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Aftermath in Los Angeles
—page 6

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Friday, May 8, 1992

2 men arraigned for alleged assault of 3 Nikkei

LOS ANGELES—Two men are scheduled to stand trial by Los Angeles Municipal Court judge David Horwitz for allegedly beating three Japanese Americans Feb. 29 at Topanga State Beach, according to the *Rafu Shimpo*. The suspects were scheduled to be arraigned May 4.

Kaskey Cody, 21, and Kurt Burns, 27, are alleged to have yelled epithets prior to the beating including, "Get off our beach you Japs! Hawaiian Nigger Chinks! Hawaiian Japs go home!"

Yuji Kawana, 24, Alan Miyagishima, 31, and Michael Tagami, 35, were identified as the victims who were alleged to have been assaulted in the beach parking lot as they were preparing to leave.

Nikkei woman killed for no apparent motive

FORT WORTH, Texas—Takashi Goto, 53, came home after exercising at a health club on April 2 and found his wife, Mae, 52, on the kitchen floor. Local police said her neck had been slashed and the paramedics had arrived and pronounced her dead. The couple lived in Bedford, a suburb 15 miles northeast of the city.

Police arrested three teen-age suspects six days later, charging Gerald Anthony Kowalk, 17, with capital murder. The two 15-year-olds were held on juvenile charges of capital murder. Lt. David Flory of the Bedford Police said, "It appears that the actual killing of Mrs. Goto was done for nothing but the thrill of it." Her purse, several hundred dollars and other items were also taken. All three suspects have criminal records.

Court: Teen to stand trial in Thai murders

PHOENIX—The Arizona Supreme Court refused to hear action that murder charges against Jonathan Doody be dropped in the Aug. 10, 1991, Thai temple slayings, according to the *Phoenix Gazette*.

Doody's attorney, Peter Balkan said that Doody was denied due process when Maricopa County Superior Court judge Ronald Reinstein refused to conduct a preliminary hearing before Doody was ordered to stand trial. Reinstein didn't conduct a hearing to see if there was sufficient cause to believe Doody committed the murders.

Originally, Doody, 17, was held as a juvenile and ordered to stand trial as an adult. According to the *Gazette*, Reinstein, took the action to avoid the delay of a duplicate hearing.

Where do we go from here?

Asian Americans take steps, say what needs to be done after L.A. riots

Asian American civil rights and community leaders on May 4 called for a meeting with President Bush after being excluded from a meeting of minority civil rights leaders and activists.

The president met May 1 with leaders from the African American and Hispanic American communities to seek their advice in the aftermath of the Rodney King verdict. No Asian American individual or group was invited to attend.

In a letter to the president, nine Asian American representatives of various na-

tional and community organizations involved in civil rights wrote, "We are angry and disappointed with the fact that Asian Americans were not invited to your meeting on May 1st. . . . As you know, Asian Americans were greatly impacted by last week's events. It is estimated that over 1,540 Korean American businesses were destroyed. In an incident telecast nationally, a Japanese American motorist, who was dragged from his car and badly beaten, was one of the first casualties.

See BUSH/page 4



Photo: ALVINA LEW

PEACE RALLY—Korean Americans gather at local park to demonstrate need for working out problems in tense Los Angeles neighborhoods. More photos on pages 3 and 4.

Short takes

Reactions to Rodney King verdict

Many Asian American organizations expressed outrage at the verdict in the Rodney King case. Here are some of the statements:

● **JACL**: "It is difficult to reconcile the jury's verdict with the images captured on the video and testimony presented by other law enforcement offic-

ers during the trial," said Dennis Hayashi, national director. "We join with other civil rights leaders in calling for an immediate federal investigation into civil rights violations."

Carol Kawamoto, PSW governor, added, "This verdict is a disturbing

See REACTION/ page 5

Nikkei leaders: What needs to be done now

By GWEN MURANAKA
Assistant editor

LOS ANGELES—As Los Angeles begins the painful process of rebuilding after the devastation of four days of riots following the Rodney King verdict, Asian American civil rights leaders grapple with its aftermath and the effects on L.A.'s multiethnic population.

"It's a great setback in terms of what's happened to people in the community," said Ron Wakabayashi, executive director of the L.A. City Human Relations Commission. "In the most dramatic fashion, (the rioting) underscores the level of pain and dissatisfaction—it's an alarm clock that's gone off."

While expressing his dismay and shock at the verdict, Wakabayashi said the ensuing violence came as no surprise. "As soon as I heard the verdict, I knew we were facing a very difficult situation. It was the absolute worst case scenario. The four verdicts had to be enraging, painful. I felt that pain."

Wakabayashi said that the Human Relations Commission was working within the devastated communities. "We're trying to do fairly immediate

See LEADERS/page 2

MORE ACTION TAKEN: JACL's Hayashi meets with Justice Department on Loo, King cases . . . page 4.

Denver Convention: A good deal, a good deal to see

By PRISCILLA OUCHIDA
Vice president/general operations

The 1992 JACL National Convention at Denver, Colo., Aug. 3-8, offers reasonable prices and a chance to explore and experience the attractions of the Mile High City.

Rooms at the Denver Sheraton Tech Center are only \$71 a night, for single or double occupancy, and the hotel has on-site restaurants and superior convention facilities. Convention meetings are just an elevator ride away.

The convention package is \$130 advance registration (postmarked by June 25, 1992) and \$145 after that date. It

includes convention registration, the awards dinner and the Sayonara Banquet. A golf tournament is also being offered for a separate fee of \$150 for JACL members and \$165 for non-members.

The Sheraton is located in a hotel complex which offers a number of restaurants within walking distance. The hotel also has a deli that is open until 10 p.m. for those who crave late-night snacks.

The Denver Convention Committee has lined up a varied menu of activities for delegates and boosters.

Interested in gambling? Central City is a short 40-minute ride away by shuttle and offers slot machines and low stakes blackjack and poker.

Have you ever tried freshly brewed beer? The committee has arranged two tours to the Coors Brewery which is highlighted by a sample of their fresh brew.

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Nikkei resigns L.A. job amid controversy

LOS ANGELES— After a 15-year tenure which has seen the Los Angeles Harbor rise to prominence as America's busiest commercial port, Jun Mori, recently resigned his position as Los Angeles Harbor Commissioner amid controversy and accusations of impropriety.

Mori announced the decision April 8 at a meeting of the Harbor Commission. In a letter sent to Mayor Tom Bradley, Mori listed no reasons for his sudden departure, but said it was with "mixed feelings and fond memories."

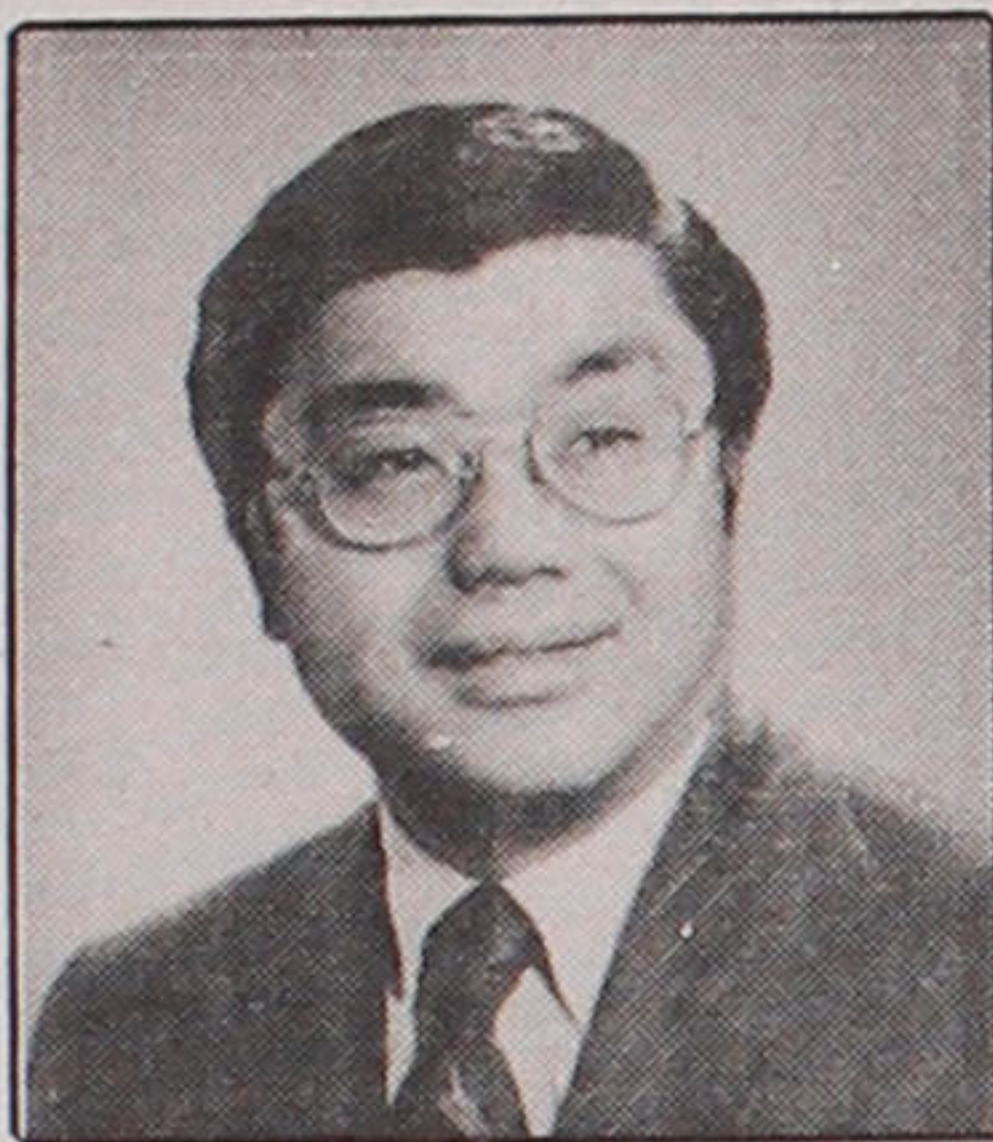
IN HIS DEFENSE: A friend writes that Mori was victim of politics. See letters, page 6.

Mori has been the subject of unfavorable articles in the *Los Angeles Times*. While crediting Mori as a champion of affirmative action and "a pivotal player in the harbor's emergence as the nation's busiest commercial port," the *L.A. Times* cites criticism accusing Mori of conflict of interest.

Mori, reacting to the articles, said his wife had been upset by the recent reports. "It's easy to say I accuse you of something, and then say there's not enough evidence. That's the kind of reporting that's done. I've worked hard for many years. People who I've worked with know this."

Mori mentioned colleague Fred Heim, who according to the *Times* has worked on the port commission for 13 years and is quoted as a source in a recent *Times* article.

In a letter to the *Times*, Heim angrily defended Mori amid criticism accusing the *Times* of going after Mori with the assumption



JUN MORI

that all public officials are corrupt. "When someone is as committed to good deeds, as Jun has been, you should be more willing to give credit. I worked with Jun a dozen years and knew him as well as anyone in the Harbor Department."

"And yet instead of quoting me, your reporter chose to give much space to the usual unnamed sources that seem to crawl out of their hole whenever the opportunity to knock someone presents itself," said Heim.

Mori went on to say, "In the more than 14 years that I have been privileged to serve on the board, the Port of Los Angeles has had a most dramatic growth and success in cargo tonnage and revenue. Worldport L.A. is now the leading port in the entire nation, which translates into unprecedented increases in jobs, sales, tax revenue and income for the entire region."

Bradley praised the departing harbor commissioner and recently announced the appointment of Toshikazu (Tosh) Terasawa as Mori's successor. Terasawa, president of the Japanese American

Cultural and Community Center and a member of the Building and Safety Commission for 18 years, was commended by the mayor for his "outstanding experience and creative problem solving skills."

Speaking to the *Pacific Citizen*, Mori cited among his accomplishments, the hiring of more minorities and women at the Port of Los Angeles in staff positions giving the example of African Americans and Japanese Americans who were in high level positions. "When I went there it was all older, white males. City departments are very closely scrutinized for the recruiting of minorities and women; I think we're one of the top departments in the city. It's on track."

Mori is also credited with adding additional revenue to the Port of Los Angeles during his tenure through increased business with Japan and through the dry bulk terminal project which he says in a letter to Mayor Bradley, "will significantly improve our nation's trade imbalance on a constant and long-term basis."

Although Mori said recent controversy didn't factor into his decision, that he had been "phasing down" his activity at the Harbor Commission for the past three years, he sounded concerned about the intense criticism and scrutiny of public officials. "If you're in the public arena, you're going to get attacked. The sad part is people are not going to serve."

"I was very determined to perform public service. One of the reasons, I realized, was because my grandfather and father were denied the opportunity. Perhaps the fifteen years was too long, I don't know," said Mori.

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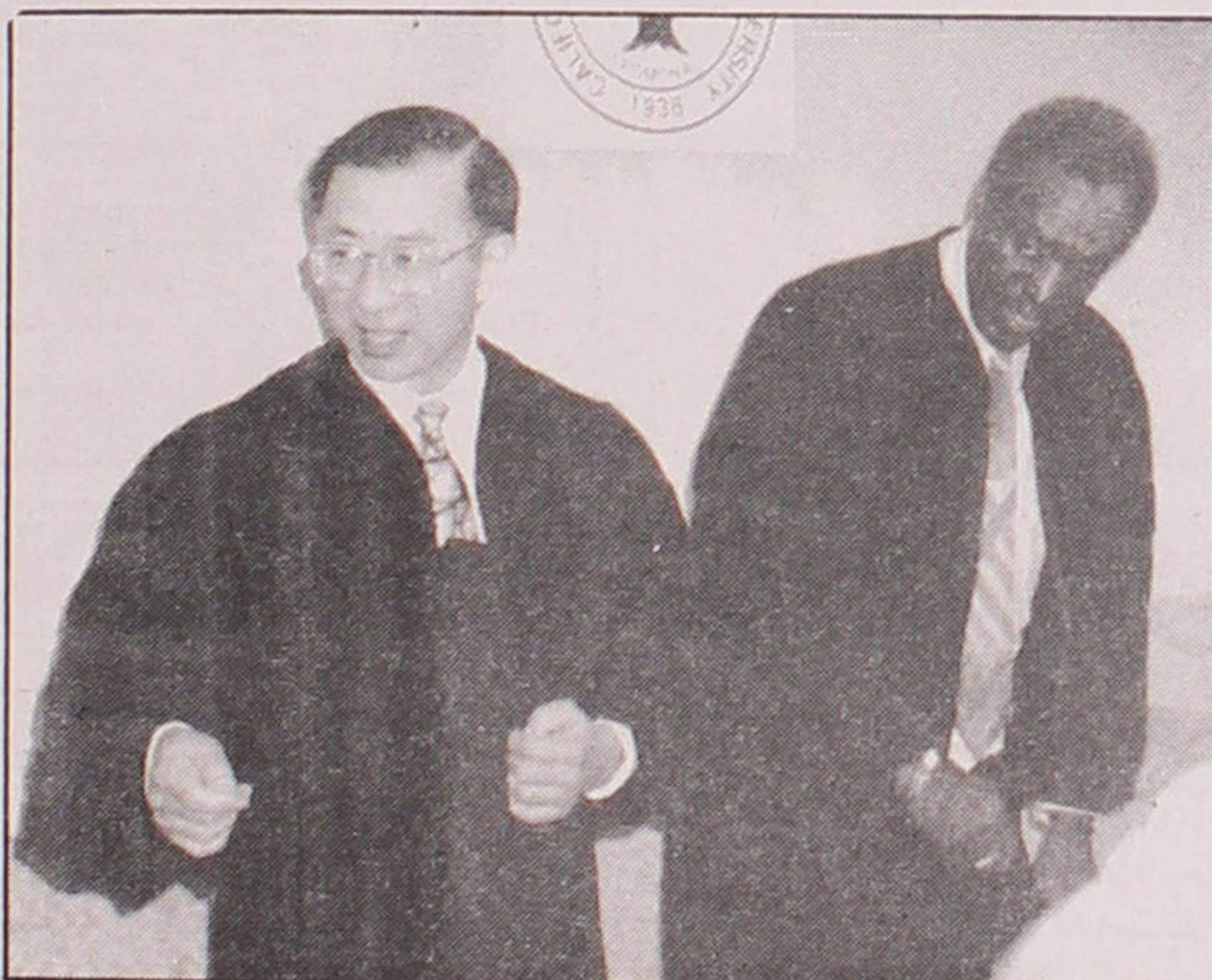
Cosby steals show at Suzuki's inauguration

Story and Photo by Harry Honda

POMONA, Calif.—Dr. Bob H. Suzuki, 56, the fourth president at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, was formally inaugurated April 29. As part of the ceremonies, entertainer Bill Cosby, tennis buddy while both were at University of Massachusetts-Amherst, was presented the honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree from the 20-campus California State University.

While Suzuki, the first Asian American to be named president in CSU history, delineated his educational philosophy "for achieving excellence through diversity" in the inaugural address, comedian Cosby entertained and educated at the same time in his acceptance remarks — a unique and rare accomplishment.

Cosby, who has an Ed.D. (1976, UM-Amherst), said Americans should look beyond minority groups. "There's a sickness of clumping one another together," said Cosby. "Look at



BOB AND BILL—Cal Poly Pomona President Dr. Bob Suzuki and Dr. William H. Cosby Jr. don robes at Suzuki's inauguration April 29.

them as individuals," he continued, "... who knows, one of them may be a potential genius," a point savored by the hundreds of educators in the audience.

Suzuki predicted the ethnic minority percentage on campus,

now at 57%, will increase over the coming decade.

Suzuki was an aeronautical engineer turned activist in the 1970s when he joined JACL's Repeal Title II program and later chaired the National JACL education committee.

Small kid time

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An uneasy calm . . .



Photo: GWEN MURANAKA

QUIET VIGIL—Little Tokyo under occupation as a squad of humvees stand watch, Monday morning, May 4.

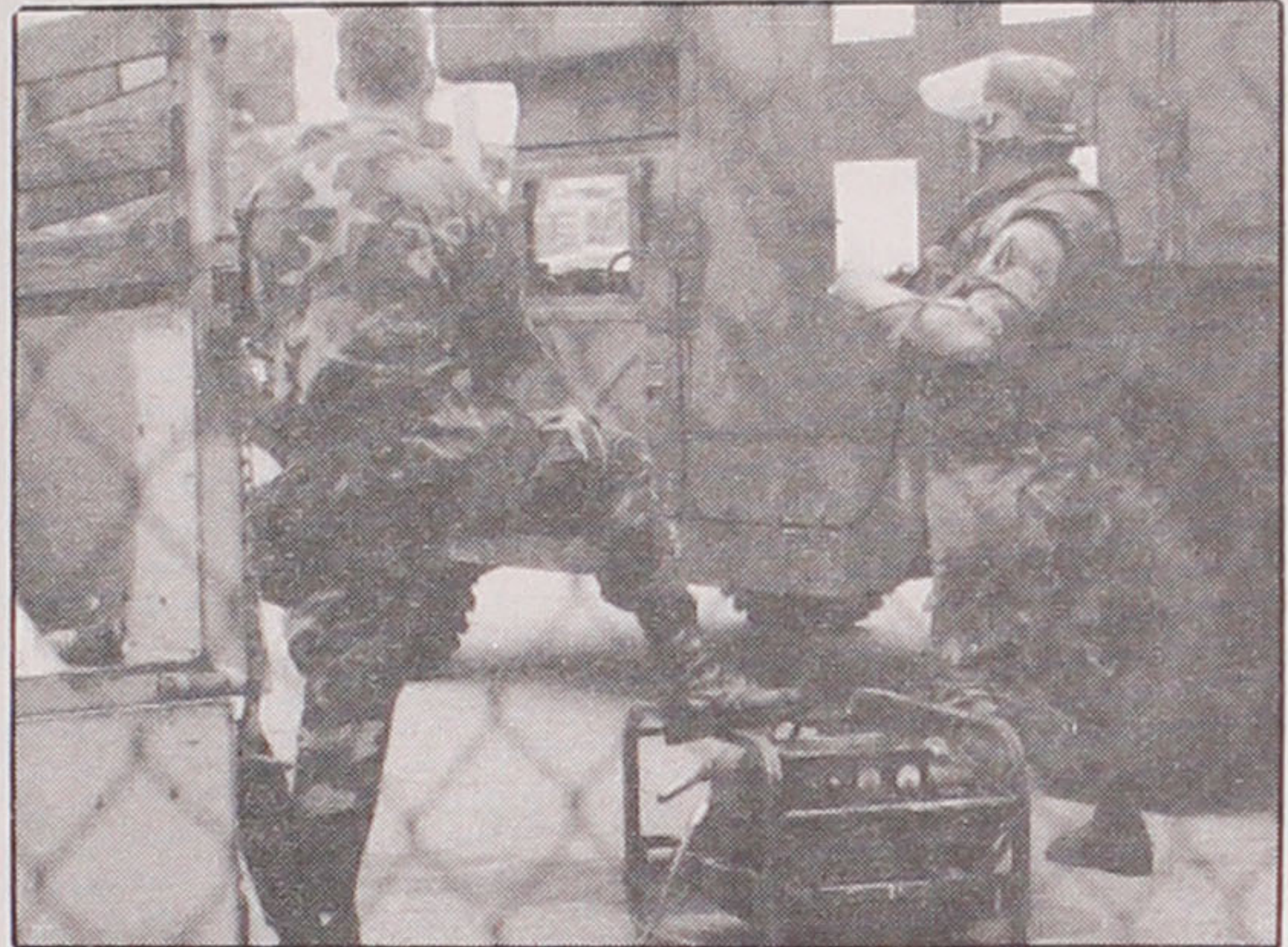


Photo: GWEN MURANAKA

MILITARY PRESENCE—Part of the National Guard forces stationed across from the New Otani Hotel on Los Angeles Street, Monday morning, May 4.

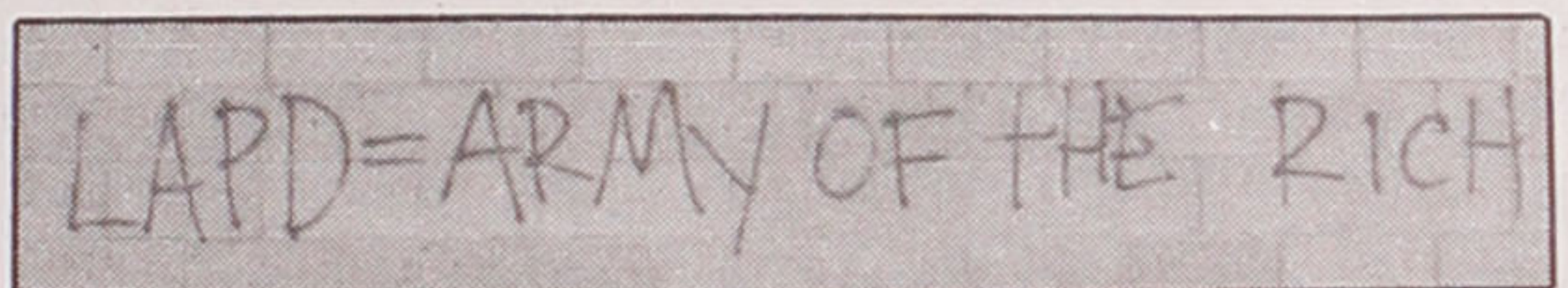


Photo: GWEN MURANAKA

REACTION—Response to the acquittal of four police officers on building adjacent to Pacific Citizen offices, Thursday, April 30.



Photo: ALVINA LEW
PEACE RALLY—Black leader and Korean policeman join hands in gesture of unity at peace rally held May 2 in Los Angeles.

Hayashi discusses Loo, King cases with government

Dennis Hayashi, JACL national director, met May 4 with James Turner, deputy assistant attorney general, U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, to discuss the department's appeal of the Jim Loo Case and the Rodney King verdict.

Hayashi urged the Justice Department to conduct an immediate investigation into federal civil rights charges against the four Los Angeles Police Department officers acquitted in the Rodney King beating trial. "In light of national reaction to the unjust verdict in the trial, and the serious escalation of racial tensions between communities, the JACL stressed the urgency for the department to quickly complete its review of the case and to quickly convene a grand jury," Hayashi said.

Jim Loo, a Chinese American, was murdered in 1989 in Raleigh, N. C. Two men, Lloyd and Jim Piche, attacked Loo and his friends as they left a pool hall, calling

them "gooks" and "chinks." Lloyd Piche was sentenced last year to four years in prison for violating the federal civil rights of Loo and six others, and ordered to pay restitution to the Loo family.

Under the Federal Sentencing guidelines, Piche faced six to seven-and-a-half years in prison for his conviction. The Department of Justice, which sought the maximum sentence allowable, is appealing U.S. District Judge James Fox's decision to downgrade the sentence to four years. This case was scheduled to be heard before the 4th District Court of Appeals May 8.

"As the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights recently reported, hate crimes against Asian Americans have increased alarmingly over the past few years. It is important that adequate sentences are handed down against perpetrators like Mr. Piche in order to send a strong signal that racial violence cannot be condoned."

BUSH

(Continued from page 1)

"Circumstances such as these have led to escalation of racial tensions between minority groups. The majority of the Asian American community was dismayed by the verdict in the Rodney King case, and supports an expedited investigation and requests for indictments on civil rights charges by the Justice Department of the involved officers. Failure to acknowledge that Asian Americans share the concerns of other noted civil rights organizations regarding the King verdict serves to deepen the growing division between our respective communities . . . As you stated in your address last Friday, 'We must allow our diversity to bring us together, not drive us apart.' Such rebuilding of bridges must be inclusive of all impacted ethnic communities."

The president was expected to visit Los Angeles at the latter part of last week. Representatives of Asian American organizations sought a meeting at that time.

Signing the letter were: Dennis Hayashi, national director, Japanese American Citizens League; Daphne Kwok, executive director, Organization of Chinese Americans; Bong Hwan Kim, co-chair, Black-Korean American Alliance; Yvonne Lee, executive director, Chinese American Citizens Alliance; Paul Igasaki, executive director, Asian Law Caucus; Deborah Ching, president, Asian Pacific Planning Council; Ron Wakabayashi, executive director, Los Angeles City Human Relations Commission; Stewart Kwoh, executive director, Asian Pacific American Legal Center of Southern California; and William Hou, president-elect, National Asian Pacific American Bar Association.

LEADERS

(Continued from page 2)

digress to finger pointing to who's the most at fault and who suffered the most," said Tokeshi.

Kathryn Imahara, attorney at the Asian Pacific American Legal Center of Southern California (APALC), describing the scene at APALC when the Rodney King verdict was announced, said, "On staff, a number were really silent, almost like disbelief. A number were screaming. I was so mad, so appalled. There was a level of disbelief even within myself."

Imahara said that APALC is now developing a plan to reach the many Asian Americans who need legal services after the riots. "The immediate concern is providing direct legal services to those who have been left homeless and lost their businesses. For those who have completely lost their businesses due to fire, we have to try and get government aide to tide them over."

On what needs to be done in aftermath the riots, Imahara said, "It has allowed us a unique opportunity to try and affect some real change because it's clear that since the Watts riots, very little has changed if at all in South Central."

"I think it's up to us to push our elected official to make some change. For the first time, I heard Pete Wilson use economic development in South Central. It's up to us to make Wilson own up to those words," said Imahara.

Talking about minority coalition building in the aftermath of the King verdict, Imahara said, "(Coalition building) was happening at one level, but (community leaders) were not the ones who were looting. There's been a lot of talk that leadership is out of touch with the communities it serves, and I think in some ways that's true."

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REACTIONS

(Continued from page 1)

message to the public that excessive and unreasonable use of force is justifiable." Referring to the recommendations issued by the Christopher Commission, which called for police reform within the Los Angeles Police Department following the King incident, Kawamoto said, "The department's policies and actions must vigorously reflect and reaffirm civil rights for all people."

Hayashi added that the anger and frustration being vented over the outcome of this case are not confined to a single city or racial group. "All people and organizations committed to defending human and civil rights should be concerned about what happened to Rodney King. At the same time, we strongly condemn the violence and scapegoating being committed against innocent people and their property."

● **ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN LEGAL CENTER OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA:** "This sends a clear signal that no person of color is safe on our streets. The beating like the one Mr. King received has been given legitimacy and can now be considered 'business as usual' from the LAPD. Nothing will change in our city, no healing will occur as long as this verdict goes unaddressed," said Stewart Kwok, executive director.

● **ASIAN LAW CAUCUS:** "Today, no person of color can feel as safe on the streets as they did before this verdict," said Paul Igasaki, executive director of the organization. "We are outraged by this travesty of justice. The Asian community also has experienced racial harassment at the hands of the police. Indeed, the Asian Law Caucus' first major case in 1972 involved protesting the targeting of Asian youths during police sweeps and we have seen other examples of anti-Asian activities by various police agencies since that time . . . The U.S. Department of Justice must prosecute the officers for violation of Rodney King's civil rights, just as they have in some anti-Asian violence cases and in situations where Southern juries have refused to convict accused whites. Somewhere there must be a response from the system to the anger and betrayal that many of us feel."

● **ORGANIZATION OF CHINESE AMERICANS:** "The acquittal is a major setback not only to the rebuilding of race relations in Los Angeles and throughout the country but also a clear commentary that reporting crimes and pressing charges does not necessarily result in justice," said Daphne Kwok, national executive director. "The Asian American community has been educating our community about the need to cooperate and to work with law enforcement officials. Unfortunately, the outcome of the King case could potentially set us back 10 steps in our efforts."

REP. ROBERT MATSUI—"I am extremely shocked at this outcome. I never really considered the possibility of an acquittal in this case because the evidence seemed so overwhelming. After viewing the videotape again, I just cannot believe that any jury could conclude that there was not an excessive use of force against Rodney King. As a part of the minority community, I am particularly disappointed, as I feel a racial edge both in the trial's outcome and in the violent aftermath we are now witnessing."

"This will undoubtedly be a defining moment for a generation of African Americans who now see their stake in our judicial system, our government, and our entire society as totally irrelevant. That is a bitter lesson for all of us, but particularly for the disenfranchised minority community."



COMMON SCENE—Pitch-black smoke rises on Day 2 (May 1) from Asian-owned G & J Market on M.L. King Blvd. and Van Ness, three miles west of Olympic Memorial Coliseum.

Scenes from Southwest L.A.

Story and photos: HARRY K. HONDA, Editor emeritus

LOS ANGELES—Along the Seinan-Crenshaw area early Thursday (April 30) and Friday morning (May 1) where Japanese Americans have been working and living since 1945, some offices and merchants were spared the looting and fires that ravaged the city in wake of the not-guilty verdict in the Rodney King case.

While the ATM machine at Union Bank on Jefferson Blvd. was ripped open, Grace's Pastries across the street seemed unmolested. On the same street, the new Seinan Senior Citizen Center, the Nisei professionals and L.A. Southwest Japanese Credit Union offices were unscathed.

Several shops in the Nisei-developed Crenshaw Square complex were burned down (see photo below); Holiday Bowl was open until 5 during the dusk-to-dawn city-wide curfew, but the adjacent drug store and auto-parts house were destroyed except for the walls.

Several blocks west of the USC campus on W. 36th, the Seinan Buddhist Church remained a picture of Japanese serenity as were other Asian American churches in the area.

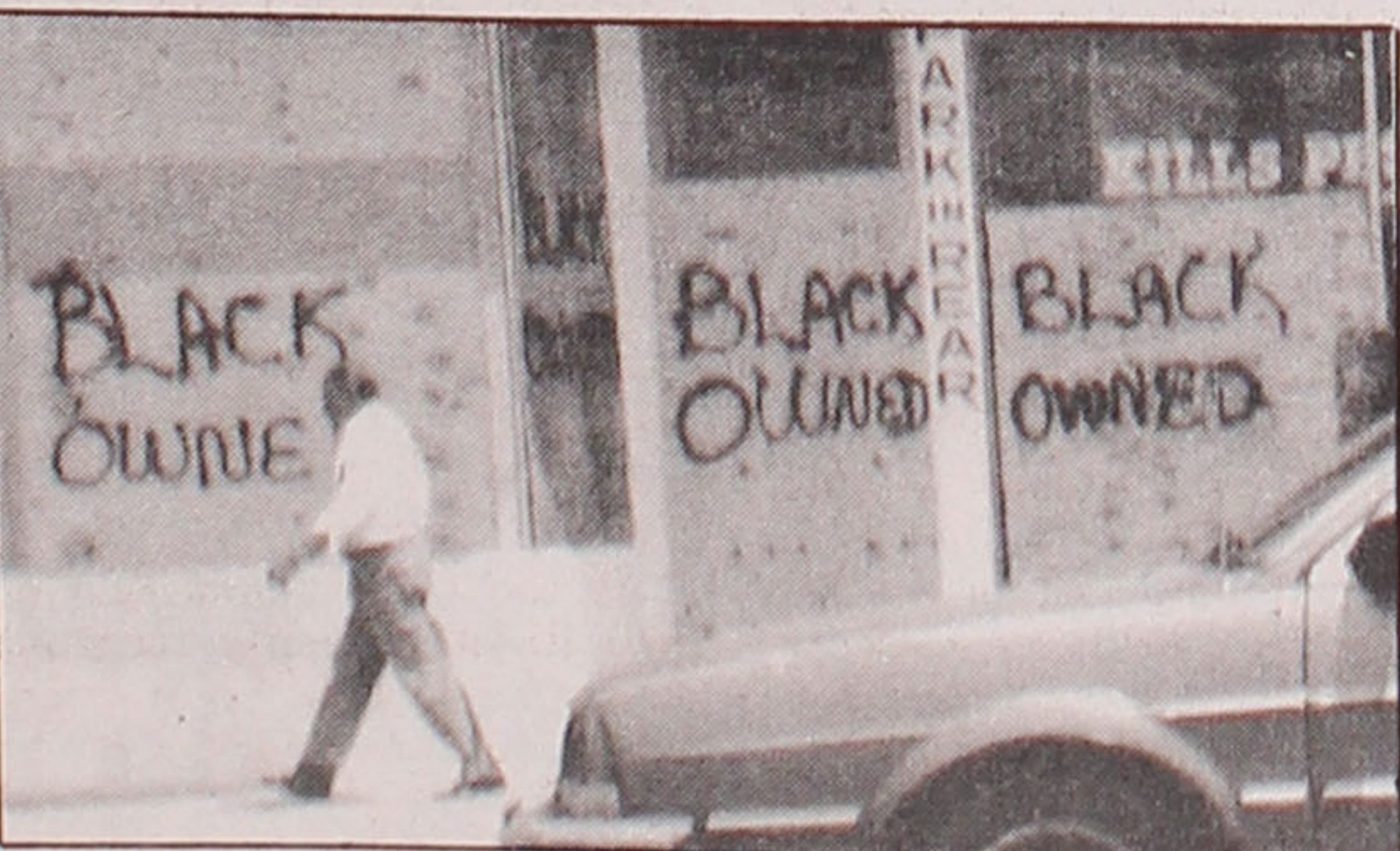
On Wednesday night (April 29) when violence erupted at Civic Center at City Hall and the police building, police pushed the protesters southward toward New Otani Hotel where one of its huge glass entrances was stoned, and around the corner on E. 2nd, a Matsuzakaya sign-display window was smashed.



DEVASTATION—Totally-gutted are two Crenshaw Square stores and Crenshaw Medical Center (once housing Nisei physicians). Wall at right is the Sumitomo Bank of California.

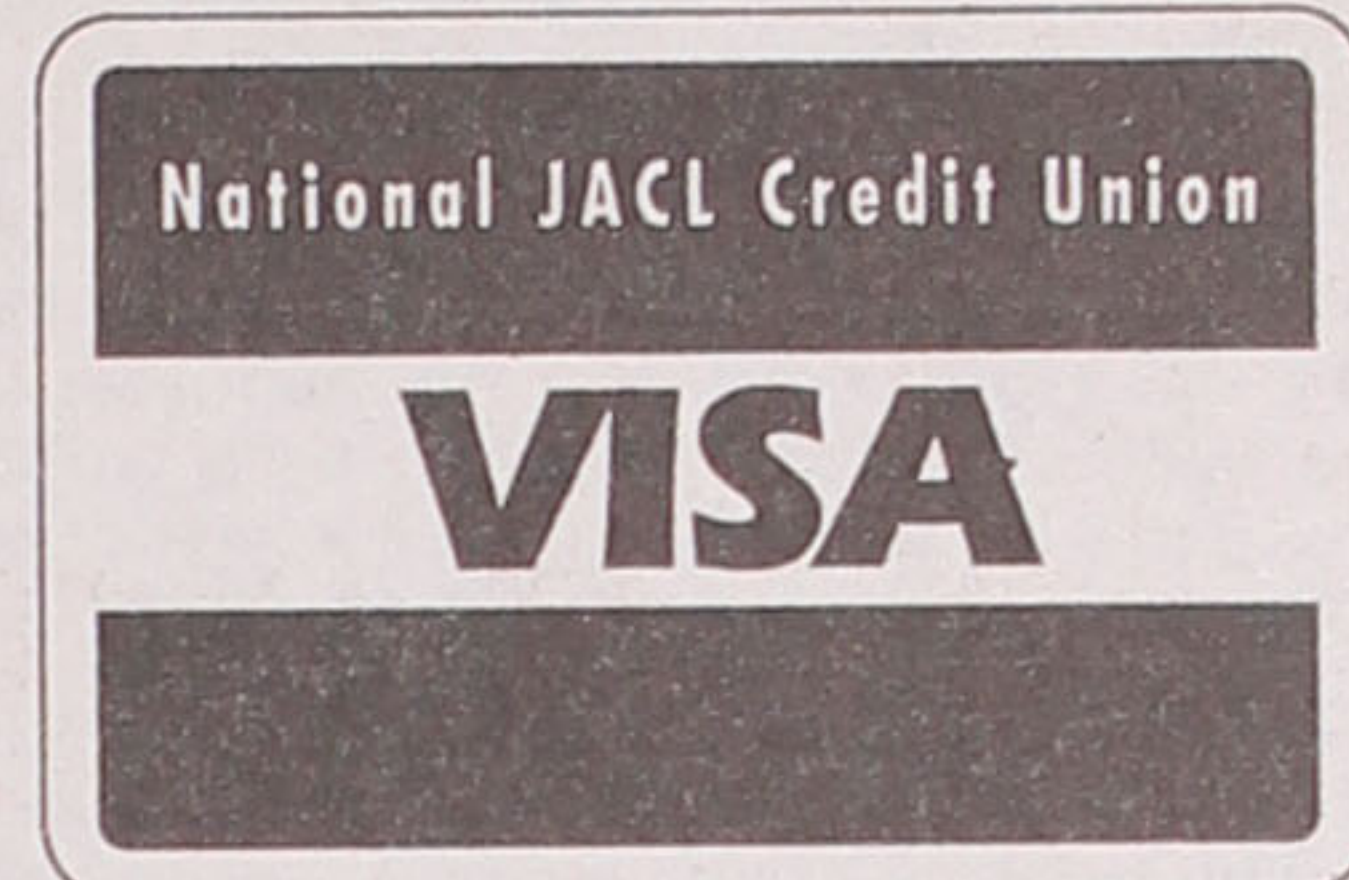


MORE DEVASTATION—Charred remains of an ARCO gas station at the busy Jefferson-Crenshaw Blvd. corner, where its Nisei owner Al Morita employed neighborhood African American youth.



SELF-PROTECTION—Boarded up with plywood before the rioters stormed the West Adams - Crenshaw area on Thursday night is this Black-owned hardware store on Crenshaw.

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JACL-Blue Shield of California Group Health Trust
1765 Sutter Street, San Francisco, California 94115

Opinions



From the frying pan

BILL HOSOKAWA

Recent books about Japanese Americans

Books by and about Japanese Americans have become so numerous that it is difficult to keep up with them. After a slow start we have become a writing people, and that's great because we have so much to put down for the record. Let me tell you about a few recent books.

Japanese Americans. From Relocation to Redress. Back in 1983 a conference on relocation and redress was held in Salt Lake City under auspices of the University of Utah. A number of Japanese Americans and other scholars interested in the subject spoke. Some of their papers, plus additional material, were compiled in a book published in 1986 by the University of Utah Press with the help of a grant from JACL's Japanese American Research Project.

A revised and updated edition was published late last year by the University of Washington Press. Good reading and lots of interesting material.

Our House Divided. by Tomi Kaizawa Knaefer. University of Hawaii Press. This project began in 1966 as a series of stories in the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* about fami-

lies in Hawaii with members on both sides of the Pacific war. Reporter Tomi Knaefer got in touch with seven families in Hawaii, then traveled to Japan for additional in-depth interviews with other members of those families. She came up with sensitive, intensely poignant stories. Now the series, with updated information and a personalized introduction, has been preserved in book form. This is a must-read.

Pearl Harbor and the Japanese Americans, by Sen Nishiyama. This book, in Japanese, was published late last year by Simul Press of Tokyo. The author has translated it into English and is now seeking a publisher.

Nishiyama was born and educated in Utah but accompanied his mother to Japan after his father's death and became a Japanese citizen. For many years he was chief interpreter for U.S. envoys in Tokyo and after retirement became a consultant for Sony.

Nishiyama found that many Japanese were unaware of the part played by Japanese Americans in the U.S. civil rights

movement. He contended that Japan won equality with the United States not only because of its economic success, but also because of the efforts of Japanese Americans to overcome racial discrimination. He wrote this book to bridge this knowledge gap, concentrating on the story of Nisei military service in World War II and JACL's postwar legislative campaigns.

Nisei Christian Journey, its Promise and fulfillment. This is an ambitious two-volume project of the Japanese Presbyterian Conference and the Northern California Japanese Christian Church Federation. Over years, in-depth interviews were recorded with 110 Japanese Americans, and 13 of them were chosen for publication.

Like most oral histories the narratives are rambling and not always complete. But they contain a wealth of material about what it was like for common Japanese Americans to grow up in impoverished pre-war communities, to experience the trauma of Evacuation and finally, to claw their way back to security and respectability. For copies, write to Tom Okazaki, 1221 Marlin Ave., Foster City, CA 94404. ☐

Letters

Letters should be brief and are subject to editing. Please sign your letter but make sure we are able to read your name. Include mailing address and telephone number. You may fax letters to 213/626-8213 or mail them to Letters to the Editor, Pacific Citizen, 701 E. 3rd St., Ste. 201, Los Angeles, CA, 90013.

Good man forced out of Harbor Commission

The resignation of attorney Jun Mori from the Los Angeles Harbor Commission is a great loss.

He accomplished more for the city of Los Angeles in 15 years as commissioner, than one would expect from one, who was made so suspect. His sincerity was not acknowledged by some.

MORE ON MORI: See news story, page 3

His brilliant leadership and participation in a very competitive business world on behalf of all of us should be recognized. Mori's dedication to high principles, astute understanding of people, combination of education and training to be fluent in both English and Japanese made him extremely valuable.

Unfortunately, these intrinsic values coupled with gentlemanly demeanor and perhaps his ancestry made him the subject of extreme, unfounded and unjust criticism. His adversaries were perhaps envious of his background and his uncanny, untainted ethical behavior made them need to lash out at every opportunity.

The commissioner was dedicated to his philosophy of improving international and trade relations between countries; Japan and those of the Pacific Rim, in particular.

Conflict of interest was a most sensitive matter to him. A large international law firm is his employer and its clients are directly or indirectly involved with industries intertwined internationally, thus Mori had concern for conflict of interest regulations at all times. He deferred to authority when in doubt.

We, citizens of this large diverse metropolitan area of a great nation, need to adjust our sights so that honest men of great integrity and wisdom are not made targets just to be targeted in shotgun fashion. Allegations should be precise and accurate.

In this heyday of Japan-bashing, all of us should come to our senses and realize the injustices of such actions and comments and understand the plight of Americans of Japanese ancestry and how they are affected.

The resignation of a man such as Jun Mori, who was practically driven out by unfounded allegations, many petty, has affected his personal life. Very few of us would have put up with such diatribes for a month; not 15 years.

Some of the very reasons for which Mr. Mori and other Americans of Japanese ancestry served and died for our country, in spite of distrust and suspicion, (were) that facial features have nothing to do with honor, trust, loyalty, integrity and love of country.

Jun Mori is a role model for all. He is a fine example and product of what can be accomplished, no matter the odds.

Heads of state request Mr. Mori's presence and assistance, yet, I and others can seek his counsel and receive his undivided attention.

It is a sad commentary to have to lament the resignation of a fine man and friend.

Harold S. Harada,
D.D.S.

Culver City, Calif.

Voices

In the L.A. aftermath

Some things will never be the same

by ISAO ANDY ENOMOTO
PC Staff

It was Thursday, April 30, 1992, about four o'clock in the afternoon. That's when I realized how bad the situation really was. I knew there were a few incidences the night before, but I thought things would have calmed down by now. As I was driving up the block to my home in the now famous area known as Koreatown in Los Angeles, I noticed two firetrucks blocking the other end of the street. An electronics store that was called ITC before Korean merchants bought it a couple years ago was on fire. The riot had come to my neighborhood.

As I got out of my car, my sister ran out telling me that the abandoned house three doors down had burnt down, that we should pack a few things and go to our cousin's house in Anaheim. But that was out of the question. One, it would take forever to get there because traffic was a mess. It took me an hour to get home when normally it takes me 20 minutes during rush hour. And two, the safest place to be during these times is at home.

At about five o'clock, the ITC fire caused a telephone pole to come crashing down—

knocking out all the power on our block. So, with nothing else to do, I put on my Walkman, tuned into my favorite radio station and climbed onto the roof of our garage to check out what was happening.

As I looked out to the south, I could see five fires. Two were obstructed by trees, so I could only see the smoke. I just sat there on the roof, helpless, watching my neighborhood going up in smoke. I felt like crying. Years ago, some of the fellas would've gotten together and done something about it. I also felt like crying remembering what our community used to be.

When I was growing up, the community was not known as Koreatown. To Japanese Americans, it was known as the Uptown area. There were almost two Japanese American families on every street between Vermont Avenue and Western Boulevard. I could not have picked a better neighborhood to grow up in. This was the real world. Pure and simple. There were people of all ethnic backgrounds. Black, white, Latino, Asian. We were different, but we were all the same. Hard working, honest and law-abiding (for the most part). We all got along great. When I was in high school, the kids from the neighborhood would get together

to play basketball everyday after school. And it wasn't uncommon to field a team of five from five different cultural backgrounds. Oh, there was always some kind of hassle, but it wasn't because of where your family came from, but because of calls in the game such as if someone fouled someone else or not. I'm not saying that it was paradise. Far from it. This was a very rough area. Gangs all around. People getting mugged all the time. But this was the real world and it taught me street smarts. At least I hope it did.

But now things are different. As I sat on the roof, I didn't realize that six more fires were burning to the north that I couldn't see. The melting pot of Los Angeles is melting—burning, and I watched it from my rooftop. Power finally came back Sunday morning. As National Guard patrolled the streets, I watched the Lakers lose to Portland. Things are slowly getting back to normal in L.A. But for me and my neighborhood, things will never be normal again. My neighborhood has changed. Beyond the burnt buildings, there are the uneasy looks, the sideways glances—fear and mistrust permeate. The riots came and took the neighborhood with them.

3-STAGE NISEI EPOCH



PETE HIRAKAWA 5/1/92

Nikkei establish L.A. recovery fund

After an emergency meeting May 4 leaders in the Japanese American community, including PSW JACL, established a Japanese American L.A. Recovery Fund for victims of last weeks violence.

Those who wish to contribute to the fund should make their checks out to "L.A. Recovery Fund, c/o JACCC" and send them to 244 S. San Pedro St., #505, Los Angeles, CA. For further information, call: 213/628-2725.

