

# WAFU SHIMPO



**CELEBRATING REDRESS VICTORY**—Members of the Southern California Japanese American community gathered at a news conference Wednesday to celebrate President Reagan's signing into law legislation to compensate Nikkei who were interned in concentration camps during war. Happy celebrants include (left to right) Tom Shiroishi, Miya Iwataki, Tim Nabara and Sumi Seki.

## CALIFORNIA STATE ASSEMBLY CREATES BILL REQUESTING TAX FREE REPARATIONS

SACRAMENTO, (AP).—The State Assembly sent to the governor Wednesday a bill that would exempt from state income taxes any federal reparations received by Japanese Americans put into camps during World War II.

The bill would also allow surviving spouses of Japanese Americans fired from state jobs because of World War II to file for the existing state claim of up to \$5,000.

The vote was 50-9 for AB4087 by Assemblyman Patrick Johnston, D-Stockton. The Senate approved it last week.

President Reagan on Wednesday signed federal legislation establishing reparations for Japanese Americans who suffered losses because their property was confiscated and they were put into camps during the war.

The bill would exempt those federal reparations from the state income tax.

It would also allow surviving

spouses of state employees fired in 1942 to file claims of up to \$5,000 for lost wages. The Legislature in 1982 passed a law authorizing the former employees themselves to file for the lost wages.

Assemblywoman Marian La Follette, R-Northridge, objected to the bill, saying many young men she knew as a girl were killed in the war.

"I would like to see an apology from the Japanese government" rather than "an apology for protecting the integrity of our Democracy."

Assemblyman Dick Floyd, D-Hawthorne, called her remarks racist, noting that German Americans and Italian Americans were not held in camps even though their native lands were also at war.

"This has not a damn thing to do with the Japanese government, army, navy or any of their forces. We as a country took our own

citizens and put them in concentration campus," Floyd said.

Assemblyman Phil Isenberg, D-Sacramento, said his wife's stepmother was 21 and born in Clarksburg but she was fired from her state job and spent four years in a camp.

Assemblyman Steve Peace, D-Chula Vista, said the family of his aide, David Takashima, lost their San Diego County land and never recovered it. People who took over the land profited when the state bought some of it for a new state prison, Peace said.

### DANCE CLASS

The Seinan Senior Citizens Center will be presenting an intermediate ballroom dance class, with Mrs. Kinue Williams instructing, every Wednesday starting Aug. 10, from 1 to 2 p.m., at the Seinan Center, 3116 West Jefferson Blvd., Los Angeles. For more information, call (213) 4-2175.

## FORMER C REDRESS B

By TAKESHI NAKAYAMA

Dorothy Shundo whipped out a black piece of paper—a photostatic copy of her birth certificate—out of her handbag and revealed that she had been carrying it ever since she and her family forcibly removed from their West Covina home by government authorities and shipped to a concentration camp at Heart Mountain, Wyoming. The signing of the reparations bill for Japanese Americans interned during World War II means she won't have to carry her birth certificate any longer.

"I carried it for 45 years," she said, fighting back tears. "I hope no other group of Americans feel they have to prove their citizenship by carrying proof of it."

Shundo was one of a group of Americans of Japanese descent—who were interned in the camps during the war—who displayed mixed emotions as they tried to explain their feelings about the new measure which will compensate them for their decades-long anguish at a news conference held by the National Coalition for Redress and Reparations (NCRR) and the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) at the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center in Little Tokyo.

"I carried the stigma (of being labeled disloyal) all these years . . . even though the United States is the only country I've known. With the signing of the bill, we now know that the Constitution is working," said Shundo, 64, a native of Hollywood who resettled in Chicago after the war before returning to Southern California in 1948. She resides in Torrance and works as a secretary for an aerospace firm.

Phil Shigekuni, who was eight-years-old when he and his family were locked up at Santa Anita and then "in the Dust Bowl area of Colorado," at Amache, had conflicting feelings about passage of the redress legislation.

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# FORMER CAMP INMATES HAIL REDRESS BILL SIGNING

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"I feel a great deal of sadness and a great deal of joy," he said as he expressed his gratitude, choked with emotion. "When I

sing 'This Land Is Your Land,' when I repeat 'with liberty and justice for all,' from now on it'll have more meaning for me."

Toshiko Yoshida talked about the contributions many Japanese Americans made during the war, including her brother, who died in Italy as a member of the Army while his family was imprisoned in the United States.

"I believe this is a happy day for all of us, mainly because all of us have had our faith restored in the Constitution," she stated.

Tim Nabara, whose family was interned at Rohwer, Arkansas, declared, "I will never forget the experience, but I am at the moment willing to forget and try to live a normal life."

Referring to the Civil Liberties Act of 1987, the retired Internal Revenue Service agent commented, "Needless to say, this is a very happy occasion for me. For the first time in my life I can really say I'm a proud American."

Tom Shiroishi of Rosemead, who was an inmate at Poston, Arizona, began to cry as he thought back to the near past. "I'm only sorry that my parents are not alive to make the twilight of their years a little easier."

It makes anybody feel better "to know that they're finally considered citizens," he said. "Well, I knew myself (that I was a U.S. citizen) but I meet White people and they ask me when did I come here? What the hell. I mean, do White people think they're the only ones that are born here? You know, I bet they think (Native American) Indians are born somewhere else."

Sumi Seki's family's experiences were re-enacted in the play, "Tachinoki," last year. She was 16 in 1942 when the Seo family was uprooted from their San Pedro home and detained at Santa Anita racetrack and then interned at Jerome, Arkansas.

Of the redress bill signed by President Reagan, she exclaimed, "This is the biggest joy of my life. I'm sorry my parents, my brother and the rest of the family couldn't be here for this joyous occasion. But I will try to forget the past and rejoice for the future."

Of those dark days of World War II, the San Pedro native recalled, "When war broke out, our friends shunned us. Everyone treated us like enemy aliens. When we were walking to the

losses, aren't here to enjoy this with us."

Emi, who served 18 months in a federal prison at Leavenworth, Kansas for conspiracy in counseling young Nisei at Heart Mountain to resist the draft before being pardoned by President Truman in 1947, commented, "as a democratic nation and leader for civil rights for the world, this was the only course of action that could have resulted. Any other action, such as denial of this passage of the (redress) bill, would have made a mockery of the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights."

Many Americans who opposed compensation for Nikkei former internees, Emi said, "equate us with the enemy in Japan. They do not try to understand that we are American citizens just like they are. They always mention that they ought to pay for the survivors of Pearl Harbor and let the Japanese government pay for our prisoners of war before they pay the internees here. They never want to understand that Japanese Americans were born here. We're Americans with just as much rights as anybody with blond hair and blue eyes."

Emi credited the lobbying campaign carried on in July 1987 by a huge NCRP contingent with having a "tremendous impact" on legislators in voting for the redress bill.

"I'm very happy. It's a day long awaited for. It's about time," said G. Akito Maehara of NCRP, a Sansei whose parents and grandparents were interned. "I'm really happy for my grandparents. The only sad part is my mother's not here anymore—she was in Manazar and Heart Mountain. I think she would have been overjoyed. My grandmother kept a scrapbook of the camps and it's always been an integral part of our history."

Approximately 57,000 Americans of Japanese ancestry who were imprisoned in camps during the war are still alive, many of them in California, said Maehara.

Under the law, survivors will receive \$20,000 some time over the next 10 years, with the earliest payment coming in 1990, officials said.

"A sad chapter in American history is now finally corrected and the stigma guilt removed," said J.D. Hokoyama of the JACL.



California Japanese American President Reagan's signing into redress camps during war. Happy Nabara and Sumi Seki.

## CREATES REPARATIONS

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## JAPAN SHOULD FOCUS ON WARTIME ATROCITIES

The Prime Minister should ponder the unspeakably perverted deeds of Unit 731—deeds such as infecting women prisoners with syphilis (sic) and then dissecting



occasion. But I will try to forget the past and rejoice for the future."

Of those dark days of World War II, the San Pedro native recalled, "When war broke out, our friends shunned us. Everyone treated us like enemy aliens. When we were walking to the buses to be taken away, people looked at us as if we were lepers or something. The wounds are still there and it's going to take time to heal.

"But I do have a good feeling now (that the redress bill passed)—I feel like going out and getting drunk," she laughed.

Frank Emi, one of more than 100 Nisei who resisted being drafted into the U.S. military from camps while being denied their constitutional rights, said "It's been over 40 years of hard struggle, but we finally achieved justice . . . and that makes me very happy, and I'm only sorry that our parents, who bore the brunt of the evacuation and the

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## ALL SINGLES PICNIC

The Greater Los Angeles Singles Chapter Japanese American Citizens league (JACL) will hold an "All Singles Picnic" on September 18 at Anderson Park located at 19101 South Wilmington Avenue in Carson from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The picnic includes games, bento, drinks and watermelon. The cost is \$7. Deadline for reservations are Wednesday, September 14.

This event is sponsored by the Southern California Nikkei Single Coalition. For more information call (213) 477-6997.