



Photos by MARIO G. REYES/Rafu Shimpō

Honorees are, from left, Takeshi Nakayama, Joanne Chiedi, David Kawamoto, Kay Ochi of NCRR, Bob Bratt and Bill Watanabe. Kawamoto and Ochi are holding up plaques presented to them by ORA.

For a Job Well Done

Redress advocates are saluted for seeing the 10-year reparations program through from start to end.

By MARTHA NAKAGAWA
RAFU STAFF WRITER

It was a long overdue recognition for a job well done.

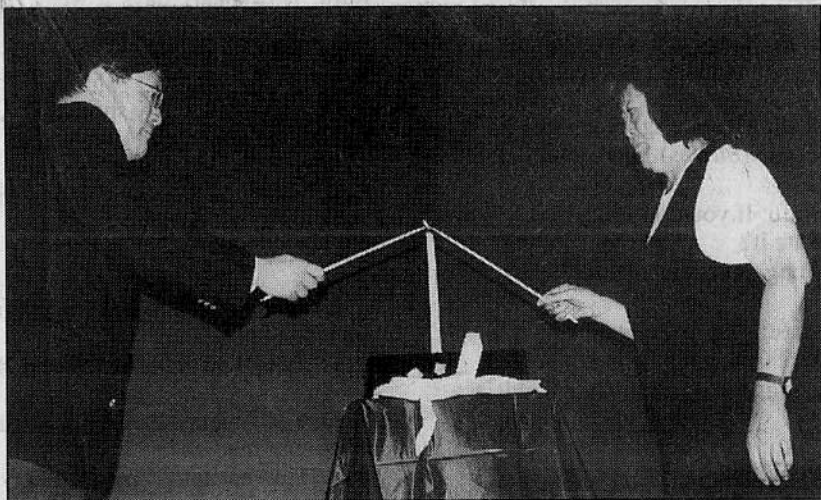
On Sunday, the day before the "sunset" of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, the National Coalition for Redress/Reparations held an awards ceremony at the newly opened Union Center for the Arts to recognize those who helped redress happen.

More than 100 people attended this touching ceremony where, like war veterans of a battle well fought, the tone was that of camaraderie and reflection.

But NCRR members also didn't rest on past laurels, and exhorted the community to remain involved in the continuing redress struggle and the struggles of others such as immigration rights, workers' rights and civil rights.

The honorees included Bob Bratt, former Office of Redress Administration administrator; Joanne Chiedi, ORA deputy administrator; Little Tokyo Service Center; and Takeshi Nakayama, associate editor of the English section of the *Rafu Shimpō*.

NCRR vice president Kay Ochi, in recalling the community's relationship with the ORA over the past 10



Gerald Sato and Duane Inouye Sanchez light a candle in memory of the "voluntary" evacuees and their children.

years, said, "The ORA has worked cooperatively, and in earnest with community organizations and individuals, although we haven't always agreed when there was a decision. But there again, they've kept the community involved and informed.

"ORA has been respectful, considerate of the claimants ... and I started to think what could have been had we not had the caring and really compassionate people running the organization. In short, it definitely has been a pleasure for NCRR and other organizations to work with the ORA over the past 10 years."

As ORA's first administrator, Bratt was praised for setting a positive and compassionate tone.

"As a founder of the organization (ORA), he created a system, but most importantly, he set the tone of professionalism and consideration for the community," said Ochi. "He set a tone

for his staff and for his successors. He established wonderful relationships within the community, particularly by his kind approach to every single internee or evacuee he spoke to."

Bratt worked at the Department of Justice's (DOJ) ORA office from 1988 to 1992. Currently, he is still within the DOJ, working as executive director of the criminal division where he received the Distinguished Meritorious Presidential Award, the highest honor for that department.

Talking from the heart, Bratt shared how he lobbied to work at the ORA.

"I wanted to work with the redress program, mainly from personal experience," said Bratt. "My second cousin was interned. I never understood why Ken was interned and what happened to him during those years.

"But as I learned more about internment and what happened to

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Japanese Americans, I personally was outraged that the government could violate a whole class of individuals' civil rights, and how a few individuals, intentionally, could abuse power ... Those principles reached down and made me sick inside, and I wanted to be a part, whatever I could, to help administrate the wrongdoing that was done."

Bratt talked about how he and his staff went about identifying and locating potential claimants.

"We could have just looked at a list of internees and said, 'Okay, we've identified the individuals, and we've done our job. But then, we'd miss the railroad workers, the voluntary evacuees, the individuals in Hawaii that were rounded up and put on Sand Island. When it came to locating individuals, it was way before the era of web pages, we asked how could they be reached and make it easier for individuals to find us and give us their new address."

To that end, Bratt and his staff established a toll-free 800 number the second week the office opened, conducted hundreds of workshops and traveled the length and breadth of the nation to meet with community members.

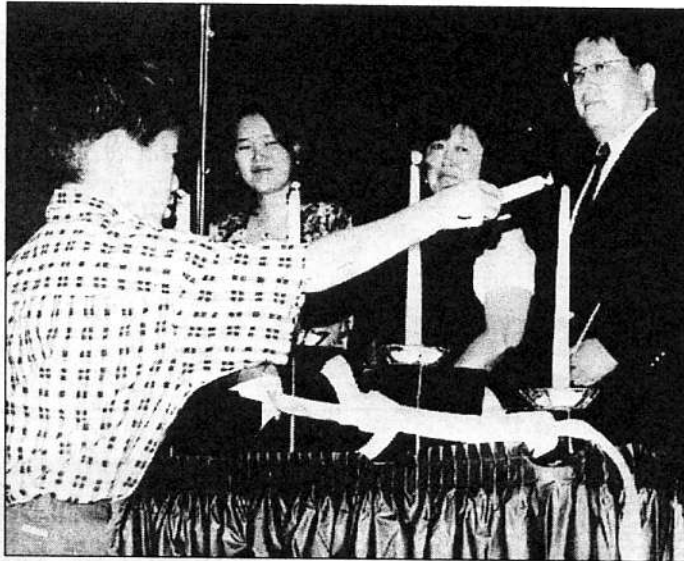
Bratt said September will mark the 20th anniversary that he's been with DOJ, and within that span, nothing compared to his experiences working at the ORA office.

"I've worked on a lot of interesting projects, but nothing will ever, ever make me feel as good about my job than working on the redress program. It's the program, to me, that will always be so special because of the friendships I've made."

In 1992, Bratt was promoted and left the ORA, but as Ochi recalled, the community wasn't ready to lose Bratt then and lobbied the DOJ to have Bratt continue with the redress program in some capacity. As a result, Bratt was appointed as counsel to the ORA administrator in 1994.

Another honored ORA staff member was Joanne Chiedi, ORA's deputy administrator, one of the few who have been with the ORA office for the entire 10 years. Within that decade, Chiedi has traveled all over the United States and conducted more than 200 workshops. But rather than tout her hard work, Chiedi humbly gave the credit to the community leaders.

"The foundation of ORA was built on a partnership we had with the community leaders, and you should be proud," said Chiedi. "You are very fortunate to have such hardworking indi-



Derek Sakata lights a candle for future generations as Jenni Kuida, Duane Inouye Sanchez and Gerald Sato look on.

NCCR is currently working with Visual Communications (VC) to preserve, catalog and index more than 13 videotapes from the three-day 1981 Los Angeles hearings of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians.

John Esaki of VC said, "Back in 1981, I think a lot of people didn't see redress as a very realistic possibility, and a lot of people didn't feel the Commission hearings, themselves, were a worthwhile way of going for the redress campaign. However, people at NCCR and VC, I think, had the foresight to say that these hearings are going to be historic and they're going to be important to look back on. So they gathered together a group of volunteers, scraped together some money for a video camera, a very inexpensive video camera because there wasn't a whole lot of money to spend on this project at the time, and we pulled together this crew and shot videos of all the hearings to preserve for future generations."

A 10-minute excerpt from the 1981 hearings were shown to attendees at NCCR's award ceremony. Highlights from the short clips included testimony by S.I. Hayakawa, Lillian Baker grabbing documents from World War II veteran Jim Kawaminami and Jim Matsuoka berating the Commission for their insensitivity.

The two organizations are utilizing a grant from the Civil Liberties Public Education Fund to preserve the tapes, which was shot on consumer grade VHS and is now beginning to disintegrate. It will be transferred to digital Beta Cam, a more permanent form.

Anyone interested in purchasing these tapes should contact NCCR (213) 680-3484 or VC at (213) 680-4462. The 13 tapes are \$300 for institutions and universities; \$250 for NCCR and VC members.

my capacity as deputy administrator or whether it be across the dinner table with friends or families, I will tell your stories and will retell them over and over again."

Ochi noted that Chiedi, who worked under three ORA administrators, provided the "continuity, experience and a lot of hearth to the department."

"Joanne will long be remembered for saying, 'If it were up to me, I'd pay every

Ochi also publicly thanked ORA's DeDe Greene, Lisa Johnson and legal counsel Tink Cooper.

In a separate move, Bratt and Chiedi presented NCCR and Japanese American Citizens League with a plaque of appreciation.

Local recognition by NCCR went to two recipients. One of them was the Little Tokyo Service Center, the hub of

charged with carrying out a very difficult, and, I thought, an almost impossible task."

But Kathy Nishimoto Masaoka pointed out that it was due to the volunteer efforts of LTSC's staff that much of the documents were translated and interpreted into Japanese. In particular, she recognized Sumiko Ono and Yasuko Sakamoto, both of whom voluntarily translated documents into Japanese; and Koichi Tagawa, who volunteered everyday between his lunch and dinner break shift at Tokyo Kaikan to translate or interpret for the Japanese-speaking people.

"The center staff and volunteers willingly helped translate leaflets and redress information into Japanese, provided transportation and translation for the Issei to the Commission (on Wartime and Internment of Civilians hearings) in 1981," said Masaoka.

Rafu Associate Editor of the English Section Takeshi Nakayama was also recognized for covering the redress issue for more than two decades. He is perhaps the only journalist, in ethnic media or in mainstream, who has continued to cover this issue for so long and so extensively.

In the early years of the redress movement, Masaoka remembered passing out flyers with Nakayama throughout Little Tokyo. She also credited Nakayama for sustaining media coverage even after the passage of the Civil Liberties Bill of 1988 in order to keep the community informed of new categories or of the names of unknowns.

"Thinking back, we've come a long way as a community since the early '80s when redress was just an impossible dream," said Nakayama. "Now today, the redress program has been going on for 10 years, and 81,000 people have gotten redress. That really says something about our small community, which worked so hard, persevered and in the process, made a lot of good friends who helped us achieve redress."

After thanking NCCR, Nakayama also recognized the efforts of writer of "Years of Infamy" Michi Weglyn, researcher Aiko Herzog, JACL, the Nisei veterans, the lawmakers, Campaign for Justice which is still fighting for Nikkei Latin American redress and NCJAR national spokesperson and plaintiff of a class action lawsuit that perhaps prodded Congress to issue redress, William Hohri.

Later, NCCR held a symbolic candle-light ceremony in honor of the Issei and the *Consolo-Ishida* cases which paved the way for redress to children of voluntary evacuees, the minor relocatees, the Hawaii Nikkei and into camps. Arizona

humbly gave the credit to the community leaders.

"The foundation of ORA was built on a partnership we had with the community leaders, and you should be proud," said Chiedi. "You are very fortunate to have such hardworking individuals working for your rights ... From the bottom of my heart, I want to thank you for opening up because your personal stories brought the history of the internment period alive for me."

Chiedi made a promise that even after the ORA office closes down, she will continue to tell the Nikkei internment story.

"My commitment to all who were affected by Executive Order 9066 is to keep your personal experiences alive. Now if it means telling co-workers or in

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Ochi noted that Chiedi, who worked under three ORA administrators, provided the "continuity, experience and a lot of hearth to the department."

"Joanne will long be remembered for saying, 'If it were up to me, I'd pay every Japanese American who were alive at the time of internment,'" said Ochi. "To those of us who got to know her, we know she really means this. She worked very hard with the department, advocating the hard cases. Some of those were marginal, but she was really trying to get that extra push for redress ..."

"And although we couldn't get every single case that we wanted, we knew we had advocates there in the ORA pitching for us, although they may have been overruled at times."

In a separate move, Bratt and Chiedi presented NCRR and Japanese American Citizens League with a plaque of appreciation.

Local recognition by NCRR went to two recipients. One of them was the Little Tokyo Service Center, the hub of much redress activity in the 1980s and 1990s. LTSC executive director Bill Watanabe accepted the award on LTSC's behalf.

"I feel *enryo* because I feel like we didn't do that much," said Watanabe. "At the Little Tokyo Service Center, we had a meeting space and a coffee pot. And I felt honored that NCRR and other community groups would want to meet in our space to do the work they were doing. . . We just provided the space for the activists, groups of people who were

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Jude Narita also performed excerpts from her work in progress on the Gripsholm hostage exchange that took place during World War II.

Catering was provided by the newly opened Union Center Cafe.