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I'm Frank Abe, a journalist and writer. I'm a news editor for a Seattle radio station. I've written about the redress story for three years.

From what I've seen, I've identified a large body of popular support for the idea of redress. This support is spread equally among all three generations of Japanese America, and in the press.

First to press for redress here were an Issei, Shosuke Sasaki, and two Nisei, Henry Miyatake and Mike Nakata. Mr. Sasaki wrote the first redress essay, "An Appeal for Action," in 1975. The Seattle Evacuation Redress Committee circulated it to Nikkei groups around the country. Sasaki was among the first to criticize the Japanese American Citizens League for its failure to carry the reparation program to Congress. He regards the passage of the Commission bill as primarily an effort by the five Nikkei Congressmen to avoid taking a clear-cut position on redress. Sasaki refuses to testify here today as a matter of principle.

To find out more about the depths of the redress story, I offered to help the Nikkei community publicize their concerns. On Thanksgiving weekend, 1978, posters such as this appeared in Seattle: "To all persons of Japanese ancestry.....The memory of 120,313 persons of Japanese ancestry request the pleasure of your company for A Day of Remembrance....Remember the concentration camps .....Stand for redress with your family." More than 2,000 Nikkei and their friends gathered with families and bundles, just as they did in 1942, to register and have their 5-digit WCCA number put on replicas of the family number tags, the tags fixed to their coats. They pasted stylized logos representing their incarceration to the windows of their cars. Three hundred cars....a caravan headed by National Guard trucks...stretched 4 miles down Interstate-Five. Inside the cars, the first setting in which the children of the camps could ask, "Dad, Mom, why were you taken away and put into

camp?" Inside the cars, the first time many of the parents could find an answer.

The Seattle press turned out. For the first time, Nikkei were able to focus public attention not only on the injustice, but on their case for redress.

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Similar events were held in Portland and ~~Seattle~~ Altogether 5,000 persons participated in the "Days of Remembrance."

What I saw was that the grassroots support for redress and reparations existed among Nikkei of all ages. I saw that two-thirds of the participants were the Nisei ex-internees of the camps who had come to stand for redress with their families.

The events gave new information to the public about the cause and consequence of the incarceration. Partly as a result, some of the local media have come out in favor of monetary reparation. The Seattle Post-Intelligencer and KING television have both editorialized for compensation. To my knowledge, none have spoken against.



# Focus

SECTION B

## What price injustice?

By Frank Abe

The petition for redress of wartime incarceration got its first public exposure in November, 1978, when 2,000 Japanese Americans gathered at the old Sicks Stadium to recreate the 1942 expulsion. Wearing large-sized replicas of the family-number tags that were the badges of their forced removal from Seattle, they formed a car caravan stretching four miles down I-5. They drove to the site of a former detention camp, the Puyallup Fairgrounds.

The Nikkei this week testify about their experience to the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians. Hearings have already been held in Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, and San Francisco. The preponderance of evidence already received — and outright acknowledgements by the commissioners themselves — make a favorable commission report a foregone conclusion. The commissioners are apparently convinced the mass incarceration was wrong. The question which still divides them is — what does the law require we pay in monetary compensation?

Sen. Henry Jackson was in Congress when that body voted funds to incarcerate Japanese Americans in 1942. At the first hearing in Washington, D.C., Jackson frowned on the idea of paying redress. "I question seriously whether you can provide for a monetary settlement of a problem that goes beyond that kind of solution," Jackson said. And he warned the panel against raising the hopes of those who sought justice: "It would be a tragedy if you came up with a figure that Congress could not appropriate."

Commissioner Edward Brooke, former senator from Massachusetts, was quick to disagree. "Even prisoners who have been wrongfully incar-

□ *Frank Abe is afternoon news editor for KIRO radio. He has been following the redress story for three years.*

cerated for a long period of time, after they have been freed, have been given compensatory damages for the time they have served in prison wrongfully." Brooke's remarks were echoed by other panelists.

The only elected official on the commission, Rep. Dan Lungren (R-Long Beach, Calif.), begs to differ. In his opening remarks in Washington, he stressed that monetary restitution was not a "foregone conclusion," and that Congress didn't intend the commission to bite the hand that created it. "The issue of transferring taxpayers' dollars in reparation to those interned is one over which there appears to be a split of opinion within the Japanese-American community itself."

The split to which Lungren referred has not significantly appeared in testimony so far, a fact which some commissioners are beginning to find embarrassing. They want to conduct a credible hearing with fairness to all sides, but in Los Angeles and San Francisco about 90 percent of Nikkei testifying called for a minimum of \$25,000 per person incarcerated or forced to relocate.

A poll conducted by the Los Angeles daily newspaper, *Rafu Shimpo*, concluded that 96 percent of the Nikkei favored compensation. A poll done here and released in May showed compensation favored by 91 percent. In Los Angeles, only three people spoke out against any form of reparation; here, a similar result is expected.

Perhaps the only Nikkei split that will be seen this week is mild disagreement over what form the reparations should take. Here, 36 percent favor individual compensation as the

only fair way to guarantee each Nikkei the right to choose whether to keep the money or donate it to a community fund. Seven percent seek a block grant formula, with funds going to community projects and good works. Another 58 percent favor a combination of both plans. It's a debate that Nikkei groups could never resolve alone, and some spokesmen look upon the blue-ribbon commission as the source of a neutral solution.

The commission has until mid-January to weigh the evidence and issue its findings to Congress. As the commissioners consider their recommendations, they will no doubt be reminded of Sen. Jackson's warning that Congress is in a "penny-pinching" mood, but Edward Brooke's response neatly sums up the stance of the commission: "I don't think it's up to this commission to consider whether the Congress can afford to pay the compensation that we recommend. It's our responsibility to determine whether there was a wrong and whether there should be compensation, and what fair compensation should be — and then let Congress determine whether the Treasury can afford to pay or not."

It's a double-edged sword for Japanese Americans who support the commission study. They're looking forward to a positive report for monetary compensation, but the report itself won't win them compensation. The words of the report, telling a heart-rending story of loss, injustice and pain, will likely strike the nation's conscience and again haunt the nation's editorial pages. But the words of the report may also lead some Nikkei and more than a few congressmen to consider the books closed on redress. The report may break off pressure, weakening the final push for congressional legislation for reparations. Critics charge this is just what the Congress intended in creating the commission: to talk the problem away.

# Commission is an evasion of the demand for redress

By Shosuke Sasaki

Brainwashed by the intense anti-Japanese propaganda lies of the first half of this century, most white Americans above the age of 55 still seem to feel that the World War II wholesale imprisonment of Japanese Americans solely for reasons of race was both appropriate and proper. Any proposal, therefore, suggesting that redress payments be made to former inmates of those concentration camps usually arouses an angry deluge of protests.

Polls taken among Japanese Americans have repeatedly shown that meaningful individual monetary redress for that arbitrary uprooting and incarceration is felt by around 90 percent to be long overdue. Support by Japanese American politicians, however, for the campaign for redress, which was started by the Seattle chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League, has been conspicuous by its absence. Moreover, the response of the national leaders of the JACL to the efforts of the Seattle chapter has consisted mostly of inaction, foot-dragging, ill-concealed opposition, equivocation, and quiet abandonment of positions in support of redress taken earlier at the organization's national conventions.

In November, 1979, Congressman Mike Lowry introduced a bill which recognized the violations of the human rights of Japanese Americans during World War II and provided for monetary redress to each individual of \$15,000 plus \$15 for each day of confinement. Although the Lowry bill was eagerly welcomed by most Japanese Americans, it was coldly ignored by all three Japanese American senators, by both Japanese American congressmen and by most national leaders of the JACL. It failed to gain the approval of the House subcommittee in June, 1980, and never reached the floor.

In its place, there was signed into law in July, 1980, the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians Act to create a commission to study the wartime treatment of Japanese Americans living in Pacific Coast areas. This act was the brainchild of the five Japanese American legislators in Congress and represented their reluctant and evasive response to the growing demands for redress among fellow Americans of Japanese descent.

□ *Shosuke Sasaki is the author of the original proposal for redress, "An Appeal for Action," distributed among Japanese Americans in 1975. He is a retired securities analyst. He campaigned against the use of the word "Jap" in post-war New York newspapers, an action which led to the word's eventual disappearance from common newspaper usage. He is an Issei, first generation Japanese American, born in Japan and reared in Pomeroy, Wash. He was interned at Puyallup and at Minidoka.*

People who are still deluded by the anti-Japanese lies which were spread by the American communications media and government officials during the first half of the 20th century, and those who are just plain racists, would be well advised not to become too worked up over the possible outcome of the hearings. They should keep in mind that all the commission is empowered to do is to hold hearings and to come up with a report to Congress containing conclusions and recommendations. Real redress proposals, if any, will have to be written into a new bill and introduced in Congress at some future date.

Of particular comfort to such individuals should be the fact that the lone Japanese American member of the commission, who will be one of the four commissioners present at the Seattle hearings, has been a vociferous opponent of the Seattle chapter's redress efforts through his weekly column in the official organ of the national JACL. His position on redress, as I understand it from some of his writings, is first, to deny the victims of the wartime exile and imprisonment any direct monetary compensation on an individual basis and second, to make sure that any possible redress funds which might be granted be handed over to some organization or groups who will see to it that such money is put to what he feels would be nobler and better use.

If any person finds the position on redress taken by Japanese American politicians somewhat unexpected and strange, he should first understand that senators and congressmen of Japanese descent do not represent the Japanese Americans in any sense other than the mere similarity of the color of their skin. In order to be

elected to public office, such persons must depend almost entirely on Caucasian votes. Their political lives would be endangered if they were to espouse or do anything which would antagonize the deep-seated prejudices and misconceptions of the white majority. If any substantial group of voter constituents is strongly against providing redress for Japanese Americans, the average politician of any race can be expected, for the sake of political survival, to turn his back on justice.

In practically all areas, Japanese Americans are too limited in numbers and influence to really count in deciding the outcome of most elections. Except for the rare politician of integrity and principle such as Congressman Lowry, injustices perpetrated against extremely small minorities are coolly ignored by most public office holders.

The commission hearings are apparently being promoted by the commission's staff and by the JACL as a great favor granted to the Japanese Americans which will enable them to get the stories of their wartime experience to the American public. I regard the hearings as demeaning to all Americans of Japanese ancestry and an insult to their dignity.

Actually the wartime violation of the constitutional rights of Japanese Americans is an American problem and not merely a Japanese American matter. The commissioners really need only to read the many books on the subject already written by reputable scholars. The hearings, if any, should include primarily the testimony of prominent scholars and experts on constitutional law.

According to newspaper accounts of the commission hearings already held, the heavy concentration on recitals of stories of humiliation, suffering and property loss is diverting attention away from the serious constitutional issues involved. Instead of redress being considered as a redress of the violations of the constitutional rights of innocent persons, redress is being perverted into a welfare issue. If such proves to be the tone and substance of the commission's final report, the victims of the exile and imprisonment may ultimately be denied the justice they seek, and an opportunity for this nation to begin the repairing of a badly twisted and torn Constitution will have been wasted.