

# 'Relocation' Camps on Our Conscience

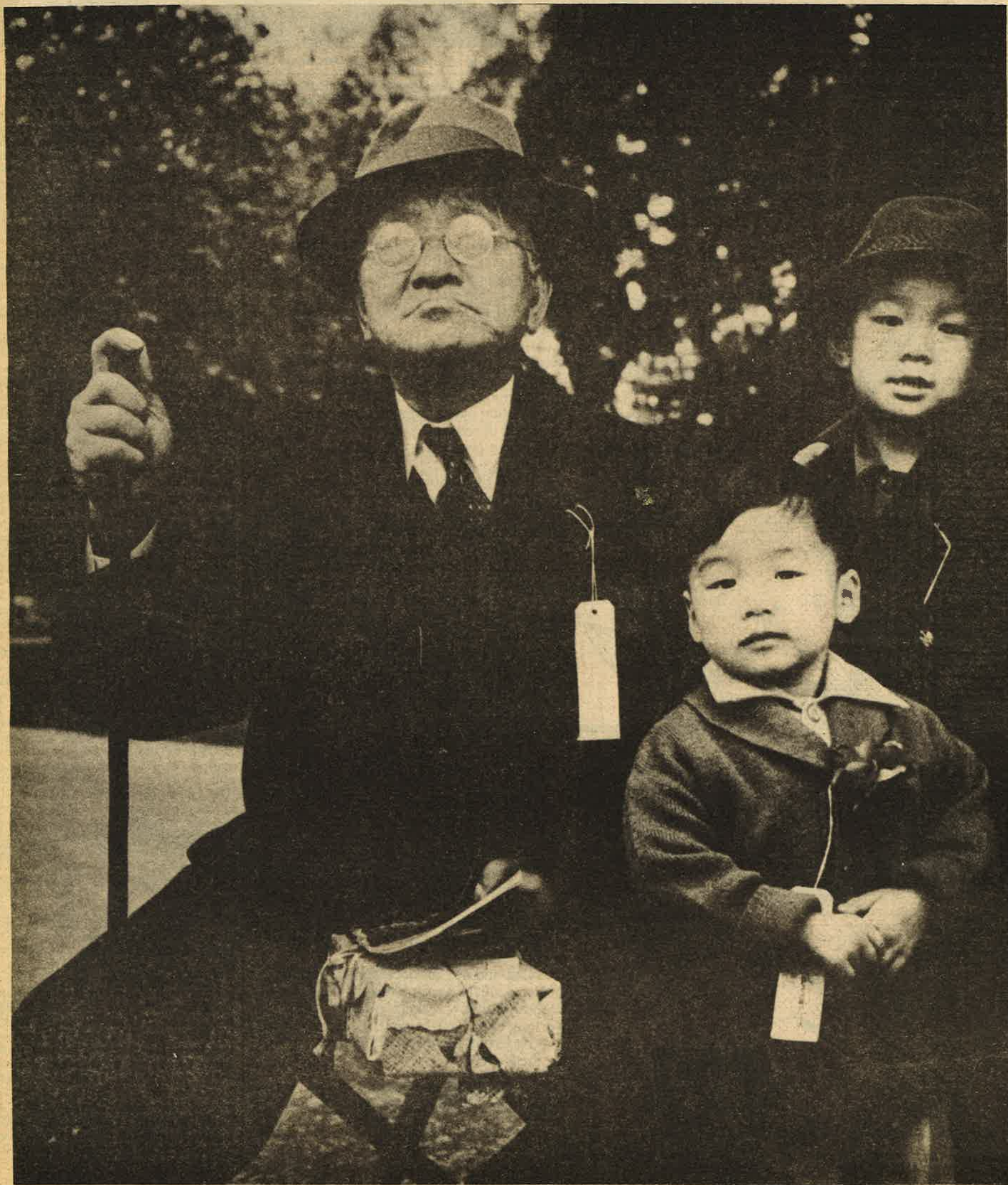
The case for \$3-billion in reparations to Japanese American citizens

## theWeekly

Seattle's Newsmagazine

October 11, 1978

50 Cents



*A grandfather and grandchildren await the evacuation bus, May 8, 1942. Photograph by Dorothea Lange.*



# How shall injustice be served?

The Japanese American Citizens League,  
a victim of misplaced patriotism,  
endeavors to revive a noble old vision

## Executive Order No. 9066

Whereas, the successful prosecution of the war requires every possible protection against espionage and against sabotage of national-defense material. . . Now, therefore, by virtue of the authority vested in me as President of the United States, and Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy, I hereby authorize and direct the Secretary of War, and the Military Commanders whom he may from time to time designate. . . to prescribe military areas in such places and of such extent as he or the appropriate Military Commander may determine, from which any or all persons may be excluded, and with respect to which, the right of any person to enter, remain in, or leave shall be subject to whatever restriction the Secretary of War or the appropriate Military Commander may impose in his discretion. . .

Franklin D. Roosevelt  
February 19, 1942

by Frank Chin

JAPANESE Americans "gave up their freedom to prove their loyalty" to paraphrase the governor of California at the time of the Relocation. The Japanese Americans, an entire people, gave up their homes, businesses, rights, family, friends, their property and their freedom for stables and barracks space. They did it to prove their loyalty, and make history. This was to be an eloquent gesture of commitment to the U.S. Constitution and the American people that would establish Japanese America forever in American history and the American conscience. They went in believing that someday America would apologize.

Up until recently, the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) and Japanese America have kept the question of redress and the subject of the concentration camps private. Nisei, the "Quiet Americans," meanwhile, are dying off in their late forties and early fifties at alarming rates. The Nisei men, who were chugging full of life in the hormones of puberty and early adolescence in camp, are dropping dead on their jobs. Harry Kitano, a UCLA sociologist, predicts the end of Japanese America before the year 2000, as Japanese America marries itself white out of existence. The camps will have been more effective at destroying entire populations of people than the atom bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Of course, America has never come forward to apologize.

A note on the photographs. The cover photo was taken by Dorothea Lange at Hayward, California, showing a grandfather and grandchildren in 1942, awaiting an evacuation bus. The photograph on page 10, also by Dorothea Lange, is of elementary school children pledging allegiance a few weeks before relocation. Toyo Miyatake, an evacuee, took the photograph of Manzanar Relocation Center, on page 12. All of these photographs are reproduced with permission from Executive Order 9066, a 1972 publication of the California Historical Society distributed by MIT Press.

October 11-17, 1978

Presidio of San Francisco, California  
April 24, 1942

## INSTRUCTIONS TO ALL PERSONS OF JAPANESE ANCESTRY

Living in the Following Area:

All that portion of the City of Seattle, State of Washington, lying generally south of an east-west line beginning at the point at which Jackson Street meets Elliott Bay; thence easterly along Jackson Street to Fifth Avenue; thence southerly on Fifth Avenue to Dearborn Street; thence easterly on Dearborn Street to Twenty-third Avenue; thence northerly on Twenty-third Avenue to Yesler Way; thence easterly on Yesler Way to Lake Washington.

Pursuant to the provisions of Civilian Exclusion Order No. 18, this Headquarters, dated April 24, 1942, all persons of Japanese ancestry, both alien and non-alien, will be evacuated from the above area by 12 o'clock noon, P. W. T., Friday, May 1, 1942.

No Japanese person living in the above area will be permitted to change residence after 12 o'clock noon, P. W. T., Friday, April 24, 1942, without obtaining special permission from the representative of the Commanding General, Northwestern Sector, at the Civil Control Station located at:

1319 Rainier Avenue, Seattle, Washington.

Such permits will only be granted for the purpose of uniting members of a family, or in cases of grave emergency.

The Civil Control Station is equipped to assist the Japanese population affected by this evacuation in the following ways:

1. Give advice and instructions on the evacuation.
2. Provide services with respect to the management, leasing, sale, storage or other disposition of most kinds of property, such as real estate, business and professional equipment, household goods, boats, automobiles and livestock.
3. Provide temporary residence elsewhere for all Japanese in family groups.
4. Transport persons and a limited amount of clothing and equipment to their new residence.

### The Following Instructions Must Be Observed:

1. A responsible member of each family, preferably the head of the family, or the person in whose name most of the property is held, and each individual living alone, will report to the Civil Control Station to receive further instructions. This must be done between 8:00 A. M. and 5:00 P. M. on Saturday, April 25, 1942, or between 8:00 A. M. and 5:00 P. M. on Sunday, April 26, 1942.

2. Evacuees must carry with them on departure for the Assembly Center, the following property:

- (a) Bedding and linens (no mattress) for each member of the family;
- (b) Toilet articles for each member of the family;
- (c) Extra clothing for each member of the family;
- (d) Sufficient knives, forks, spoons, plates, bowls and cups for each member of the family;
- (e) Essential personal effects for each member of the family.

All items carried will be securely packaged, tied and plainly marked with the name of the owner and numbered in accordance with instructions obtained at the Civil Control Station.

The size and number of packages is limited to that which can be carried by the individual or family group.

3. No pets of any kind will be permitted.

4. The United States Government through its agencies will provide for the storage at the sole risk of the owner of the more substantial household items, such as iceboxes, washing machines, pianos and other heavy furniture. Cooking utensils and other small items will be accepted for storage if crated, packed and plainly marked with the name and address of the owner. Only one name and address will be used by a given family.

5. Each family, and individual living alone, will be furnished transportation to the Assembly Center or will be authorized to travel by private automobile in a supervised group. All instructions pertaining to the movement will be obtained at the Civil Control Station.

Go to the Civil Control Station between the hours of 8:00 A. M. and 5:00 P. M., Sunday, April 26, 1942, to receive further instructions.

The message Seattle's Japanese Americans found on phone polls one spring, 1942 morning.

I wonder if they would have gone in, if they knew they'd be afraid to talk about camp in front of whites in 1978. Would they have gone in, if they knew they would be faced with asking the government for redress? Would they have gone in, if they knew that when they asked for redress they'd have to prepare for a "white backlash"?

The "Japanese" seeking redress are not Japanese at all, but Japanese Americans: Nikkei. Four generations of Nikkei: the Issei, Nisei, Sansei and young Yonsei now in grade school. The Japanese American Citizens' League would like a Nikkei in Congress, Senator Daniel Inouye, the one-armed war hero from Hawaii, or the most famous

Japanese American of all, S.I. Hayakawa (fresh, famous and sleeping in the Senate from California), or Senator Spark Matsunaga and Representative Norman Mineta to introduce a bill to appropriate \$3-billion redress to Japanese Americans and others of Japanese ancestry held in American concentration camps between 1942 and 1946.

Before such a bill has a chance of passing Congress, the JACL and Japanese America have to convince a nation that the camps existed at all. They have to convince the nation that Japanese Japanese are not Japanese Americans, that Japanese Americans were culturally, politically, historically independent of Japan. Whites have not been able to

distinguish between Japanese and Japanese Americans for 100 years. The JACL has been trying to make the difference clear since 1927. They went into concentration camps to prove the difference, and failed.

What's your history worth to you? Can I buy your name from you? Will you sell me all your memory, every memory you have of your children, your parents, your grandparents back to the beginning of your language and burn all the artifacts of their existence, smash the clocks and burn all the heirlooms, love letters, diaries, trophies, flags, picture albums, and call yourself "Fido" to live next door to me? So your daughter can marry my son?

Japanese America spawned the Japanese American Citizens League in Seattle in the last roars of the twenties, with a Japanese American vision of Nisei being born to U.S. citizenship, born to make a name for their new American people and write a course of American history, courage, and conscience that would go deep into the American soil and produce Nikkei myths, legends, heroes, as American as John Henry, John Paul Jones, Paul Bunyon, Johnny Appleseed.

The Nisei, the first American born and raised multi-tongued generation, were not Japanese. They were not white American. They were self-begat. The giant peach floated down a ribboning Japanese river over waterfalls and through rapids to the sea. Then over the sea and through the straits of Jaun de Fuca, into Puget Sound, or San Francisco Bay, or up the Columbia chased by an old couple till the peach stopped and burst open and a rosy cheeked boy bounced out to be Nisei. The Nisei were the Peach Boy come true, the American dream and the dreamers. Come from outcasts, outlaws, fugitives, misfits, low samurai, and persecuted Christians, like the Pilgrims sneaking out of England with their buckled shoes on. The Issei came to America to realize big ideas and a vision of making themselves new to do things and be things, think things out loud that would topple the governments of ancient nations oppressively afraid to die, left behind, oceans ago.

The JACL was formed by Nisei Japanese Americans just as gung ho, red-white-and-blue American Democracy, capitalized the "D" in democracy, the "G" in government, and the lead letter of any word vaguely trembling with "American" meaning.

To hear the oldest Nisei in the Northwest, a man in his eighties, tell it, young snot nose Nisei brats, Japanese American quiz kids, straight "A" smart aleck American born punks fluent in How Now Brown Cow, Rudolf Valentino, baseball, whizzing the stars and stripes banner Oh Say Can You See accentless in their veins, kids with a princess complex for being the first American born of their people, gah gah American dream of being self-begat, fresh out of high school civics converted their sports clubs with citizenship discussions into Japanese American citizens leagues and progressive citizens clubs with sports programs.

They played baseball, basketball and kendo against each other, argued the deeper meaning of "Nisei" Japanese American over sodas with their dates in malt shops up and down the Pacific Coast, 'til a Seattle Nisei

the Weekly Page 9



## JAPANESE-AMERICAN REPARATIONS

boxer beaten blind in the ring, founded an all-English-language Japanese American newspaper, the *Japanese American-Courier*, and went out riding in a chubby car, all over the west. Blind James Sakamoto, the JACL's beloved "Jimmy," coalesced and collided the clubs, associations, and leagues into a national organization. He fancied himself an orator. The JACL came into being in Seattle, Japanese America's first point of entry and oldest community. It was before camp, before the war, when Jackie Cooper was the James Dean of the age.

The Nisei kids were possessed of a vision of Japanese America founded on a belief in American "equality under the law, and American justice," Shosuke Sasaki, a Seattle Issei, says. The Issei had the same vision. It's what saw the immigrants over the ocean, Sasaki has a lot of balding head above his eyes. With that large head, big eyes, and beaklike nose, he is the Issei thinker and word magician of the Seattle redress movement. "The most lasting impression my father left on me was that he was a man who insisted on absolute and total honesty and integrity. And that he was not the kind of man who would easily accept insults from Caucasians."

He grew up with his sister Meiko and brother Mokichi living in back of their mom and pop restaurant, in Pomeroy, in southeastern Washington. The Garfield County seat. A farm town. A grain mill. A railroad branchline ended there to wait for wheat and flour. "In that little town, we were the only Japanese family there. My sister and I were the only Japanese children the people there had ever seen. And in many ways, the people there treated us better than they treated their own children. With the exception of one family who went out of their way to be nasty to my sister and me. All the rest of the townspeople treated us just as if we were one of their own."

He was in school when his father died of a sudden hemorrhage. They came to Seattle because his mother wanted to be near other Japanese. Shosuke was disappointed by both the whites and the Nisei of 1923. "When we came to Seattle, we found that the Nisei children with whom we associated, not all but many, proved to be far more petty. They regarded us as outsiders. They were quick to



Schoolchildren pledging allegiance to America, just before the camps.

criticize manner or speech, or habits that were different from what the Nisei were accustomed to. I felt prejudice as soon as I started school. Sometimes I would accompany these Caucasian classmates of mine, home. To their home. And there I would notice the difference immediately. Whereas,

in Pomeroy their parents would invite me in and make me feel at home, in Seattle if I went to the home of a Caucasian friend, I was never asked inside.

"I knew James Sakamoto from before the war. I thought he was a pretty decent sort of fellow. I rather liked him personally. And I

think he sort of personally thought well of me. I thought his paper was good and serving a community purpose as far as the Nisei in this country. I found practically nothing in it to which I would take exception, until the war broke out. And the JACL adopted this policy of 100 per cent cooperation, which I felt was a great mistake, uncalled-for, and placed us in a ridiculous position. Obviously the JACL could not openly advocate resistance. But when the government officials asked their leaders for their cooperation, they should have refused that."

The founders of the Japanese American Citizens League were the first generation of American born. They were ex high school student body presidents, the upper 10 per cent of the classes, football stars, class clowns, valedictorians, destined to make their people's history. They could feel it in their bones. A lot of them wore glasses. A lot were Phi Beta Kappa. The first generation to enter American universities. They were high achievers, anxious to do. The first to test the American dream. And so far, the American dream was all coming true. White racism was a fading ogre in a fairy tale told by their parents, who thought they'd kept their bitterness and grief to themselves. The Nisei kids, like all kids, read between their parents' lines. But they didn't read at all.

The constitution the Nisei drafted in 1928 is Boy Scouts of America and high school student government. It's also what the young Nisei really believed and rings with their youth, their naivete, their gooey and boundless faith in America. The preamble also publishes a promise to bring the Issei all the way home to America with naturalized citizenship to cap their permanent residency, and lift the curse of "alien ineligible for citizenship" off the immigrants.

"We, American citizens, in order to foster American Democracy, promote active participation in civic and national life, and secure justice and equal opportunities for Americans of Japanese ancestry permanently residing in the United States, as well as for all Americans regardless of their race, creed, color or national origin, do establish this Constitution for the Japanese American Citizens League of the United States of America."

The Constitution was a promise, the word

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October 11-17, 1978







## JAPANESE-AMERICAN REPARATIONS

moto was fast becoming a white agent of Nikkei self-destruction, and in the tension of the times, hated him for every headline.

### SHOTS FIRED FROM CARS AT JAP HOME

Salt Lake City, Jan 3 -(AP)- Nine bullet holes. Mrs. Tstusui, two sons and three daughters but were not injured. The shooting occurred early New Year's Day. One attack was made about 2 am and a second about 4 am.

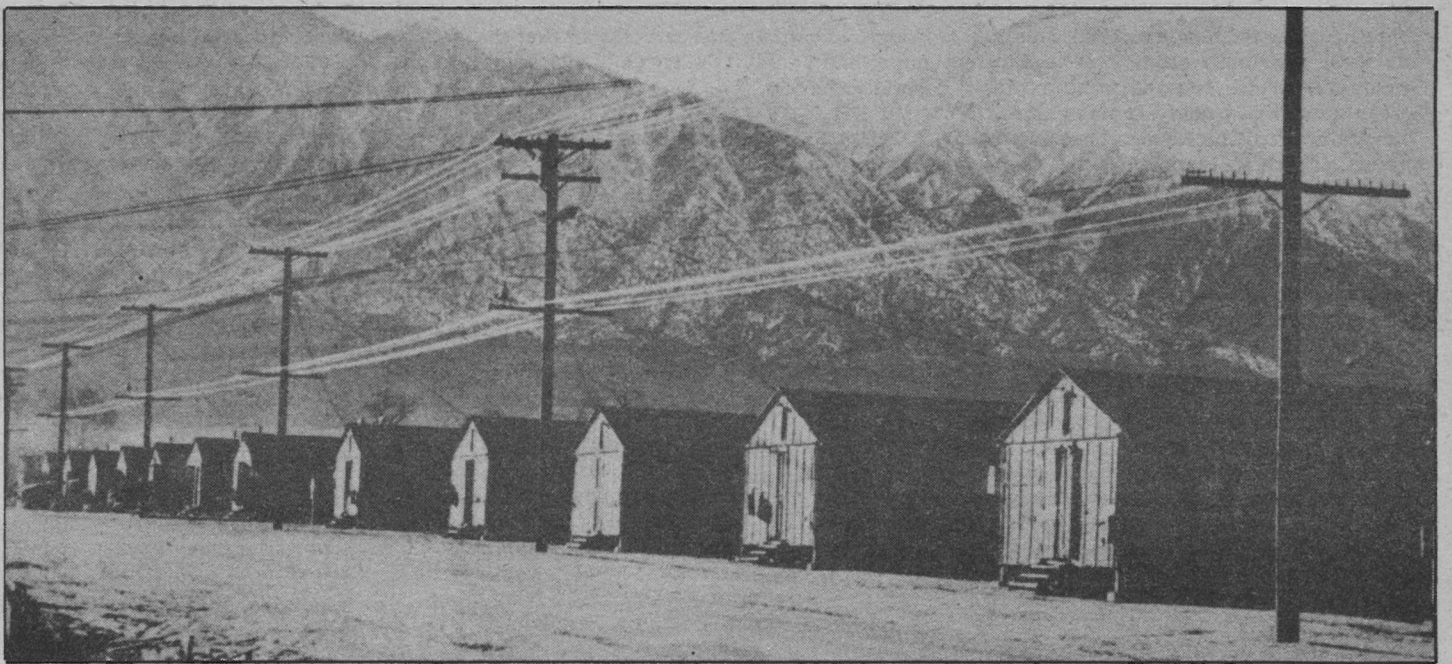
### MORE JAPANESE GIVE UP RADIOS

Fourteen Japanese aliens yesterday surrendered short wave radio equipment to police.

The words "Evacuation" and "Relocation" suddenly coughed out loud and often into everyday Japanese American speech, the newspaper, radio news, and the movies. Many Nisei, clinging to their faith in the government's promise and the government's word, took the evacuation and relocation ordered by Executive Order 9066 to mean "resettlement," not "expulsion" and "exile." As late as March 1942, at the JACL emergency council meeting where they decided to cooperate fully with the government, Sakamoto talked of the Evacuation and conjured images of tribes of Japanese American pioneers wandering east across America for land to "resettle." When they talked with the government representatives, Monday, March 9, 1942, in San Francisco, they didn't all see the barbed wire, machine gun towers, shotguns and the windswept big nothing all around waiting to keep them "eliminated" from their homes.

Once the Japanese Americans were in camp, Congressman Henry M. Jackson made it clear. By Jackson's reckoning, the Nisei, by conniving to be born here, had no moral right to their American citizenship and should not be treated like native-born Americans, because they were merely foreigners, aliens born in America on the sly. Loyal to the race, not national birth. He urged the "removal of the Japanese and particularly the Japanese that are born in the United States." "It is my personal opinion," he went on, "That it's more difficult to trust the Japanese born in this country than the Japanese who are born in Japan and have immigrated to this country. Apparently there is more espionage perpetrated on the part of the second-generation Jap than the first."

Earl Warren, at the time attorney general in California, also joined into the frenzy to



The scene at Manzanar Camp, California: a legacy of helplessness.

relocate the Japanese Americans. He opposed for years afterward the return of Japanese Americans to California. Then he became bothered by what he had done. When he was Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, his civil rights decisions were influenced by past guilt. Bill Hosokawa, a Seattle newsman hauled off to Minidoka and now an editorialist for the Denver Post quotes a Warren-watcher in Hosakawa's just-out book, *Thirty-Five Years in the Fry-ing Pan* (McGraw-Hill): "The Japanese Americans paid the ransom that liberated the blacks."

"The greater our cooperation with the government, it can be expected that the greater will be their cooperation with us in the solution of our problems," the JACL said. Many Japanese Americans increasingly felt the JACL had sold them out, become puppets of white racism, and betrayed their ideals of American democracy.

Sasaki, the Issei, came with a vision of a Japanese America based on a belief in American justice. "The country betrayed Japanese America by knuckling under the white racism and continues to protect the white racists to this day," he says. The camps were racist retaliation against the only ethnic minority group in the world that had defied European or American domination in modern times.

"The Nisei were also disinherited by the camps. All the property they might have inherited, \$400-million by U.S. Federal Reserve Bank estimates in 1972, had to be dumped, abandoned, lost. The Nikkei were robbed of their self respect by growing up in a hostile prejudiced atmosphere. The Average Japanese American born between 1905 and the end of World War Two grew up despising himself and his culture," says Sasaki. "One of my greatest regrets is that we don't have a Nisei martyr who went down fighting rather than be put in a concentration camp."

Before he went to camp, on March 23, 1943, James Sakamoto, still riding his blind faith, wrote President Roosevelt, "Mr. President, we have protested our loyalty in the past. We have not been believed. We are willing to assume the burden of continuing to demonstrate it under all but impossible conditions. We would be deeply grateful if you would point it out to our fellow-citizens that we are not traitors to our country. . . . Restore our good name to us."

### PACIFIC JAP REMOVAL COMPLETE, ARMY SAYS

San Francisco, June 1 -(AP)- The Army said today that all persons of Japanese ancestry had been cleared.

### Main Cities Free

The cities cleared of Japanese—aliens and American citizens alike—included Seattle, Tacoma, Portland, San Francisco and the entire bay area; Sacramento, San Jose, Los Angeles and San Diego.

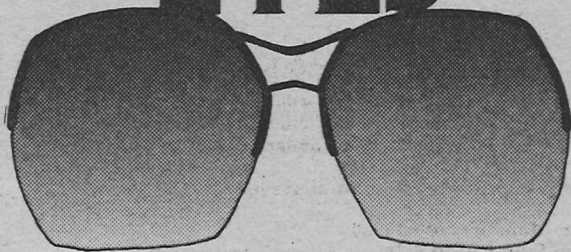
Those parts of Oregon and Washington in military zone Number One have been completely cleared of Japanese. In California the only ones not yet evacuated were about 800 in Yolo County, and they will be moved out by Friday and Saturday.

### 105,000 Removed

Authorities requested that citizens living in this military zone report immediately to law enforcement agencies any Japanese who does not have proper identification.

Some whites went out of their way to keep their Japanese American friends and neighbors feeling a part of their communities, while they were away in the camps. Toku the midwife's son, Eddie Shimomura, worked his way up to fill prescriptions at Hart's, a downtown Seattle, "first class prescription store." "After the news of the evacuation, my boss at Hart's told me, 'Eddie, I don't care where you are relocated. I want you to come back here after the war.' And he went on to say, 'If you don't have any money, I'll send you the money to

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come back here.' Well, with that kind of support, I couldn't sell the house, so we decided to rent it out and save one room for storage. Reverend Andrews helped. The First Baptist Church handled the renting out of the house."

After Pearl Harbor, Stimson Bullitt joined the Navy. When he heard about the camps, he was a one-man letter-writing campaign against them. After the war, Bullitt won the largest single claim, \$20,000 awarded under the Evacuation Claims Act of 1948. (Henry Jackson backed and boosted passage of the Evacuation claims Act; the same Henry Jackson who had backed and boosted the evacuation and he'd graduated law school with a Nisei master spy.)

"You've already written about Jimmy Sakamoto. We used to be friends," Bullitt says. "Once during the war, when I was on leave, I hitchhiked to Hunt, Idaho, where there was a camp—Minidoka—to try to see him, but couldn't see him. I had the impression the reason why he lost his eyesight was simply because of the general corruption of the boxing business, of not caring about the welfare of the participants, and often overmatching them, rather than giving him a bad time because he was a member of a minority race," he says, and we talked old time boxing a little before his impressions of blind Jimmy Sakamoto came back. "An earnest man, strong character. His being a Catholic seemed to be an important part of his life. Passionate American patriotism. I hope I'm not being disparaging to his memory, and to that of others like him, by saying that he clung too desperately in bad times, in times of a lot of hostility, to the group that he belonged to. You could say it was an 'Indomitable Patriotism' or looking at it from another psychological viewpoint as something almost craven, or timid, not from the standpoint of seeking to be tolerated, but of reassuring himself that he was right. I sometimes think these people

represented a whole class with their extreme Americanism. Their extreme patriotism reminded me of Arthur Koestler's *Darkness At Noon*."

Shosuke Sasaki and his mother left an apartment on Seattle's Capitol Hill for a place in a stable at Puyallup Fairgrounds renamed Camp Harmony, as if a name that was music to the ears could turn a stable into a bungalow. "Within a month after we got into Camp Harmony, people started to be shifted from Camp Harmony to other camps. People would often be told, 'Pack up your things!' at nine in the morning, 'Pack up your things, you're going to be shipped to camp so and so, in California or wherever.' They were given no reason. Nothing. This occurred to two or three of the Seattle community lawyers, including Kenji Ito, and Tom Masuda, and it happened to other people too. The only reason I could imagine for those people being sent to other camps was that these people were regarded as having some influence in the community, occupying positions of leadership. They were apparently being shifted to other camps where they wouldn't have a following. The Nisei were being stripped of leadership. The Issei had already been taken. Right after Pearl Harbor, the FBI rounded up most of those people up and sent them to Department of Justice camps." (There were 26 small Justice Department and other camps for Japanese Americans in Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Montana, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Utah and Wisconsin.)

One day a friend, an older Issei, approached Sasaki, between the barracks. Would Sasaki become a "nominal" member of a group of people planning the execution of James Sakamoto? Sasaki would not have to be involved in the actual killing. After Sakamoto was dead and everybody knew, the

killers, and all the nominal killers would come forward, admit to the deed, and make a speech that would make killing Sakamoto the act of a loyal American. They needed somebody to make that speech. Shosuke Sasaki was known as the silver tongue of his generation.

"The desire to get rid of Sakamoto's influence was, to me, perfectly understandable. Had the situation been totally hopeless, and the length of time we'd be in those camps seemingly endless, I might have given him a more affirmative answer. But I knew we were being moved in a few months, so I suggested we delay until we got to the next camp, and we try to approach the administrations there. And if after those attempts, Sakamoto still continued to wield his influence, then I would agree with their plan." It's the classic tale of loyalty and revenge. The plan was to kill Sakamoto, then come forward and admit the killing *en masse* and show that Sakamoto was not representative of the internees, should not have been the sole adviser to the government. All the other Issei who spoke English as well as Japanese, were in Department of Justice camps. Shosuke Sasaki was the last of the English speaking Issei, and they had to come to him. Sasaki helped save Sakamoto's life.

#### EVACUATION OF JAPS BEGUN AT PUYALLUP

**Advance Party Leaves for New Camp in Southern Idaho; Glad to Get Permanent Home**

*By the end of the month all of the 7,200 residents of the center will have been moved to a permanent location center in Southern Idaho and the site now occupied by Camp Harmony will be turned back to the Western Washington Fair Association.*

*There is no chance that a Western Washington Fair will be held this year, however.*

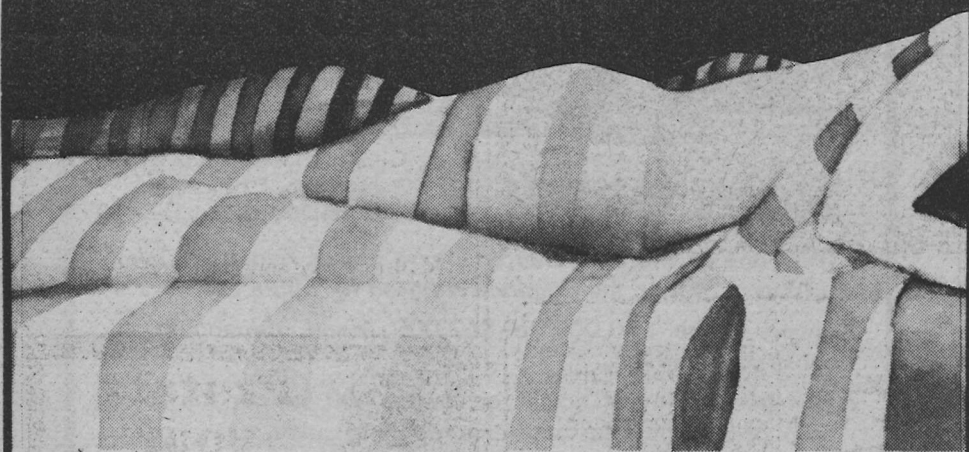
The founders and leaders of the JACL, "yes men," "informers," and "collaborators," became the targets of threats, assassination plots, and beatings in the camps. Pearl Harbor had assaulted Japanese America as brutally as the rest of the nation. Pearl Harbor stripped the Nikkei of their identity, history, voice, their essential American legitimacy and left them resigned to suffer an outrageous, maddening helplessness. The camps deepened their sense of helplessness into a hateful uselessness. The same emphasis on loyalty and faith in the given word, the obligation of the promise that had kept them together through bad laws, stonings in the street, and baseball—now tore them apart. Before camp they'd die for each other to prove their loyalty. In camp they'd kill each other to prove their loyalty.

At Manzanar, a camp of 10,000 in California, Fred Tayama of the JACL took notes at a meeting and heard himself marked for a stomping. They rioted at Manzanar and hunted Fred Tayama down for his "Confidential" reports to the JACL. For taking the minutes, they broke Fred Tayama's bones.

The Japanese Americans did not settle easily into life behind barbed wire. From Minidoka, where most of the Seattle and Washington state Nikkei arranged themselves, a Nisei woman who was a girl at Minidoka cherishes the memory of a young blue-eyed soldier putting down his rifle and picking her an armload of dandelion flowers to stop her crying. "Once we got to Sakamoto and pulled his horns where he couldn't do any more damage, life in Minidoka was pretty quiet. Minidoka had the reputation of being the quietest of all the camps," Shosuke Sasaki says.

On September 25, 1942, barely aware he wasn't alive so much as not being killed, Sakamoto wrote the President of the United States again, to present his "grave concern"

# Bedscapes



Bedding & Lingerie

## OFF BROADWAY

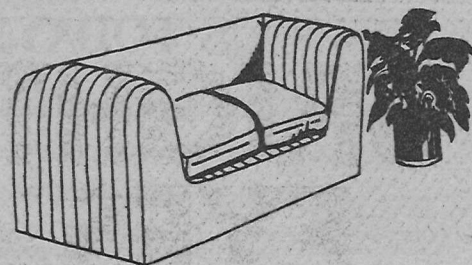
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October 11-17, 1978



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the Weekly Page 13



over a bill that Henry Jackson, of his home town, helped pass the House, "designed to deprive the American-born Japanese of their citizenship and to intern them for the duration together with non-citizens of enemy alien classification. The bill also provided for the deportation of the Nisei to Japan after the war. I read this bit of Sakamoto out of the past, to Shosuke Sasaki without telling him that the blind man of the JACL wrote it.

"That such a measure, discriminatory and un-American to say the least, should find its way to introduction and passage before an August body of our Congress is not only sorely disappointing but surprising beyond understanding. It is needless to mention that measure which would deprive some 80,000 to 85,000 American born Japanese of their birthright strikes at the very core of our democratic institutions in the fourteenth Amendment of our Constitution. . . . On this measure which effects not only our status but our lives, we are the unheard minority. Before the bar of American public opinion, enactment cannot hope to balance the scales of justice or prove the slightest excuse of necessity for the injustice and discrimination it would impose. . . ."

"Who wrote that?" Shosuke Sasaki booms at me. He likes what he's heard.

"James Sakamoto," I say.

"Hmmm!" he snorts, impressed. He reaches for the letter, and reads him, grunting and snorting at certain passages. Shosuke Sasaki turns his back on me to be alone with Sakamoto's letter. They haven't been this close since Sasaki read his name in Sakamoto's paper, before the war.

Last July 19 the national convention of the JACL in Salt Lake City voted unanimously to seek "to provide cognitive redress," from the United States, "to persons of Japanese ancestry, two-thirds of whom were American citizens, and their immediate family members who, during WW II, suffered injustices by official actions of the United States Government; to remind our nation of the need for continued vigilance and to render less likely the recurrence of similar in-

west started the graveyard, built a swimming pool, and managed the baseball team, and Shosuke Sasaki was a big man in the camp-fire department because he could shout in both Japanese and English, in any emergency. "Of 15 guys I used to play football with in camp, 8 are dead," Miyatake says. "Four of leukemia." Nikkeimen in their early middle-age are dying faster than other men their age, and faster than Japanese their age.

Japanese America loves the volunteer, the

## Sen. Hayakawa: 'Forced relocation gave the Japanese Americans a broadened view of America.'

justices." If all goes well, there would be \$3-billion to pay each of the 120,000 Japanese Americans and Japanese nationals forced out of their homes, lives and legacies, into concentration camps—\$25,000 each.

Henry Miyatake led the Seattle redress movement from church to church, the Japanese Baptist, the Japanese Methodist, and the white churches, opening wounds, breaking minds, until the Seattle chapter of the JACL was known as the heavy muscle, the big mouth, the iron heart of redress.

Miyatake looks like the bookworm he calls himself. He wears his clothes like groceries wear shopping bags. A library slouch, from reading with his face too close to the printed word, and glasses. He was 11 years old when he went to Minidoka concentration camp, in Idaho, where the oldest Nisei in the North-

amateur, the underdog who makes it of sweat, staying up all night, and sincerity—the kid who wins first place for no other reason than he deserves it. Henry Miyatake is the Little Engine That Could. Everyone who sits on the National Redress Committee with him is a Little Engine That Could, determined to win over and civilize the whites.

Miyatake, a Boeing engineer who built model planes as a kid, worked computer models of the hypothetical growth of Japanese American money, if the Japanese hadn't been put in camps. He moved Dan Evans's friend, who moved Dan Evans to move his friend, then President Gerald Ford, to rescind Executive Order 9066, and issue his "American Promise."

The first news of redress to hit the wire ser-

vices and make ink in the hometown papers, was that Senator S.I. Hayakawa was against it. Hayakawa came on strong that the forced relocation of Nikkei into concentration camps was "perfectly understandable," and done for their own "safety." Hayakawa dubbed moves to seek redress "ridiculous" and "absurd" and said "for the JACL to ask restitution is merely the rekindling of resentment and racism that no longer exists." He cites as proof of the absence of white racism against Nikkei, his election to the United States Senate. "Some unpredicted benefits came from the relocation," he adds. "For example, the more rapid Americanization of Nisei as they experienced life and work in Chicago, Minneapolis, Cincinnati, Denver, New York and elsewhere. . . . The forced relocation gave them a broadened view of America that has helped their careers immeasurably."

The Portland *Oregonian* was offended. They endorsed Hayakawa's "telling his fellow Japanese Americans that they should forget the harsh treatment many of them received during World War II." Then the *Wall Street Journal* argued redress is unnecessary because the Japanese Americans are "one of the most prosperous ethnic groups. Racial prejudice against them is almost dead." Proof that racism is dead: "Half of the third-generation Japanese-Americans are intermarrying. Tomorrow a relocatee's daughter—he is a leading cardiologist and she is a Wellesley graduate—will wed the son of the governor of Utah." Then, the *Milwaukee Journal*: "We do not agree that the restitution effort does more harm

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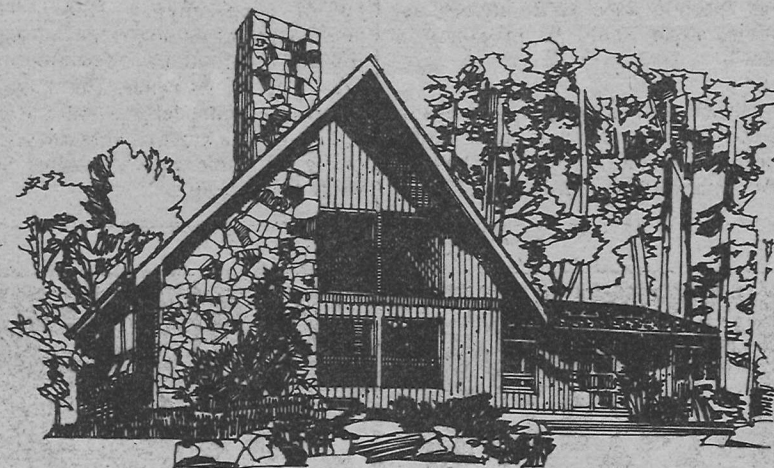


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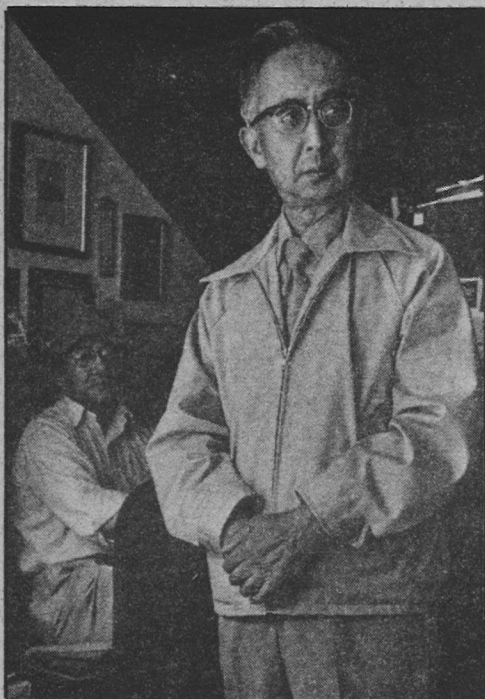
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Shosuke Sasake at David Ishil's bookstore.

than good. In the first place, those who were uprooted suffered real damages and have a right to seek recompense. Furthermore, anything as serious as the wholesale violation of the basic rights of Japanese Americans shouldn't be pushed into the nation's subconscious."

"The redress we seek is not a bonus," Clifford Uyeda, a retired pediatrician, national president of the JACL, wrote the *Wall Street Journal*, "It is a perfectly sound American principle of restitution to the victims of injustice. It is not an archaic principle, but an existing honored principle of present day United States." And later: "If it isn't the single sum of \$25,000, it's the aggregate of \$3-billion that distressed others. There is, however, another way of looking at the \$400-million in property losses alone suffered by Japanese Americans in 1942. The Evacuation Claims Act of 1948 restored only eight per cent of the losses. The government paid only a single year's interest on the original sum. If the \$400-million was kept in a savings account since 1942, interest accumulations alone would be in excess of \$3-billion."

For neither the Japanese Americans nor the whites has the understanding of camp grown or deepened since camp. They haven't set their imagination, sense of humor,

culture, or philosophy to feed on the camps, the way Americans have fed and grown on the POW camps of Europe. The camps have the mystery of a religious experience to the Japanese Americans. Something of them died there. They don't know what. They haven't looked at the body. They can barely endure going through the papers. They haven't buried it, and don't know how to case and frame the camps out back in history. For all intents and purposes, the Nikkei still lives in camp, not in Seattle, Portland, San Francisco, Salt Lake, San Diego or even Milwaukee. The Nikkei are out on parole, not out of camp.

The quest for redress is Japanese America's last stand to win the political and moral recognition of Japanese America's identity. For the old campaigners, it's the biggest and the last fight. There's not much time left. The *Wall Street Journal* is right: the Japanese Americans are being absorbed and the JACL is an organization without a future, unless they win redress, the \$3-billion, their chapter of American history, a monument in sight of the Capitol Building, and the Potomac.

I asked Shosuke Sasake if he really believes Japanese America is going to win redress. He said, "Yes, because I believe in the average American's sense of justice and fair play," and echoes the words of his fellow internees at Minidoka, back when they dedicated their yearbook:

*"We have every confidence that this nation of ours will lead the way toward a post-war peace which will bring to all everlasting security based upon those principles of freedom, equality, justice and humanity which so many of our sons and brothers are fighting... and dying... to uphold."*

It sounded like prayer then. It sounds like prayer now.

Henry Miyatake made a Cleveland kit glider when he was a boy in camp. "I spent a lot of time on it," he said; "I spent a lot of time on it. I worked very diligently on it, and painted it. And I guess, I made it too good. I flew it, and it just kept on going. The last I saw of it, it was heading toward Hazelton, Idaho." That toy wouldn't have gotten you out of camp, anyway, Henry. The plane you're working on now is the one you want to fly, out of Minidoka, Manzanar, Amache, Gila, Popton, Rohwer, Tule Lake, Newell, Heart Mountain, Jerome—all the way home to history and American greatness. "Restore our good name to us," James Sakamoto wrote from camp. □



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