

Day of Remembrance Marks 30th Anniversary at JA

College students offer perspective on Japanese American internment and fight for redress.

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February is an important time of the year for many minority Americans living in the United States. Most prominently known and seen in media is the celebration of Black History Month. Since 1926 February has been a time to celebrate the history of the African American experience from slavery to the civil rights movement to present-day issues that African Americans face today.

It is fitting then that February also marks the 30th anniversary of the Day of Remembrance (DOR). DOR commemorates the 66th anniversary of Franklin D. Roosevelt's signing of Executive 9066 on Feb. 19, 1942 that forcibly removed and incarcerated 120,000 Japanese American citizens during World War II.

Each February, since 1982, the Nikkei for Civil Rights and Redress (NCR) has hosted the DOR. This year, the event took place on Saturday, Feb. 16 at the Japanese American National Museum (JANM) in Little Tokyo. NCR collaborated with JANM and the JACL Pacific Southwest District to present this year's theme of "From the Commission Hearings to the Civil Liberties Act and Beyond... The Power of Grassroots Activism: Unleashing Community Voices."

The theme manifested itself through "Unleashing Community Voices" an interactive performance created by artist/producer Traci Kato-Kiriyama that blended spoken word memories and essays from Nisei participants of redress, a video montage of historical events within the Japanese American community's fight for redress, a taiko performance by Progressive Taiko, and the voices of today's generation of college student activists.

Penny Ishizuka, the president of the USC Nikkei Association, Stacy Iwata, president of the Nikkei Student Union at UCSD and Frank Hiroyasu of UC Riverside's Nichibei Bunka Kai joined



Photos by MARIO G. E.

Stacy Iwata, president of the Nikkei Student Union at UCSD, was one of three college students who spoke at the DOR ceremony about the importance of educating and empowering future generations of Japanese Americans.

Kay Ochi, Kathy Masaoka, Suzy Katsuda, Frank Emi, Jim Matsuoka, and Sean Miura and provided a wide spectrum of generational voices that gave credence to the Japanese American experience.

"We have the power to educate and empower future generations," said Iwata, "So they can learn about their culture, their community and most importantly, their history."

While February serves as an important reminder to the past efforts and struggles of minorities in America, this past weekend made it clear that minority rights must still be fought for and defended. Representing Congressman Xavier Becerra, Christine Oh reminded the capacity crowd of the injustices left unaccounted for against some 2,300



In keeping with the theme of grassroots organizations making a difference, the HanNuRi Korean American Cultural Troupe performed "Gosa" a traditional Korean dance with live music accompanied by artistic dance.

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Latin Americans of Japanese descent.

The Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Latin Americans of Japanese Descent Act (the H.R. 662 and S.381) is a bill created by Bacerra, Hawaii Senator Daniel Inouye and other members of both the House and Senate, that would establish a federal commission to investigate and determine the facts surrounding the relocation, internment and deportation of Latin Americans of Japanese descent and

recommend any appropriate remedies based on the commission's findings.

"Many of you here who went through internment know what it is like to be stripped of your identity, your dignity and your pride," Oh said. "Many of you know how it feels to abandon all of your life's work, your houses, your businesses, your farms. Many of you here know what it feels to be forced to feel ashamed of who you are, of being Japanese Americans."

Her message is that others continue to feel that way today and that action must be taken. In addition to writing members of congress people interested in helping

to see this bill passed can visit www.campaignforjusticejla.org.

For those interested in letting their voice be heard, they can visit NCCR's Web site www.ncrr-la.org or contact J-Town Voice, an all volunteer organization that provides a space for people to speak frankly on issues concerning Little Tokyo, at JTownnvoice@yahoo.com.

"If we can affect at least one person," Iwata said. "Then our efforts were not in vain. And this is what I'm trying to pass on to my members, my officers, that their hard work in the community is not going unnoticed. It all starts with just one person."