

WHAT WE LEARNED

I think it was a statement attributed to the noted anthropologist, Margaret Mead, who said, “never doubt that a small group of thoughtful citizens can change the world. Indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.” I think that pretty much describes NCCR. We were that small group “of thoughtful citizens,” and in a very meaningful way, we were able to “change the world” that we lived in!

I appreciated the apology sent to us in a letter and signed by the president. I felt that when the president apologized to us, he did so on behalf of the entire nation! I heard some people say that we should not take money because “we were above that.” But money, in our case, was only a symbol. Our society accepts the fact that it has qualities far beyond it’s fiscal meaning.

Although I was always involved in partisan politics in my own community (of Pasadena), it was often difficult to get Japanese Americans involved in the process, even in redress. I realized that a lot of our Nisei did not come from a tradition of participating in politics, possibly because their parents, the Issei, never had rights to American citizenship (until very late in their lives). It’s possible that the Issei may not have had much involvement in Japan either, but I believe that the lack of citizenship developed cultural inhibitions that probably became part of our community’s behavior over the years.

I hope that our
and message to
political clout and to
Sometimes in our
truly satisfying for
knowing that what
Because something
you will always be



Rei Osaki

experience will stand as an inspiration
others. Particularly to those who lack
those who feel they are oppressed!
life, we do have to take risks! It was
me throughout the redress campaign,
was “just” was always on our side.
is “right,” however, doesn’t mean that
able to achieve the results you want.

But if you truly believe in seeking your rights, you do need to take that risk.

Rei Osaki 2004