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The Newsletter of the National Coalition for Redress/Reparations

REDRESS

"EXPANSIVE INTERPRETATION" OF REDRESS LAWS PROMISED BY JUSTICE DEPT. LEADERS

by Kay Ochi

NCCR secures reforms increasing access to redress

Members of NCCR met with Deval L. Patrick, the Assistant Attorney General, Civil Rights Division and the Director of the Office of Redress Administration (ORA), DeDe Greene, on September 19, 1994, at the Department of Justice (DOJ) in Washington, D.C. NCCR members Miya Iwataki, Sox Kitashima, Kay Ochi and John Ota shared NCCR's concerns which included those individuals still denied redress, appeal procedures, and communication between the ORA and the community.

"Both Patrick and Greene are recent appointees of the Department of Justice and are key administrators for redress. We wanted to make sure that they understood the issues and knew that the community was still greatly concerned about redress cases," stated Ochi. "They were well informed about the remaining cases and very open to our concerns." Iwataki



Sox Kitashima, bay area NCCR member with Deval Patrick, Asst Attorney Gen., Civil Rights Division, in Washington D.C.

added, "Patrick assured us that he intends to take an expansive interpretation of the Civil Liberties Act and is committed to concerted fact finding in the remaining redress cases."

"We are also pleased that Robert Bratt, the previous Administrator of the ORA, has been appointed as Counsel to the ORA. We met with him in November to discuss his role and to request his active participation in the

continued, page 2



(L to R): Richard Katsuda, President; Kay Ochi, Vice President; Kathy Nishimoto Masaoka, Vice President; Suzy Katsuda, Treasurer; Duane Sanchez, Secretary.

New Year Brings New Officers for LA Chapter

At the January 7, 1995 General Meeting of the National Coalition for Redress/Reparations, Officers for 1995 were elected. They are Richard Katsuda, President; Kay Ochi and Kathy Nishimoto Masaoka, Vice Presidents; Suzy Katsuda, Treasurer; and Duane Sanchez, Secretary.

continued, page 6

OTHER FEATURES IN THIS ISSUE

NCCR Fights Redress Denials:

Pg 2

50 Years After the Camps: Racism & Resistance, Then & Now

Pg 3

Camp Workshop: Big Hit for Educators

Pg 3

Seniors Gain More Housing Improvements

Pg 4

Unionization Gets Boost at New Otani Hotel

Pg 4

ORA Reforms: continued from page 2

policies of the ORA," added Ochi.

Many issues raised at the September meeting have been addressed during the past few months by the ORA:

- The ORA is planning to conduct a workshop in Arizona to assist redress claimants in the Phoenix/Glendale area. Of the 103 Arizona cases filed, 51 are potentially eligible, 16 are potentially ineligible, and 36 cases need additional information. The workshop will help to clarify eligibility.

- The ORA will consider legislative amendments to change the eligibility of certain Japanese Peruvians interned during the War and to extend the dates of the internment from 1945 to 1947. The Japanese Peruvian Oral History Project will submit the language for the proposed changes to the Act.

- The category of the minor children who were returned to Japan is being thoroughly examined. The ORA will provide an update in the near future.

- The ORA has clarified the appeals procedure. When ineligibility letters are sent to redress claimants, a form letter and return envelope will be included. When the form letter is returned to the DOJ, it will serve as the notice to appeal and as the request for the claimant's ORA file through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Applicants need not worry if they need more than the 60 days allowed to appeal. Mr. Patrick stated, "I assure you that the Appellate Section will continue its policy of liberally granting multiple extensions so that no claimant's appeal is prejudiced by FOIA delays."

- NCRR will be sent quarterly updates regarding ORA statistics, copies of ORA press releases and copies of substantive motions in the lawsuits filed against the government (*Consolo v. United States*).

- Patrick and Greene are interested in meeting with the Japanese American community on the West Coast and Hawaii when the date is set.

- A community meeting to update the community about the remaining redress cases will be scheduled during the Spring at which time Mr. Patrick and Ms. Greene will be invited to meet the community and address concerns.



Miya Iwataki from LA & John Ota of the Bay Area Chapter discuss strategy in Washington D.C.

"NCRR is in frequent contact with Ms. Greene. Representatives from the ORA spent two weeks in Hawaii during November to meet with many redress claimants who were denied redress. I am optimistic that information gathered at that time will help many of them to be made eligible," stated Ochi.

NCRR FIGHTS REDRESS DENIALS

by Bruce Iwasaki

While most people eligible for redress under the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 have received compensation, more than two thousand have been denied payment. For the past two years, NCRR has actively lobbied for a broader interpretation of the legislation that would render more people eligible. Recently, NCRR joined the court challenge to one of the government's positions. NCRR filed an amicus curiae (friend of the court) brief in the United States Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit in Washington, D.C. If successful, this appeal could result in redress payments to hundreds of applicants.

More than one-third of the denials—over seven hundred cases—involve people whose parents left the West Coast on their own, or whose parents left camp, and who were born after the relocation. For example, Linda Consolo's parents left California in March 1942. This was when U.S. policy was to encourage "voluntary" relocation to the interior, before the forcible expulsion and internment of all Japanese Americans. After her family moved to Utah, she was born. While Ms. Consolo's mother was granted redress, the Justice Department decided that Ms. Consolo was ineligible.

Attorney Gerald Sato of Ventura County sued on her behalf, and won a victory in the U.S. Court of Federal Claims. In a separate but nearly identical case, however, a different judge ruled in favor of the government. Both cases were appealed to the Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit.

In December, NCRR filed an amicus curiae brief urging affirmance of the Consolo case, and reversal of the other decision that favored the government. The brief was submitted by the Los Angeles law firm of O'Melveny & Myers. The appellate court agreed to consider NCRR's brief.

NCRR's principal argument is that the Civil Liberties Act provides redress not only to those who were interned, but to those "otherwise deprived of liberty or property" by the government because of Japanese ancestry. In these cases, the claimants were deprived of the right to return to their homes, were singled out for disgrace, and were denied the equal protection of the laws, all deprivations of liberty. Therefore, they should be found eligible. A hearing will probably be set within three or four months, with a decision several months later.

In addition to the written argument to the Court of Appeals, NCRR has worked with private lawyers to represent individuals who need to have their case filed in court. Several volunteer lawyers have agreed to interview and, if appropriate, file cases on behalf of persons denied redress.

(Editors note: Longtime NCRR member Bruce Iwasaki, attorney at the law firm of O'Melveny & Myers in LA did most of the preparatory work for the legal brief filed by NCRR.)

50 Years After the Camps: Racism and Resistance, Then and Now

by Richard Katsuda

1995 marks 50 years since the closing of most of the concentration camps that were "home" to Japanese Americans during World War II. It was a scary time for Japanese Americans, scapegoated during the wartime hysteria and denied their constitutional rights behind barbed wire. In 1945, they set out to begin life again outside and re-settle in their old communities or in new ones. They had immense apprehensions. "What kind of reception will we get?" "Where will we go?" "How will we find jobs?" "Who will hire us?" They still

suffered from the scapegoating, of being "suspected" Americans.

Now, 50 years later, conditions are ripe for a new kind of scapegoating. Persisting economic and social problems are making people mad and frustrated. Many feel "fed up" and ready to take drastic measures. One such measure was Proposition 187, which pointed to immigrants as the cause of California's economic problems. Although Prop. 187 proponents claim the initiative was directed towards undocumented immigrants, the net effect of the measure is making documented immigrants suspect as well. Many immigrants, documented or not, are suffering the same kind of fears and apprehensions that Japanese Americans felt 50

years ago.

NCRR's 1995 Day of Remembrance program will take a probing look at this situation. The theme for the program is "50 years After the Camps: Racism and Resistance, Then and Now." The annual event commemorates the signing of Executive Order 9066 by then President Roosevelt on February 19, 1942, authorizing the evacuation and incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II. This year's Day of Remembrance program will be held on Sunday, February 19, 2PM at the Centenary United Methodist Church, at 300 South Central Ave. in Little Tokyo. Program speakers will discuss the treatment of Japanese Americans during World War II and the conditions which led to it. They will then take us to the present, where similar conditions appear to be emerging. They will also address the critical question: "What can we do about it?"

Please see enclosed flyer on the Day of Remembrance for more information



Camp Workshop: Big Hit with Educators

NCRR Education Committee strives to "institutionalize" camp/redress lessons into public classrooms

left—The Education Committee and the Asian Pacific Committee of the United Teachers of Los Angeles, UTLA, join together after the workshop

by Kathy Nishimoto-Masaoka

Inspired by the San Francisco NCRR's teacher workshop, the Education Committee had initiated plans for an educational workshop on the internment and redress of Japanese Americans back in early summer 1994. The committee, consisting of many teachers, had real-

ized the need for such workshops to reach thousands of students attending public schools in Los Angeles. Despite the large Japanese American population in Los Angeles, such workshops for teachers were unprecedented. By using the San Francisco workshop as a model, the committee researched local resources during the summer and was ready to launch the sessions in the fall.

Timing was on the committee's

side since the exhibit, "America's Concentration Camps: Remembering the Japanese American Experience," was set to open in early November at the Japanese American National Museum. With the strong support of the Asian Pacific Committee of the United Teachers of Los Angeles as a co-sponsor, all the schools and over 30,000 school staff was informed through the union newspaper and communication network

continued, page 5

Seniors Win More Improvements at Little Tokyo Towers

Tenants exert clout through organizing at largest government subsidized senior housing project for J As on mainland.

by Kay Ochi

Bernadette Nishimura, long-time NCRR member, completed her first year as President of the Little Tokyo Towers Residents Council. She reports that after four difficult years of negotiations with the Board of Directors and the Managing Agent, the Towers has seen many needed improvements and has become a more comfortable and safe home for the 378 senior citizens.

"Thanks to the hard work of Lily Okamoto, past-President of the Residents Council, and Mr. Uchimura, the resident manager, a lot of progress has been made," commented Nishimura.



(back row, L to R) Mr. Mori Uchimura, Ms. Ayako Uchimura, Mr. Fumiaki Shimozaawa, Vice-Pres. (front, L to R) Lily Okamoto, past president & Bernadette Nishimura.

"And now, with the assistance of Mr. Shimozaawa as Vice President, the Residents Council hopes to work with the Board of Directors to be even more responsive to the needs of the seniors here."

Recent changes included:

- The hiring of Alice Nishimoto in the Manager's Office to work on bookkeeping, recertification of residents, and other office duties.
- The new security agency has improved the building's security during the past year.
- There has been no auto vandalism or other incidents reported for over 9 months.
- The Board has printed a brochure about the Towers to be distributed to various organizations to encourage residency at the Towers.

Those interested in residency should call the Office of the LTT at (213) 622-3076 to receive an application & brochure. Applicants must be 64 or older, and must meet the strict income standards of HUD-subsidized housing.

LABOR

Workers & Community Urge New Otani Owners to Respect Unionization Drive

NLRB rejects management charges of unfair labor practices

below: NCRR's David Monkawa addresses 500 marchers in one of many actions in Little Tokyo



Since the fall of 1994, Workers at the New Otani Hotel, and their supporters have focused on pressuring the major shareholders of the New Otani to respect the call for

union representation.

The New Otani is owned by a consortium of about 30 corporations called the East West Development Corp. The Kajima Corp., a multi-billion dollar developer, the Otani Family and Sumitomo Bank are the largest and most influential.

On September 26, 1994, nine of East West's main shareholders were visited by delegations of workers, students, Local 11 members and the New Otani Workers Support Committee. The delegation urged the companies to stop intimidation and harassment of pro-union workers and

settle in good faith.

The building of the worker core inside the hotel got a boost when the National Labor Relations Board ruled that managements' allegations against Local 11, charging harassment of anti-union workers "was without merit."

The workers want management to recognize the union legally by mutual agreement and not go through the NLRB as management insists. Facts show that the conservative NLRB in recent years has a record where 80% of its decisions has favored management.

The approximately 280 Latino and Asian workers receive about half the wages of workers in other major cities doing comparable work. The organizing effort is part of Local 11's citywide campaign to unionize thousands of non-union workers to upgrade wages benefits industry-wide.

to all the schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District.

Over 100 educators participated in the "When Justice Was Denied" workshop organized by the Education Committee of NCRR. The sessions, designed to provide teachers with strategies and resources to teach about the internment and redress of Japanese Americans, were held over a three-day period in November and December. The committee members presented workshops covering litera-



Carol Takeshita from the Denver NCRR Chapter, shares the writing project with elementary school teachers.

ture themes and video resources for the elementary and secondary levels and called upon other resource as speakers and presenters for the social studies area. George Kiriama of the Japanese American Historical Society, the keynote speaker, shared his slides of camp and enticed the participants to ask questions. Carol Takeshita flew in from Denver, Colorado to explain the young writer's workshop which resulted in the publication of Kids Explore America's Japanese American Heritage. Teachers received a thick handout filled with projects for the classroom. Paul DeWitt's workshops on the historical and legal ramifications of the camps drew lively discussion as he energetically shared ideas and materials used in his classes at Newark Memorial High School in the Bay Area.

Patty Nagano's hands-on lesson using the book, The Bracelet, was well received by elementary teachers who reviewed June Kizu's strategies for Yoshiko Uchida's The Journey. Steve Nagano and Kathy Masaoka worked together on a session familiarizing secondary teachers with pieces of literature including poetry and short

FAMILY EXPO ON THE CAMPS

Japanese American National Museum event draws thousands in L.A. to reflect, learn & have fun

by Suzy Katsuda

The first Family Expo sponsored by the Japanese American National Museum was held on November 11, 12 and 13th at the Los Angeles Convention Center. The multi-faceted event was an opportunity for former internees to reminisce and catch up on old times. It was also an opportunity for the Japanese American community to participate in understanding and appreciating their heritage and for the and for the public to see how that heritage fit into the society.

NCRR participated as one of the 100 booth exhibitors. We displayed many of our past Day of Remembrance posters. Our main attraction, however, was the presentation of selected compelling testimonies by former internees from the 1981 redress hearings held in Los Angeles by the Commission on the Wartime Internment and Relocation of Civilians. These hearings, held nationwide allowed the interned citizens to air their grievances against the U.S. government. NCRR urged that the hearings be held at convenient times for working people and elderly and for simultaneous translations to be provided. The communities vocal call for justice at the Commission Hearing s was a driving force in the struggle for redress. We also introduced our first NCRR T-shirts and sweatshirts, made by Miles Hamada of the Little Tokyo Art Workshop.

stories for both videos and literature.

Invaluable were the experiences shared by camp internees and redress activists such as Bert Nakano and Jim Matsuoka who discussed the building of the grassroots redress movement led by NCRR. The teachers were shocked by information about the Japanese Peru-



Past Chair of L.A. NCRR, June Kizu clarifies a point for elementary school teachers

vian evacuation shared by Libia Yamamoto who joined three other internees on a panel which included Frank Emi from the Heart Mountain Fair Play Committee, Hank Yoshitake from the 100/ 442 and Dorothy Shundo fro Heart Mountain. These discussions and exchanges had the greatest impact on the teachers who expressed a desire for more time with the former internees and more workshops like this.

The committee does plan to conduct another workshop on a smaller scale in the Long Beach school district, While appreciating the overwhelmingly positive feedback on the workshop, the education committee hopes to use teacher suggestions to refine and improve future workshops.



(L-R) Libia Yamamoto, Dorothy Shundo, Hank Yoshitake and Frank Emi.

(NCRR thanks the hard-working members of the Education Committee. James Bechtel, Maryann Ito, Richard Katsuda, Suzy Katsuda, June Kizu, Alan & Ruth Kondo, Kathy Nishimoto Masaoka, Patty & Steve Nagano, Kay Ochi, Bob Toji, & David Urmston. Special thanks to Tom Kurai of the Japanese Village Plaza, Japanese American National Museum, Sheri's Bookstore & Suzanne Toji of Feast from the East for their assistance and donations to the raffle.)

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NIKKEI FOR CIVIL RIGHTS & REDRESS

Tax deductible contributions allowed

A new organization called Nikkei for Civil Rights & Redress, incorporated in Apr. '91, received a tax-exempt, nonprofit status on Oct. '92. This tax status is retroactive to April 1991. The purpose of the Nikkei for Civil Rights & Redress is to engage in educational activities that inform the public of the past and ongoing struggle for civil rights in the Japanese American communities. 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.

50 Years After: cont. from page 3

As the newly elected President, Katsuda stated, "1995 will be a real test year for NCRR. The November election results reflect the chilling mood of understandable frustrations with growing problems in our society. It is a climate where people are vulnerable to seeking "easy solutions" and "easy targets" for scapegoating. The Prop. 187 campaign was a prime example of this, as immigrants, whether documented or not, be-

came suspects for causing California's ills.

"We in NCRR are very alarmed by this. In 1942, Japanese Americans were easy targets for scapegoating. We felt compassion for, and fought for the victims of that period. And in 1995 we're still fighting for those denied redress. We felt the same compassion for today's victims. There are certainly tough problems to deal with, but the challenge is to seek real solutions. It will be a mighty test, but NCRR is a hearty group and

up to the challenge."

Out-going president Kay Ochi, stated, "The past 2 and a half years as President of NCRR have been terrific. It has been a real honor to work with such dedicated, truly wonderful people. I look forward especially to continuing in our commitment to redress. The slate of new officers is dynamite! I look forward to a challenging and productive year as vice president and proud member of NCRR!"