

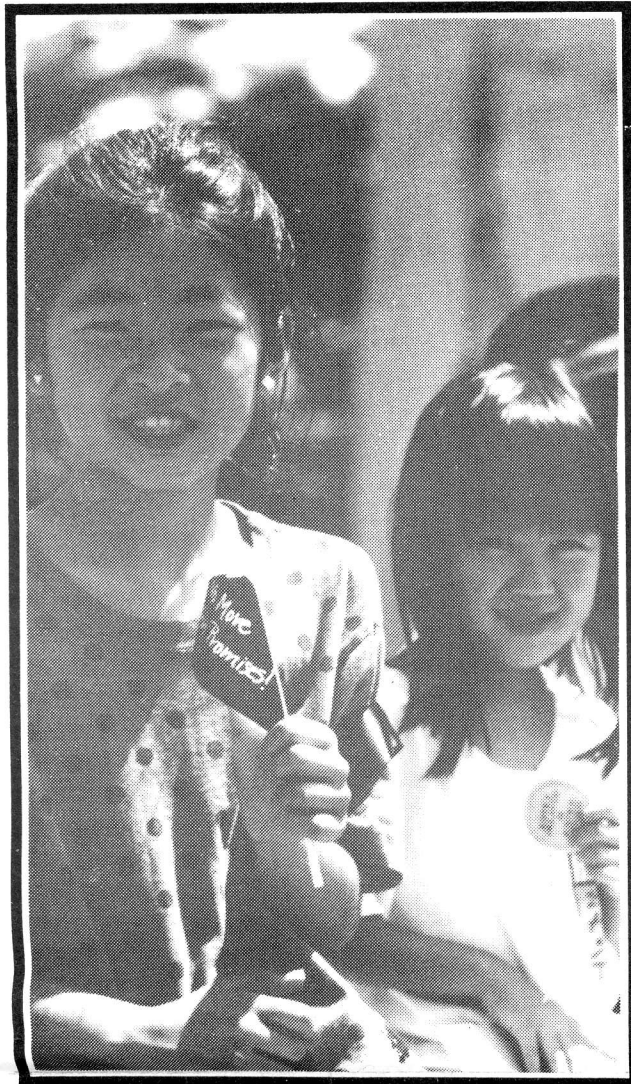


TOZAI TIM

October 1990

Heirs to the Wealth of East and West

• 5810 East Olympic Boulevard, Los Angeles, California 90022, (213) 477-1111



NCCR: An Honeymoon Organization Ponders Future Goals

By Brian T. Niiya

government and 5) Education of the American public so that future generations may learn from the mistakes of the past and not knowingly allow them to happen again.

But according to NCCR National Spokesperson Bert Nakano, who was present at that meeting, the roots of the movement go back much further. "NCCR didn't really start in '80, but it began before that," he observed. "In the '60s with the grassroots community movements, and by 1978, they already had what they called the LACRR, the Los Angeles Coalition on Redress/Reparations."

Depending on who you talk to, the Redress movement may well have roots which go back even earlier. William Hohri, the driving force behind another Redress group, the National Council for Japanese American Redress, cites three World War II era dissidents, James Omura, Joseph Y. Kurihara and Kiyoshi Okamoto as being the first to propose the concept of reparations, (each did in isolation between 1942 and 1946). Others point to Edison Uno, a lifelong community activist whose "Requital Supplication" proposal issued in 1970 was the first to explicitly call for Redress. By 1978, a resolution calling for monetary compensation of \$25,000 was adopted by the LACRR at its Biennial Convention. Participants

of CANE (and on recalls that "CAN Asian Student U Tule Lake in the Lake Pilgrimage changed its name Progressive Ass Redress as its m

In San Jose, Nihonmachi O formed in 1979 Pilgrimage and activity of the s Angeles J-Town Richard Katsud tells of how it be organizations of unique in that " still exists—as a continues to ser Jose." Though n organization, N early '80s.

In Los Ange People's Rights spearheaded lo LTPRO formed forerunner of N

It's a typically scorching summer Sunday in

It's a typically scorching summer Sunday in Little Tokyo and I arrive at the 11:00 a.m. meeting a little late. Though I have never been to a National Coalition for Redress/Reparations (NCRR) meeting in my life, I am greeted by name by several people. In calling the meeting to order, NCRR co-chair Alan Nishio says, "Good, now that Brian is here, we can start," to the amusement of the rest of the room. (This, I would learn, is how many of their meetings start.) Whatever the intent, such friendliness quickly made this stranger feel comfortable.

The topic of the meeting is to begin planning for a conference commemorating the tenth anniversary of the Redress organization. This day long conference will also officially mark the transformation of NCRR from a single issue organization to a multi-issue Japanese American civil rights one. There is no debate on whether or not to continue; it seems to be a given for the thirty or so people from NCRR chapters throughout the state that the organization will continue its work despite the passage of Redress legislation and the imminent arrival of the first checks. Given the original principles upon which the organization was founded ten years earlier, this decision isn't too surprising.

NCRR was officially created at a meeting in Los Angeles on July 12, 1980. According to a brochure put out by the organization a year later, NCRR was formed "for the expressed purpose of seeking restitution for losses and injuries suffered by Japanese Americans and others unjustly uprooted and/or incarcerated by the U.S. government, and to seek preventative measures so that similar acts and violations of Constitutional rights never occur again."

The brochure goes on to list the five "Principles of NCRR." They are: 1) individual payments of at least \$25,000, 2) the establishment of a community fund, 3) an overturning of the legal basis for the camps, 4) Support of others who have suffered or still suffer from similar unjust actions taken by the

was the first to explicitly call for Redress. By 1978, a resolution calling for monetary compensation of \$25,000 was adopted by the JACL at its Biennial Convention. By this time, it was clear something was happening.

At about the same time, community organizations primarily made up of Sansei were beginning to take up the Redress issue. In San Francisco, San Jose, Los Angeles, and other cities Sansei activists who had been involved in community organizations primarily concerned with issues of redevelopment and housing began to pick up on Redress.

In San Francisco, it was members of the Committee Against Nihonmachi Evictions (CANE) which led the charge. Organized around the issues of housing and redevelopment, CANE is remembered for once having seven of its members chain themselves together at a redevelopment office to prevent work from proceeding. June Hibino, a member

spearheaded the LTPRO former forerunner of was in touch v talking about such similar t led to talk of c organization. when represer Angeles, San joined forces t

The meeting hour late with chapters, in th and Los Angele continuing Red help people fill answering que issues reported a state commis



HA I 東西 TIMES

of East and West • 5810 East Olympic Boulevard, Los Angeles, California 90022, (213) 723-6245 Volume 7 Issue 73

NCCR: An Honest Organization Ponders Future Goals

By Brian T. Niiya

government and 5) Education of the American public so that future generations may learn from the mistakes of the past and not knowingly allow them to happen again.

But according to NCCR National Spokesperson Bert Nakano, who was present at that meeting, the roots of the movement go back much further. "NCCR didn't really start in '80, but it began before that," he observed. "In the '60s with the grassroots community movements, and by 1978, they already had what they called the LACRR, the Los Angeles Coalition on Redress/Reparations."

Depending on who you talk to, the Redress movement may well have roots which go back even earlier. William Hohri, the driving force behind another Redress group, the National Council for Japanese American Redress, cites three World War II era dissidents, James Omura, Joseph Y. Kurihara and Kiyoshi Okamoto as being the first to propose the concept of reparations, (each did in isolation between 1942 and 1946). Others point to Edison Uno, a lifelong community activist whose "Requital Supplication" proposal issued in 1970 was the first to explicitly call for Redress. By 1978, a resolution calling for monetary

of CANE (and one of the links in that chain), recalls that "CANE worked with some of the Asian Student Unions to put on a pilgrimage to Tule Lake in the late '70s." Aided by the Tule Lake Pilgrimage Committee and others, CANE changed its name to the Japanese Community Progressive Association (JCPA) and turned to Redress as its main concern.

In San Jose, it was a group called the Nihonmachi Outreach Committee (NOC) which formed in 1979 after working on the Tule Lake Pilgrimage and amidst fears of redevelopment activity of the sort San Francisco and Los Angeles J-Towns had already gone through. Richard Katsuda, one of the founders of NOC, tells of how it became one of the founding organizations of NCCR and how San Jose was unique in that "NOC continued to exist—and still exists—as a separate organization which continues to serve as an NCCR chapter in San Jose." Though not exclusively a Redress organization, NOC worked mainly on R/R in the early '80s.

In Los Angeles, it was the Little Tokyo People's Rights Organization (LTPRO), which spearheaded local Redress efforts. Members of LTPRO formed the LACRR which was truly the

was the first to explicitly call for Redress. By 1978, a resolution calling for monetary compensation of \$25,000 was adopted by the JACL at its Biennial Convention. By this time, it was clear something was happening.

At about the same time, community organizations primarily made up of Sansei were beginning to take up the Redress issue. In San Francisco, San Jose, Los Angeles, and other cities Sansei activists who had been involved in community organizations primarily concerned with issues of redevelopment and housing began to pick up on Redress.

In San Francisco, it was members of the Committee Against Nihonmachi Evictions (CANE) which led the charge. Organized around the issues of housing and redevelopment, CANE is remembered for once having seven of its members chain themselves together at a redevelopment office to prevent work from proceeding. June Hibino, a member

spearheaded local Redress efforts. Members of LTPRO formed the LACRR which was truly the forerunner of NCRR. Hibino recalls that "JCPA was in touch with LTPRO, in fact we're always talking about merging since they were doing such similar things." These personal alliances led to talk of collaborating on a new Redress organization. These plans crystallized in 1980 when representatives from San Francisco, Los Angeles, San Diego, Sacramento, and San Jose joined forces to form the NCRR.

The meeting officially begins around a half hour late with reports from the different chapters, in this case San Jose, San Francisco, and Los Angeles. The chapters are all continuing Redress work, holding workshops to help people fill out the right forms and answering questions about eligibility. Other issues reported on include the controversy over a state commissioned video for high school

-Continued on page 12



students and the firing of a Japanese American student advisor at Cal Poly Pomona. The people in the room are mixed in age with perhaps half being older Sansei, a fourth being Nisei, and the other fourth younger Sansei/Yonsei. As chaired by Nishio and the other NCCR co-chair, Kathy Masaoka, everyone who wants to say something is allowed to say it and practically everyone in the room speaks out.

According to Nishio, the active participation of such a diverse group of people is one of the main contributions of NCCR. "It was really a vehicle for folks that had never been involved, who were not your professional organizers or your meeting kinds of people." He adds, "NCCR provided a vehicle for a lot of good, honest people to become empowered, to take up things, to become involved in a political issue, to feel a sense of power to determine things."

This grassroots type approach has been a



hallmark in the way NCCR has done things from the beginning. One of the best examples is their approach to the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (CWRIC) hearings in the summer of 1981.

Karen Umemoto, an NCCR member in San Francisco at the time, recalls that "during the commission hearings, the JACL was mainly interested in getting big name people to testify. And the whole approach that NCCR took was *really trying to figure out how to get the broadest cross section of the Japanese community to speak.*" She recalls NCCR doing presentations at churches and other community organizations and of house meetings where "people would cry and tell their stories. And when those Nisei get excited, they started going to all their friends and having more house meetings..."

Once the people were gathered and willing to testify, the organization also helped them to prepare for that experience. NCCR Legislative Chair Miya Iwataki remembers that "we had practice sessions with the Issei and Nisei, helped them type up and copy their testimony, kept them abreast of where they were on the agenda, and ordered buses to help bus people in from San Diego and other faraway places."

When the hearing times and dates were announced NCCR also made many demands geared at expanding the audience and impact of the hearings. According to Bert Nakano in Los Angeles, "We told them that the room you guys picked here is too small, we gonna need more, so

filled those two rooms. Then we told them that you guys gotta provide direct translation—Japanese/English—we'll provide the interpreters, we want those who wish to testify in Japanese to be able to do so and so forth." NCCR also requested a night hearing "because there's a lot of people working who wanna testify but they can't come" and got such hearings in San Francisco and Los Angeles. It was also the NCCR that requested a hearing in New York.

All that work resulted in an experience which seemed to have left an indelible impact on everyone associated with it. Of the San Francisco hearing, Hibino recalls that "there were at least 400 people there. I'd never seen anything like that, just an outpouring of people's emotions, that was really a...historic kind of thing."

For Kathy Masaoka and others, experiencing the hearings fortified their commitment to the cause. "I think they had a tremendous impact on anyone that was there," she recalls. "The release or whatever it was that came out of everybody was so overwhelming and had a lot to do with our plugging along with our work."

In the succeeding years that work involved organizing Day of Remembrance commemorations, helping to shape the legislative strategy, and helping to continue the process of education and enlightenment to the cause of Redress. The NCCR also played a key role in drafting a 1982 Redress bill introduced into Congress by Representative Mervyn Dymally (D-Gardena). At times, things didn't look good. "There were a lot of ups and downs," remembers Masaoka.

One of the ups was certainly the delegation of 141 people who went to Washington, D.C. to lobby for the Redress legislation in the summer of 1987. Essentially paying for their trips out of their own pockets, the NCCR delegation made up for its inexperience with great honesty and feeling, according to Iwataki.

They were also helped by friends in Washington. "While we were there, Representative Dymally allowed us to camp out in his office and use his typewriters, fax our documents, and just make ourselves at home," recalls Iwataki. The group was also warmly received by Reps. Robert Matsui and Norman Mineta, among others on the Hill.

At first, it was difficult for many members of the delegation to participate. Nishio recalls, "spending time with people who were just afraid, who would never ordinarily have done that except for the issue of Redress."

"Initially, they said, 'I'll go, but I won't say anything,'" he remembers. "But when they got there, they'd start talking and you could see them feeling that 'Hey, I made a difference.'"

This change in individuals mirrored the changes that were by this time running rampant in the community. "I see this as the most important part of the Redress movement," says Masaoka. "It was the process people went through to get it, and how it changed people's thinking about themselves as Japanese

Americans.
"Sometimes y
on it that you do
feelings. Then w
what does this m
about it?" and th
She pauses for a
to feel proud. It'
proud of what we

As plates of s
make their way
turns to plans fo
November of 198
conference with
evening cultural
decided that the
tenth anniversar
Beach State on S

In some way
for this upcoming
possible direction



pursue in the co
workshop focuse
American comm
wants to see the
back on the com
the future of the
schoolteacher an
wants to see the
cultural things t
pride and self-kr
generations.

Other works
discrimination o
in retirement. T
in anti-Asian vio
issues facing the
issues that the n
as a Japanese Ar
organization.

Americans.”

“Sometimes you get so involved in working on it that you don’t always think about your feelings. Then when someone asks you, ‘Well what does this mean?’ and ‘How do you feel about it?’ and then you hear the Nisei talking...” She pauses for a second. “It was really a chance to feel proud. It’s like, yeah, we really do feel proud of what we did.”

As plates of *sushi* magically appear and make their way around the room, the meeting turns to plans for the upcoming conference. In November of 1980, the NCCR held a kickoff conference with a day of workshops and an evening cultural performance. It is quickly decided that the format will be similar for the tenth anniversary conference, to be held at Long Beach State on Saturday, October 20th.

In some ways, the workshops being planned for this upcoming conference suggest different possible directions that the new NCCR might



pursue in the coming years. For instance, one workshop focuses on the future of the Japanese American community. Kathy Masaoka for one wants to see the new NCCR “turn its attention back on the community and to trying to shape the future of the Little Tokyos.” As a schoolteacher and a mother of two, she also wants to see the organization get into promoting cultural things that would help to bolster the pride and self-knowledge of succeeding generations.

Other workshops focus on such issues as discrimination on college campuses and activism in retirement. These—along with the rising tide in anti-Asian violence—are some of the major issues facing the community at present and are issues that the new NCCR will have to deal with as a Japanese American civil rights organization.

Another workshop will deal with coalition building with other groups and taking up issues that are not specifically Japanese American issues. This is something that NCCR has always done over the years, as stated by founding Principle #4. Alan Nishio traces NCCR’s involvement in such issues to Jesse Jackson’s 1984 presidential campaign. “In ’84 many of us got involved in the Jackson campaign, not as NCCR, but as individuals that are in NCCR,” he remembers. “I think that really helped because it raised a lot of political awareness of people around things that allowed us to take up other issues.”

Over the years, NCCR has taken up many such issues as an organization. Most had some connection to the camp experience or to the Japanese American historical experience. They include the Simpson-Mazzoli immigration bill and other immigration related issues, the arrest of Palestinian students on the basis of race, the Big Mountain relocation issue, the free South Africa movement, the “dump Bork” campaign, and the anti-Dan Lungren for treasurer campaign among other things.

“I think we’re gonna continue to do those things,” states Nishio. “In the new organization, I don’t think we will have any need to link up whatever we take up to the issues of the camps, but that it will just be issues that the membership feels are important, that we need to become involved in.”

In addition to its specific focus and breadth, much else about the new organization is unclear, including its name. The group wants to keep the NCCR initials, but a name satisfying to everyone which meets that criterion has yet to be found.

The structure of the new organization is also undecided. For Kathy Masaoka and others, the need for a staff and an office seem clear.

“People have always volunteered and at times various people have put in a whole lot of energy and time into the organization and many of us are getting a little older and can’t quite do as much,” she notes. “We realize we do need a place and staff.”

For Nishio, there is also the need for tighter organization once the group becomes less of a one issue coalition. “We’re gonna have to have

—Continued from page 9

created Cinpac, organizing the entire Pacific defense under the naval commander-in-chief. In the ’50s and ’60s, the Pacific fleet was concerned with the containment of Communism, especially in China. The Pacific fleet today rehearses for conflict with the Soviet Union.

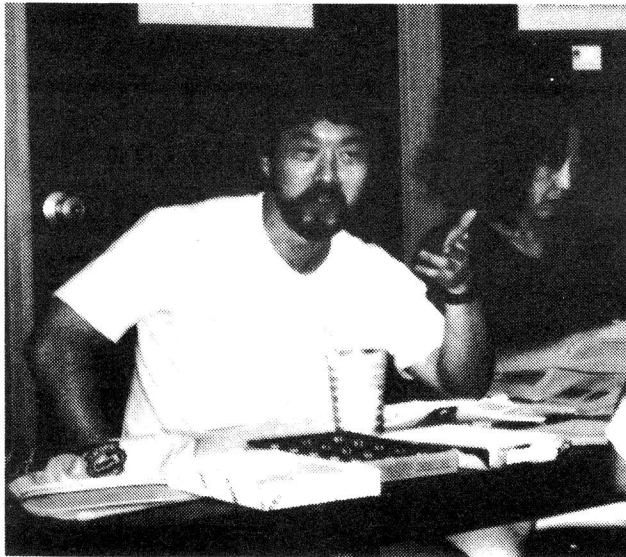
Still, Korea continues to be a raw nerve in Asia. North Korea has a history of invasion and the South Koreans continue to request U.S. assistance, but the stakes may be very high.



structure, we're gonna have to have committees, we're gonna have to have a definable and elected leadership."

These sorts of changes take money, and fund-raising is something "we're awful at" states Nishio. Up to now, the group has been funded almost entirely by small, \$100 and under contributions which have only occasionally been solicited. But with the imminent arrival of \$20,000 checks for many Nikkei, won't that change?

"It's really funny because we had a big argument in NCRP about whether we should even solicit funds from people that are getting the Redress money," continues Nishio. There is a fear of "guilt-tripping" people into thinking that they owe the group something and a feeling that people ought to do what they want with the money. An appeal for Redress and other monies is being readied which emphasizes "that we are a progressive voice in the community taking up



America's trade deficit to Japan reached \$4 billion a month and Reagan decided to put 100% tariffs on Japanese goods. Japanese leaders were stunned and angry to be made scapegoats of what they saw as American shortcomings.

By 1987, Japanese wealth was increasing at a faster rate than any nation in history and the world's ten largest banks were all Japanese. Taizo Watanabe of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs explains that the Japanese still see themselves as a small nation and are only beginning to ask what they should do with all their power. The program reveals the incredible

these kinds of issues and we hope you agree that it's an important agenda and that you consider participating," sums up Nishio.

As the meeting approaches the four-and-a-half hour mark, it finally begins to come to an end. Assignments are made for work on various issues connected with the conference and a future meeting schedule is laid out. Someone asks about paying for the *sushi*; when it is revealed that one of the Nisei men treated everyone, he gets a round of applause. The men make sure the women are escorted out of the building.

"There aren't a lot of models that I can point to that say that they work," notes Nishio. "I mean our bottom line commitment is we wanna be grassroots, we wanna be accessible, but we wanna be professional, organized, efficient. At the same time, we wanna continue to be what we are: a friendly, honest organization."

"The jury's still out on NCRP's ability to do that."

They appear to be well on their way.

Reunions

BUTTE HIGH, CAMP II OCTOBER 5-7, 1990

Join the first reunion of Butte High School, Camp II, Gila River, Arizona, Classes of 1943 through 1950 in San Luis Obispo. Rekindle old friendships from high school days and join in on a gathering to remember!

If you are interested in attending, or if you know the whereabouts of any Butte High alumni, schoolteachers or administrators, contact any of the following people:

Chairperson: Haruo Hayashi, 2460 Gracia Way, Arroyo Grande, CA 93420, call (805) 489-2595, FAX (805) 473-2893

Co-Chair: Ben Tamaki, 3641 Hillcrest Dr., Los Angeles, CA 90016

Correspondence: George, 1340 Garrons Dr., San Jose, CA 95130.

Phone Committee: Dolly (Hirohata) Uyeno, (916) 391-2625 in Sacramento or Tayeko (Iwata) Takeda, (219) 941-2511 in Stockton.

Reunion information is printed as a community service, as space permits. Send your reunion information to Tozai Times 5810 E. Olympic Blvd. Los Angeles, CA 90022. And for all of you who can't make this year's reunion contact your reunion committee anyway, so you

