children's Museum (the "Kyoto" House has since opened to the public and has become a major New England tourist attraction); in December, JACL members were given a special guided tour of the new Japanese folding screen exhibit at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; also in December, JACL, together with several other groups, hosted a New Year's celebration which featured food, dancing, musical performances, a magic show, and mochi making; in March, Prof. T. Scott Miyakawa (former Chairman of the Sociology Dept. at the Univ. of Massachusetts, Boston, and Professor Emeritus at Boston University) spoke at a JACL-sponsored meeting at Harvard, in which the early history of East Coast issei and nisei and their role in the silk trade was reviewed; and, in May, a major public forum was held in Cambridge, designed to promote public education of the redress issue; a number of educators, social movement leaders, and persons who experienced evacuation/incarceration spoke at the forum. Additionally, during the Spring and early Summer, JACL members individually and collectively engaged in political action on behalf of the redress legislation.

Reaffirmation of Central Purpose of New England JACL

Given that the NEJACL is now completing a full year as a Probationary Chapter of the national organization, and is preparing to request status as a regular chapter, it was thought appropriate to review the guiding principles of the New England organization. The following points were discussed:

1. The New England chapter should respond to the unique needs and circumstances of the New England area, specifically taking into account the fact that this is a major academic area, that many Japanese Americans are academicians or professionals with some

university association, and that significant numbers of Japanese American students from other parts of the country come to Boston, Cambridge and other New England cities to study.

2. There is an important function to be performed by any organization representing a specific ethnic/racial group in terms of opposing oppression, fighting racism, and protecting the legitimate interests and rights of the group. This function is especially timely for JACL at this moment because of the redress legislation and the possible backlash which may occur during the next year (i.e., during the life of the Presidential Commission).
3. Japanese Americans should recognize that they share a similar history in the United States with other Asian groups, and that racist legislation and government policy has affected all groups during different historical periods (Asian exclusion laws, prohibitions on landholding, miscegenation laws, restrictive immigration policies). Therefore, NEJACL should develop linkages with Chinese-American, Vietnamese, and other Asian-descent groups in New England, and should support the aspirations of these peoples for more equitable opportunity. Additionally, JACL should endeavor to be represented on governmental and nongovernmental civil rights commissions and organizations, and should speak up on issues effecting other minority groups.
4. In program terms, NEJACL should recognize the variety of interests and needs reflected by the Japanese American community, and should strive for a balanced program involving cultural, social, political and fraternal events. In particular, attention should be given to the development of linkages between permanent New England residents, and those living in this area for a short period of time (primarily students).

1980-1981 Program

Several ideas were presented for 1980-81 program activities; these are summarized as follows:

1. A "Pan Asian" forum designed to bring together people of various Asian groups in a discussion of common issues, problems and needs.
2. An up-date on the status of the Presidential Commission (once it has been named and has begun hearings), featuring a member of the Commission.
3. The formulation of a listing of potential witnesses for a New England appearance of the Presidential Commission, and submission of the listing to appropriate officials.

4. A continuation of the kinds of cultural events initiated during the 1979-80 program year, taking advantage of the substantial cultural and artistic resources of the Boston area.
5. A continuation of fraternal events, especially the New Year's celebration.
6. The formation of a speakers bureau which could provide representatives for various organizations in New England to discuss redress and other issues of importance to Japanese Americans.
7. Involvement of NEJACL in councils and groupings of minority organizations.

NEJACL Organizational Structure

It was agreed that organizational continuity and structural strength were key elements in the success of NEJACL. In this regard, several decisions were made. First, David Sakura agreed to continue serving as Chapter President until such time as a slate of officers could be presented to the membership for formal approval. Second, it was agreed that NEJACL would immediately seek regularization of its status as an authorized chapter of national JACL. Third, Mel Kawakami agreed to handle membership questions (lists, dues, solicitation of new members). Fourth, it was agreed that Lon Hatayama would be contacted pursuant to representing NEJACL at the forthcoming JACL National Convention in San Francisco. Fourth, it was agreed that JACL business meetings should be held regularly on the second Tuesday of each month. Fifth, it was agreed that the Redress Committee, co-chaired by Kei Kaneda, will hold a special meeting with Eji Suyama during August and that the Committee will report back at the next business meeting. Sixth, Gary Glenn agreed to serve as interim recording secretary. Seventh, it was agreed that next business meeting, to be held on August 12 at 85 Wendell Street, Cambridge, will discuss the 1980-81 program in greater detail, will hear from the Redress Committee, will recommend a slate of officers for presentation to the membership, and will discuss aspects of the role NEJACL may wish to play in the national organization.