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Friday, September 1, 1988

Osaka Family's Fight on Anti-Black Racism Stalled

LOS ANGELES—The Arita family of Osaka, Toshiji and Kimiko with their 10-year-old son Hajime, were stalled here this past week in their fact-finding trip to fight racism in Japan against Blacks.

Concluding a 17-day tour of six cities sponsored by the U.S. Black Business Council, their irreplaceable notes, videotapes and journals chronicling visits with the Rev. Jesse Jackson, Atlanta Mayor Andrew Young, Coretta Scott King and Baltimore Orioles Manager Frank Robinson and other prominent Blacks disappeared upon arrival at the airport Aug. 22.

Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley promised the police would help hunt for two missing bags, "which is of no value to anyone else, but it is of great value to this family that has worked so hard," Bradley pointed out.

Educator Toshiji Arita, 42, told Bradley, "We have learned through our trip that we were not mistaken in trying to stop racism against Blacks. We were going to report to the media and the public what we have seen here, but not having the documents and materials will make it very difficult."

The Aritas founded their organization last year after being alarmed by the popularity of dolls and other Japanese merchandise depicted Blacks in an unflattering manner. Several Japanese firms reacted by halting sale of or removing the offensive material.



VIDEO CONTRIBUTION—As a contribution toward the JACL Redress Video Project, a check for \$10,000 was presented by W.T. Yasutake, chairman of the H.S. Kawabe and Tomo Kawabe Memorial Committee, to National JACL President Cressey Nakagawa in front of a portrait of H.S. Kawabe. From the left are Chiyoko Yasutake, Kawabe Memorial Board member; W.T. Yasutake; Nakagawa; and Cherry Kinoshita, Redress Video Project chair and JACL national v.p. of Public Affairs. The 25-minute video will depict the 18-year history of JACL in the redress movement. Those with resource materials such as videotapes on the topic are asked to contact JACL Headquarters in San Francisco.

JACL to Dedicate Tule Lake Linkville Cemetery Sept. 10

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — The dedication program of the Japanese American Citizens League Tule Lake Linkville Cemetery Project will be held on Sunday, Sept. 10 in Klamath Falls,

Oregon, announced spokesperson Toko Fujii.

When Tule Lake closed at the end of WWII, most families took home the remains of relatives who had died there. However, there were 11 remains which were not taken home by family members and placed in Linkville Cemetery.

A large, new bronze marker containing the names of the 11 deceased will be unveiled by members of the JACL Tule Lake Linkville Cemetery Committee, followed by floral tributes from district governors of Northern California-Western Nevada Pacific JACL and the Pacific Northwest JACL.

Names of the 11 in the care of Linkville Cemetery are: Mitsuzo Asao, Tetsuo Kiyono, Matsubara Baby, Hiraio Dick Nishizaki and Kazuo Harry Nishizaki (twin brothers), George Uyeda, Yamamoto Baby, Okada Baby, Seki Baby, and Loni Miyoko Toriumi.

Mark Miyoshi, a Sansei taiko maker living in Mt. Shasta, is credited—along with two or three others—with getting the project started to dedicate a plaque at Linkville Cemetery.

"It took a Sansei to get things rolling," said Fujii, "Some of Nisei had visited the gravesite a few times, but we never thought of doing anything about it."

Opening the program will be a taiko drum roll performed by Mark Miyoshi of Shasta City and Michio Teshima of Seattle, followed by opening remarks from master of ceremonies Henry Taketa, Sacramento historian.

Project chairman Tom Fujimoto will give the principal address, followed by prayers and sermons from the Rev. George Uyemura, retired Methodist minister from Portland, and the Rev. Charles Hasegawa of Idaho-Oregon Buddhist Church of Ontario Ore.

Chartered bus will leave Sacramento on Saturday, Sept. 9 at 6:30 a.m. on Sunday, Sept. 10, about 1 p.m.

For chartered bus reservations call Tom Fujimoto, (916) 427-6839 or Toko Fujii, (916) 441-7900 or 421-2112.

Donations toward completion of the project are still being accepted at the Sacramento JACL, 2124-10th St., Sacramento, CA 95818.

Textbook Revision Resolution Vents Bad Feelings in California

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Final passage of the Assembly Concurrent Resolution 37 relative to the inclusion of the Japanese American internment experience in the textbooks on Aug. 24 was 41-10 (29 were either absent or not voting).

But Assemblywoman Jackie Speier (D-South San Francisco), sponsor of the resolution urged by the San Francisco JACL, had to verbally spar with Assemblyman Gil Ferguson (R-Newport Beach), who sought to delay consideration about a week until military organizations could respond.

Speier retorted that her bill had been in print since February, that it asked the textbooks in the state to reflect the fact that President Reagan had signed the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 which said, "in fact, the internment was not one of military necessity but was a violation of human rights."

After she declined to postpone the vote, Ferguson spoke on the resolution, saying he was in 100% agreement with textbooks being accurate and objective about the Japanese internment experience, except that "you're saying . . . the brave men and women of this country were a bunch of racists."

Ferguson agreed it was a bad decision, a terrible thing to do. "But 50 years [later] sitting in this chamber, when the biggest risk in your lives is getting reelected or safe sex, what right do you have to question the motives of your fathers and mothers and your grandfathers and uncles? They are the one who made this decision . . .

"When I came to these shores in

California as an 18-year-old kid joining the Marine Corps, these people were scared to death. And many of these California people would have killed Japanese Americans, and many of those Japanese were not American Japs. [They] would have killed them."

A retired lieutenant colonel and veteran of three wars, Ferguson shouted his objections and touched off a verbal skirmish—the strongest condemnation coming from Assemblyman Phillip Isenberg (D-Sacramento), whose wife (Marilyn Yoshiko Araki) was placed in a Japanese internment camp when she was 4-years-old.

"What military necessity sent her to a prison camp?" Isenberg asked. "Mr. Ferguson: American citizens—not foreign nationals, not Japanese—Americans who happen to be of a different ancestry were sent to prison . . . It is deeply offensive to every single piece of what this country is about and you should be ashamed."

David Takashima, chief of staff for

Continued on Page 3

Old Zen Center in Maui Burned Down Now Rising

PAIA, Maui — Just 18 months ago, the Rinzaï Zen Mission here was destroyed in a fire, deliberately set by someone unknown. New buildings are rising from the ashes as the Rev. Ryozo Yamaguchi conducted Obon services on Aug. 19. The mission, started by Okinawan immigrants, is the only Rinzaï Zen temple outside of Japan.

JACL HQ's 'American Promise' Sept. 23

SAN FRANCISCO — "An American Promise," a special dinner event to honor four major national organizations and institutions for their support in the redress campaign will be sponsored by the National JACL on Saturday, Sept. 23 at the Hyatt on Union Square.

"Because the issue of redress for Japanese Americans interned during World War II address important constitutional issues, it brought together the support of many individuals and organizations," stated National Director Bill Yoshino.

"We are grateful to organizations and institutions such as the American Jewish Committee, the Anti-Defamation League, the Leadership Confer-

ence on Civil Rights and the *San Francisco Chronicle* for their supportive efforts during the ten-year campaign for redress."

"These organizations contributed much to the successful effort in gaining redress legislation."

Corporate support for the Sept. 23 dinner has been received from Sanrio, Sumitomo Bank, Anhauser-Busch, Pacific, Gas and Electric, and the Mitsui Co.

The dinner event is \$100 per person. Proceeds of the dinner will benefit the programs and operations of the National JACL. For more information, contact the National JACL Headquarters at (415) 921-5225.

Denverites: Name Amache 'Historic Site'

DENVER — The Denver Central Optimist Club, unofficial caretakers of the Amache Cemetery and Memorial Site near the town of Granada in southeast Colorado, have requested the U.S. government and Colorado Historical Society to declare the site listed in the National Register of Historic Sites.

However, the Optimists have encountered opposition from the town of Granada, which now owns the entire Amache area. The club hopes to eventually overcome the opposition.

The Optimists and other interested persons have driven the 450 mile round trip to Amache each year around Memorial Day to clean the area, to hold a memorial service, and to place flowers.

There are nine gravesites at the cemetery, seven of which bear names. The Denver Optimists have spent the last several years trying to determine the names of the two unmarked graves. The Department of Vital Statistics at Lamar has been unable to pinpoint names for the two graves, except to say that they are probably fetuses.

Former Amache internees who may be able to assist in determining the names of the two unknowns should contact either Sadako Tsubokawa, 6265 Ammons Dr, Arvada, CO 80004, or Terry Sato, 571 S. Estes St. Lakewood, CO 80226.

Japan Weeklies Dubbed 'Peeping Tom Press'

TOKYO — The recent downfall of Prime Minister Sousuke Uno and other salacious gossip about the rich and famous are pieces published by scandal magazines, now referred to as the "peeping Tom press." It was the *Weekly Jewel*, which ran the stories and rumors involving Uno.

Michio Inaba, mass communications professor at Tokyo International University, noted the magazines have always covered the love affairs of famous actors, but now they are becoming more interested in politics "because it fits in with their sensationalist approach." This is the first time sex scandals and gossip have become central to a political situation in Japan, it was noted.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Over 300 Expected at JACL National Singles Con

TORRANCE, Calif. — Over 300 people are expected to attend the Fourth National JACL Singles Convention, to be held Sept. 1-3 at the Torrance Marriot Hotel, according to Meriko Mori, convention liaison. Attendees will be coming from across the nation, including participants from Chicago, Denver, San Francisco, San Jose and Seattle. "We've been working real hard on the program," said Mori. She emphasized that there would be no on-site registration for people who decide to attend at the last minute. The convention boasts 16 workshops and an appearance by JACL National President Cressey Nakagawa. The Mile-Hi JACL is considering hosting the next singles convention in 1991. Information on this year's convention can be obtained by calling Mori at (213) 477-6997.

Three Openings Available on JACL-LEC Board

LOS ANGELES — The JACL-LEC Board announces three openings for at-large positions for 1990-92. Interested persons should write Meriko Mori, nominations chair, at 1927 Federal Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90025, or call (213) 477-6997 for nominations forms. The deadline is Sept. 22.



Pacific Citizen Photo By George Johnston

CHILI WINNERS—Visual Communications' annual Chili-Visions chili cook-off was held Aug. 19 in Little Tokyo. The winning entry was from the Korean American Coalition (KAC) and the people's choice winner was Bob Uno. In the back row, from the left, are Hobart Young, Chinatown 10K Race Committee; Bob Uno; Masayuki Kohama, senior rep, Hitachi; Francis Ryu, KAC; and Mike Watanabe, Asian American Drug Abuse Program (AADAP). In the front are Ben Tagami, 100th Battalion; V. Navarro, Thai Association of Southern California; Nobu McCarthy, East West Players; and Gilbert Ayuyao, Search to Involve Pilipino Americans (SIPA). Over 350 chili and movie fans showed up.

ORA Estimates 16,000 Eligible Potentials for Redress 70 Years and Up as of 1988

WASHINGTON—The Department of Justice's Office of Redress Administration (ORA) released estimates the first week of August on the number of surviving internees in the oldest age ranges, as of 1988. These estimates suggest that approximately 16,000 Japanese Americans and U.S. permanent resident aliens evacuated or interned by the United States during World War II are ages 70 and over.

Bob Bratt, ORA's Administrator for Redress, emphasized that the numbers are not exact. "These figures are estimates only! There could be an error factor of plus or minus 5 percent." Conclusive numbers for eligible survivors age 70 and older cannot be determined until all individual cases are examined for eligibility, Bratt explained.

Estimates of Eligible Survivors 70 and Over

Age	Number of Potential Recipients as of 1988
70-74	7,800
75-79	3,500
80-84	1,900
85-89	800
90-94	200
95-99	35
100+	35
Total:	15,935

Since redress payments will be issued, according to the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, from the eldest eligible to the youngest, those in the oldest age

groups are designated to receive payment first.

Proposed regulations governing the Civil Liberties Act, which include eligibility qualifications, were open for a 30-day public comment period from June 14 to July 14, 1989.

28% Minority Tally in Federal Work Force

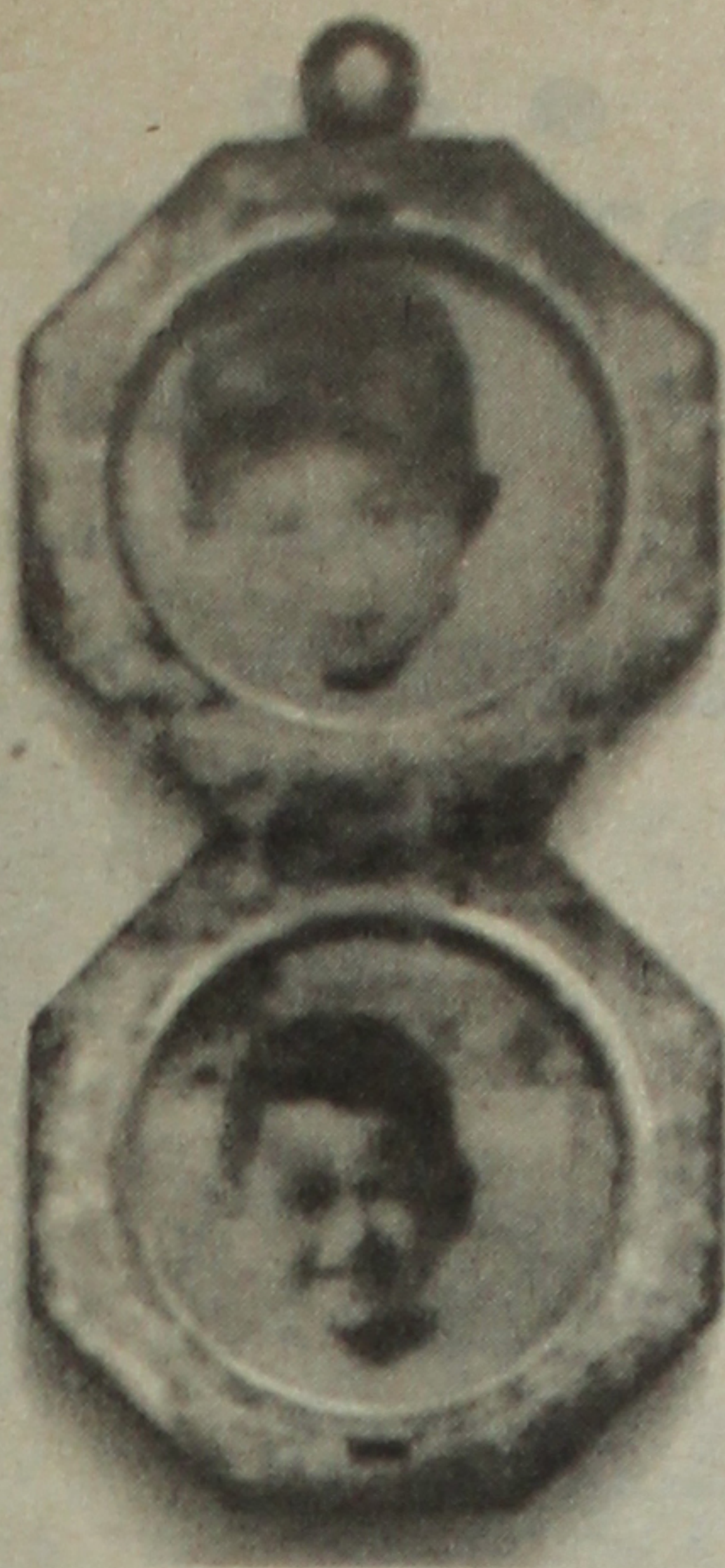
WASHINGTON—A detailed look at the federal work force by the Office of Personnel Management found almost 28% to be minorities: 16.8% Black, 5.3% Hispanic, 3.4% Asian/Pacifics, 1.7% American Indian, according to the *New York Times* Aug. 8.

Total number employed was not reported.

Death Penalty Sought in Ai Toyoshima Case

SAN JOSE, Calif. — A father of twin daughters was charged with 37 felony counts including the rape and killing 16-year-old Ai Toyoshima, an exchange student, by Santa Clara County Deputy District Attorney Jack Marshall Aug. 21.

Prosecution will seek the death penalty of the accused, Gregory Calvin Smith, 27, who was arrested Aug. 16.



MANZANAR LOCKET FOUND—The gold locket pictured above was discovered last June by Don Imhoof, president of the Gold Coast Treasure Hunters of California, Ventura County. On display during the Nisei Week Camp exhibit at the Japanese Village Plaza, it is currently on display at the Eastern California Museum of Inyo County in Independence, Calif. The exhibitors hope to find the original owner. To find out more information, contact Imhoof at 545 Saratoga St., Fillmore, CA 93015 or call (805) 524-3667; another party to contact is Shi or Mary Nomura, 13162 Kerry St., Garden Grove, CA 92644, tel. (714) 534-0273.

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East West Players to Open 24th Season

LOS ANGELES — "Dynamic . . . entertaining . . . and daring . . ." So says new artistic director Nobu McCarthy in announcing East West Players' upcoming, 24th season scheduled to open this October at the 99-seat theatre's mainstage.

McCarthy further added that this year's selection of a Sondheim musical, two world premieres by Asian American playwrights and a classic American drama, reflects East West Players' goal to offer "a provocative and varied repertoire that will appeal to Los Angeles' culturally diverse audiences."

Opening the season on Oct. 18, at 8:00 p.m. is *Company*, Stephen Sondheim's smash musical comedy about the woes of a thirty-something bachelor and the matchmaking efforts of his "concerned" married friends; Paul Hough directs with composer Scott Nagatani as musical director.

The world premiere of *The Chairman's Wife*, by Wakako Yamauchi, opens in January 1990. From the author of the acclaimed *And the Soul Shall Dance* comes the compelling and personal story, based on fact and rumor, of the extraordinary life of Chiang Ching, the now-imprisoned wife of Mao Tse-Tung.

In March 1990, the theme shifts back to the zanier, more Western concerns of gender confusion in *Performance Anxiety*, the outrageous new comedy from first-time playwright Vernon Takheshita. The setting: Unmistakably L.A.!

Classic American drama rounds out the season in May, as East West Players presents *The Glass Menagerie*. Television director/screenwriter Rick Edelman will direct an Asian American cast in a unique production of Tennessee Williams' poetic memory play.

Season subscriptions and single tickets are now on sale at East West Players at 4424 Santa Monica Blvd. in Los Angeles. For dates and further information, please call (213) 660-0366.

First Nikkei Conference on Aging in Canada Slated

CALGARY, Alta. — The first national Canadian Nikkei conference on aging will meet Oct. 5-6 at the Westin Hotel in Calgary, under auspices of the National Association of Japanese Canadians. Among the workshop discussion leaders will be film producer and actor Robert Ito.

Poll Finds Tokyoites Fear Influx of Foreign Workers

TOKYO — Some 48% of Tokyo residents surveyed in February about their work attitudes fear an influx of foreign workers will create havoc due to cultural differences, according to a Tokyo Metropolitan Government survey released Aug. 1. About 91% predicted their ranks will increase in the future.

THE FLOATING WORLD

(of a Nikkei Family)

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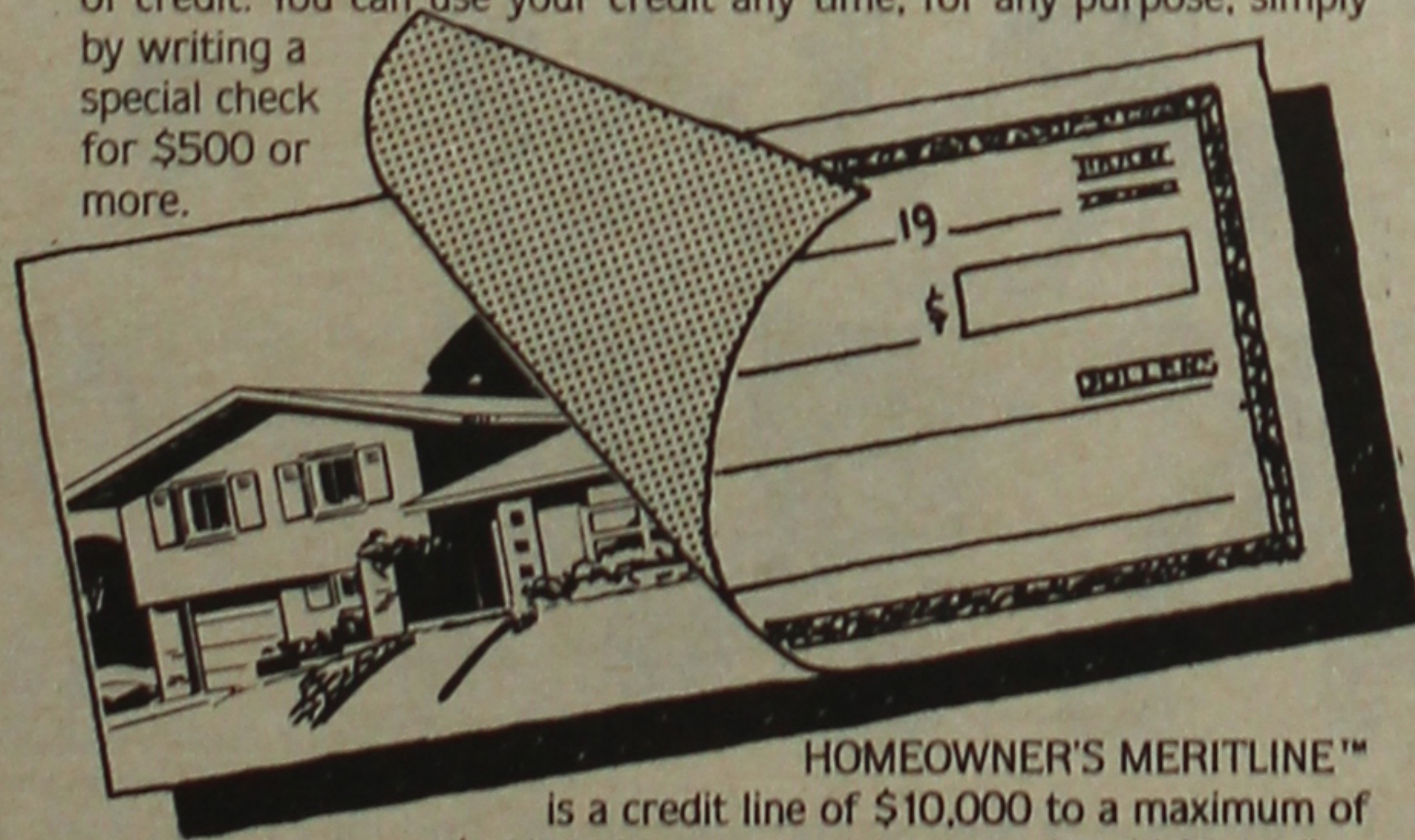
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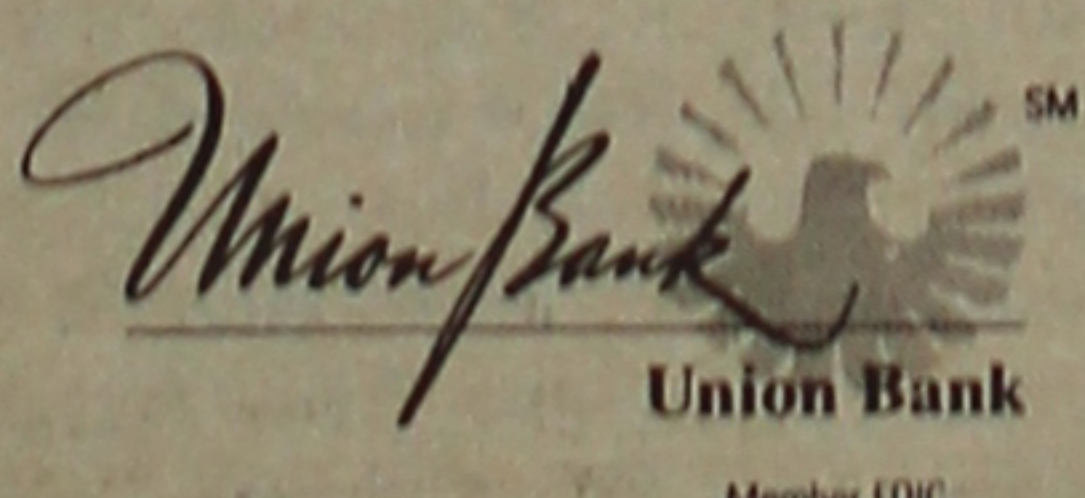
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EDITORIAL OF THE PACIFIC CITIZEN

"Why" Missing in Sambo Ban

EARLIER THIS year many Japanese were surprised to learn that caricatures of Blacks and even the well-loved story of Little Black Sambo were offensive to Americans. They didn't really understand why; after all nothing bad was intended. But in their commendable desire to be accommodating, the Japanese got rid of the caricatures and Little Black Sambo.

Caricatures of Blacks, particularly in a commercial setting, were condescending. They served no useful purpose and it simply made good sense to stop using them.

But the way in which Little Black Sambo was eliminated is more troubling. The book simply disappeared. Publishers discontinued it. Librarians banished it. Black Sambo dropped out of sight, apparently because Americans frowned, but few Japanese really understood why.

The main reason was that there was little if any effort made to explain offensive racial stereotypes and growing sensitivity in the United States. In Japan there was no effort to apply the enlightened American attitude to problems in contemporary Japanese society involving discrimination against Koreans, Ainu and the *burakumin* "untouchables."

The Japanese solution to meeting an unexplained American complaint was to sweep the offending material under the rug. Out of sight, out of mind. And an opportunity for developing the kind of understanding that can bring the two peoples closer was lost.

Could Japanese Americans as a group, and JACL in particular, have taken action to promote understanding? We believe they could have and should have. It is well enough to speak in lofty terms of promoting understanding, but the real opportunities may lie in down to earth situations such as explaining why Little Black Sambo is no longer a cute little children's tale.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Wowed by Woo

Los Angeles 13th District Councilman Michael Woo's letter (July 21, 1989 P.C.) was much appreciated. I met Michael Woo at the "Welcome Home, Ron Wakabayashi" get-together sometime ago and was impressed by his friendliness, love and concern for people. Hearing that I was from Pasadena he expressed how his early training, along with that of his wife, by Ted Tajima, Alhambra High School journalism teacher served as a stepping-stone to success today. His wife is with the *L.A. Times*. (Tajima is a church and community leader and member of the Pasadena JACL).

Thanks go to Pacific Citizen for sending Mr. Woo a copy of the John Tateishi's *And Justice for All* which he enjoyed much but will other city, state and national leaders also receive copies of this or many other great books by Japanese Americans? *They Call Him Moses Masaoka*, *JACL: In Quest of Justice*, *Thirty Five Years in the Frying Pan*, *The Quiet Americans*, *The Bamboo People*, *Heroic Struggles of Japanese Americans*, *John Aiso and the MIS*, *Go For Broke* . . . the list goes on and on. Of course Councilman Michael Woo may be in the minority of those who would write and thank you.

MACK YAMAGUCHI
Pasadena, Calif.

Lessons From ADL, SCLC

Thank you for your coverage of "Building for Tomorrow", the PSW-JACL dialogue with the Anti-Defamation League and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. I would like to add some information about that evening.

The event was sponsored by the Leadership Development Committee of the PSW and attracted mostly younger JACLers, many of whom serve in key leadership positions in the district. Since the JACL—and in particular the PSW—is involved in self-evaluating long-range planning for the organization, we felt that it was important to take a look at other prominent civil rights organizations and find out what makes them

effective forces in this area.

There were three key points brought up by Andrew Cushnir and Mark Ridley-Thomas:

#1—Clarity of image and purpose sells the organization. The ADL has very clearly defined objectives and a long and highly visible track record of fighting discrimination. As a result, people know what the ADL stands for, and are very willing to donate money—or support the group in other ways—year after year. (The ADL relies solely on contributions for their funding.)

#2—The most effective organizations are those that are professionally staffed (with experienced media and fundraising people, for example). Volunteer-driven organizations do not have the same level of impact and professionalism as staff-driven groups. (The ADL and the SCLC employ apx. 40 staffers each in the L.A. area alone.)

#3—Media and fundraising staff people pay for themselves. Good people in these two areas can produce results that far outweigh their expenses.

This session was one of a series of dinner meetings sponsored by the PSW Leadership Development Committee.

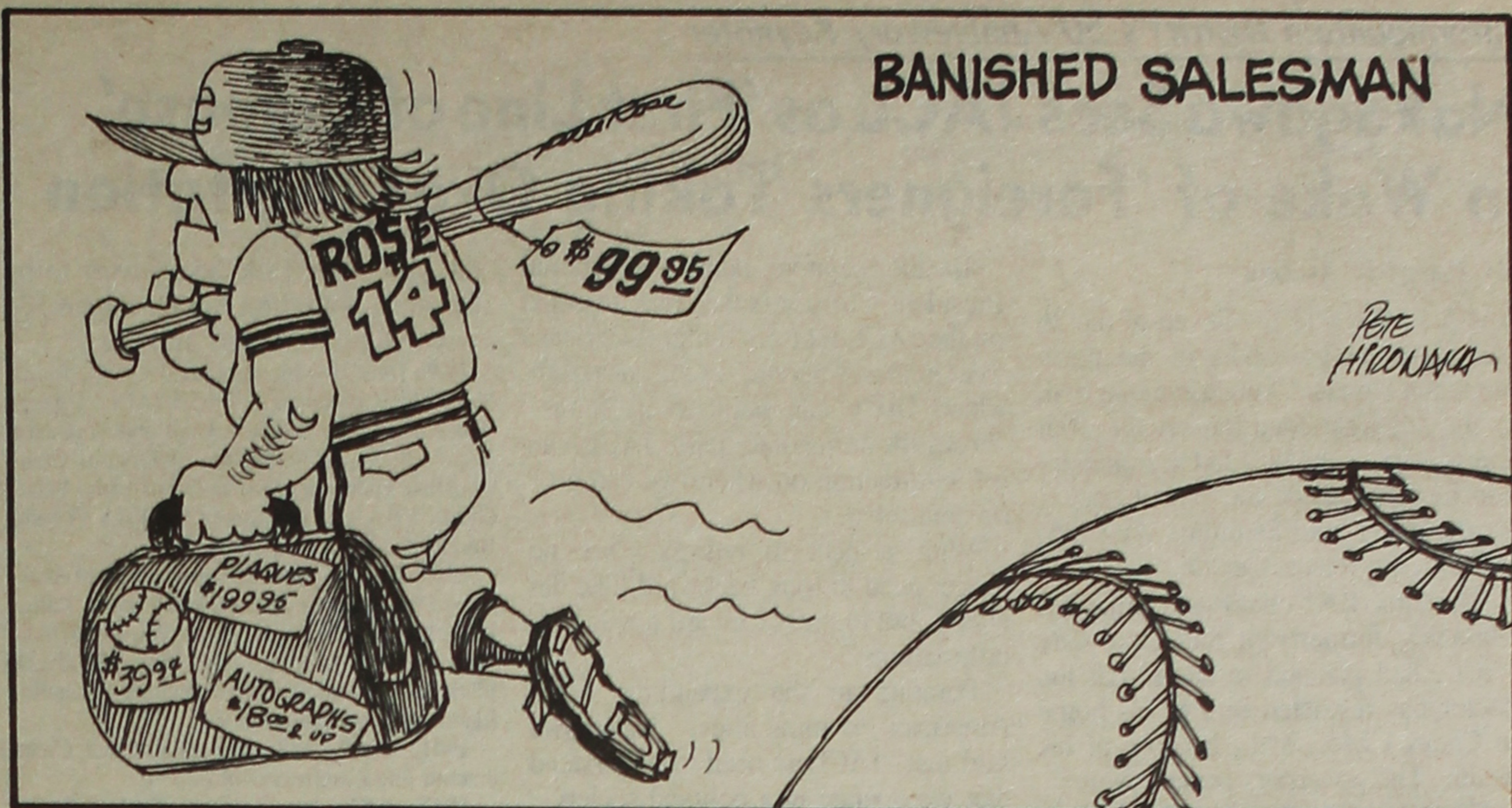
B.J. WATANABE
Leadership Development Chair, PSW
Los Angeles, Calif.

Commendation

I want to commend your staff for the interesting and excellent articles found in the Friday, July 21-28 issue. I appreciated reading about the report on Brazil and the Japanese immigration and also about the article on the "First Japanese U.S. Came by Mistake."

Again, thank you for the good coverage the Pacific Citizen is providing for the readers.

SAM TONOMURA
Japanese Evangelical Missionary Society
Los Angeles, Calif.



BANISHED SALESMAN



FROM THE FRYING PAN

BILL HOSOKAWA

Small Turnout for Nikkei Films

The *Rocky Mountain Jiho*, which is our little community weekly in Denver, announced recently that two Sansei-produced movies were coming to the Buddhist Temple auditorium. One film was titled *Beacon Hill Boys*, and the other was *Cruisin' J' Town*.

The news item said tickets were being sold by JACL Board members, but space permitting, they also would be available at the door. There's nothing like the threat of being shut out to make one want to see the show. We went a half hour early, fully expecting to have to fight our way through a horde of Sansei and Yonsei youngsters since the movies were about their contemporaries—their yearnings and problems and triumphs. It would, it seemed, be an unusual experience for Sansei and Yonsei to see reflections of themselves on the screen.

As it turned out, we were about the first ones in the auditorium. Ultimately the box office head-count reached about 110 and perhaps 90 percent of them were Nisei. Apparently the Sansei and Yonsei in our community have more important things to do than spend a couple of hours watching Sansei-produced films.

Question: If something as universal as films about and by their peers fail to interest young Japanese Americans, how realistic is the contention of some of their elders that all Asian Americans can be united into a cohesive political and social action groups?

Ah, but that is beside the point. We were talking about films.

I did not know what to expect from *Beacon Hill Boys*. Beacon Hill is a residential district in Seattle. On its western slope the hill provides a spectacular view of the harbor. On the east it looks out over Rainier Valley, which is less inspiring. In my youth, which is a long time ago, the more well-to-do of Japanese families lived on Beacon Hill and the rest of us lived closer to town. Today it is a mixed neighborhood, still pleasant, still relatively well kept up by the many Japanese American families that have moved there since the war.

The film showed little of the neighborhood, but I recognized the characters. There were fellows like them among the Nisei before the war—confused, rebellious, drifting, hiding their insecurity behind foul mouths and a

phony bravado. Hardly the stuff of heroes, the film depicted them starkly and brilliantly. But if one overlooked the dramatic skills involved in making the film, one would find it depressing that so little had changed among a people.

The audience was told that *Beacon Hill Boys* was made on a shoestring. Perhaps that is the reason for the impression that it is only a synopsis, without enough footage for development of plot or character. I'd like to see the filmmakers utilize their obvious talents with more adequate financing.

Cruisin' J' Town is an unfortunately irrelevant title, but the music is exciting—particularly the sounds produced by the koto under skilled hands—if somewhat difficult for oldsters to understand. But who says art should be understood? It is reassuring that there are creative Sansei and Yonsei doing their thing in the arts as well as in laboratories and corporate board rooms. They deserve more encouragement than was provided by 110 mostly graying patrons who, judging by their comments or rather the lack of reaction, didn't enjoy the experience all that much.



EAST WIND

BILL MARUTANI

Redress and 'Ho-Sho'

line to the right, probably representing the string to the bow—which one "pulls" and we get "hiku," naturally.

Now, back to the first digression.

AS FOR *ji-shō* and *jiten*, they share the same first kanjis meaning, among other things, "word, term, expression." The other meanings, quite unrelated, include "resign" *ji-suru* and "refuse, decline" *ina-mu*. As for the *shō* part of *ji-shō*, it is the kanji for "write" or "document." One dictionary defined this kanji compound as meaning "glossary."

Finally, as to *jiten*, the *ten* includes meanings such as "code, rule, ceremony" implying (to me) something that is more formal, more complete, more thorough. Which may explain why every recent dictionary, even including a thin, pocket one that I happen to have, labels itself to be a "jiten." One can

字 J1 character, letter, word, handwriting. *aza* section of a village.
引 *jibiki* dictionary
典 *jiten* character dictionary
辞 *jisho* character dictionary

Source: *The Modern Reader's Japanese-English Character Dictionary* by Andrew N. Nelson.


charge a higher price that way.

Let's see, now; where were we? Oh, yes, the *nihongo* term for "redress."

THE DICTIONARY I consulted first explained that the term "redress" had reference to remedying societal abuses. Then it gave the nouns of *ho-shō* and *bai-shō*, with definitions common to both of "indemnity, compensation, reparation." The kanji *shō* for both words is the same, the *kun-yomi* (Japanese reading) being *tsunaga-u* meaning "indemnify, atone for." (Those who enjoy side trips might note that *tsunaga-u* itself is composed of radicals, starting with a *nin-ben* (person) and resulting in a speculative derivation.)

The *ho* in *ho-shō* is a kanji character with a *kun-yomi* of *ogina-u* (to make up for) and *bai* of *bai-shō* means "compensate, indemnify." From my very limited familiarity with the usage of the Japanese language, I believe *bai-shō* has a more common application to everyday affairs, such as civil punishment (*son-gai bai-shō*) and thus would not be appropriate for something sobering such as "redress," a right enshrined in the most important of the amendments to our U.S. Constitution—the First Amendment.

I'VE NO IDEA what terms the Japanese vernacular newspapers use when referring to redress. I may get a few critical letters.


A BROWN JAPANESE AMERASIAN SPEAKS

VELINA HASU HOUSTON

**The Defense and Nurture
of Amerasian Culture in America**

A close American friend of mine who is half Euro-American and half native Japanese told me about another Euro-American/Japanese Amerasian fellow she knew who referred to me as being African, although he also recognized that I was obviously racially mixed. My friend pointed out to him that, yes, I was a quarter African American, but that I was half native Japanese and also a quarter Native American Indian; that, indeed, I was just as Japanese as he was and most certainly Amerasian. My skin is the color of cinnamon mixed with a touch of rice flour; my hair is bible-black with a few hints of angry auburn. I have sloe-shaped eyes, and a button nose and full lips that are exactly like my native Japanese mother's. But this fellow was obviously blind or inobservant, or he chose to be or was trained to be. Whatever the source of his shortcomings, again, I was faced with the fractional definitions that the racist or ethnically-ignorant seem bent on hurling into the faces of multi-racial, multi-cultural beings such as myself; particularly such beings who are mixed with a race of color such as African or Latin.

When the government had to define who was Japanese in order to send Japanese Americans into World War II internment camps, Executive Order 9066 legally defined anyone who was one-eighth or more of Japanese ancestry as being Japanese. Relatedly, mono-racial Americans (particularly Euro-Americans) like to think that anyone who has any smidgeon of African blood is African American. Furthermore, the U.S. government defines anyone who is one-quarter or more Native American Indian as being Native American Indian.

Should we judge my racial and/or cultural identity against these legal and illegitimate fractional definitions, I am wholly Japanese by one definition, wholly African American by another and wholly Native American Indian by another. But that is a lie, a lie created and perpetrated by mono-racial Americans to deny multi-racial and multi-cultural beings of their birth-right.

Biological Truth

I tire of other people, particularly mono-racials, telling me who I am when it comes to my race. I am my biological truth; it is as complex and crystallized as that. I am not Japanese. I am not African. I am not Indian. I am an amalgamation of all three that defies the narrow, exclusionary racial categories used to classify people who live in America.

Similarly, my culture is not American. My cultural upbringing is part native Japanese and part American. I estimate that my cultural composition is roughly three-quarters Japanese and one-quarter American. The American portion is a mixture of cultural values including the values of a person of color, a woman, a liberal, a traditionalist and a Midwesterner.

Living my biological and cultural truth is not easy. In fact, it is an isolated existence. Many of my multi-racial/multi-cultural sisters and brothers also have chosen to shed the prevaricating labels of race that the American mono-racial majority (Euro- and African Americans alike) tries to foist upon them. They provide me with sorority and fraternity that strengthens my quest to free other multi-racial/multi-cultural beings from having to live under such mono-racial oppression.

My quest centers on the struggle for Amerasian peoples to live without such mono-racial racist oppression, although I am just as sensitive towards any other multi-racial mixtures. (Although the term "Amerasian" literally means half American and half Asian,

I use the term to refer to anyone who is of multi-cultural and/or multi-racial Asian descent.)

I am particularly interested in the struggle of "Brown" Amerasians, that is to say, Amerasian who are part Asian and part a race of color.

The reason I am particularly interested in Brown Amerasians is because this hybrid composition owns distinct phenotypes that cause it to feel the weightiest brunt of mono-racial racism against multi-racial Asians in America. A Brown Amerasian is Amerasian. She is not African American or Latin American by any stretch of the culturally/racially-ignorant imagination; nor is she Japanese. She is composed of several races, but she is a new entity with a brand new hybrid culture. (As I always like to say, when one mixes red with blue, one achieves violet; a new color that is given a new name because it looks different and is different.)

"... I am wholly Japanese by one definition, wholly African American by another and wholly Native American Indian by another."

Indeed, the Brown Amerasian, like any member of any other distinct and proud racial group and culture, deserves to be called by her rightful race, by whatever terminology that race finds most appropriate during any given era. The ethnic ignorance of or lack of ethnic consciousness on the part of mono-racial Americans or native Japanese should not diminish the birth-right of the Brown Amerasian or any other Amerasian. The types of oppressive racism that Brown Amerasians endure at the hands of native Japanese and mono-racial Americans are experiences that even more adamantly separate them from these mono-racial factions.

It is inescapable fact that Japanese have a difficult time embracing Amerasians in general—be they White, Golden or Brown; be they Japanese citizens or American citizens. Their arms grow even shorter, however, at the prospect of Brown Amerasians. Mono-racial Americans are just as guilty (if not more so) than Japanese when it comes to treatment of Brown Amerasians. Often, I try to forget that every day of my life is a battle, but incidents always arise that remind me of the constant struggle that stretches out before me. Let me enlighten you.

Racism American-Style

Recently, I attended a meeting of Asian Americans in Los Angeles. I was not the only brown spot in the room. Indeed, there were many full-blooded Asians whose skin was equally as brown as mine and a couple who were even darker than I. But I stood out because my features were not purely Asian; in fact, they are not purely anything, but a composition of everything that I am. I enjoy that definition-defying look.

I had been invited to the meeting because of my stature as an Asian American playwright and poet, and because of my literary contributions to the Asian American community. But there were many people there who did not know who I was. They saw me as an unwanted foreign element in their midst.

"What's she doing here?" whispered a bespectacled Nisei woman. "I thought this was for Asian Americans only."

I heard her every word, though she did not know it. Later on, having heard that I was the woman who wrote *Asa Ga Kimashita* and *Tea*, the Nisei woman approached me with a saccharine smile and said, "You're Velina

Houston, aren't you?" I was kind, polite and tactful, but I was very honest. I told the woman that I had heard her casting aspersions upon me before the meeting began and that she need not hide her racial prejudices now that she learned I was a person who many Asian Americans accord a place of respect within the community. I also told her that, like it or not, she was going to have to accept the presence of Amerasians (be they Afroasian or Eurasian or Latin-Asian) in her midst because we are the community's future.

That statement was modestly based on the fact that Asian Americans are outmarrying at high rates that promises a wealth of Amerasian offspring who Asian Americans should only hope will fuel and sustain their culture as I have and as other Amerasians in literature, the arts and academia are doing.

Perhaps that woman will think twice about verbalizing her racist attitudes from now on, as should all Asian Americans. For Asian Americans are people of color who proselytize continually (and well they should) about the racism they receive at the hands of Euro-Americans. It is rather odd for Asian Americans then to turn around and practice similar types of racism against other people of color, particularly against other people of color who are half Asian. But, odd as this may seem, it happens with alarming frequency.

Incident at a Restaurant

Let me tell you about another racist incident I experienced recently, this time at the hands of a native Japanese woman. I frequent a Japanese restaurant owned by non-racist people whom I love and respect.

One night while having dinner there, I excused myself from the table to go to the ladies' room. On the way there, I overheard my waitress, the native Japanese woman at issue, discussing me with a fellow, very dark-skinned Okinawan waitress. They did not see me, nor did they know just how much Japanese I do or do not understand.

"It is another awful night for me," the Japanese woman exclaimed with exaggerated disgust to her Okinawan associate. "I have to serve the little Black child, the Japanese nigger," she continued, and she and the Okinawan woman, whose skin is darker than mine and whose features are less Asian than mine (she looks Mexican), proceeded to titter with laughter.

Moments later, my waitress returned to my table and conversed with me in Japanese about the wonderful quality of my meal. She was utterly sweet to me and, had I not witnessed her awful racist expression, I would never have suspected her of being a racist. (The Okinawan woman I had long suspected of racism because of her constant complaints about the darkness of her complexion. One evening when a customer asked her if she was of mixed race, I thought the silly woman was going to faint in embarrassment and shame about the very prospect of having "impure" Japanese blood.)

I have not gotten over either of these incidents. One never does. I try to absorb them and allow them to fuel my work. I look at my native Japanese mother and the goodness and grace with which she interacts with all people—be they African American, Korean American, Japanese American, Mexican American or Euro-American. I try to concentrate on that racial/ethnic openness as an ideal of hope for other peoples. Sadly, though, I know my mother is the exception and not the rule. All of my life, I have watched Brown Amerasians suffer ra-

cism at the hands of African Americans, Euro-Americans and other Asian Americans. I know these sufferings all too well myself.

The Life in Kansas

When my mother and our family first settled in Kansas after we came from Tokyo, my mother could not get Euro-American salons to cut her hair because she was a "Jap". She could not get African American salons to cut her hair because she was a "Jap" and because she had "stolen" one of "their" men. She could not get the one Japanese woman in town who cut hair to do hers because my mother had married an African American/Native American Indian, while the Japanese beautician had married a Euro-American.

When I brought Japanese food to school in my lunch pail, Euro-American children laughed, but African American children taunted and called me profane names. A Euro-American family demanded that the Amerasian children be forced to re-take their I.Q. tests because we had scored too high; how could the children of immigrant women score so high on American standardized tests?

When a Korean Afroasian girl and I walked home after junior high school one day, African American girls taunted us with cries of "your mother is a Jap," "your mothers are nigga lovers," "Nip nigger, nip nigger, nip nigger." When a young Los Angeles African American policeman laid eyes on me and my Euro-American/Amerasian son, he looked at me through slatted eyes and whispered roughly under his breath, "Half-breed bitch." When I spoke at UCLA recently, an African American student became angry with me as I expressed my multi-racial-cultural politics. After all, he declared, racial mixing was destroying the African race. Balderdash, I say. Racial mixing is creating new races that create bridges between the original races that, hopefully, will allow us all to get along better as the years go by. When my sister went to buy cosmetics in a Little Tokyo shop, the Japanese shop girl was rude to her and resented her presence in the store. When my sister revisited that same shop with my native Japanese mother in tow, the same girl was sweetly over-kind. And, yes, my friends and enemies, racism is alive and well in America.

Amerasians: An Agenda of Truth

I have no solutions, except the suggestion that we all learn to accord one another personal choices about how we live our lives in terms of who we are racially and culturally. It is important that multi-racial Asian Americans (Amerasians) are allowed to live their biological truths, if they so choose. Asian Americans should value what they have to offer the Asian community, just as other ethnic minority or majority communities (whatever the case may be) should value whatever input these multi-racials offer to their respective communities. We take nothing away from any community by being who we are; rather, we look to each of the communities represented in our racial/cultural compositions and hope that we can contribute positively in some way or offer our support.

America is always boasting that it is the "Great Melting Pot." On the contrary, America is composed of a great

many colors, but, believe me, they are not getting along with a great amount of harmony, not when you dig down deep below the surface rhetoric. The only "melting" element of America is the increasingly burgeoning number of multi-racial/multi-cultural Americans who are standing up and saying, "We are not going to take it anymore."

We are not going to check one racial box, whatever is most suitable to mono-racials, and be satisfied. We are not going to alter our states of being in the racial or cultural sense just to fit into one group or another. Accept us as Americans who carry the racial and cultural baggage of more than one group... and who suffer the racial and cultural prejudices of more than one group.

Many groups focus on Amerasians living in Asia. They speak of their hardships trying to survive in Asia when they look different than other people. Well, there are several hundred thousand Amerasians living in America who also face social, political and sometimes economic struggle because they look different—they don't look Caucasian enough or African enough or Asian enough to fit into the traditionally American racial groups.

While my attention is focused on Amerasians both in Asia and in America, I suggest that Americans and especially the American media take a good, long, hard look at Amerasians who have had to struggle to survive in an American society that tells them they cannot be who they are if they want to cut the all-American rug.

We are our own race. Just as mono-racials protect their races and their culture, we demand, protect, defend and nurture our own—be we Brown or Golden or White Amerasians. Amerasians cannot be told to stand in one racial or national line or another, no more than Euro-Americans can tell African Americans to sit in the back of the bus.

Amerasians will not quietly sit in the back of the racial/cultural bus, so to speak, not like multi-racial Americans of African-European mixtures have allowed themselves to be sat for too long. Amerasians have an agenda for truth—the truth of who we are culturally, racially and biologically. White, Golden and Brown Amerasian voices unify to sing a song of sisterhood and brotherhood; and to fight for the acceptance of us for who we are.

We are building a home and it has no boundaries. It is Asian, it is Latin, it is African, it is European, it is American.

Velina Hasu Houston is an award-winning playwright and poet. Her plays include Asa Ga Kimashita ("Morning Has Broken"), American Dreams, Tea, Thirst, Albatross, The Legend of Bobbi Chicago (a musical), The Melting Plot, My Life A Loaded Gun, and Kokoro Kara ("From the Heart"). The plays have been produced nationally at theaters such as Manhattan Theatre Club, the Old Globe Theatre, the Negro Ensemble Company, Philadelphia Theatre Company, Whole Theatre, TheatreWorks and East West Players. Her poetry collections are entitled, "Green Tea Girl in Orange Pekoe Country" and "Skirful of Hell." A Phi Beta Kappa, Houston is a twice-named Rockefeller Foundation Fellow and the recipient of numerous awards for her contributions to the theatre art and multi-cultural communities. Currently, she is penning a book of short stories entitled, Amerasian Stories. She resides in Santa Monica, Calif. with her son, Kiyoshi, and dedicates all of her creative efforts to him and to her mother, Setsuko.

1989 Holiday Issue Notice

The Holiday Issue advertising kits are being completed by the staff for distribution soon after the Labor Day weekend. It will consist of basic instructions, Bulk Rate Card No. 12 (the rates are the same: \$12 per column inch, \$5 per one-line greetings, \$840 for one page, \$1,170 for a pair of pages), insertion orders of ads which appeared in the last Holiday Issue for renewals, and a supply of blank forms for new orders.

The deadlines are: Nov. 1—Bulk Rate Space. Nov. 15—Ad Copy. Nov. 30—Final for All Ads and Stories.

The Holiday Issue will be printed on the Tuesday prior to Christmas Day.

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