



## The Hearings

WASHINGTON, D.C.—It's 4:30 a.m. in the morning on July 16, 1981, and I am sitting in Room 930 of the Hotel Washington—a block away from the White House—working on what will be my statement before the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians later today.

I sit here listening to jazz on WHUR, missing my wife back in Echo Park and waiting for the sun to show its face over the Department of Treasury Building outside my room's eastern-facing window. I am torn over whether I should include as part of my testimony before the commission concerns about the World War II concentration camp experience of Japanese America that have disturbed me since I first heard them as a kid, and which disturb me even more now as I look at the documentation spread out all over my unslept-in double bed.

The distinct impression I got from the first-day of the commission hearings was that they resembled a capital garden party. To me, it was bizarre to have former government officials tell a governmental panel what the government did to Japanese America four decades ago and to have the politically-appointed members of that panel thanking what some would call war criminals for agreeing to appear and recalling grand times they had had as young bureaucrats in the '40s. Incestuous and unhealthy are other adjectives which pop into my mind.

The only thing I am sure of is that I will read into the official record of the commission results of **The Rafu Shimpo** Japanese American Redress Survey. I feel good that nearly 4000 have responded to our community study on this historic question. And I feel thankful for the help of Kazuko Fukazawa and Akiko Hayashi of our Japanese editorial section for typesetting and proofreading the Japanese translation of the survey. And the survey would have never been tabulated in time if it were not for the patience of Yumi Ohshima-Chuman back in L.A.

Well, there's the sun. Gotta get back to the Selectric.

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### Statement of Dwight Chuman, English Editor, The Rafu Shimpo Before the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians U.S. Senate Caucus Room, July 16, 1981

My name is Dwight Chuman and I am a third-generation Japanese American.

I am here today both as English-language editor of **The Rafu Shimpo**, a daily newspaper published in English and Japanese in Los Angeles, and as an individual to express views on the issue of redressing the wrongs inflicted upon Japanese America during World War II by the United States government and agents acting on its behalf.

Although I was born five years after the last of the concentration camps for Japanese Americans was closed down, I was raised by parents whose memories today remain scarred by their unjust imprisonment of 40 years ago, and I grew up in a community whose elders often speak to each other as if they died and went to Hell in 1942 and were reborn only after being freed from their imprisonment—they today still use the phrases "before camp" and "after camp" to assign some order to their disrupted lives.

The primary purpose for my appearance here today is to share with the commission results of a nation-wide survey of Japanese American public opinion on the long-neglected redress question.

The response to the survey was overwhelming. We have been advised that a passively-administered questionnaire such as ours would yield, at best, a one percent response. But when we completed the tabulation of the results two weeks ago on the Fourth of July, we found that more than 16 percent, or 3749 of our 23,000 readers had considered the issue of enough import to take the time to fill-out the study and mail it back to us.

We can conclude from the response, which is unprecedented in the

78-year history of our publication, that Japanese America remains haunted by the wholesale violation of their constitutional rights and the internment of four decades ago, but is still ready to demand a just resolution of that violent injustice despite a century of racist treatment in this country.

We printed the survey in both Japanese and English to enable all those victimized, especially our rapidly-dying Issei first-generation to speak for themselves on the issue.

Perhaps the most important misconception we feel this survey sets aside is rhetoric implying that our community is deeply split on redress.

Three-thousand, five-hundred and seventy-five respondents or more than 96 percent answered that they felt Japanese Americans should seek redress, and 3350 or 89.36 percent, said an appropriate form of reparation is direct monetary payments to individuals affected by Executive Order 9066, or their heirs.

About a third, or 32.17 percent, also favored the establishment of a community trust fund using reparation monies for senior citizens' housing and community service programs for our elderly.

Only 13.39 percent indicated they thought a presidential apology was sufficient redress of their grievances.

One-hundred and fifty-five respondents, or 4.13 percent, said they opposed redress, citing reasoning ranging from fear of racial backlash to opinions that no wrongs were committed.

Japanese America has delivered its mandate.

I am also here to cover these proceedings for the newspaper. After Tuesday's opening session, I sat down to write my story but something troubled me, and I couldn't put my finger on what it was. To mull things over, I decided to take a walk. My hotel is only a block away from the White House and within a few steps of the other majestic buildings and monuments of this city. But it wasn't the many symbolic tributes to the ideals of this nation which brought me catharsis. Instead, it was the incongruity of the unemployed black youths on the streets here and the droves of prostitutes who set up shop a stone's throw from the Executive Mansion that brought things into clearer focus.

This commission, like this town, I fear, is a pretense; a sham. And, it will remain so, until important basic changes are made.

Tuesday, we heard shocking testimony detailing massive misfeasance by cabinet-level officials and their advisers and even possible abuses of authority by the President of the United States.

Far more shocking, however, was the fact that only Edward Brooke and Justice Arthur Goldberg called attention to these revelations. The commission appeared poorly briefed, not conversant with the facts surrounding the war crimes against Japanese America and clearly not ready to carry out the mandate given it by Congress and victims of E.O. 9066. I hope this changes during subsequent hearings.

The realities of our times tell us that Congress is not in the mood to authorize the redress former inmates of the WWII concentration camps are legally and morally entitled. Therefore, the foremost contribution the commission can make to Japanese America's fight for justice to produce a comprehensive report of all the facts surrounding this American travesty.

In concluding my remarks, I cannot emphasize more how essential a role the commission has in helping the Japanese American community itself understand fully what happened to it during the camp years. Four long decades have not healed many of the damages inflicted from within—I ask specifically that you command your staff to examine documentation available in the National Archives which show:

—That Japanese Americans in the camps may have been subjected to scientific programs of behavior modification, rumor experiments and that some of the relocation centers may have been laboratories for government studies on the control of the populations of defeated enemy nations.

—That conditions forced euthanasia or mercy killings to become a regular practice in camp hospitals.

—That members of the Japanese American Citizens League may have served as government informants prior to and within the camps, and by doing so, exacerbated dissent and suspicion among internees. Please tell us why so many members of the JACL, our only national organization, were targets of violence within the camps?

—And help us to understand why the JACL discouraged court challenges to the legality of the evacuation and the camps (Documents indicate that JACL national secretary Mike M. Masaoka in April of 1942 publicly characterized Minoru Yasui as "a self-styled martyr" out to do nothing but "capture headlines." Perhaps commission staff determine whether such a stance had a chilling effect on other Japanese Americans exercising their rights as citizens.)

—Is it true that the JACL first advocated special segregation camps for those it deemed "subversive" and as "agitators."

—And, help us to understand why in March 1942 JACL national secretary Masaoka recommended that Japanese "be put into labor concentration camps to be farmed out to large sugar beet combines as cheap laborers; Japanese internees be brought in for road making; and that the Japanese be branded and stamped and put under the supervision of the Federal government."

I implore this panel to fill these gaps of understanding for the Japanese American victims, their children and the rest of the citizens of this nation.

—DWIGHT CHUMAN