

# Remembrance: Racist Hysteri

Day of Remembrance speakers criticize the recent round of scapegoating that has become prevalent among politicians and business people.

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Japan-bashing and the scapegoating of Japanese Americans and other Asian Americans were the central topics of speakers at the Day of Remembrance program on Saturday, Feb. 15, at the Japan America Theatre in Little Tokyo.

The Day of Remembrance commemorated the 50th anniversary of President Franklin Roosevelt's signing of Executive Order 9066, that authorized the forced evacuation from the Pacific Coast and subsequent incarceration of 120,000 American residents of Japanese ancestry.

Jimmy Tokeshi, regional director of the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) Pacific Southwest District, told the audience of an estimated 500 people, "Fifty years ago, the sky above darkened . . . for Japanese Americans. The journey from freedom to bondage was a demonstration of (the government's) power against our community. That power and the undertone of racism that ravaged our community 50 years ago is no different today."

Speaking out against the anti-Asian hate crimes and Japan-bashing, Tokeshi stated, "Time and again we have seen the smell of McCarthyism rise again with the specter of 'yellow perilism' to undermine the basic principles of liberty and security we all hope to preserve."

Tokeshi added, "We must warn and remind those in power that you do not ignore the moral and ethical principles that we have in our Constitution because of the political climate . . . We must not allow anyone to invite such liberties as hate. We must state clearly in no uncertain terms, we will not tolerate hatred."

Michael Woo, Los Angeles City Councilman from Hollywood, maintained that the World War II internment of Japanese Americans was "one of the most disgraceful acts by the U.S. government . . . an act of racism driven by fear" of Japanese.

"Even today, we still see signs of racism based on fear," he said. "In efforts to find a scapegoat for our economic problems, unscrupulous politicians and overpaid corporate executives are trying to pin all the blame on Japan . . . And Japanese Americans and other Asian Americans are becoming the targets of this witch hunt for scapegoats."

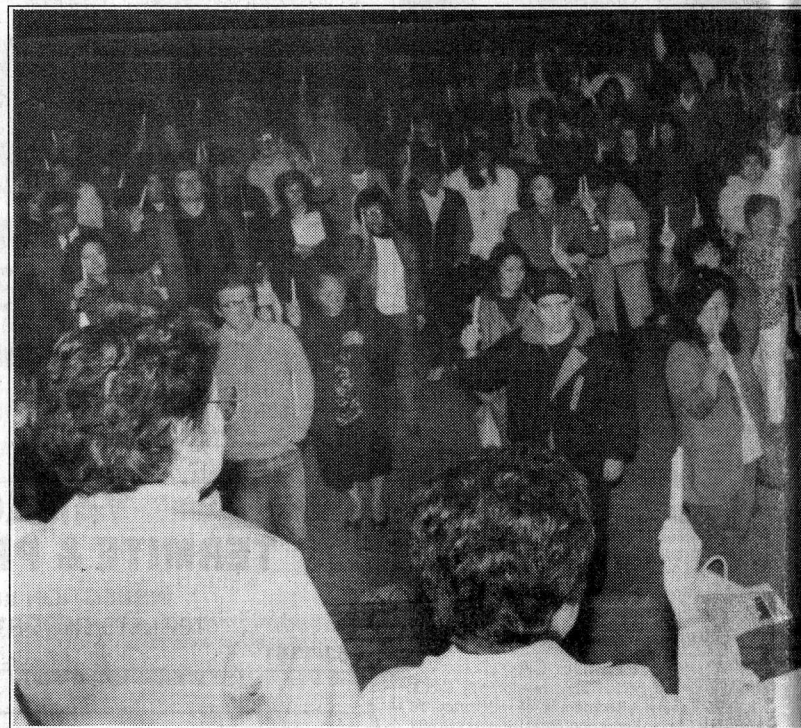
Executive Order 9066 is a "relic of history," Woo said, "but the racism driven by fear that made it happen is still very much alive. We need to redouble our efforts to overcome the fear which made it happen."

Aki Maehara of the National Coalition for Redress and Reparations (NCRP), an assistant director of the Asian Pacific Student Services at Loyola Marymount University, in commemorating the anniversary, stated, "The Nisei used the phrase 'before the war,' meaning before the concentration camps, before our freedom was stolen . . . before our dreams were turned to desert dust. 'After the war' is the 50-year rebuilding of our community."

Maehara declared that the redress movement changed Japanese America. "It helped us to rebuild, to heal and to reunite. The camps were still with us, needing to be purged. But they were no longer our shame."

Instead, he said, "The camps were an outrage that needed to be redressed."

The victory of the redress movement also changed America, Maehara stated. "The law providing for redress was one of the few



Over 200 people raise light sticks in commemoration of the 50th anniversary.

instances in our nation's history when it confronted its racist past and tried to make amends."

He added, "With racism, hate crimes and xenophobia on the rise, we must continue to fight for justice and freedom."

In observance of 50th anniversary of EO 9066, Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley uttered, "The horror of that black mark on the history of our country sticks in our memory . . . We have to remember in order that this kind of event not happen again."

The mayor said that in recent weeks there was pervading in this country "the tone of the same kind of vicious, unthinking statements that prevailed in 1942, where persons of Asian ancestry were singled out and held to scorn."

This kind of racial hysteria that occurred in 1942 "could stir up again," he warned. The awarding of the Green Line railroad contract to

Sumitomo by the Los Angeles County Transportation Commission brought out "the same kind of hysteria . . . the same kind of mindless hatred that not only expressed anger at the company that won the bid but also at Japan from which (the company) came. And that hatred was extended to Americans of Japanese ancestry."

Mayor Bradley and Ninth District Councilwoman Rita Walters presented a certificate from the city proclaiming Feb. 15, 1992, as an official Day of Remembrance.

Highlighting the program was a multimedia performance, entitled "We've Come This Far," the story of a family's struggle to face the ugly memory of incarceration, and subsequent commitment to fight for redress.

The performance, which touched the emotions of many former internees, was directed by Betty Muramoto and written by Mari

# ia Returns 50 Years Later



Photos by MARIO G. REYES/Rafu Shimpō

anniversary of Executive Order 9066 in the JACCC plaza.

Sunaida and Perry Miyake, Jr. "We've Come This Far" starred actors Benjamin Lum, Henry Hayashi, Jeane Sakata and Susan Haruye Ioka.

NCRR, which has recognized individuals who have dedicated themselves to the fight for justice in the Nikkei community, presented the Fighting Spirit Award to NCRR members Bert Nakano, Bernadette Nishimura and Lily Okamoto.

Nakano, national spokesperson for NCRR, is a Nisei who was a leader for redress long before it was a popular issue in the community. He has served as a member of the State Central Committee and Asian Pacific Caucus of the Democratic Party and was elected to be a Jesse Jackson delegate in the 1984 and 1988 Democratic National Convention.

Nishimura, an In-Home Supportive Services coordinator for the Japanese Community Pioneer Cen-

ter, serves on the executive board of the Los Angeles City Council on Aging and is active on the boards of the Catholic Commission on Aging, Little Tokyo Service Center, Asian Pacific Coalition on Aging, and the downtown Los Angeles chapter of the American Association of Retired Persons.

Okamoto, current president of the Little Tokyo Towers Resident Council, has served on the boards of the Little Tokyo Service Center and the Japanese American Society of the Blind. She is also a member of the Senshin Buddhist Church and the Toastmistress Club.

Also featured on the program were the winners of the Junior High and High School Student Essay Contest who presented their views of the camps and read excerpts from their writing. The essayists were presented the Y.K. Kubota Scholarship.

Daniel Shea, an eighth-grader at

Sherman Oaks School for Enriched Studies and winner of the junior high division, said that as a non-Japanese person he was "shocked" to learn about all the problems people had in the World War II internment camps for Japanese Americans.

"In school, we didn't learn about this tragedy," he said. "We need to be educated about these camps. After all, without being educated, history can repeat itself."

Shea was winner of a \$300 scholarship. Runner-up in the junior high division was Dan Nishimoto of Walter Reed Junior High School, who won a \$200 scholarship. Third place winner Jeremy Shoji of Nobel Junior High was awarded \$100.

Dana Kawaoka, from El Cerrito High School in the Bay Area and winner of the high school division, said America, with its current economic problems, is faced with the harsh realities that "Japan is no longer that little island nation that needs help to get back on its feet. In fact, it's just the opposite, much to the dismay, frustration and envy of Americans. As a result, Asians here have become targets of racial slurs . . . being blamed for the trade imbalances and economic problems just because they seem to be Japanese."

Kawaoka was winner of a \$300 scholarship. Runner-up in the senior high school division was Christie Mayumi Onoda of Whitney High in Cerritos, who won a \$200 scholarship. Third place winner Suzanne Kiyomi Shimoyama of North Hollywood High was awarded \$100.

Entertainment at the program was provided by the San Fernando Mugen Taiko group under the direction of Hongo Sensei.

The DOR program, sponsored by NCRR, in conjunction with the Los Angeles Community Coalition to Commemorate 50 Year Remem-

brance-Japanese American Internment (LACCCYR), was dedicated to the memory of the late Ralph Lazo, a Mexican American who voluntarily entered the U.S. concentration camp at Manzanar to be with his Nisei friends.

A large bouquet was presented to the family of Lazo, who passed away on Jan. 1. Accepting on behalf of the family were Lazo's sister, Virginia, and his sons, David and Danny Lazo.

Following the program, Bert Nakano, former Jerome (Arkansas) internment camp internee, and J.D. Hokoyama, a representative from the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), held a press conference at the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center (JACCC).

NCRR's Nakano criticized the recent round of "Japan-bashing" that has become prevalent among politicians and business people. "The scapegoating of Japanese people for America's economic woes can mean serious trouble for Japanese Americans and other Asians," Nakano stated.

Nakano complained that there is a segment of society that still views Japanese Americans and other Asian Americans as foreigners. "With a deteriorating economy and Japan-bashing becoming a daily news item, Americans of Asian descent are once again increasingly becoming targets for violence and hate crimes."

While deploring the "callous remarks" made by Japanese politicians regarding American workers, he said, "we (NCRR) also take issue with the media and many American politicians whose commentary and remarks are also inflaming attitudes and contributing to the rise of anti-Asian sentiment in this country."

Nakano concluded, "We must understand and celebrate the growing diversity of our population as a

