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a newsletter of the Nikkei for Civil Rights & Redress



More than a Gym: Building Community with the LT Sports Center

By CHRISTINA SHIGEMURA

Little Tokyo is in the heart. This means that generic parking lots and an unwieldy hotel may dominate the landscape at the moment, but those of us who carry the spirit of Little Tokyo in our hearts see the potential for a place where a multi-generational community, including Nikkei and non-Nikkei, could gather, learn from each other and have a great time, too.

The vision of Little Tokyo that lies in our hearts is already becoming reality through community programs like Tuesday Nights at the Union Center Cafe and Nisei Week festivities. Now we have an exciting opportunity to create a unique community space in Little Tokyo—the Little Tokyo Sports Center.

The Sports Center will include a six-court gymnasium to accommodate basketball and volleyball leagues as well as space for martial arts tournaments. Non-sports-related community needs will also be fulfilled by the Sports Center.

Koreisha Chushoku Kai will have room to expand their senior hot lunch and senior exercise programs, and there will be space for taiko practice and performance workshops. A public parking facility is also planned to be part of, or adjacent to, the Sports Center.

For the past five years, Little Tokyo Service Center Community Development Corporation (LTSC CDC) and Sports Center supporters have conducted surveys, made market-rate offers on various plots of land, and raised funds for the project. Given a large enough site, LTSC CDC also hopes to build low-income and market rate housing units as part of the project.

The most pressing problem right now is that LTSC CDC needs to secure land for the Sports Center. The best site which is currently available is located on the city-owned First Street North block, adjacent to the Union Center for the Arts and the Japanese American National Museum. Although the LA Children's Museum has claimed part of the First Street North site, there is still plenty of room for the Sports Center.

To date, LA City Councilmember Rita Walters, whose district See *More Than a Game*, Page 2

Commemorating August 10, 1988: Civil Liberties Act is Signed

BY KATHY NISHIMOTO MASAOKA

After a decade-long grassroots campaign by the Japanese American community, President Ronald Reagan finally signed the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 (CLA) on August 10, 1988 and we celebrated our victory. But it took another fight and a "Day of Protest" in 1989 for Congress to appropriate the money and for the Office of Redress Administration (ORA) to start its work. Little did we realize that this would be the beginning of yet another decade of work campaigning for those many groups of people denied redress.

As NCRR continued to get the word out and to assist people in filing their applications for redress we met individuals who fell into categories not covered or not included in the bill. This meant more lobbying and more letter writing for groups, such as: the minor children of those who had returned to Japan, railroad workers and miners, individuals born to "voluntary" evacuees and the Japanese Latin Americans.

Though the ORA has shut its doors, NCRR continues to support those still fighting their cases in the courts. This includes the Japanese Latin Americans who seek redress equity, those born outside of camp and after the cutoff date of January 20, 1945 as well as an immigration case of Mr. Kato. Although he was here legally, Mr. Kato was not a permanent resident. He was interned but denied redress because his status was never corrected while he was in camp.

To mark the signing of the CLA on August 10, 1988, NCRR will be sponsoring a welcome party and fund-raiser on Saturday, August 26. This event is also a kickoff for a visit of a Japanese Cuban Nisei, Mr. Francisco Miyasaka, who will be speaking about the history and current conditions of Japanese in Cuba at the Japanese American National Museum on Sunday, August 27 from 2 to 4 PM. For more information about the party, please call Judy Ota at (323) 664-6485.

Join us at the Japanese American Historical Society of SoCal's awards dinner to honor our friends and respected community members:

Takeshi Nakayama Lillian Nakano

Chris Aihara Tak Yamamoto

Gardena Valley Japanese Cultural Institute

Saturday, Oct. 28th at the Torrance Marriott Hotel

Dinner: \$45

If you are interested in attending, please contact Kay Ochi at (213) 413-6537.

In this issue:

Resisters' Stories Told in "Conscience and the Constitution" Redress Update

Education Committee Holds Ralph Lazo Film Reading NCRR 2000 in Action

Resisters' Story Told in "Conscience and the Constitution" at VC Film Fest

BY KATHY NISHIMOTO MASAOKA

On May 23, NCRR co-presented Frank Abe's film, "Conscience and the Constitution" as part of Visual Communication's Film Fest 2000. The film showed to a full house at the David Henry Hwang Theatre. In fact, it had one of the best turnouts of the entire film festival and won the Audience Award for Best Feature-Length Film.

Many of us know the story of the resisters, especially through NCRR member, Frank Emi. However, this film allows more people to learn about the struggle of 85 young men who refused to be drafted out of the concentration camp at Heart Mountain, Wyoming. It honestly tells how they were persecuted and ostracized by the community and the JACL even though they were willing to fight as soon as their rights as citizens were restored and their families released.

We were fortunate to have several Fair Play Committee members in the audience, which enthusiastically applauded them as they joined Abe in a post-film discussion, Frank Emi, Yosh Kuromiya, Tak Hoshizaki and Mits Koshiyama from San Jose shared their personal reasons for resisting the draft while interned at Heart Mountain, Wyoming and thanked Abe for making the film. Koshiyama also acknowledged the early support of the Sansei. In 1999 NCRR honored the Fair Play Committee at the Day of Remembrance.

There were sharp comments by members of the audience about the JACL's refusal to apologize and to acknowledge the heroism of the resisters (JACL passed a resolution to formally apologize to the resisters at its recent national convention). The audience continued to talk with the filmmaker and the resisters at a reception in the courtyard hosted by the JACL Pacific Southwest District Civil Rights Caucus and NCRR. Abe extended his thanks to NCRR for helping to bring people to the event and making it a special night for the resisters.

This film was well worth the eight years it took to make. Congratulations to Frank Abe and the resisters!

More than a Game, cont.

includes Little Tokyo, has offered no support of the Sports Center beyond lip service, despite the fact that many Little Tokyo residents are in favor of the Sports Center.

The needs of our community cannot be ignored simply because a City councilmember fails to understand the importance of having a Sports Center. Little Tokyo may not be in Rita's heart, but it is in the heart of every NCRR member.

For this reason, NCRR has signed onto the campaign to build the Sports Center. We need to make ourselves heard. If you live in the LA area, call Mayor Riordan and your city council member and tell them to make the city-owned First Street North site available for the Little Tokyo Sports Center. Even if you live outside of LA county, you can help by letting other people know about the Sports Center.

There will be a special event to publicize the Sports Center on Saturday, October 29, at 11 AM. Mark your calendar, and plan to bring your friends and family to Little Tokyo that day.

If you would like to be involved in

planning the October 29 event, or for more information on the Sports Center, call Cathleen Kuniyoshi at (213) 473-1687, or email ckuniyoshi@fsc.ltsc.org.



NCRR Seigi Member and SAT 2000 graduate Kei Nagao, right, with sister Christina Nagao at Nisei Week Parade on July 30, 2000.



From late April to May 2000, a group of teachers from Japan who work with the Burakumin (outcast) population in Japan visited NCRR and the Little Tokyo Service Center. A reception was hosted at the Union Center Cafe to introduce the teachers to the work of NCRR and share experiences of working as and with minority communities.

Photos by Janice Yen and Wilbur Sato

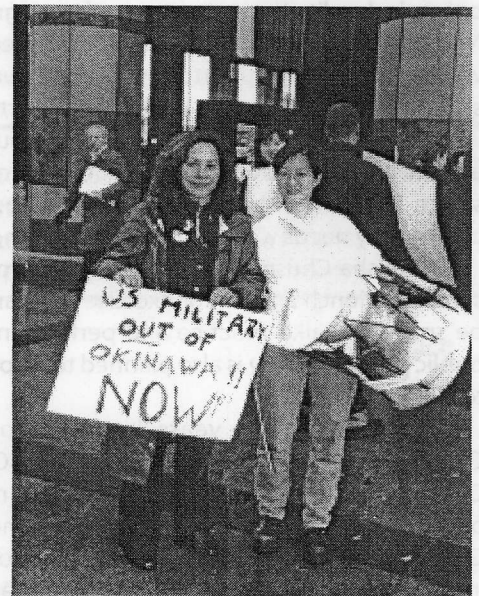
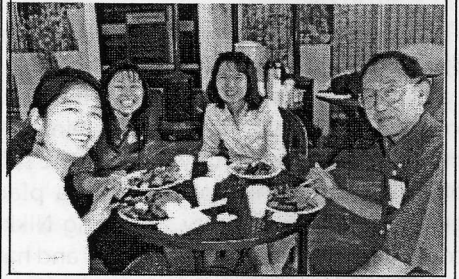


PHOTO BY WATARU EBIHARA

Civil Rights is Emphasized with Name Change

BY AYAKO HAGIHARA

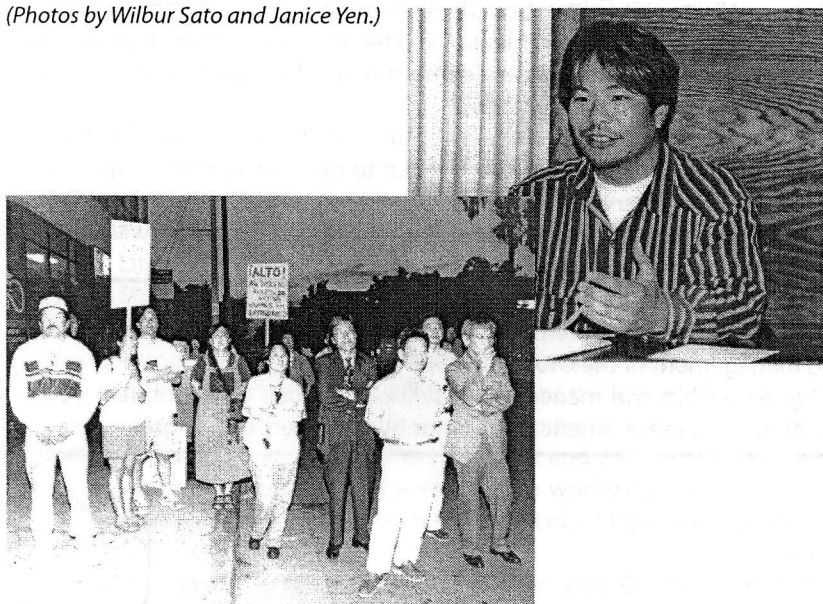
It's now been nearly six months since NCRR changed its unabbreviated name to **Nikkei for Civil Rights & Redress**. But whenever we introduce ourselves, we still feel like we have to explain—"Nikkei for Civil Rights & Redress, formerly National Coalition for Redress/Reparations." It's quite a mouthful, and people wonder why we did it.

Since the founding of the National organization in 1980, NCRR has been an advocate and grassroots organizing group for Japanese American redress and reparations. But at the same time, NCRR committed to support the struggle by other individuals, groups and communities as they fought for social justice and civil rights.

It is this principle of unity that NCRR sought to highlight as we enter the new millennium. While redress and reparation work is still a key component of the organization, NCRR will also focus on the civil rights and other support work that we have been doing for the past 20 years.

Below and on the facing page are some photos that capture the work that NCRR has been doing this year: from co-sponsoring a panel discussion on Okinawan Identity and History, including a presentation by Wesley Ueunten, supporting Korean Immigrant Workers Advocates and the workers at the Elephant Snack Cafe who are seeking back overtime wages and respect, taking part in the Women's Forum and the International Women's Day Picket and Rally in front of the Japanese Consulate, and participating in meetings with Congressional aides like John Walk, aide to Congressman Xavier Becerra who introduced the Redress Equity Bill of 2000, Nikkei for Civil Rights & Redress remains active in the community.

(Photos by Wilbur Sato and Janice Yen.)



Are you an NCRR member? Join now and support continuing efforts for redress, civil rights and social justice!

NCRR Membership Form

\$30 One-year

\$15 Students and low-income

\$500 Lifetime membership

Please make checks payable to

NCRR

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231 E. Third Street G104

Los Angeles, CA 90013

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REDRESS UPDATES

BY KAY OCHI

Joanne Chiedi, Deputy Executive Officer of the Civil Rights Division at the U.S. Department of Justice and former administrator of the Office of Redress Administration (ORA), announced that at the end of July, 2000, redress checks were mailed to 29 Japanese Latin Americans (JLA) and 24 Japanese Americans (JA).

Of the approximately 34 JLA and 44 JA cases remaining, the majority of the cases are active and pending payment. In some of the cases, the ORA has been unable to reach potential recipients at the last known address and phone number. Chiedi reported that there are about 22 JA cases with whom they have lost contact and have, over the past many years, many attempts to locate these individuals.

To redress recipients Chiedi urged, "It's very important that redress recipients cash their checks right away. With only three months left in this fiscal year and the reassignment of ORA staff, if there are any problems with the checks, it could take longer to resolve them."

Chiedi, Tink Cooper and Lisa Johnson, longtime ORA officials, continue to work on redress issues as they arise although they have all been reassigned within the department.

Individuals with redress questions should contact the ORA's NEW Helpline at (202) 616-9736.

Redress Court Cases (partial list):

Carol Higashi - Attorneys Julia Mass and Scott Yamaguchi appeared before a panel of three judges at the Federal Court of Claims in Washington D.C. on June 9 in their appeal of Higashi's redress case. Mass reported of the oral argument that "One judge seemed sympathetic, one didn't, and the other judge seemed unsure. It's a hard case; we'll have to see what happens."

Robert Murakami - Attorney John Ota stated that in Murakami's case, the government had filed a motion to dismiss and argued that any lawsuit filed after Aug 10, 1998, the ending date of the CLA, should be thrown out. Murakami filed his lawsuit after Aug. 10 but prior to Feb. 5, 1999, another closing date of the ORA. The court rejected that motion. The government then proposed to put the case on hold until the appeal decision on Carol Higashi's case is announced. Ota agreed to that, so the case is on hold at this time. Ota is with the firm of Minami, Lew & Tamaki in San Francisco.

NCRR lawsuit - Attorney Christopher Prince with the law firm of McCutchen, Doyle, Brown & Enersen reported that the main reports have been filed by both NCRR and the government. NCRR contends that the government failed in its fiduciary duty to invest redress funds before and during the time reparations were being paid as the CLA directed them to do. Prince stated, "We are waiting for the oral argument to be scheduled in the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals. It could be within one or two years."

Art Shibayama's (Attorney Karen Parker) lawsuit and the lawsuits of plaintiffs represented by Attorney Paul Mills (Kay Kato, Jane Yano, et. al) are updated in the Campaign for Justice section of this newsletter.

NCRR EDUCATION COMMITTEE: FIRST RALPH LAZO FILM READING HELD

BY JANICE HARUMI YEN

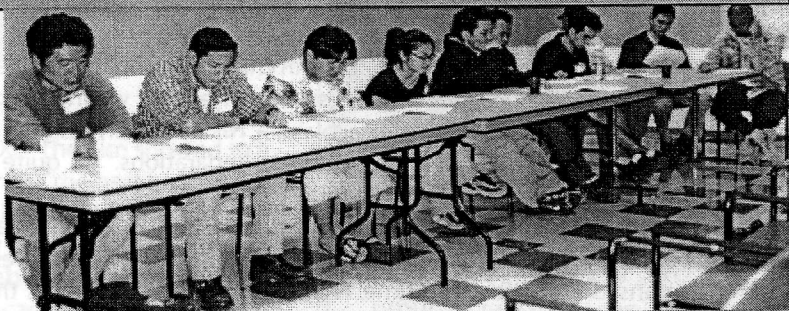
With the pre-production phase of the 30-minute film, *STAND UP FOR JUSTICE* coming to a close, the video project committee held an evening reading of the script about the life of Ralph Lazo. John Esaki, screenwriter and director of the film, invited actors to read for an audience composed of high school students, NCRR members, former friends of Ralph, and film professionals to get reactions to and suggestions for improvement of the script.

Ralph was a teenager who lived in the Belmont High School district in pre-World War II LA. The neighborhood just west of downtown was composed of people of Latino, Japanese, Chinese, Pilipino, European and Jewish heritage. Ralph's closest friends were of Japanese and Chinese ancestry who hung out together at school and played on the same sports teams.

When Ralph's Japanese American (JA) friends were forced to leave school for the Manzanar concentration camp, Ralph decided to join them. A gregarious and upbeat teenager, Ralph took part in student government, was a popular cheerleader, and also delivered mail to camp inmates. After graduating from Manzanar High School in 1944 he was inducted into the military. Returning to Los Angeles, Ralph received his degree from UCLA and became a community college student counselor.

Ralph never forgot his JA friends. He actively supported the redress movement, participated in the Manzanar Pilgrimages, and spoke to students about the JA internment. He kept in touch with his friends until his death in 1992. NCRR recognized Ralph Lazo's contributions to the redress movement posthumously at its 1992 Day of Remembrance. On behalf of the Lazo family Virginia Lazo, Ralph's sister, was present.

The production of a film about Lazo has been a



Members of hereandnow and others read Stand Up for Justice script. Photo by Janice Yen. longtime dream of NCRR's and was made possible through funding from the national Civil Liberties Public Education Fund and the California Civil Liberties Public Education Project and through the close collaboration between Visual Communications (VC) and the NCRR Education Committee. Pre-production staff consists of John Esaki (formerly on staff at VC and now with JANM), writer and director; Amy Kato (VC), producer; and Janice Yen (NCRR), associate producer.

Extensive interviews were conducted with Ralph's friends Sue Embrey, Bruce Kaji, Archie Miyatake, and Yoshindo Shibuya. Wilbur Sato assisted the committee at the Manzanar Pilgrimage by accompanying John, Amy and Janice around the former campsite. Members of the acting troupe *hereandnow*, Chris Tashima, and Michael Uno contributed valuable insights at the reading. As representatives of the eventual target age group of the film, students from Marshall High School and teenage actor Marcus Toji were frank in their evaluation.

All were intrigued about Ralph's decision to go to camp. Did he really just want to be with his friends? Did he somehow realize the enormous significance of the wholesale internment of the JA community? How did he sign up to go to camp?

The questions that arose about Ralph Lazo's teenage life made it clear that the Lazo character needed to be more fully developed. After additional interviews and script rewriting, *STAND UP FOR JUSTICE* is scheduled for filming in the fall. The Education Committee will continue its monthly meetings with the film staff.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Robert K. Bratt, former Executive Director of the ORA, announced his retirement from the Department of Justice after a 25 year career with the DOJ, including the development and management of the ORA from 1988 to 1992.

Bob received numerous awards from the DOJ for his leadership and management skills. In August, 1998, Bob received a community award from NCRR for his outstanding work with the Japanese American community in the redress program.



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231 E. THIRD STREET G104
LOS ANGELES, CA 90013

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