

7/7/89

LITTLE TOKYO RALLY PROTESTS U.S. FAILURE TO REDRESS EX-INTERNEES CAMP SURVIVORS DYING AT RATE OF 200 A MONTH

By TAKESHI NAKAYAMA

An estimated 1,000 people demonstrated Saturday in Little Tokyo to protest delays by the government in issuing redress payments to Americans of Japanese ancestry who were interned in U.S. concentration camps during World War II.

Wearing black armbands, the demonstrators marched through the streets of Little Tokyo chanting "No More Broken Promises," and "Justice Now," as they vented their wrath over government failure to deliver the compensation of \$20,000 to each camp survivor as promised in the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, which was signed into law by President Reagan on Aug. 10, 1988.

"We are angry that not one penny in reparations has been paid out while 200 Issei and Nisei have passed away each month since the redress bill was signed," declared Glenn Kitayama, of the Asian Pacific Islander Student Union, at the protest rally held at the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center Plaza.

"We are angry that the government has turned its back on us. Their refusal to allocate enough money for the redress bill is a slap in the face. We are angry at the lack of respect accorded to Japanese Americans," Kitayama continued. "We see the lack of appropriations for redress as an attack on the civil rights of all Asian and Pacific Islanders."

Councilman Mike Woo, the first Asian American elected to the Los Angeles City Council, observed the government is suffering from "amnesia, the failure to remember its violations of human rights...It's time to bring forward the battle to fight against the forgetfulness, the shame of this country which allowed this internment to take place, and which allowed for so many years the failure of the government to recognize its obligation to these Americans of Japanese descent."

Woo added: "It's wonderful that the President and Congress did take action in recognizing that responsibility (to redress internees), but now it's important to follow through on that responsibility."



SUPPORTING NIKKEI DEMANDS for immediate redress payments at a rally Saturday in Little Tokyo are (from left) actor Edward James Olmos, Miya Iwataki of the National Coalition for Redress and Reparations, sponsors of the event, and Los Angeles City Councilman Mike Woo.

of us," stated another speaker, Jim Matsuoka. "At the present rate—the \$50 million the House appropriated for Fiscal Year 1990—we won't be done until the year 2010. I don't think many of us will be around that much longer. Redress has to be a priority (for the government). Until we get redress, we're still second class citizens."

Matsuoka added to the gathering, "We've got to get rid of the word *shikataganai* (there's nothing we can do). There's plenty we can do." He urged concerned citizens to write their lawmakers demanding that former internees be paid right now, and that the full amount of \$500 million per year be allocated for redress.

Keynote speaker was actor Edward James Olmos, who told the crowd he thought the redress issue was settled a year ago when the bill was signed into law, but

who was born at the old Japanese Hospital and grew up in East Los Angeles and Montebello with many friends of Japanese ancestry.

He said the problem strikes at the very core of America's ability to take care of its own problems. "Our human resource is our best natural asset and if we let our

cultures be forgotten, we all lose."

Lily Okamoto, a former internee, told the crowd that although many Japanese Americans have realized their dreams and are now successful and have beautiful houses and cars, there are many Issei and Nisei who

Continued on Page 3

NIKKI WANT GOVERNMENT TO HURRY UP AND PAY

By TAKESHI NAKAYAMA

Kim Webster, 70-year-old Nisei, was one of some 30-40 elderly residents of the Japanese Retirement Home in Boyle Heights who attended the rally held on Saturday in Little Tokyo to protest delays in providing compensation to Nikkei former internees of U.S. concentration camps

age of 200 dying each month.

"The way it is now, this country needs a new blood transfusion," declared the Rev. Paul Nakamura, "because Congress and the President are anemic—no sense of justice, integrity and righteousness."

He observed that the process of healing in the Japanese Ameri-

that the President and Congress did take action in recognizing that responsibility (to redress internees), but now it's important to follow through so that payments are actually made before more of those who would benefit from the payments pass away."

Those attending the rally and march wore black armbands in memory of the approximately 2,500 former inmates who have have died since the bill was signed a year ago. According to the Department of Justice Office of Redress Administration and the National Coalition for Redress and Reparations—sponsors of the demonstration—there are 60,000 surviving internees and they are dying at the rate of 200 a month.

The House Appropriations Committee on July 25 recommended redress funding of \$50 million for Fiscal Year 1990, far below the allowable \$500 million a year provided in the Civil Liberties Act of 1988.

"Time is running out for a lot

Edward James Olmos, who told the crowd he thought the redress issue was settled a year ago when the bill was signed into law, but, "a year later, another broken promise. What is going on with our (America's) integrity?"

"This issue brought into focus the way we treat what I consider to be our finest natural resource of this country, and that's the humanities that exist inside of it," said the star of "Miami Vice" and the movie "Stand And Deliver"

test delays in providing compensation to Nikkei former internees of U.S. concentration camps during World War II.

"We should get our money right away," Mrs. Webster stated. "We've waited way too long. A lot of people are dying. The government should hurry up and do something right away."

Mrs. Webster was forcibly evacuated with her family from their farm in Seal Beach and locked up at Poston in Arizona. "We really suffered. We lost a lot—our house and farm animals—and we couldn't go back after the war because the Navy depot had taken over our land. We had to find someplace else to live," said Webster, who worked as a housekeeper after the war until her retirement.

"They ought to hurry up and at least pay redress to the older ones, because more are dying off everyday," said Tom Shiroishi, 65, who was interned at Poston I.

"What I think about this (the delay in providing redress), you couldn't print in the paper," fumed the Rosemead truck driver and NCRS member.

The Office of Redress Administration figures last week showed that there were 16,000 survivors of the internment camps who were 70 years or older.

The total group of survivors is estimated at 60,000, with an aver-

rage age of 70.

He observed that the process of healing in the Japanese American community has slowed down, that there is a lack of energy because of the delay.

Formerly of Hawaii, Nakamura, whose wife was interned at Jerome and Rohwer, Arkansas, said he was "glad to see so many Nisei and Sansei working hard for redress. A few years ago, many Issei didn't come out—we still *gaman* but are finally finding our voice, thanks to Bert Nakano and Alan Nishio (of NCRS)."

Questioning the priorities of this country, John Saito of Los Angeles asked, "Was that \$166 billion the government was going to give for S&L (Savings and Loan) bailout? And how many billions for the Stealth bomber? Instead, they could give just \$165 billion for S&L bailout and give more money to redress."

Echoing those sentiments was community activist Mo Nishida, 53, who said "this shows how serious the government is. They don't give a damn. It leaves a bad taste. When we ask for redress, it seems like we're begging. If they had a sense of justice, they would do right."

He said "they can bail out the S&Ls, and spend billions on bombers, but not for redress. Their priority ain't justice."

COMMUNITY RALLY BLASTS U.S. REDRESS INACTION

From Page 1

have not realized their dreams. "There are many who are struggling to make ends meet. The \$20,000 now would make the biggest difference to people like this who are scrimping and saving."

She urged everyone to write letters to Senator Daniel Inouye and the Senate Appropriations Committee. "We've waited too long—44 years. More than 2,500 have passed away since Aug. 10, 1988."

Actor Sab Shimono, star of "The Wash," delivered a reading of the 1981 testimony of Kiyō Yamashita during the Commission of Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians. The testimony described the Yamashita family's anguish, misery, suffering and bitter memories associated with the forced relocation of 120,000 West Coast Nikkei into concentration camps.

Shimono was himself interned with his family in a camp at Amache, Colorado. His family, too, suffered deprivation, property losses and lost hopes and dreams.

Also speaking at the rally was Tony Tamayose, representing the National Association of Japanese Canadians, the organization which was successful in obtaining compensation for Canadians of Japanese descent who were deprived of their freedom and liberty during the period from 1941 to 1949.

He noted that Canada, which passed its redress bill two months after the U.S., has already issued 6,000 reparations checks out of an estimated 14,500 qualified applicants. Each Canadian Nikkei who was deprived of freedom and liberty receives \$21,000, and the bill provides another \$12 million in community funds to restore and rebuild the Japanese Canadian community which was destroyed during 1941-49.

"Enthusiasm in our (Japanese Canadian) community is now at an all-time high, and self-esteem of individuals in our community is now at an all-time high," Tamayose reported.

The 53-year-old Canadian revealed that although he was not interned—he lived in Alberta during the war—he too is being compensated because of loss of the right to vote and because Nikkei didn't have the freedom of

movement until 1949.

"The NAJIC is pleased to join with NCRP in urging your United States government to recognize and uphold their obligation of Aug. 10, 1988, and to appropriate substantial funds so that payments to the elderly and terminally ill can begin immediately," the Canadian Nisei government employee from the Vancouver area said.

"It is sad to hear that each day another internee or camp survivor has passed away, thus denying them the tangible realization of redress, as promised by your bill," Tamayose continued. "The \$20,000 was intended to symbolize an acknowledgement by your government that they recognized that the constitutional rights of Japanese Americans were violated. Until these payments begin, justice continues to be denied your people."

Bert Nakano, national spokesperson for NCRP ac-

knowledged the support of the following politicians and organizations: Warren Furutani, board member of the Los Angeles Unified School District; Congressman Mervyn Dymally of the 31st District (represented by Miya Iwataki); State Senator Tom Hayden (represented by Trisha Murakawa); Pacific Southwest District of the Japanese American Citizens League, represented by Sandy Kawasaki; San Fernando Valley JACL, Pat Kubota; Little Tokyo Service Center, Bill Watanabe; Seinan Senior Center, Jimmy Jike; Korean American Coalition, Eun Hee Kim; the Rainbow Coalition, Mike Murase; Mexican American Political Association, Ron Baca; the Rev. Paul Nakamura of Lutheran Oriental Church, Gardena; United Teachers of Los Angeles, June Kizu.

Also in attendance at the rally were between 30 and 40 elderly Issei and Nisei residents of the Japanese Retirement Home.