

GETTING INVOLVED

When I got involved, I was a political activist. I was looking for a symbolic issue to help organize the community. I never felt at the time that we were ever going to win redress. I just kind of saw this as an issue to kind of get involved in. This was after our struggle with redevelopment in Little Tokyo and we were trying to find something to mobilize and educate the public with. But in the process of doing some presentations, I found some things that were very touching to me. It was at a program at the Little Tokyo Towers (for low income senior citizens). One of the seniors living there handed me a crumpled up five-dollar bill and said,



“Here, this is all I can afford for the redress thing.”

After that, I said to myself, I’m going to be in this for the long haul because there are people that are really counting on us. We started something and we should not do it just for a political issue.

[Asian Americans against Apartheid, 1989](#)

If something else came up, were we going to jump to another issue? I think redress took on it’s own life and I personally saw that we had started something and that certain expectations were being made. We had no choice! For me, it was a defining moment in my life. I had to help carry this thing out and not begrudge the time. It was historic and we knew that it would be our only chance. We had to say, “Now is the time. Everything is falling into place. If we don’t do it now, it’s never going to happen.” People were relying on us to be there and deliver the goods!



Alan Nishio (Oral History Project, July, 2001)