

DAY OF REMEMBRANCE

Commemoration to Link Racism and Resistance, Past and Present

Los Angeles' Day of Remembrance to draw parallels to World War II racism and current anti-immigrant scapegoating.

By GORDON NAKAGAWA

The 1995 observance of the Day of Remembrance, scheduled for Sunday, Feb. 19 at the Centenary United Methodist Church in Little Tokyo, will highlight the continuing legacy of racism and resistance reflected in the War World II internment of 120,000 Japanese Americans.

Sponsored by the National Coalition for Redress/Reparations, the event commemorates the issuance of Executive Order 9066, setting into motion the mass imprisonment solely based on race.

The theme of this year's program is "50 Years After the Camps: Racism and Resistance, Then ... and Now."

In addition to remembering the past, the program also hopes to draw attention to the disturbing and ominous similarities between the political climate of the past and present.

World War II Hysteria

Indiscriminately targeted during the wartime years as "disloyal, undesirable enemy aliens," Nikkei left the camps at the close of the war to re-enter an often-hostile environment, facing racist acts by individuals and pervasive discrimination.

With an uncertain future, life for many Nikkei families was a continual struggle to simply get by from day to day. Remaking fragmented communities torn apart by governmental policy and struggling to

gain a foothold in American society were elusive goals, but also served as driving forces for the Nikkei as they endured and resisted the ongoing racism.

Immigrants Stigmatized

In 1995, a reinvigorated xenophobia has once again re-surfaced; but this time, it is indiscriminately stigmatizing immigrants, especially those who are people of color, as "undesirables." Often subjected to economic exploitation, many recent immigrants are struggling to make ends meet, from one day to the next.

Once again, many families and communities are facing a future of fear and uncertainty in the face of new government policy, today in the form of measures like Proposition 187. But like the Nikkei community after the war, today's immigrants have continued to struggle and resist injustice and racism.

"What Can We Do About It?"

"Many immigrants, documented or not, are suffering the same kind of fears and apprehensions that Japanese Americans felt 50 years ago," explained NCRP president Richard Katsuda.

He went on, "Program speakers will discuss the treatment of Japanese Americans during World War II and the conditions which led to it. They will then take us to the present, where similar conditions appear to be emerging. They will also address the critical question, 'What

can we do about it?'"

One of the program's featured speakers will be Linda Camacho, a teacher for 13 years at Lennox Middle School and currently regional secretary of the Mexican American Political Association (MAPA). Camacho, whose Nisei mother was interned in the Tule Lake camp during the war, and whose father was an immigrant from Mexico, will address the similar circumstances that join conditions in 1945 with those in 1995.

The program will run from 2 to 4 p.m. and will also feature presentation of NCRP's "Fighting Spirit" awards; performances by *shakuhachi* player Masakazu Yoshizawa and the UCLA Nikkei Student Union taiko drummers; a children's workshop for ages 5 through 11 years; and an update on redress efforts in support of over 2,300 Nikkei who have been deemed ineligible by the federal government.

"The struggle must continue until redress and reparations are won for all who were unjustly deprived of their constitutional and human rights," emphasized Kay Ochi, NCRP vice president.

Day of Remembrance in Los Angeles

The 14th annual Day of Remembrance in L.A. will be held at Centenary United Methodist Church, 300 S. Central Ave., in Little Tokyo, on Sunday, Feb. 19, from 2 to 4 p.m. Admission is free. For more information, call NCRP at (213) 680-3484.



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Members of National Coalition for Redress and Reparations, including David Monkawa, left, and Miya Iwataki, second to left, were part of anti-Proposition 187 demonstration prior to last year's election.