



AUGUST 1987

# NCRP BANNER

## NATIONAL COALITION FOR REDRESS/REPARATIONS

REDRESS/REPARATIONS LOBBY SHOWS  
THAT PEOPLE ARE MAKERS OF HISTORY

WASHINGTON D.C.- "I'll probably vote for the bill... I'll vote for the bill!" conservative Congressman Charles Bennett (D- Florida) assured 442nd Battalion veteran Rudy Tokiwa at the end of a highly moving and emotional meeting in the nation's Capitol. Also present in the meeting were 442nd veteran Bill Kochiyama, Manzanar internee Hannah Uno Sheppard and Gardena Lutheran minister Paul Nakamura.

This was a "special team" pulled together specifically for this office visit from among the 120 lobbyists, sponsored by the National Coalition for Redress/Reparations (NCRP). On July 25 to 29, 120 Japanese Americans became a part of history in the making—displaying insight, commitment and courage in a trip to Washington D.C. to urge passage of landmark legislation H.R. 442— the civil liberties act of 1987.

At the week's end, approximately 16 members of Congress had agreed to co-sponsor or vote for H.R. 442 when it comes to the floor for a full House vote on September 17. And 15 more were stating they "might" support it. Another 15 were studying the issue and their offices had requested a follow-up call.

It was one of those proud moments of Japanese American history. These 120 people had saved up their hard-earned money and vacation time for plane fare and hotel fees to participate in



the delegation. About half of the delegation were Nisei.

After going through grueling orientation sessions, they descended on the Capitol for a total of 101 visits to congressional offices. These grass-roots lobbyists came into contact with congressional aides that had not heard of the bill. Still other aides were well-versed in the concentration camp experience and had studied the Fred Korematsu coram nobis case.

Through visits like these, the delegation understood that these congressmen were made of flesh and blood and human emotions. The strength of the teams were that they were actual camp survivors and many of them were able to convey the pain that they still felt 45 years later, very simply and honestly.

It was this sincerity and "coming from the heart" that really moved the legislators. The presentation sometimes triggered a painful experience of their own, enabling them to see the seriousness and the justness of the redress cause.

One Capitol Hill veteran reported hearing reports from several different sources that the delegation was extremely knowledgeable about the issue and very effective. Some legislators told the team that it served as the most well-prepared group they had met. It was a refreshing change from the "professional" lobbyists they had so often seen.

### NUTS AND BOLTS

Through the offices of Congressman Mervyn Dymally, an early champion of redress, various aspects of the lobby were planned. This entailed scheduling meetings with members of Congress, setting up three "General Sessions," and pulling together a major reception with key members of Congress and Washington D.C. organizations.

The General Sessions served many functions. First, they were an "official" welcome to Washington D.C. and a show of support for the NCCR delegation by our key redress legislators- Norman Mineta, Bob Matsui, Spark Matsunaga.

Secondly, it provided a forum for them to personally address the delegation in its entirety and to see the physical make-up of the group: three generations, 50 percent Nisei and 442nd veterans.

They were visibly impressed by the donor ribbons, each one bearing the name and the spirit of a supporter back home who had contributed monetarily to this effort. These ribbons and a beautiful NCCR banner decorated the walls of each General Session and reception. All of the Japanese American congressmen felt it was a very effective and impressive display.

Setting up the lobbying appointments was an education. Each appointment required an average of three to four phone calls plus a letter of confirmation

with the names of the team making the visit.

Targetted first were the uncommitted representatives of California, where most of the delegates were from. Also targetted was Texas, since there was a strong contingent of 442nd veterans who had their "Honorary Citizens of Texas" papers; as well as Eric Saul, consultant with National Japanese American Historical Society, and Chet Tanaka, co-author of "Go for Broke." They provided material for the packets that were given to legislators.

Also contacted were the 58 members of Congress who were on a list compiled by Norman Mineta and Robert Matsui's offices.



Most of the teams met before the meetings to go over the biography of the congressman and to discuss strategy. They met afterwards to sum up and write their reports. This analysis is largely based on these reports. They had breakfasts, lunch and dinner together and worked like a well-oiled machine. "We met so much, I felt confident in every meeting," reported Mary Ann Sakaue, who had never lobbied or been to a congressional office before.

Meetings were not always with members of Congress, but with the legislative directors and aides who are assigned to an issue, such as H.R. 442. In many cases their research and recommendations are the key factors in positions taken by members of Congress.

Surprisingly, some offices made a distinction between cosponsorship, support and a "yes" vote. Therefore, the NCCR delegation took the advice of the Nikkei leadership and embarked on a number of "thank-you" visits. Those visits were very important, not only to express gratitude, but to reaffirm "yes" votes, and see if there were any concerns.

For example, one office reported receiving a lot of negative mail, and needed positive mail from their constituents. Several others were summed up as "may need to emphasize the importance of individual compensation as the crux of the bill."

A special thank-you visit was made to Majority Leader Tom Foley who made time to personally meet with members of the delegation after that day's Contragate hearing. He spoke of his continued commitment to see the bill pass and said his office was putting together a "Whip Check" on the bill. Like so many other legislators, he was very responsive to the 442nd veterans.

These meetings led to 15 uncommitted members leaning towards a "yes" vote. Rep. Beryl Anthony (D- Arkansas) was aware of the two camps in Arkansas, which he considered "a blight on our history" and mentioned he would speak to Arkansas Senator Dale Bumpers who is an S. 1009 co-sponsor. In another meeting with an uncommitted California Republican, an aide came in to escort the congressman to his next appointment. Somehow, the door was stuck and couldn't be opened, thus allowing Glen Kitayama, a member of that team to relate a very moving story about his grandfather, who was an internee. The congressman was visibly moved, and took the time to take a group photograph. The team came away very optimistic about his support.

A special 442nd team of "Honorary Texans" met Rep. Martin Frost (D-Texas), who later stated to 442nd veteran Wally Nunotani, "I think I'll vote in favor of this bill." Several Texas and Southern legislators spoke of the positive influence of Speaker Jim Wright.

There also was a number of uncommitted members who were very supportive of the issue, but had a deep concern about monetary compensation. A couple brought up the budget deficit, or Gramm-Rudman, but the teams quickly brought out the fact that Senator Rudman was a co-sponsor of the Senate bill, S.1009.

Other meetings led to a definite positive response.

The Fred Korematsu team met with Rep. Butler Derrick (D-South Carolina) and his aide, Carl McIntosh, who had studied Korematsu's case in law school. He mentioned several times, "Isn't this Norm's (Mineta) bill?" (In fact, the bill was introduced by Speaker Jim Wright (D-Texas).) A few days later, they informed the team leader, Jenny Morozumi, that Derrick would co-sponsor the bill.

Out of the 101 visits, eight were totally against the bill. They cited concerns about setting a precedent. They also felt an apology should be sufficient, and that reparations would be equivalent to taking money away from senior citizens programs. One felt that accepting reparations would tarnish the good image of Japanese Americans and create a hate backlash towards Asian Americans. One Asian American aide felt that individual payments would probably be used "to pay bills and take trips to Japan," and were not as lasting as a trust fund.

The most common and serious reservation, even among those who supported redress, was the question of setting a precedent and concerns about where the appropriation would come from and how it would affect the deficit.

## NIKKEI LEGISLATORS

The NCCR delegation appeared to energize the Nikkei legislators, who in turn worked hard to accommodate these newcomers to Washington. Norman Mineta and Robert Matsui provided updated co-sponsorship lists and status of the bill on an almost daily basis- Carol Stroebel from Mineta's office and Ed Hatcher from Matsui's- gave presentations at the orientation.

Both congressmen led a General Session, were available for office visits, co-hosted and received a mounted hand-lettered Certificate of Appreciation at the reception.

Mineta stayed throughout the entire final reception, and afterwards took the NCRR San Jose delegation to dinner—all of them packed in his car. Matsui gave NCRR a beautifully framed congressional Certificate of Appreciation, and a mounted copy of his Congressional Salute to NCRR, which was put into the Congressional Record.

They, along with Rep. Patricia Saiki, also sent out a "Dear Colleague" letter informing other members of Congress of our arrival and urging their cooperation. In a meeting, Saiki informed us that she would send a "Dear Colleague" letter to the uncommitted Republicans. Rep. Don Edwards (D-San Jose) was consistent in his support making time to speak at a General Session with Mineta, coming to the reception and also opening up his office for visits.

Congressman Mervyn Dymally also made all of his office's resources available to the delegation. Dymally, unfortunately, was called to a convention in Africa and wasn't able to be present throughout the lobbying.

Senator Spark Matsunaga, who practically single-handedly gathered 76 co-sponsors for S. 1009, showed real Hawaiian hospitality by providing fresh-baked cookies and cold drinks at the General Session. He said there were probably five more coming on board bringing the total to 81. (The Senate committee unanimously passed S. 1009 by voice vote last week.)

The accomplishments, excitement, and reported effectiveness of the delegation is only half over, however. A summarization of all the lobbying reports is almost completed—there are still a few outstanding meeting reports. Constituent visits and letters during the August recess, while legislators are home, are being scheduled. Certain offices are being targeted. Volunteers will be making follow-up calls to

supportive legislators who offered to talk to specific colleagues, as well as to sympathetic aides.

The week on the "Hill" is only part of the continuous struggle of the Japanese American community to get redress and reparations, symbolically important in light of those who suffered, fought, died and survived. However, it vividly shows that yes, people can be the makers of history.

by Miya Iwataki

#### SANSEI STUDENTS JOIN IN REDRESS LOBBYING EFFORT

WASHINGTON— "When I entered college, it was the redress and reparations issue that opened my eyes. Listening to testimonies at the hearings and learning of the pain and suffering our parents felt brought out my anger at the unpaid violations. At the same time, it brought out my pride in being Japanese American," said Linda Asato, a graduate student at Columbia University in New York, at the reception on the final day of redress lobbying in the nation's capital.

Asato was one among many students who joined the delegates who traveled to Washington D.C. to lobby Congress and to network with other young people in other schools to strengthen the Asian Pacific student movement.

The campuses across the United States represented included the following: Southern California—Eagle Rock Junior High School, East Los Angeles City College, California State University, Los Angeles, Narbonne High School; Northern California—Berkeley High School, San Francisco State University, University of California, Berkeley, Stanford University; and East Coast—Boston University, Columbia University, Cornell University, Georgetown University and New York University.

According to Norman Yen, seventh grader from Eagle Rock Junior High School, "I think we pushed those congresspeople to vote "yes" on H.R. 442 and Senate Bill S. 1009. I had a lot of fun doing that in Washington D.C."

Gary Fujimoto, a student at California State University, Los Angeles, and a coordinating committee member of the California Statewide Asian/Pacific Islander Student Union (APSU), expressed his pleasure at seeing the various campuses represented. APSU recently held a statewide meeting in which there was unanimous support given to the NCRR lobbying delegation to Washington.

This Sansel's family was interned at Tule Lake Relocation Center. "Just like many families, they suffered a lot of hardships. It is very important that Yonsel, Sansel and Nisel continue to lobby for the reparations bills. People with whom I had spoken with agree that it takes a united effort by all generations of Japanese Americans, driven by the Nisei to rally for redress and monetary reparations in our fight for justice," he said.

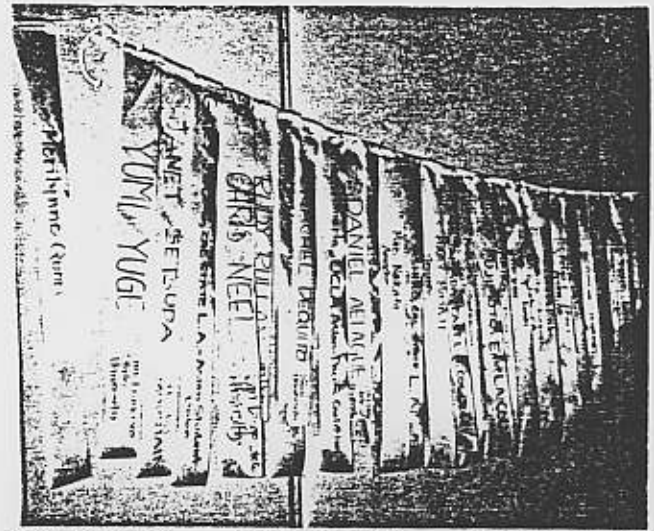
Linda Asato also was impressed with the unity of the cross-generational group. "Many times, people say, 'If it wasn't for the Sansel's efforts, redress and reparations would not be reality today, but as we can see from this delegation, it is Nisei who are the strongest fighters here. You and our Issei grandparents are an inspiration to us. You are the ones who endured the camps and are fighting today," she said.

"Although we were not forced into camps, we do not view redress and reparations as an issue of the past. To us, the camps are a sad symbol of the historic and continuing oppression of Asians in this country," said Asato.

She also spoke of the anti-Asian prejudice on American campuses. "This reminds us that if justice is not served for the wrongs of the past, who's to say that similar actions like the concentration camps won't happen again.

"Finally, like our parents and grandparents, we accept the challenge to continue the legacy of struggle with our community. Redress now! Reparations now!"

contributed by the student delegates



RIBBONS EXPRESS COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIP AND SUPPORT OF THE DELEGATION

WASHINGTON- When the more than 120 delegates went to Washington, D.C. on the NCRR lobbying effort between July 25th and the 29th, they were accompanied by the spirit of support many people back home had given to this historic event. From across the country, hundreds of supporters responded to the call to give their support to this grassroots lobbying effort to achieve the passage of H.R. 442.

By making contributions many people had their names placed on yellow, white and lavender ribbons which also included the camp and assembly centers they had been in. Others were signed in memory of relatives who had lived through the camp experience. While still others, though not in a camp, signed their names as part of the larger community support being given to the redress and reparations movement.

"Volunteers from NCRR in California implemented the 'Sponsor a Delegate' campaign with a 'Go for Broke' spirit," said G. Akito Maehara, Outreach Chair of the Los Angeles chapter. He said, "They set up information tables at community events, churches, and Nikkel community centers. They also made presentations to community groups and organizations throughout the state."

"I was very moved by seeing the Issei come up to our tables and giving us whatever they could afford to help support our efforts

in Washington D.C.," said Kimberly Hee of the Outreach Committee. She continued, "What moved me most was that people would keep coming back and giving as much as they could, often bringing friends with them."

While in Washington, D.C. the ribbons were displayed at every large gathering of delegates and members of Congress. Over 600 ribbons were displayed representing supporters from San Jose, San Francisco, Los Angeles, San Diego, New York, Boston, Washington, D.C. and various college campuses. "Whenever there was a break in the day's activities people could be

seen searching through the ribbons for familiar names from the past or just reading them to learn the

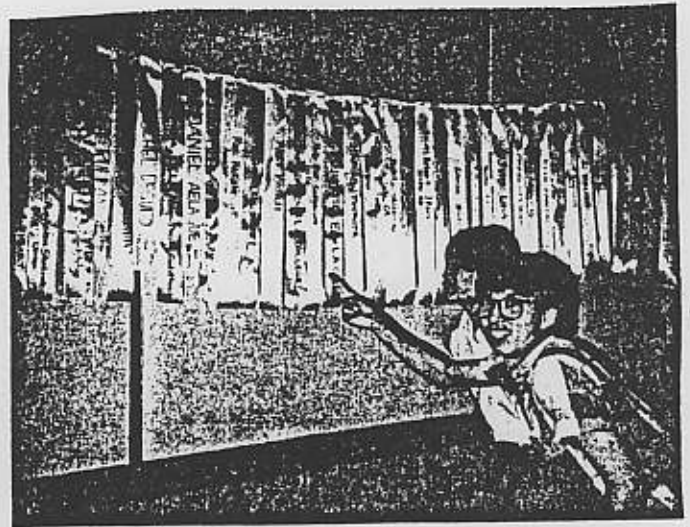
history contained in them," said Jim Matsuoka.

NCCR would like to extend its deepest appreciation to all those volunteers whose efforts contributed to the spiritual upliftment which the ribbon display brought to both the delegates and the congresspeople. Finally, our sincere thanks to the hundreds of individuals and organizations who came forward to provide the support which helped make this delegation a success.

by Kathy Nishimoto Masaoka

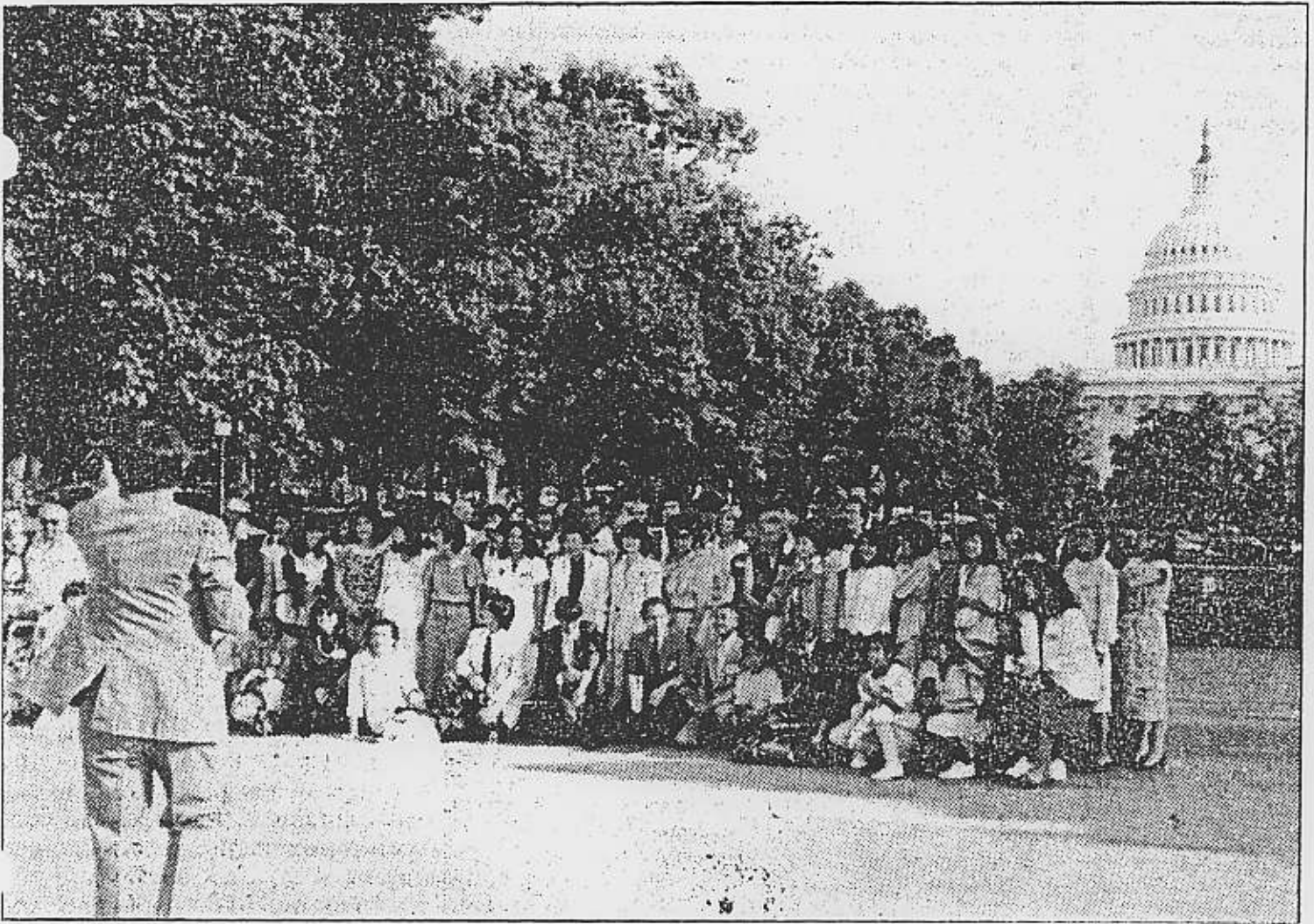


San Francisco Delegates



Student Delegates





Washington Delegation

WHAT WE NEED TO DO NOW TO ENSURE  
THE PASSAGE OF H.R. 442 ON  
SEPTEMBER 17

1) Continue letter-writing to  
congress people:

-ask friends and relatives East  
of the Rockies to write their  
congressperson.

-thank representatives who are  
cosponsoring the bill and encourage  
them to vote for individual  
compensation.

2) Phone or visit your  
representative's field office  
before September 17 to express your  
desire to see H.R. 442 pass with  
his/hers "yes" vote.

3) Donate to continue the redress  
lobbying effort.

#### CALENDAR OF EVENTS

NCRR Statewide Steering Committee  
meeting: August 30, 11-1 JACCC  
Room 410

NCRR Coordinating Committee  
meeting: September 1,  
7:30 PM JACCC Room 410

Press Conference: September 17,  
9:00 AM JACCC 2nd Floor

Smithsonian Exhibit opening:  
October 3

Fundraiser Luau: October 3 (more  
information to follow)

COMMUNITY MEETING: September 13, 1-3  
PM at LITTLE TOKYO TOWERS

COMMUNITY MEETING  
September 13 1-3 PM  
at Little Tokyo Towers

- report from the Washington lobby
- videotape presentation of delegation
- update on the redress campaign and  
what needs to be done now

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