

THE HEARINGS

The hearings proved to be an outpouring of emotions that had been pent up for so many years. It also featured those opposed to redress like Senator S.I. Hayakawa and Lillian Baker of Gardena, who wound up being ejected after she tried to rip up the testimony out of the hands of a spokesperson for the 442nd. Hayakawa, on the other hand, made news by deriding the Nisei, saying that the camps were beneficial in that it forced them out of their ethnic ghetto and out into a wider world.



My testimony at the hearings was to be quite simple and direct. I wanted to point out that my father's life savings of some twenty years were gone. I still had

[Lillian Baker snatches testimony from Jim Kawaminami \(442th\)](#)

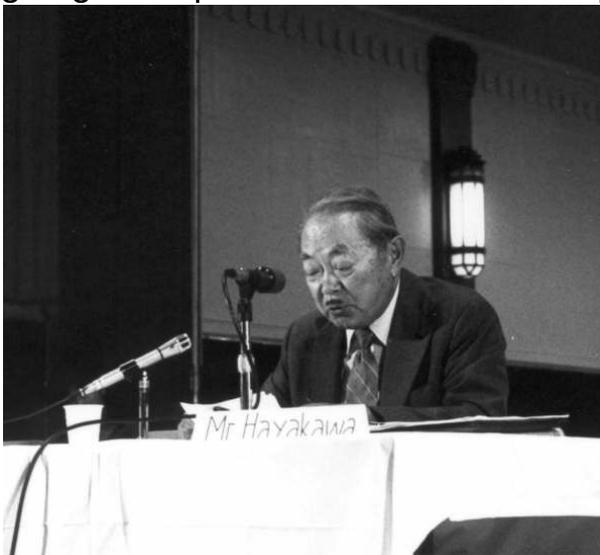
the bank deposit books from the Sumitomo Bank. The U.S. Government had seized all of Sumitomo's deposits as enemy alien assets and then simply wiped them off the books. A letter from the Department of Justice said that we had in fact "abandoned" the claim because too many years had passed.

I was more concerned about the testimony to be given by the person seated next to me. Larry Boss was a graduate student at Cal State Long Beach and had made a study of the economic losses sustained by the Japanese community living in and around Long Beach. We needed this sort of data because we were constantly being asked how we came up with the figure of \$25,000 for reparations. Both Lloyd Inui of Long Beach's Asian American Studies Program, his mentor of sorts, and I had to do a lot to get Larry to agree to testify. I even had to make a special trip to his home in Long Beach to make sure that he would submit his paperwork in on time. I felt Larry's testimony would be a crucial one. Here we had a case study of a local community that would document the enormous financial losses suffered by the Japanese Americans.

You could imagine our shock when Judge Marutani, who was presiding over the hearings, indicated that the testimonies would be halted due to the lateness of the hour, and that we should simply turn in our written statements. Shouts of protests immediately came from the audience. The four of us sitting

at the testifiers' table sat in stunned silence. All three of the persons sitting to the right of me began to hand over their statements to the clerk. The protests continued to cascade down from the audience and I could clearly hear Lillian Nakano, who was sitting in the front row in back of me yelling, "Jim, do something!" My first thought was - - why me? I had that sinking feeling of someone that's picked to be "it." For a brief moment, I thought about asking everyone to stand up and walk out! Lillian was continuing to egg me on, all of this in an evening in which I was hoping that my testimony would go quickly so that I could head out for dinner.

Well, it was all over the Metro section of the L.A. Times the next day. I had slammed my fist in anger on the table. I told Judge Marutani that I had waited too many years to speak about what had happened to us and no one was going to stop me! The audience erupted as I began a tirade against our incarceration and its destruction of our rights as Americans! I likened the promises of America with the broken Christmas toy I was given at Manzanar, both of which deserved to be relegated to a trash-can! I also railed against the likes of people like Senator Hayakawa, whom I said destroyed forever the notion that "wisdom and old age go hand in hand." I also concluded with that, "if I were to receive redress, I would be glad to buy him a one-way ticket back to Canada."



In the turmoil that followed by outburst

Senator S. I. Hayakawa, who opposed Redress

as I was leaving, a reported asked me if I had planned all of this. No, I said. The only real plan I had that evening was to just go out to dinner!

Jim H. Matsuoka (February, 2004)

