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Seek Redress Hearing Testimony

NCRR, JACL Mobilizing for July L.A. Commission Sessions

With Washington sources reporting that the Commission on the Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians will convene a hearing on the World War II concentration camp experiences of Japanese Americans here as early as the first week of July, two Los Angeles groups have stepped up their efforts to prepare the community to testify at the historic sessions.

The National Coalition for Redress/Reparations (NCRR) and the Pacific Southwest District of the Japanese American Citizens League, the two main Southland groups now mobilizing for the commission hearings, issued separate calls for members of the community to step forward to testify at the L.A. hearings, scheduled tentatively for early July.

NCRR is seeking those interested in testifying before the Commission on Wartime Evacuation and Internment of Civilians to be held this spring, said coalition spokesperson Jim Matsuoka. "We want people from the Nikkei community to come forward and share their experiences. We will be working with other organizations to help prepare testimony to correspond to commission guidelines."

Matsuoka added that NCRR also is seeking translators (both written and verbal) to help in the commission process.

NCRR is an amalgam of student and community organizations across the United States. It was responsible last November for organizing the largest Southern California discussion of the Japanese American and Alaskan Aleut experiences during World War II—a weekend conference held on the campus of California State University Los

Angeles. While they are currently working in cooperation with regional and national redress committees affiliated with the JACL, many Southlanders who have been disillusioned with 'CL policies in the past are turning to the coalition as the predominate redress group.

Meanwhile, Dennis Kunisaki, the Sansei governor of the 'CL's Pacific Southwest District, announced recently that the league's main thrust now "is to identify

Min Yasui to Chair 'CL Redress Committee

SAN FRANCISCO.—Minoru Yasui, Denver attorney, has been appointed as chairman of the JACL's National Redress Committee, according to a league announcement earlier this month.

Yasui, who is succeeding John Tateishi, who resigned the redress committee chair last month, will direct the committee's activities from Denver.

In 1942, Yasui challenged the government's curfew orders for Japanese Americans and his case was one of the three brought before the Supreme Court.

The decision against him was one of two establishing that the military orders against Japanese Americans were constitutional, rulings which activists in the Japanese American community are seeking to overturn.

Yasui is executive director of the Commission on Community Relations for the city and county of Denver.

potential witnesses who will relate their experiences in camp before the commission." He said each league chapter has designated a "redress representative" whose responsibility is to find people willing to provide testimony.

Kunisaki also announced the appointment of Nisei educator Harry Kawahara as the new chairperson of the PSWDC redress committee, replacing Ron Wakabayashi, who left the committee to assume his post as 'CL national director.

In his first public statement on redress, Kawahara said, "We are hopeful of having an adequate pool of potential witnesses. They will play a most important role in the effectiveness of the commission hearings. We want to have a good cross-section of people who can articulate the harmful aspects of being imprisoned in the detention camps."

JACL's strategy is to identify potential witnesses and then to hold workshops to prepare these people for testimony before the congressional hearing. Kawahara hopes this process will "maximize their impact on the commission."

The new local 'CL redress chair said both Japanese ancestry and non-Japanese ancestry persons are being sought for testimony.

Those interested in working with the National Coalition for Redress/Reparations should call Merilynne Hamano, 267-0299 (evenings), or Jim Matsuoka, 498-5148 (days).

The JACL contact persons are John Saito, 626-4471 (days), and Harry Kawahara, 791-3791 (evenings).

—DWIGHT CHUMAN