

# Valley

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LUIS SINCO / Los Angeles Times

Kay Ochi, center, leads a delegation from Los Angeles to lobby federal officials for additional reparations.

## Redress Sought for War D

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By JULIE TAMAKI  
TIMES STAFF WRITER

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Members of both groups say they should receive government apologies and \$20,000 checks, as did 60,000 surviving Japanese American internees.

The absence of redress for the two groups has become an enduring frustration for members of advocate groups. As a result, two dozen members will make the pilgrimage to the nation's capital this week.

"We hope this is the last big show we have to have," said Kay Ochi, vice president of the Los Angeles chapter of the National Coalition of Redress/Reparations, as she waited in a Los Angeles International Airport terminal for her flight. "People have no idea how horrible it was for the Japanese Americans and Japanese Latin Americans."

The federal law that authorizes reparation payments expires this year, and those seeking redress are elderly, giving the lobbying trip added urgency.

**Please see REDRESS, B5**



LUIS SINCO / Los Angeles Times

Sharon Tanihara, left, and Haru Kuromiya wait to board a plane for their lobbying trip to Washington, D.C.

## REDRESS

Continued from B1

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# REDRESS

## Continued from B1

"We have only six months left and unless we start getting things done now, we're going to run out of time," said Phil Shigekuni, a North Hills resident and member of the Japanese American Citizens League who leaves today for Washington.

Shigekuni played an active role in the 1980s redress movement for Japanese Americans and most recently has been involved in trying to raise awareness in the San Fernando Valley about the Japanese Latin Americans.

Hoping to press their case in Washington, members of Ochi's and Shigekuni's groups—as well as the recently formed Campaign for Justice for Japanese Latin Americans—will meet with Bill Lann Lee, the nation's chief enforcer of civil rights, and members of Congress.

The plight of the Japanese Latin Americans, the bulk of whom were shipped from Peru, represents a dark if little-known chapter in American history. An estimated 2,200 of them were forced from their homes and deported to the United States, apparently because they were perceived as a threat to the U.S. national security after the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

Once in the United States, most spent the war years in an internment camp in Crystal City, Texas. The deportations, ordered by the Roosevelt administration, were carried out with the cooperation of the victims' governments. Roosevelt also signed the order that

allowed the military evacuation of 120,000 U.S. residents of Japanese ancestry from the West Coast to 10 internment camps in seven states.

After years of lobbying by Japanese Americans, the U.S. government formally apologized in 1988 and offered payments to survivors. But when the Japanese Latin Americans applied for redress under the 1988 reparations law, most were told they were ineligible because they were not legal U.S. residents when they were seized.

In the case of the railroad and mine workers, the Department of Justice has claimed that only those who lost their liberties because of government action are eligible for redress, according to Albert Muratsuchi, regional director of the Japanese American Citizens League. The workers were fired by private companies, thus redress has been denied to all but a handful of the roughly 150 workers and their family members.

Many of those people, however, have testified in statements that FBI agents were involved in the firings and the evictions from railroad housing, as well as the confiscation of guns, radios and cameras, according to Richard Katsuda, president of the Los Angeles chapter of the National Coalition for Redress/Reparations. Other workers and their families were subjected to travel restrictions, curfews and searches.

"People who had worked for 20 to 30 years were suddenly fired and kicked out of their homes," Ochi said. "Some were forced to live in

sheds and barns."

Ochi and her counterparts plan to ask Lee, who is acting assistant attorney general for civil rights, to intervene and settle the cases involving the railroad and mine workers and their families.

They will also ask him to help settle the pending federal lawsuit involving the Japanese Latin Americans or to recognize them as legal residents of the United States while they were interned, thus making them eligible for redress.

A hearing in the federal lawsuit is scheduled for Friday, when a judge is expected to rule on whether the case can be pursued as a class-action lawsuit or should be dismissed.

Muratsuchi estimated that over the years more than 500 Japanese Latin Americans have applied for redress, but it is unknown how many are still alive.