



NCCR BANNER

Newsletter of the National Coalition for Redress/Reparations

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PROTECT THE CIVIL RIGHTS OF ASIAN YOUTH: ABOLISH THE RACIST ASIAN MUGSHOT FILES

For the past several months, Asian American youth (Japanese, Vietnamese, Chinese and Korean) have been detained and searched with questionable "probable cause" by the police in Fountain Valley, CA. The police have systematically taken photographs of youth right on the street against a wall or squad car without permission or explanation and have collected the photos in a binder, designated "AGI" (Asian Gang Investigation). Cases of excessive force and physical abuse have been documented such as chokings and stomping on feet while being detained.



Core members of the Fountain Valley Asian Youth Alliance-NCCR, during filming of CNN news segment.

These acts may be a discriminatory violation of civil and constitutional rights. White "Skinhead gangs" are not photographed in proportion to their numbers. Innocent individuals may be stigmatized in the future. The use of the Asian mug-file or files alienates the Asian communities from the police. **It should be abolished, and the random harassment discontinued.**

In San Jose, Ted Nguyen, age 26, was mistakenly identified as a robbery suspect through the Asian mug-files, spent 3 months in jail and incurred \$20,000.00 worth of legal fees before being found innocent. Through a concerted effort by the Asian American community to pressure the Police Department in August 1991, the Asian gang photo policy was abolished in San Jose.

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TEACHING ABOUT THE INTERNMENT OF JAPANESE AMERICANS

Passing on our legacy to youth

The mass incarceration of 120,000 Japanese Americans in U.S. concentration camps during World War II marks a dark period in American history. But **Teaching About the Internment of Japanese Americans**, a one day conference on Saturday, March 20, will provide educators with the knowledge and techniques to use the lessons of this dark period as positive learning experiences for elementary and secondary school students. The conference is the second of its kind sponsored by the National Coalition for Redress/Reparations (NCCR), a national civil rights organization. NCCR held a similar conference last year, but due to overwhelming interest in the topic, conference organiz-



Conference participants listen to guest speakers

ers had to turn people away. NCCR has decided to repeat the conference not only to meet the interest people have expressed in the topic, but also because of the positive feedback from last year's participants. A conference on **Teaching About the Internment of Japanese Americans** could not be more timely. State agencies, statewide organizations, and communities of color have been urging school administrators and teachers to teach about historical events which reflect the experiences of all racial, religious, and ethnic groups. The California State Board of Education's History-Social Science Framework for California Public Schools,

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RACISM AND REPRESSION: A grassroots "take" on fighting hate crimes

The past 2 years have seen a sizable increase in hate crimes directed against minority peoples and gays. An FBI report of national hate crime statistics released in February 1993 (the first of its kind) revealed that "hate is not color blind", with over 60% of the crimes directed against African Americans and another 10 to 15% directed against people of color. Unfortunately the most telling statistic is that only 3,000 of the 16,000 law enforcement agencies contacted participated in providing information.

Physical violence represents the most savage manifestation of institutional racism that includes a broad range of right-wing attacks on our economic and political rights. During the Reagan /Bush years, affirmative action, low income housing, labor rights, education, civil rights legislation have suffered major setbacks. Several factors have had an impact in the rise of racism and reaction:

- The military intervention of the past 12 years such as the invasions of Grenada and Panama, the funding of the Contras and the Gulf War have resulted in more incidents of domestic racism towards Arab Americans, Latin Americans and other minorities.

- The economic crisis such as the recession and layoffs, especially in aerospace and auto provided fuel to scapegoat minorities and immigrants.

- The trade deficit and Japanese investment in the U.S. have fanned up anti-Asian sentiment in particular.

- The increase of organized right-wing ideologies and groups within and outside of the Republican Party have created a political atmosphere more tolerant of racism and reaction within both parties.

These factors have been on a collision course over the past 15 years with the tremendous increase in Asian Pacific Islander immigration. In southern California the acute contradiction between layoffs of white workers in the military industrial complex and the rise of the Asian population, often mis-perceived as "taking over the town" is very pronounced in Orange and Riverside Counties. Conservative white dominated municipalities have traditionally controlled "their" towns which are increasing becoming more minority. In areas such as Norwalk, Cypress, Diamond Bar, La Habra, Huntington Beach and Norco, incidents of violence against Asians and minority peoples continue to occur. It may not be just coincidence that a nationwide list of active "Skinhead" chapters released by the Anti-Defamation League sites active chapters precisely in those areas.

Many civil rights groups, legal advocacy groups, politicians and community leaders have been trying to provide leadership on how to deal with hate crimes. The main

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ADVOCACY FOR THOSE DENIED REDRESS

This past year has seen many applicants for redress denied because they did not fit into the criteria provided by the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 and its amendments. The cases coming up for decision are more controversial because the applicants are younger and involve complex situations. In the Bay area, San Jose and in LA, NCRR members have been at the forefront in aiding those who have been denied redress or are trying to find out about the status of their eligibility.

In L.A. alone, over 60 individuals have received either telephone or walk-in counseling and in certain situations, have gotten letters of appeals edited and written by NCRR members. Those denied cover a wide range of situations.

The stronger cases have been those who were born

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NCRR SENIORS CONTINUE FIGHT FOR TENANTS RIGHTS

The Residents Council of the Little Tokyo Towers (The largest senior citizens housing project for Japanese Americans in the U.S.) reports that its campaign to improve conditions at the Towers and to create a more responsive Board of Directors continues into its third year.

Lily Okamoto, President of the Residents Council, and Bernadette Nishimura, Vice President, are very concerned about several absentee Board members and urge the building's sponsoring organizations (the Pacific Southwest/JACL, the Southern California Gardeners Federation, Inc., the Southern California Christian Church Federation: Japanese American, and the Los Angeles Buddhist Church Federation) to replace offending Board members.

The Resident Council is further concerned that the Board has not had a regular meeting since mid-November since there are several pressing concerns. Meanwhile, the Council has recruited 20 new council members and have instituted a monthly residents' meeting and a Towers Newsletter.

Okamoto and Nishimura, active NCRR members, encourage community members who are 62 years old (or older) and have low monthly income (currently, no more than \$1045 net per month, per individual or couple to consider living at the Towers. "We're in the heart of Little Tokyo, and things are getting better here. We soon hope to have the dining room reopened." Those who are interested should call Mr. Moritaka Uchimura, Resident Manager, at (213)622-3076.

..."Racism and Repression,"continued.

advice which they reiterate for the Asian communities is to report hate crimes to their respective law enforcement agencies and to local Human Relations Commissions. This is very important so that such crimes will be documented as a basis for more law enforcement attention, prosecution and educational resources.

However, it is not enough to rely solely on local government and police. In many areas where racist ideologies have entrenched themselves for years, the local governments and police have a "blind spot" to acknowledging hate crimes. Even when victims report incidents as "racially motivated" assault or vandalism, these acts may not be interpreted by the police as such. In other situations, the police have not shown an aggressive or serious attitude in the investigation of these crimes, especially where the political clout of the minority communities are limited.

Although NCRR joins other civil rights groups in encouraging the reporting of hate crimes, we believe the organization of grassroots efforts by victims/residents is a critical element which is often omitted from many hate crime seminars.

These organizing efforts can help to: a) Pressure local police and governments to take serious action to investigate hate crimes and prosecute culprits. b) Develop collective ways to defend our communities by forming Neighborhood Watches or circulating "wanted posters" c) To take preventative measures by educating ourselves about the location and nature of right-wing and racist groups. These efforts have the potential to galvanize communities so that they can exert greater political strength and possibly even expand their issues to go beyond the immediate



Kay Ochi, President, NCRR L.A., with victims of hate crimes at community meeting to demand more aggressive police action.

goals.

These efforts have been pioneered for years by the African American communities. Tactics such as, holding open community meetings to seek better services from the police, distribution of flyers to warn others of hate crimes and to intimidate perpetrators, letter writing and telephone campaigns to get action from local governments and forming self defense and neighborhood watch committees to name a few, all have been implemented by many minority, women's and gay organizations. These tactics are perfectly compatible with legal strategies or with local law enforcement agencies and in fact provide a important source public support needed for political campaigns to beef up state and national legislation to deter hate crimes.

Similar to the Redress movement, we must develop ways to empower the grassroots and fight for local accountability of government including law enforcement agencies.

Nowadays, an atmosphere of fear and paranoia of "street

crime" pervades the nation,. Although we need more skilled and sensitive law enforcement, we must not allow police to be complacent about hate crimes nor allow the "war on crime" to turn into repression of communities of color. Community accountability of police is as controversial a subject in our community as redress once was. "Redress" for all Japanese? You're dreaming," we were once told. Perhaps this dream too will become reality over the next decade.



Youthful Pan-Asian audience attending community meeting

..."Asian mugshots,"continued.

Law enforcement officials have placed more attention on Asian gangs statewide due to their increased activity. Although this is a concern for all, many racist and un-informed stereo-types of Asian gangs permeate the media such as the "mysterious triads" or "exotic yakuza's" who are the overlords "behind" youth gangs.

The Fountain Valley Asian Youth Alliance, a chapter of the NCRR was formed to combat these stereotypes and abolish the mug-file practice. "We believe that closer working relationships with the community, more Asian officers and staff, more gang/drug prevention and recreational programs are needed to deter gangs," stated members of the Alliance. The random harassment of Asian youth and the mug-file practice jeopardizes individual civil and constitutional rights, and has yet to be a effective deterrent according to some law enforcement experts.

Currently the Southern California American Civil Liberties Union, ACLU has filed a "Public Records Act Request" against the Fountain Valley Police in an effort to disclose what exactly are the purpose of the photos and other documents related to Asian gang policies. The police have refused to disclose anything and are conducting their own internal investigation of 9 administrative complaints filed by members of the Fountain Valley Asian Youth Alliance-NCRR.

"We're doing a petition campaign to the Mayor and City Council of Fountain Valley to abolish this practice. We are currently speaking to many organizations on campuses and in the community to gain more supporters," stated Jason Kanshige. The issue has received broad support from community, campus and civil rights groups of all nationalities. A front page L.A. Times article, a Times editorial opposing the Asian mugfile practice, a nationally broadcast CNN and NPR segment as well as coverage in most ethnic newspapers have helped to bring this issue to the public.

"It is important for the Asian communities to unite with the African American and Latino communities in addressing police misconduct. We cannot allow more Rodney King incidents against any of us regardless of color," stated David Monkawa of NCRR L.A.

NIKKEI FOR CIVIL RIGHTS AND REDRESS

Tax deductible contributions allowed

A new organization called the Nikkei for Civil Rights and Redress, incorporated in April of 1991, received a tax-exempt, nonprofit status this past October. This tax status is retroactive to April of 1991. The purpose of the Nikkei for Civil Rights and Redress is to support a broad range of educational activities that inform the public of the past and ongoing struggle for civil rights in the Japanese American community. Tax deductible contributions may now be made to this organization to support its educational and charitable programs.

ed. note— The National Coalition for Redress and Reparations is an independent body. Contributions to this civil rights organization sustain important and urgently needed advocacy and political lobbying activities, and are not tax deductible.

DONATIONS NEEDED:

More Ways to Support Civil Rights!

NCRR-Los Angeles in 1992 opened an office in the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center in Little Tokyo. The office needs the following: a photo-copier; a Macintosh computer; modems for IBM compatible PC's; Apple or HP-compatible laser printers; a fax machine; a fax/modem/phone switch; and other desktop publishing tools. You can support NCRR with these tax deductible donations, please call (213)680-3484.

..."denied redress" continued

in camp to mothers who were interned but may have left camp temporarily. The more difficult cases have been those children born to "voluntary" evacuees who are seeking redress not born in camps. NCRR in L.A., is now trying to assemble those JAs who were shipped to Japan on a prisoner exchange program with the aim in mind of developing a strategy to gain redress. Although the possibility of a class action suit is one option as is a legislative strategy which might be pursued by the Peruvians, each grouping of appellants would have to pursue the strategy which would most facilitate their own situation. It is becoming clear that all chapters of the NCRR should meet soon to discuss and develop ideas to address the compelling stories of people who justly deserve redress.

Redress Assistance

Los Angeles:	NCRR, (213) 680-3484
San Francisco:	Mrs. Tsuyako "Sox" Kitashima (415) 922-1534 Nihonmachi Legal Outreach 1840 Sutter Street San Francisco, CA 94115 (415) 567-6255
East Bay:	Marlene Tonai (510) 848-3560
San Jose:	Richard Konda, Asian Law Alliance (408) 287-9710
Wash. D.C.:	Office of Redress Assistance: (202) 219-6900 Appeals Section (202) 514-3430

..."Teaching about internment," continued.

the state's guide to history and social science curricula for elementary and secondary schools, specifies teaching about the internment of Japanese Americans not only in discussing U.S. history, but also using the issues related to internment to teach students about topics such as immigration and constitutional rights. Although these agencies and concerned individuals are urging teachers to educate students about internment, state-approved curriculum materials are oftentimes inadequate in their coverage of this topic. Conference organizers hope that the peer advice and support, the sample lessons, and introduction to resources and materials on the internment will help educators meet the goals and intent of the state's framework. "I've always felt the internment should be taught in the classroom," said Lucy Hamai, a librarian and former internee who is organizing the conference. "This workshop is valuable because there's a need for this kind of in-service for people to successfully teach this topic. This workshop allows teachers to hear first hand about what happened and get guidance from top-notch teachers who have successfully integrated the subject into their classroom studies." **Teaching About the Internment of Japanese Americans** will kick off with a morning talk by guest speaker Chizu Iiyama, an educator and longtime community activist who was incarcerated in Topaz internment camp during World War II. At elementary and secondary workshops, conference participants will learn more about the Japanese American internment experience and how to integrate them into class lessons. Carole Chin, a fourth grade teacher at Malcolm X School in Berkeley, and Chiyomi Masuda, a sixth grade teacher at Albany Middle School and a member of the state's Curriculum Commission, will discuss ways to teach about the Japanese American experience at the elementary level. Paul DeWitt, a high school teacher and head of the Social Studies Department at Newark Memorial High School, will discuss how to integrate the subject of internment at the secondary level. Later in the afternoon, a panel discussion will offer the perspectives of Fred Korematsu, litigant in the 1944 Supreme Court case Korematsu v. U.S.; Libia Yamamoto, a Japanese Peruvian whom the U.S. government forcibly removed from Peru and incarcerated in a U.S. concentration camp during World War II; Rudy Tokiwa, a U.S. veteran who served in the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. "We hope to provide teachers with a well-rounded background on the internment experience," said Hamai. Representatives from the National Japanese American Historical Society will be on hand to offer for sale its numerous publications on the wartime internment and related topics. Representatives from Shen's Books, which specializes in books dealing with Asian American topics and history, will also be on hand with their wide selection of books appropriate for all grade levels, some of which are often hard-to-find in regular bookstores.

Teaching About the Internment of Japanese Americans: 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, March 20, 1993-Albany Middle School, 1000 Jackson St. in Albany. Registration: \$20. (The price includes lunch and a raffle ticket) Books, photo aids, posters, gift certificates, and other valuable prizes will be awarded at the afternoon raffle. Registration is limited and must be received by March 6. For more information, contact Lucy Hamai at (510) 559-6540 (day) or (510) 524-2093 (evening) .