



NCRR TESTIMONY for

Senate Bill 2116 Hearings, Los Angeles, California, August 16, 1984

The National Coalition for Redress/Reparations (NCRR) is a grassroots coalition made up of individuals and organizations throughout the nation. We are an organization composed of Japanese Americans of all ages and generations as well as Americans of all races and backgrounds. Our membership and endorsements include organizations ranging from the ACLU to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference to the three million members of the Lutheran Church in America. We came together five years ago to educate, organize and develop community-wide efforts to win reparations for the more than 120,000 Japanese Americans who were incarcerated in internment camps during World War II.

NCRR's principles are based upon our community's strong desire for justice; our convictions are verified by a wealth of historical and government documents; and our beliefs are founded in the democratic ideals of this country.

The experiences of internees will exemplify the violations guaranteed under the Bill of Rights.

The FIRST AMENDMENT guarantees freedom of speech and of association.

An internees reports "...Censorship was the rule... Nothing was permitted to go into the papers that did not meet with

NATIONAL COALITION FOR REDRESS/REPARATIONS

244 South San Pedro Street Room 406
Los Angeles, California 90012 (213) 620-0761

1858 Sutter Street
San Francisco, California 94115 (415) 921-8841

center management approval. Discussion of the international situation, war news, national news, even hometown news and politics was taboo."

The FOURTH AMENDMENT prohibits unreasonable searches and seizures by the Federal government.

Umeno Fujino testified that, "... On January 1942, seven FBI men arrived in Salinas. They showed up at my door and messed up everything in the house. They took a boxful of silk handkerchiefs and scarves. They were just so cruel. They even watched me when I went to the bathroom."

The FIFTH AMENDMENT guarantees the due process of law, the right to be formally charged and the right to present a defense, before liberty can be taken away.

An evacuee recalls, "... the FBI came and took every male Japanese alien in town. They came in very suddenly and many of the men were taken right off of the fields so that they had no chance to say good-bye to their families."

The SIXTH AMENDMENT guarantees the right to a public and speedy trial.

Henry Murakami states, "... the FBI came and began to arrest every male in Terminal Island who had a fisherman's license. I was taken to the Immigration Building in San Pedro and on that very same night, shipped to Fort Lincoln, North Dakota."

The EIGHTH AMENDMENT prohibits cruel and unusual punishment.

Alice Nehira testified, "... at the time of my birth, my mother's physician in camp performed a tubaligation on her.

She never gave her consent and was totally unaware of it until ten years ago when she was examined by her internist for colon cancer."

There are 120,000 individuals' experiences. Of course, we seek monetary reparations for three and a half years out of our lives: communities devastated, property lost, families separated, lives lost, individual lives disrupted, the trauma and indignities suffered.

How did this extraordinary event occur? The 1981 Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (CWRIC) reported that, "...Executive Order 9066 was not justified by military necessity ... and the broad historical causes which shaped these decisions were race prejudice, war hysteria and the failure of political leadership."

Prior to 1942, a long history of discrimination against Asian Americans was manifested in over 500 pieces of legislation which included the statute to prohibit the naturalization of any Japanese immigrant. This resident alien status barred people from buying land and participating as citizens until the passage of the Walter-McCarren Act in 1952. The second-generation Nisei were natural-born American citizens. Criticisms of disloyalty associated with dual citizenship status (held by less than 20% of the Nisei by 1930) was never substantiated. Not one single person who went to camp was convicted of any act of espionage, treason or sabotage. Of the evacuees, two-thirds were citizens and one-third were resident aliens.

The population of Japanese Americans increased, along with their economic strength in the states of Washington, Oregon and especially California. We are certain that economic greed became another motive for mass evacuation.

While in camps, internees were incarcerated and under military guard. The War Relocation Authority (WRA) attempted to implement a leave program after the necessity of detention became difficult to defend. Departure was permitted only after a controversial loyalty review in consultation with the military. The program was ineffective and the larger number spent years behind barbed wire.

What will the United States government do about this travesty of justice? NCRR commends the courageous recommendations of the CWRIC and we want to make clear our support for the historic bill before us today, Senate Bill 2116.

NCRR recommends, however, that the restitution amount to individuals be a minimum of \$25,000. This figure was determined by nationwide community surveys and petitions and is the symbolic amount which represents a tangible, meaningful apology. It is also more than justified by the documented calculated losses.

Payment should be given to heirs of deceased evacuees. 120,000 lives were affected and these are the numbers that must be dealt with in terms of compensation. To restrict 'justice' to the survivors implies a cruel waiting game - letting old age and death become the dominant factors.

Japanese Americans of all generations are still affected by the evacuation experience. We urge expediency and priority of payments to our Issei and elderly.

In respect to the Aleuts, as included in SB 2116, NCRR recommends reparations that are on parity with the Japanese Americans.

The passage of Senate Bill 2116 would be a landmark advancing the cause of justice not only for Japanese Americans - but for all who aspire to the principles upon which this country was founded. It would make an impact so that such violations do not occur again. As Kanshi Yamashita stated at the CWRIC Hearings "...unless concrete measures are taken in the form of definitive restitution, ...what has transpired in the past will only be an echo - a sop to the conscience of the United States - a glossing over of a gross injustice upon a group by a nation which proclaims democracy as a way of life throughout the world.