

NCRR BANNER



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NCRR: 244 S. San Pedro, Rm. 406, LA, CA. 90012
or: 1858 Sutter St., San Francisco, CA. 94115

AN INDEPTH LOOK AT THE R/R MOVEMENT

The purpose of this article is to share with BANNER readers in a little more depth, some of the views of the NCRR -- both on the redress/reparations (r/r) issue, as well as our view of other groups active in the campaign.

Nationally, several major groups, each with its own perspective and strategy, are involved in this historic issue -- the NCRR, the JACL (Japanese American Citizens League) and NCJAR (National Council on Japanese American Redress).

The NCRR formed in July, 1980, with 2 major aims: 1) to seek restitution for all who were evacuated and incarcerated during World War II, and 2) to seek preventative measures against similar atrocities occurring again. The NCRR has chapters and members throughout California, the Pacific Northwest, on the East Coast, and in other parts of the country.

The JACL was largely responsible for initiating the Presidential Study Commission on the Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, which will soon be conducting hearings throughout the country. The JACL has stated support for monetary compensation, with the money coming through a Foundation, from which individuals may receive payments. JACL has not stated a figure, instead, "leaving it up to the Commission to decide what is appropriate remedy".

NCJAR, based in Chicago, recently retained a Washington D. C. law firm to start preparations for a class action suit. The purpose of the suit is to obtain compensation, based on violations of civil and constitutional rights, for Japanese Americans interned in the WWII camps.

What is the NCRR's Position on These Questions?

From its inception, the NCRR has supported the concept of monetary compensation -- both direct individual payments and a community fund -- as being at the heart of the r/r issue. There must be substantial individual payments, of at least \$25,000 for each individual (or their heir) interned and affected by Executive Order 9066 and/or related military orders. This sum will never repay those who suffered in the camps, but would indicate governmental recognition that tremendous personal and property losses were incurred through the total abrogation of civil, constitutional and human rights. In addition to monetary compensation, the NCRR also seeks other forms of redress, for example, educational and legal.

We feel there is a good basis to work with both JACL and NCJAR, because we share common aims of seeking r/r -- both JACL and NCJAR have stated support for individual payments and JACL also favors a community fund. Already there has been, on the whole, a lot of cooperation with local chapters of the JACL and NCJAR. This kind of mutual support, always stressed by the NCRR, is certainly needed if we are to win r/r.

At the same time, there are distinctions and differences of opinion as to what forms of r/r and strategies are in the best interest of the community as a whole. This is only natural, given the diversity of the community, and the different experiences of each group.

The NCRR believes there should be direct individual payments instead of going through a Foundation or Trust Fund. A Foundation would tie up the payments in a complicated bureaucratic process and sub-

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SAN DIEGO NISEI SPEAKS OUT FOR R/R

(Francis Lawrence "Frank" Honda is a California-born nisei. Frank spent his concentration camp time in the orphanage at Manzanar. Frank is a deeply religious man, a devout Roman Catholic, and he is using his religious beliefs to help fight for redress/reparations. Frank, and his wife Dolores are both members of the San Diego Redress/Reparations Committee/NCRR. The following is Frank's initial statement in preparation for the upcoming Commission hearings.)

I was 7 years old when I went to Concentration Camp. My gums swelled like marbles; in Manzanar I lost all my teeth. I used to vomit because of the food - I hated the food.

I broke my wrist, which never healed. I'm afraid to use it to carry anything.

A baseball hit me in the throat; I could not speak; I did not receive medication. I can't sing or speak without becoming very tired. At that time I could only lay down; I thought I would never speak again!

I was dying of pneumonia, as I was in the hospital. I thought I would die and when I came out, I could not walk well; I could not run. It was winter, with snow on the ground, and from this time on I could not memorize anything important, like the times tables. To this day, I can't memorize numbers. I have always had jobs that paid a minimum wage; I will never have a good job because of my past sufferings at Manzanar Concentration Camp, which made me from a good student at Maryknoll-St. Francis Xavier Church and School, to a mediocre American citizen for the rest of my life.

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ject Japanese Americans to apply for money as though it were a gift or welfare, rather than something rightfully deserved. The support for direct individual payments has been widely expressed and is very popular according to numerous surveys conducted in Japanese communities throughout the U. S. We also feel some figure should be stated to give people an idea of what we mean by "substantial" individual payments. The NCRR has always stressed a minimum of \$25,000 per individual, and does not consider it "unfair" to mention a possible figure, especially as it is flexible. We do not agree with "leaving it up to the Commission to decide". To do so takes the matter out of the hands of the Japanese community, where it belongs.

In addition to direct payments, the NCRR also supports a community fund to be used for the rebuilding of our communities, as most were largely destroyed by the camps. The fund could be used for desperately needed issei and family housing, for services for issei, and for social and cultural purposes. Such a fund would be administered by a broad cross-section of the community, not just one or two groups. On this point, we differ with NCJAR, which does not support the concept of such a community fund.

What Strategy to Pursue?

Fundamental to whether Japanese Americans can win r/r is how strong the support is from the people -- both within our own Nikkei communities and from other nationalities. Public sentiment must be created and pressure directed at the government in order to realize our aims. To expect either Congress or the courts to willingly grant r/r would be naive. We realize that winning r/r will be a long, step-by-step struggle involving continuing efforts to educate and unite more and more people around our goals.

More specifically, the NCRR believes that both a direct appropriations bill and legal action remain as potential avenues. Currently, the NCRR favors pursuing a direct appropriations bill on the federal level. We feel this is the most popular view expressed precisely because if won, it would be the fastest, most direct means of obtaining reparations. The NCRR will push the Commission to recommend that Congress pass a direct appropriations bill and after the Commission ends, we plan on pursuing this course of action.

We are also interested in learning more about NCJAR's class action suit. Since the suit is supposed to be on behalf of a class of Japanese Americans, we feel the actual involvement of that class -- the people themselves is imperative. This community-wide decision making, discussion, and involvement has been missing from NCJAR's approach. Little is known about the suit beyond the fundraising aspect. The community should be informed of all the suit's pros and cons, especially since losing the suit may have serious implications for the future ability of JAs to sue the government for r/r. One of the main concerns expressed at the NCRR

conference last November was how to waive the statute of limitations on the Supreme court cases to even get the class action suit into the courts.

In any case, whether the route be through Congress or the courts, the course of action must involve, educate and organize Japanese Americans all over the country for maximum impact.

Organize for the Commission Hearings!

The Commission hearings, soon to take place throughout the country are a very important means of raising the demand for r/r and educating people about the camps. We urge community organizations, churches, social service agencies, clubs, issei, nisei, and sansei to come forward and speak out for r/r.

We have the responsibility to clearly proclaim that the camps were wrong and restitution is not only deserved, but long overdue! This is especially true since the Commission is only obliged to "study" whether a wrong was committed. Our stand should be strong and our voices many. To go into the hearings with bowed heads, "presenting pleas to the Commission", mistakenly puts the burden of proof and guilt on Japanese Americans instead of on the government for putting us into the camps!

Over the past 6 months, the NCRR has been busy organizing on the grassroots level for the hearings. We have put on numerous community programs, campus programs; hit the streets with petitions and leaflets; organized house meetings, speaking and slideshow presentations; and have built good relations with many groups.

We have also been in direct communication with the Commission and Staff and have offered many suggestions to maximize input from the community into the hearings. (see Commission Update article) While Commissioner Bernstein and others have stated openness to our suggestions, recent information from the Staff indicate that unfortunately, most of these ideas are not being implemented.

A Strong Voice Inside the Hearings and Out

The NCRR has been working very close with many individuals who plan on testifying, either orally and/or in written form. We have held numerous house meetings to draw out people's experiences and are now transcribing tapes and writing up the testimony. Our witnesses include "experts" as well as common people who want to speak out on the camps and r/r. We also plan to submit a formal NCRR testimony, along with many other member organizations.

Outside the hearings we plan on holding programs featuring speakers, cultural performances and photo displays. These programs are an important part of educating the public and Commission about the sentiments for r/r and supporting the testifiers inside. These activities should not be confused with "picketing" the hearings, as certain members of JACL's national staff

COMMISSION UPDATE

The Commission hearings are finally taking shape. As you can tell from the rest of this issue of THE BANNER, we have been busy getting the word out and gathering testifiers. We encourage Nikkei of all generations as well as other sympathetic people to come forward now. It is our responsibility to get to the heart of the matter by letting the Commission and the public know that redress and reparations is on the order of the day.

To maximize input into the hearings, the NCRR has submitted hundreds of petition signatures demanding more hearing sites, especially in California where the majority of Japanese Americans live. We have also put forth many concrete suggestions to the Commission (see below). With the latest word from the Commission meeting of June 23, we were disappointed to learn that only 5 sites (besides Washington, D. C.) were set and the times of the hearings will fall in the middle of the week.

Although we are disappointed, we nevertheless strongly urge all people concerned to support the recommendations listed below aimed at greater participation by the Nikkei communities. We must at this time pose the question, who should the Commission serve? Our answer is-- the people, who went through the suffering and hardships of the camps.

Please call or write the Commission at the address below and urge them to implement the following recommendations:

1. more hearing sites, at least informal hearings at Sacramento, San Jose, San Diego, New York, and other places.
2. schedule hearings at times convenient for working people (preferably on the weekends) and at locations in the communities.
3. Japanese translation of all press releases and Commission literature as well as at the hearings themselves.

COMMISSION
OFFICE: New Executive Office Building
Room 202
726 Jackson Place, N. W.
Washington, D. C. 20506
(202) 395-7390

ATTEND THE HEARINGS!

Washington, D. C.	July 14 & 16
Los Angeles, CA.	August 4, 5, 6
San Francisco, CA.	August 11, 12, 13
Seattle, WA.	Sept. 9, 10, 11
Alaska	Sept. 15, 17, 19
Chicago	Sept. 22 & 23

FROM THE REGIONALS

Los Angeles-- Some highlights of the LA Regional's activities include:

- a presentation to the Terminal Islanders (an association of former Terminal Island residents who were forced to evacuate within 36 hours after Pearl Harbor), which was enthusiastically received...
- an endorsement from the United Teachers of Los Angeles (UTLA), the largest teachers' union in LA...
- support from the East West Players (Asian Pacific Theater Group), which has decided to devote its 1981-82 theater season to the issue of r/r. The EW Players have produced 4 plays on camp life and will donate part of the proceeds from the season's tickets to the NCRR...

San Francisco-- Members of the S. F./Bay Area Regional are busily following up on potential witnesses contacted through house meetings and programs held in S. F., Berkeley and Oakland. The Regional is participating in a forum on r/r sponsored by the Committee on Pre-Retirement, to be held on June 27, at 2:00 p. m. at Christ United Presbyterian Church in S. F. We also plan to have an informational booth at the annual Nihonmachi Street Fair on August 8th and 9th, as well as a potluck fundraising dinner for NCRR in late July.

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have consistently stated. The NCRR has clarified this point repeatedly with these individuals and publicly at programs sponsored by the JACL, NCRR and other groups. To picket the hearings would completely contradict all the work we have been doing to prepare for the hearings! The outside programs are not counter to but complementary to the inside activity, together creating a powerful statement by Japanese Americans that the camps were wrong and restitution is necessary.

Commission Hearings Just the Beginning!

The NCRR considers the Commission hearings a big step, but only the first step, in the r/r campaign. Unlike some people, we don't believe the hearings will or should be "the one and only chance" Japanese people have to bring the camps experience and demand for r/r before the government. Winning r/r will be a long, hard struggle -- we should have no illusions about this. But we have already seen an incredible amount of commitment and unity growing, bringing us closer to winning r/r and justice for Japanese Americans.

MEMBERS AND SUPPORTERS OF THE NCRR

MEMBERS: Agape Fellowship (LA), Asian Americans for Community Involvement (Santa Clara), Asian Law Alliance (San Jose), Asian Legal Services Outreach (Sacto), Gardena Committee on R/R, (the late) Amy Uno Ishii, Japanese Community Progressive Alliance (SF), Little Tokyo Peoples' Rights Organization (LA), Little Tokyo Service Center (LA), Los Angeles Community Coalition for R/R, Manzanar Committee, Nihonmachi Legal Outreach (SF), Nihonmachi Outreach Committee (San Jose), Sacramento Tule Lake Committee, San Diego R/R Committee, Southside Peoples' Art Collective (Sacto), Takenoko (Boyle Heights, LA), UNITY Newspaper, West Coast Asian/Pacific Student Union - Southern and Northern California Regions, San Jose State Asian Students In Action Now, Stanford Asian American Students Assoc., Berkeley Asian Youth Center, Concerned Japanese Americans (New York).

ENDORSERS: American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California, Asian American Legal Defense Fund (NY), Asian State Employees Assn. (Sacto), Bay Area Attorneys for Redress, Community Asian Art & Media Project (Oakland), Gordon Hirabayashi (Canada), Japanese American Citizens League (Pacific Southwest District Council), JACL (Sacramento Chapter), (San Mateo Chapter) - (Sequoia Chapter), Edward Miyakawa (Oregon), New England Nisei, Filipino American Alliance (UC Berkeley), Sycamore Church (El Cerrito), Sac Committee for R/R, East Bay Landscapers & Gardeners' Association, Japanese Welfare Rights Org. (LA), Asian Pacific Planning Council (LA), United Teachers of Los Angeles.

San Jose-- Many activities have been taken up by the San Jose NCRR Regional and its member organizations. The Stanford Asian Students Assoc. completed a flurry of r/r outreach, education and fundraising. Dorm groups were overwhelmingly supportive, and made house donations. An r/r educational forum and a disco yielded about \$300!

Meanwhile, the Nihonmachi Outreach Committee (NOC), has organized several successful house meetings and is involved with the Peninsula Redress Committee, which sponsored a forum on June 13.

The San Jose State University A.S.I.A.N. group, after doing extensive programming on r/r and Japanese Americans at their annual spring festival has joined the NCRR!

As a regional, the final petitions for San Jose as a Commission site have been sent to D. C., and a regional meeting is planned for June 27th.

Sacramento-- In the Sac area, the NCRR has been working actively with the Sacramento Committee for Redress/Reparations. The Committee recently held a workshop to gather oral and written testimony from the community, with follow-up sessions at the ALSO office, 1520 V St., Sacramento. The NCRR also had a literature table at the recent Hito Hata showing which drew over 2,000 Sac-area JAs. The NCRR is now planning more house meetings to gather new members into the Coalition and prepare for the upcoming hearings.

New York -- The New York Regional has been very busy pushing for N. Y. to be a hearing site. Plans are underway to organize testimony for a hopeful NY hearing as well as to attend the Washington, D. C. hearing. A community meeting is scheduled to take place after the D. C. hearings.

San Diego--

The San Diego Redress/Reparations Committee (SDRRRC/NCRR) has stepped up its house meetings to accommodate the widely dispersed JA community in the greater San Diego area.

The SDRRC has also joined with the San Diego chapter of the JACL to form a joint redress/reparations committee. The committee has been funded for \$2,000 by the San Diego JACL for 1981.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE HELP WITH YOUR TESTIMONY, OR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE NCRR, CONTACT ONE OF THE REGIONALS BELOW:

LOS ANGELES - Bert (213) 532-9527
Merrilyn 267-0299

SAN DIEGO - Jan (714) 280-5263

SACRAMENTO - Kathy (916) 323-2302

SAN FRANCISCO - Cathy or Don (415) 921-8841

SAN JOSE - Julie (408) 287-9710

NEW YORK - Sasha (212) 732-3467

(cont. fr. p. 1) San Diego Nisei

My greatest regret is that I have absolutely nothing to offer Dolores, my wife. Redress and Reparations would change our lives where we could try to live like normal human beings, like Good Americans!

P. S. If there is no Redress/Reparations bill passed, the U. S. Government will have committed a greater wrong act than E. O. 9066 and all those who are responsible for such an atrocity will be judged harshly in the future to come! One day, they will die a terrible death, in this life and the life to come.

--- Francis L. Honda, April 25, 1981

**** MEMBERSHIP/DONATION FORM ****

YES, I WOULD LIKE TO JOIN THE NCRR _____
YES, I WOULD LIKE TO MAKE A DONATION _____

AMOUNT \$ _____

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

(Individual membership is \$5.00, organizational membership is \$25.00)

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