

4/14/95

REPARATIONS

Good News for Some Nikkei Denied Redress

Those who were minors on a prisoner-of-war ship and children of "voluntary evacuees" may soon have their cases reversed.

By NAOMI HIRAHARA
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Victor K. Nosé, 53, recalls his parents' stories of moving into a chicken coop in the Pacific Southwest in the dead of winter.

"We didn't have electricity," said Nosé. "A kerosene lamp, that's all we had." Soon after, Nosé was born in May of 1943, surviving a near-death situation.

Nosé is among the 900 "children of voluntary evacuees," a historical term used to coin those born outside of camp to Japanese Americans who chose to relocate from the West Coast into the U.S. interior to avoid being placed in World War II concentration camps.

This group of individuals, as well as people in other categories, has been denied redress and reparations under the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, but are hoping to see a reversal in their cases.

What people don't realize, says Nosé, is that "voluntary evacuees" were forced to leave their homes in a few days and also had to record their activity with governmental authorities. "They made dang sure that you got to your point (of desti-

nation)," said Nosé. On Thursday evening, Nosé and others were encouraged about the status of their cases in a Los Angeles meeting with representatives from the Office of Redress Administration (ORA) at the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center. Officials included ORA head DeDe Greene, past administrator Bob Bratt, legal counsel Tink Cooper and director of operations Joanne Chiedi.

At the meeting, officials revealed that if a certain legal decision is

overturned by Federal Circuit's Court of Appeals, 900 children of "voluntary evacuees" who have filed their case with the ORA will be awarded \$20,000 in redress money.

Last Thursday, attorney Gerald Sato argued before the court on the behalf of his cousin, Linda (Yae) Consolo, who was denied redress because she was born in Utah during the war.

Earlier, Sato, who also made a case for another plaintiff, Douglas Ishida, reported that he felt the

judges seemed dissatisfied with the government's argument that if such individuals were awarded redress, an inordinate number of additional Japanese Americans would clamor for restitution.



Newly appointed ORA head DeDe Greene explains new developments in denied redress cases.



Victor Nosé is child of a "voluntary evacuee." A recent court case may change the fate of 900 individuals who fall in this category.

Angeles, had been picked up by the FBI on Dec. 7, 1941. Later the family was interned in Santa Anita and Amache before going to New Jersey to embark on the Gripsholm on Sept. 1, 1943.

Sam Miyamoto, a U.S. veteran who served during the Korean War, further elaborated that Japanese Americans were treated worse than illegal aliens in Japan. "We couldn't use public transportation or use the hospital. We had to say that we were Koreans," said Miyamoto.

Updates on other categories include the following:

•Japanese Latin Americans—The ORA is currently working with the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) to see if U.S. permanent residency status for some Peruvians and other Latin Americans can be awarded retroactively. During the war, these individuals of Japanese ancestry were taken from their homes to camps in the U.S. to



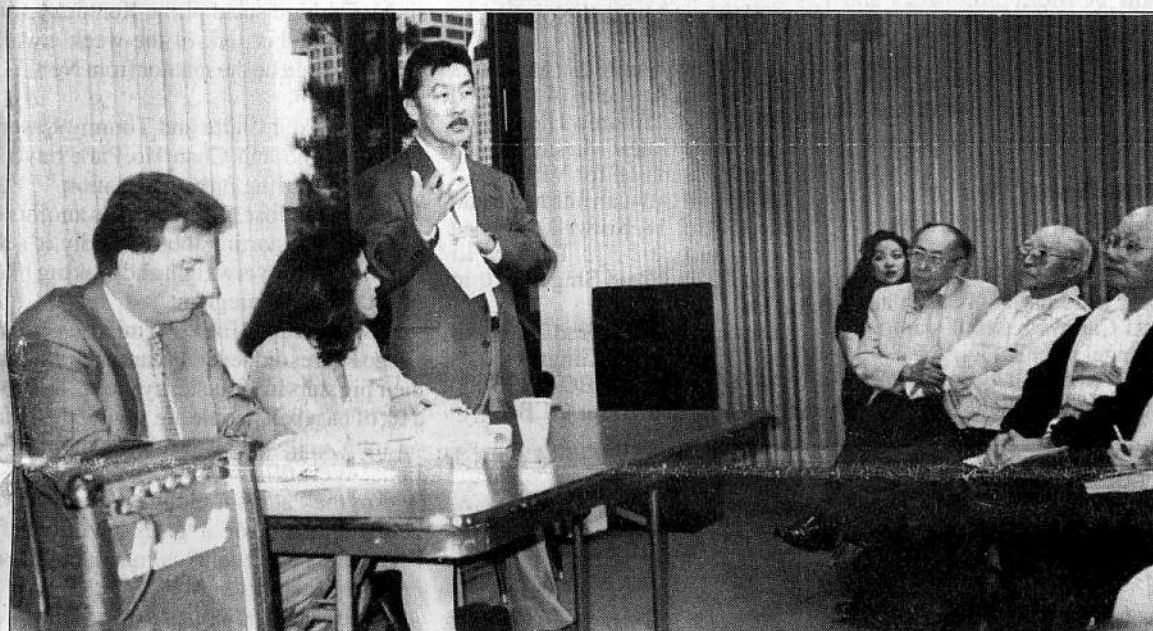
When she was a minor, Reiko Rikimaru Nimura traveled to Japan on the Gripsholm prisoner-of-war ship in 1943. She is among 131 others who may receive redress.

be used for prisoner exchanges with Japan. Losing their Peruvian citizenship and first ineligible to gain U.S. citizenship, these individuals were people "without a country."

The ORA reported that 18 of 30 individuals were recently deemed eligible to receive redress because their permanent residency status was clarified by the INS. Five were denied that residency status, and the remaining cases are pending.

•Arizona Residents—Although individuals in the state of Arizona were not forced into concentration camps, their wartime movement was restricted through curfews and other laws. Through the legal efforts of the Asian Law Caucus' Gen Fujioka, certain individuals living in northern Phoenix successfully argued that their livelihood was severely impaired by a law restricting their movement from the southside. These agricultural workers proved that they had a preexisting relationship with southern Phoenix, explained Cooper.

To date, 125 related cases have been processed through the ORA. Of that number, 35 have been paid. Fifteen are expected to receive redress in this next round of payments.



Photos by NAOMI HIRAHARA/Rafu Shimpō

Richard Katsuda, new NCCR president, discusses the legal cases currently affecting governmental redress for "children of voluntary evacuees." These individuals have been denied redress because they were not born in camp. Sitting at the table are Bob Bratt, former ORA head, and director of operations, Joanne

Richard Katsuda, president of the National Coalition for Redress and Reparations, which sponsored the meeting, said he hoped the decision would come within three to six months.

If the court rules in Consolo's favor, said Cooper, all affected individuals will be informed and redress will be paid.

Japanese Americans who were minors when they traveled with their parents on the Gripsholm prisoner-of-war ship also received good news. ORA administrator Greene revealed that movement was being made to pay restitution to individuals in that category. "I'm very optimistic," said Greene.

According to the ORA, 131 individuals who were minors at the time have petitioned to receive redress. When asked to clarify the age of such "minors," Cooper confirmed that age 21 was considered the legal limit at that time, and that numerical definition has been approved by Department of Justice head Deval Patrick.

"You hope that a decision will be issued in the next four to six weeks," said Cooper.

Those who traveled to Japan on the Gripsholm were previously denied but they had "relocated to an enemy country during the war."

"Our contention is that we had no choice," said Reiko Rikimaru Nimura, who was in her teens at the time.

Nimura explained that her father Isamu, one of the partners of Rikimaru Produce Market, in Los

ments.

Other questions emerged involving workers on the Union Pacific railroad who were released from their jobs because they were of Japanese ancestry; children of World War II veterans who were born outside of camp; and individuals in Nevada who faced curfew restrictions.

Such individuals should contact the ORA directly, said officials. "We're trying to create a partnership," said Greene, who is working for money to be available for all eligible internees. "We want you to be comfortable calling us."

Kei Ochi, former NCRR president, agreed, concluding the meeting with the comment, "We want to discuss all these cases."

Who to Call for Redress Help

Individuals denied redress can call the Office of Redress Administration (ORA) in Washington, D.C. directly. The telephone number is (202) 219-6900. Please leave your name and phone number at the recording, and a representative should call you back.

For local help, contact the National Coalition for Redress and Reparations at (213) 680-3484. The non-profit group has no paid staff members, but volunteers will return your call.

Another meeting may be held this summer.