



NCCR BANNER

National Coalition for Redress/Reparations

1942-1992: A Perspective on the 50th Year Remembrance

1992 promises to be a year of great significance to Japanese Americans—a year of remembrance as we mark the 50th anniversary of an event that forever changed the lives of all Japanese Americans. Recently, we witnessed the unprecedented media coverage of the 50th anniversary of the bombing of Pearl Harbor. There will likely not be as much coverage when February 19 arrives, a date that will commemorate the 50th anniversary of a day of infamy for all Japanese Americans.

On February 19, 1942, Franklin Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, the decree that authorized and forced the removal and incarceration of all Americans of Japanese ancestry from the west coast. The signing of E.O. 9066 initiated what was to become one of the darkest chapters of U.S. history with the violations of the rights and liberties of 120,000 Americans based on race and ethnic origin. With the passage of 50 years, much has been learned about the causes and impact of the camps. More importantly, justice has finally been served with enactment of redress legislation, the result of the perseverance and spirit of the Japanese American community.

February 19, will be marked by commemoration events initiated by NCCR chapters in Los Angeles, San Francisco, and San Jose. The 50 year commemoration



of the camps and the conclusion of the monetary phase of the redress campaign signifies the closing of a major chapter in the history and experience of Japanese Americans.

Much still lies ahead. The fight for redress is not yet over

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1992



An Untold Chapter from our History: The Liberation of Dachau by the 522nd F.A.B. (100th/442nd)

It isn't often that one gets to hear a fascinating story from Japanese American history. It also isn't often that members from our community come together with members of the Jewish community to share a similar experience. Both of these things took place on December 4, when some 400 people turned out to hear veterans from the 522nd Field Artillery Battalion (100th/442nd), Dachau concentration camp survivors and Eric Saul, army archivist from San Francisco, give moving, personal accounts of the liberation of Dachau by the 522nd. The audience was also able to view photographs taken by George Oiye and Sus Ito, members of the 522nd, some of which had never before been seen by the public.

Eric painted some background history of the 522nd and the 100th/442nd—how the 522nd was known for its pin-point accuracy and how overall the 100th/442nd received over 18,000 medals and was the most decorated unit of comparable size in U.S. history.

Clarence Matsumura, of San Gabriel explained how the 522nd "stumbled" across Dachau, some 10 miles outside of Munich, Germany. Being part of the Headquarters Battery of the 522nd, which handled all radio communications, Clarence believed the mission of the 522nd was to find and capture Hitler. When they arrived at Dachau and opened the gates, they found many prisoners very sick and some already lying dead in

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as much work needs to be done to ensure that the lessons of the camps are learned by all Americans. There are also many other issues to be confronted. With increasing racial polarization, growing anti-Asian sentiment, and continued cutbacks in services and opportunities, the need for a progressive grassroots organization such as NCRP remains as strong as ever. With your support, NCRP will continue to be a presence in the grassroots movement for civil rights and the empowerment of our communities.

1992 Day of Remembrance Programs

San Francisco: Saturday, Feb. 15, 1992 - 2:00 pm
JCCCNC

1840 Sutter St., San Francisco

San Jose: Sunday, Feb. 16, 1992 - 6:30 pm
San Jose Buddhist Church

640 No. 5th Street, San Jose

Los Angeles: Saturday, Feb. 15, 1992 - 11:30 am
Japan America Theatre

244 So. San Pedro St., Los Angeles

50 Year Remembrance Events

Feb. 15 & 16, JACCC

(Dachau continued from page 1)

the snow. Clarence, along with other 522nd members tried to help them by feeding and clothing them, even though they were given orders not to.

George Oiye, from Los Altos, was one of the 522nd's forward observers, whose responsibility was to scout out and locate enemy positions. He recollected, "...the inmates looked like lumps in the snow because they had died either before or after it snowed; they were so weak, starved, and diseased."

Sus Ito, from Massachusetts, another forward observer and first lieutenant of the "C" Battery, was one of the very few Japanese American officers of the 522nd. He and George Oiye put together the photo display so that "...our children and our grandchildren should have an accurate record of what we did."

Rudy Tokiwa, a 442nd veteran and NCRP member from San Jose talked about the famous Battle of the Lost Battalion, and how out of 258 members of his Company, he was one of 17 that returned alive.

Yanina Cywinska, from Fairfield, California, gave

a heart wrenching account of how at age 10, her entire family, which was Catholic, was sent to concentration camps for helping the Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto. All of her family members perished in the camps and Yanina believed she was about to be shot when miraculously, she was saved by a Japanese American soldier. Yanina cried out, "Go ahead and shoot me," but the 522nd soldier got down on his knees, crying and insisting that she was now free.

In the audience were several other Dachau survivors who had read about the program in the LA Times. Some of them, Mr. and Mrs. Gilbert from Los Angeles and Martha Greenbaum and her sister Helen from Irvine, spoke of their hardships in the camps. Mr. Gilbert, in particular, remembered being saved by troops of all nationalities, including Japanese Americans.

An exciting highlight of the program was the attendance of 3 African American veterans who were medics during WWII and were sent into Dachau to clean up and tend to the prisoners. They talked about how they were often sent into very dangerous situations and many contracted diseases and died.

Looking to the future, members of the 522nd will travel to Dachau next April where a plaque will be dedicated, and then on to Israel where they will be officially thanked for their role in liberating Dachau. Also next year, the 100th/442nd and the Japanese American National Museum will sponsor a full-blown photo exhibit featuring George and Sus' photographs in Los Angeles.

Educating the Next Generation

One of the goals of the NCRP is to work to educate the American public about the World War II incarceration of Japanese-Americans. Our work has included pilgrimages to former campsites, recording the oral histories of former internees, and developing ideas for an educational video. NCRP members have shared their camp experiences with students from elementary schools to college campuses.

One concrete way of ensuring an accurate history of the internment be taught is by sponsoring curriculum workshops for teachers. The Bay Area NCRP is holding a workshop for teachers on Saturday, March 28, 1992. The day-long conference will feature grade level workshops, a guest speaker and panel discussion. For more information, contact Lucy Hamai, at (510) 526-2884 (days).

NCRR Helps Improve Media Sensitivity in Pearl Harbor Commemoration

NCRR chapters in San Francisco and Los Angeles, and Nihonmachi Outreach Committee (NOC) in San Jose, along with many other Japanese American organizations and individuals, had an important impact on the national media coverage of the 50th anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor.

The networks, the national news weeklies and major newspapers were completely saturated with multiple stories on Pearl Harbor. Nonetheless, there were a significant number of stories that distinguished Japanese Americans from the government of Japan, and recounted both the injustice of the concentration camps and the courage of Nisei soldiers. *Time* and CBS's *Sunday Morning* ran stories on the internment, and the *Los Angeles Times* ran a front page story a month before December 7 on Japanese American concerns about the Pearl Harbor anniversary, quoting Alan Nishio of NCRR, and many others. Ten years ago, it could not have been imagined that a major Presidential address would acknowledge the government's fault in interning Japanese Americans during WWII. President Bush's Pearl Harbor statement was a result of the campaign for redress.

NCRR and NOC initiated press conferences in San Jose, San Francisco, and Los Angeles to express community concern about the coverage, and the threat of anti-Asian violence. These were widely covered by local television news. The San Francisco *Examiner* ran a prominent story focused on longtime NCRR members Jim and Nobu Kajiwaru and the impact that Pearl Harbor had on their lives. The Oakland *Tribune* printed a commentary by Chizu Iiyama of the National Japanese American Historical Society. The *Los Angeles Times* ran many articles during the week before December 7. Several were positive, including a front page article on the freeing of Dachau survivors by the Japanese American 522nd Field Artillery Battalion. NCRR in L.A. sent all local media a detailed press packet on Pearl Harbor and the concentration camps.

As feared, however, there were a number of hate crimes around the state. An elderly San Leandro couple, Asachi and Kanyu Masuyama, were targets of an attempted firebombing. A rice cake shop in Sacramento was sprayed by a pellet gun on December 7 and 8. The Southeast Japanese Community center in Norwalk (near LA) was hit by vandalism in November; "Go Back to Asia" and "Nips" were painted on walls of the Center. In

October, a Claremont Japanese American's house was vandalized with a message reading, "You Rice Ball, Eat S___." San Jose *Mercury News* writer Donna Kato and Sacramento JACL leader, Mary Tsukamoto both received hate messages after stories in which they were involved appeared in local media.

While these ugly episodes evidence rising racial tensions, perhaps the number of these incidents were reduced by the positive coverage. In general, the media coverage of the Pearl Harbor anniversary was careful to distinguish Japanese Americans from the acts of the Japanese military. NCRR's years of fighting racism and bringing the truth to light are in large part responsible for that recognition. ■

ORA UPDATE

The Office of Redress Administration (ORA) is in the process of completing the second round of redress payments to eligible Japanese Americans born between 1920 and 1928. The vast majority of these payments (90%) were mailed out in the first week of October 1991. The remainder were held up due to delays in receiving eligibility documentation, but will be released as processing of individuals cases is completed.

To aid in this process, the ORA will be holding these workshops:

1/31/92 Little Tokyo Towers, LA 1-4 pm
2/1/92 Ken Nakaoka Ctr, Gardena 10-1 pm
2/14/92 JCCCNC, San Francisco 4-7 pm

People who have not already been in contact with the ORA (including people in the current age group and those born before 1920) should contact them immediately. According to Richard Konda of the Asian Law Alliance in San Jose, those whose original contact was with the National Archives need to contact the ORA directly. "We still have people coming in who haven't received anything, but who mistakenly believe that the government knows about them because they sent a form to the Archives years ago." Also, anyone receiving a denial letter from the ORA should immediately contact one of the community legal agencies for assistance.

San Francisco—

Nihonmachi Legal Outreach (415) 567-6255

San Jose—

Asian Law Alliance (408) 287-9710

Los Angeles—

NCRR (213) 413-6537

Little Tokyo Towers Update

The year-long struggle between the residents of the Little Tokyo Towers, the senior citizens' apartment complex in Los Angeles, and its Board of Directors has not yet been resolved. Despite the mounting frustration of the residents, the Residents' Council, headed by Lily Okamoto, has focused its efforts on changes in the Towers' kitchen. The Council has requested that the cook be replaced and that the supervision of the kitchen be put under the supervision of the resident manager, Moritaka Uchimura.

The Board's decision is pending investigation by its own kitchen committee. Residents and former employees of the Towers' kitchen testified on November 25, 1991, about the cook's poor behavior and misappropriation of goods. Ms. Okamoto expressed the unhappiness and low morale of the tenants after having witnessed many years of serious improprieties in the kitchen. "When will this whole devastating situation end? The majority want him out. This corruption is like a cancer; it must be cut out. Let's

make this a safe and happy home for all of the retired persons to enjoy the remaining years of our lives here—in peace and security."

In July, 1991, the Board of Directors refused the residents' demands that 1) residents be represented on the Board, 2) that the President of the Board resign, 3) that the management company be replaced, and 4) that the cook be replaced. Only one of their demands was met—that the resident manager be removed from probationary status and placed on regular employee status.

NCRR members continue to meet with the Residents' Council to provide support and assistance. For further information, contact Kay Ochi, (213) 413-6537.

NCRR Banner

The following people contributed articles, photos, graphics and labor to this issue of the *NCRR Banner*: Susan Hayase, June Hibino, Bruce Iwasaki, Kimi Maru (editor), David Monkawa (graphics), Alan Nishio, Kay Ochi, John Ota, and Jan Yen (photos).



NCRR

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