

Japanese-Americans seek financial redress

By Gregory L. Gudger

Although chances for federal financial restitution for Japanese-Americans are considered slim "at this time," Japanese-American Citizen's League representatives said recently, that it is of paramount importance that the United States publicly expose the wholesale violation of Japanese-American civil rights during World War II through the studies of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians.



Professor Gordon Hirabayashi; Representative Norman Mineta; Mrs. Susie Sakai; Dr. Arthur Flemming; national JACL President Dr. James Tsosimura; Minoru Uasori participate in discussion on restitution to Japanese.

Established by an act of Congress during the last year of the Carter Administration, following years of pressure from the JACL, the nine-member commission will review the facts and circumstances surrounding the uprooting and incarceration of 120,000 mainland-based Japanese-Americans from 1942-45 following the signing of Executive Order 9066 by then President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The Commission will report its findings to Congress and the President in 1981, as well as making recommendations for redress.

"This is not only for us but for all America...a crusade we all need to engage in," emphasized Minoru Yasui, head of the JACL Redress Committee and the Denver, Colorado Commission on Community Relations. The work of the Wartime Relocation and Internment Commission and the support of its efforts is "so important" even after 39 years because "an injustice done that is not corrected remains an injustice forever," said the ebullient Yasui, noting the obvious "futility" of even constitutional guarantees.

Representative Norman Mineta, fourth-term Democrat from California and the main sponsor of P.L. 96-317 which established the commission, explained that the new commission's role as being similar to that of previous commissions -- the Kerner on civil disorders, the Eisenhower on police brutality and the Scranton on campus unrest -- in eliciting the facts for public education and policy change. In his key note address to the 150 persons attending the JACL workshop, "A Broken Promise: A Case For Redress" at Lewis and Clark College, Representative Mineta said the upcoming commission report "forces us to concentrate on the facts...strips away conspiracy theories as being based on the war-

time hysteria of the times... (and) guarantees public exposure so that history will be accurately recorded."

Mineta and Yasui disagree, as do other members of the Japanese-American community on whether the U.S. will make financial reparations sought by the 30,000-member JACL for the estimated \$400 million lost by Japanese-Americans during the internment, only 10 percent of which was ever returned. Mineta noted that the "probabilities are very minimal" for such redress given the nation's economic status and the current, conservative power structure. Yasui, a native of Hood River whose conviction for violating the military's racially-based curfew (along with the conviction of Gordon Hirabayashi) was upheld by a Supreme Court ruling, stood firm on the JACL position demanding monetary redress. Regardless of Reagan economic policies, "we will strive and we shall not yield," Yasui explained. He indicated that payment could be either individual payments, "Block" payments put toward cultural programs and scholarships or a combination of the two.

According to the JACL, the \$25 billion restitution payments West Germany has made to Jews and Jewish institutions for the incarceration and murder of Jewish citizens by the Third Reich sets a precedent for the JACL's demands. Ironically, the U.S. and other allied powers imposed the concept on Germany.

Both Mineta and Yasui are reluctant to second-guess the commission regarding its recommendations, and both agree that "...the real battle will be (for the U.S.) to carry out the recommendations made by the commission."

Dr. Arthur Flemming, Chairman of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and a presidential appointee to the Wartime Internment and Relocation Commission, urged Japanese-American conferees not to "sell the process short...it can have meaningful effects as far as your community is concerned, other minority communities are concerned, and the future of the nation is concerned." Flemming, former President of the University of Oregon and veteran of numerous national committees and conferences on civil rights, said the Wartime Commission's recommendation power is at the "heart" of the body's function. And although its recommendations "may not be accepted quickly," by those "interested in maintaining the status quo," historical precedent dictates that "they (recommendations) eventually will make it into law."

Flemming also did not speculate on what the commission will present to the President and Congress in 1982, but assured "When you finally do set up a commission of this nature, it is not an idle gesture...it does lead to some tangible results."

Similar demands for reparation have not followed from Blacks or other American minorities, but

backers of the commission alluded to the importance of Black and other minority support of the study group's effort.

Both Representative Mineta and Dr. Flemming noted that the plight of Blacks led to the establishment of earlier commissions and subsequent national policies directed toward Black and other minority needs. Many of these policies are still struggling through the "implementation stage," Flemming said, explaining that Euro-American fears and the desire to maintain a white-dominated status quo have been the primary stumbling blocks to effective implementation of civil rights mandates, and the root of racist policies enacted in the nation.

In order for the Wartime Commission's recommendation to be successfully transitioned into government policy, said Flemming, "pressure from other minority groups as well as the Japanese-American community may be required."

During a panel discussion in the JACL workshop's afternoon session, panelist Susie Sakai, responding to a question regarding a Black/Japanese-American coalition, said, "Japanese-Americans must be cognizant of what's going on around us...coalitions are our way of addressing problems."

Support from at least one Black, former U.S. Senator Edward Brooke, would be significant. Brooke was appointed to the Wartime Commission by the Senate. When asked about the appointment of Brooke, Co-commissioner Flemming said, "...Some people felt...he would take a position of desirability."

Besides Flemming and Brooke, other appointees to the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians include: Joan Z. Bernstein, Father Robert F. Drinan, former Ambassador Arthur Goldberg, Father S.V. Gromoff, Representative Daniel Lundgren, Judge William M. Marutani and former Senator Hugh B. Mitchell.

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Little joins law profession

(Continued from Page 1 Col 1) the first place, in the examination room, there were only a handful of minorities as usual. Adding to that ominous intimidation was the constant reminder she had heard throughout her four years of law school of how many minority students flunk the bar exam. Law studies are not hard if you do not mind the relentless pace, she says.

"What is so hard is constantly being reminded that as a minority, your chances of making it through are almost non-existent. Every year so many students flunk the bar but it is the names of the minority students that are waved in your face every time. Needless to say, if your confidence is easily shaken, it can drive you to quit. All these anxieties plagued me as they must have plagued all other minority students

and, on top of this, I was just trying to do my best on the exam."

When the Bar results came, they held another setback: Monica was informed she had flunked. The passing score was 65 and she was informed she had fallen short by 0.124%! She had been given a score of 64.876%. Since she was well within the allowable 3 points, she petitioned and, in January of this year, she was informed there had been a mistake, she had passed after all.

At the moment, Monica Little, JD, is working for HUD in Seattle doing legal research while looking for a job as a private attorney in the Portland area. Like every other community, Black people also draw up wills, file lawsuits, draw up contracts and make use of the entire spectrum of legal services. Not all

Black people use the low-income and subsidized Legal Services or the Public Defender. There are lots of Black people who can afford private attorneys and Monica Little hopes soon to be able to cater to just such clients.

Soon there will be someone in the community to whom we can turn when we need the services of a lawyer. For those who may be considering Law School, Mrs. Little has some words of advice. She says one has to understand the effects of racism, the negative self-image that most of us grow up with. As a small part of the population, we need to constantly reinforce each other.

"Do not be afraid; do not be talked out of it. Law school is not hard; it is the pace and you can discipline yourself for just four years. It also helps a great deal if you can go out and work in a legal environment because that gives you a feel for the demands and responsibilities of the job. You need a good foundation in writing skills and you must train yourself to think logically from A to B to C and so on. I would certainly hope that more people take up law as a profession. We need it badly," she concludes.

The Portland Observer and the community join together in congratulating Mrs. Monica Little on this very important achievement. We wish her the best as she embarks on this new, exciting and influential career and hope that her success will encourage more students to follow in her footsteps. It is the lawyers who will tell us when we are being shortchanged.

Once more: Congratulations! Makorokoto! Amhlope! Felicitations!

"Opera" is a shortened form of the Italian opera in musica, meaning "musical work."

TOWN MEETING with Congressman Ron Wyden

WHERE: Cafetorium King Neighborhood Facility 4815 NE 7th

WHEN: 11 a.m. - 1 p.m. Saturday April 4, 1981



"I need your views on issues facing our district, our State and Congress. Drop by our town meeting and let me know what's on your mind: high energy prices, inflation, jobs, Medicare...or any other topic. I'LL MAKE NO SPEECHES - just listen to you and try to answer your questions."

Ron

From the Front Door

BY TOM BOOTHE

FROM THE FRONT DOOR, I have received many phone calls and in person comments regarding the March 19th and March 26th, from the Front Door publication in the Portland Observer. All comments have been positive and supportive of my position regarding Black "On Time" participation in Political processes and I have been encouraged to write more on this subject. My feelings are, "Once you speak and are heard, to keep saying the same thing ends up being counter productive." However, I have a proposition for all who are supportive.

If each person who is supportive would get your neighbors informed "ON TIME" and into the voting booth "ON TIME" would you believe we would be SOLVING the problem; as opposed to just TALKING about it. THEN LET'S DO IT, OK?

Another thing which I am concerned about is our attitude regarding our immediate community where we live. Many of our citizens will go down town, or in other parts of the city and behave respectfully and clean, then come home where we live and throw BEER BOTTLES on the streets and leave our streets and sidewalks littered with broken glass, paper and fast food boxes. There is no excuse for complaining and criticizing littered conditions, when it is us who are allowing our neighbors to be irresponsible to our community.

Here is an area which we as individuals can greatly improve, when we all decide to do so.

During February, I published a model of what I think should be a base regarding the establishment of a Policy of Principle, published as BLACK POLICY OF PRINCIPLE. Its contents were:

"Cleanliness, Wholesomeness, Honesty, Truthfulness and Respect shall be my policy of principle in all my relationships from this day forward; And I shall communicate this Policy of Principle with a Positive attitude to all whom I encounter."

Lets practice Cleanliness, the rewards are pure and genuine.

Again, you can't spend your time or money for a better purpose; Join with the Exodus Youth Mental Health Offensive, building our community into a better and safer place to live and raise our children.