

01:11:54

FRANK EMI:

Who is Michi Weglyn the historian? Why do so many Japanese Americans cherish the book, YEARS OF INFAMY?

Who is Michi Weglyn the spirit of redress?---Former President of the Japanese American Citizens League, and former president of the Japanese American Historical Society Dr. Clifford Uyeda, of San Francisco, and Historian Dr. Arthur T. Hansen, Director of the Oral History Program at the University of California at Fullerton-

01:12:02

Lights up- on semi-circle of seated friends of Michi Weglyn. Dr. Clifford Uyeda, Art Hansen, Robin Kramer, Ruth Mizobe, William Hohri. Mike in center of semi-circle with a tall stool.

Behind the semi-circle of speakers is bleacher seating. Michi is seated here, with her friends, friends of the speakers, people who don't mind sitting on stage.

Clifford Uyeda

It was the summer of 1976 that Ernest Uno, brother of Edison Uno, and I drove from San Francisco to Sacramento to meet Michi and Walter Weglyn. It was our first meeting. It was Edison Uno who had said to me to be on the lookout for the book which was about to be released to the American public, YEARS OF INFAMY: THE UNTOLD STORY OF AMERICA'S CONCENTRATION CAMPS.

Michi Nishiura Weglyn is a wonderful, remarkably accomplished woman. In her words I found my own feelings, as I grew up in the State of Washington. I had fled the West Coast of the United States in 1936 and had gone to Wisconsin in an effort to prove to myself that the West Coast of the United States was not American, that it was anti-America.

Michi had broken with with the Nisei convention of passive submission to white racism, tyranny and oppression. She not only called the government liars, but she proved it. And most remarkable

and refreshing was her anger. The anger that no Nisei dared put in a book, but every Nisei felt. She was emotional about the camps. That emotion was shared by all of us. I recall the statement Michi made to me many years ago, "When I wrote that book, I was hoping that Nisei would become angry." She had accomplished her purpose.

It was this emotional realization and her documentations of the American government's wrongdoings that was the primary reason behind the push for redress by the Japanese Americans and supported by millions of other Americans. Her book became a bible for the 20th Century Japanese Americans.

I had come to know many survivors of the Nazi Holocaust, and Michi's husband Walter was unforgettable. I can't ever remember seeing him not dressed immaculately in a suit and tie and handkerchief. He was a member of the underground war against the Nazi occupation. He was a survivor of the Holocaust. He had encouraged Michi to write her book. Michi recalls that he used to give her exact change for the bus ride to and from the library, when she was doing her research. He was a man of character, impeccable manners, with dignity and was always thoroughly devoted to Michi.

It is a great honor to be able to participate in honoring Michi Nishiura Weglyn today, and in bringing back the image of her loving husband Walter.

Thank you.

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Dr. Art Hansen

I am a professional historian. There are those who say Japanese American history cannot be written by a Japanese American, that only an unbiased and objective outsider can write Japanese American history. As a professional historian, I can honestly say there is no such body of elite professional historians who are not without bias. There is no objectivity without a weighing of all the facts, and all the acts and all the influences on Japanese American history. And Japanese American history cannot be written without Japanese American historians, amateur, professional, occasional, confessional.

I will be more specific in the workshop: Who Writes Japanese American History, in the next hour.

I believe, here, I am speaking to Japanese Americans who lived in and lived out the history, certain historians claim only they know and understand. I am not sure most of you read the books by those historians.

There are two periods of time and thought in the history of the Internment and Redress. The first period is the period of explaining Japanese America's response to the camps as "Shigatenai". The notable Nisei literary works of this period are Mike Masaoka's JAPANESE AMERICAN CREED, and Bill Hosokawa's NISEI: THE QUIET AMERICANS. I am sure, most of you have read and know of The Japanese American Creed and NISEI; THE QUIET AMERICANS. These works characterize the Japanese Americans as a pathological victim people, earnest but ineffectual, eager, but helpless, racially despised, but grateful.

The definitive work of the second period is Michi Weglyn's YEARS OF INFAMY. This book with its intelligence and anger gave the lie to shigatagenai. The Japanese American was victimized but not a pathological victim, not helpless, not submissive, not passive. And in this second period led by Japanese Americans neither defined by nor preaching shigategenai Japanese Americans appeared to root out the facts of their history and appeared to people like me, to get their stories told. Gone were the stereotypes of shigatagenai Japanese Americans cowering in submissive helplessness, afraid to talk about the camps. If Michi Weglyn's YEARS OF INFAMY did not inspire all Japanese Americans to become historians, her book certainly marks, to the day, the period when Japanese America gave up helplessness and wrote for themselves. We are still in that day. It's a good day, Michi Nishiura Weglyn.

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AYAKO HAGIHARA:

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AYAKO HAGIHARA:

Ladies and Gentleman, Representing the the Honorable Mr. Richard Riordin, Mayor of Los Angeles, the Mayor's Chief of Staff, Robin Kramer:

01:18:22

The Mayor's Message:

"Los Angeles is proud of the Japanese Americans, the Nikkei of Los Angeles and all of America for winning redress. The Japanese Americans proved --though it's difficult sometimes--the constitution works. American democracy, even when it is imperfect, works, if and when the people are willing to make it work.

"The Executive Branch, the President himself, the Congress, the Supreme Court, all three branches of the government wronged Japanese America, failed Japanese America in 1942. Japanese Americans are to be congratulated and thanked for waging the long fight to right this wrong.

"I am delighted to be here to at last, thank you for demonstrating once again, that our political process works, and to meet the woman who had the courage to tell the untold story of America's concentration camps with solid information, and a knowing anger -- the average reader would expect, but no Japanese American had ever revealed. Both non-Japanese and former Japanese American internees found a great release in Michi Weglyn's anger, and inspiration in her research.

"Michi Weglyn is the best advertisement for the Public Library I can think of. She used her library card to get the goods to make the case for redress.

"The man who occupied the Mayor's office in 1942 was not the beneficiary of Michi Nishiura Weglyn's hours of digging in the National Archives and the New York Public Library and her wisdom. The Los Angeles of today is a better city, being home to a Japanese American community that takes pride in its history, its civil rights, and its people."

01:20:12

Ruth Mizobe

William Hohri

0:00- Main auditorium-One hour: Storytelling for children. Selected stars and writers tell children stories to children-with Lawson Inada, telling the story of who Michi Weglyn is.

break-

1:00-Main auditorium-One hour tribute to Michi Weglyn, Spirit of Redress, NCRR Fighting Spirit Award ceremony-, and announcement of workshops.

VOICE OVER-Welcome Ladies and Gentlemen to the 18th National Coalition for Redress/Reparations' Day of Remembrance. Your masters of ceremonies, Ayako Hagihara and Frank Emi.

Lights up- Podium to one side of the stage. The Hosts step up to the mike.

Ten minutes-NCRR--

I suggest: Today we celebrate the Spirit of Redress. The Spirit of Redress touched us all and many came to embody and inspire the Spirit of Redress. ---*rollcall of names of those who embody the Spirit of Redress.*-- But there is only one Michi Weglyn, and only one YEARS OF INFAMY. Before Michi Weglyn's YEARS OF INFAMY was published, in the year of the American Bicentennial, 1976-- no Japanese American for or against redress dared be Nisei, and be angry and bitter about being Evacuated from their homes at gunpoint, and Interned in concentration camps. Her anger was liberating and compelling because it was informed with the produce of years of archival and library and documentary research. She was not merely an angry Nisei. She was an angry Nisei who had done her homework and knew what she was talking about.

00:10:00

MICHI TRIBUTE

AYAKO HAGIHARA: Is there a Japanese American alive who has not read Michi Weglyn's book, YEARS OF INFAMY? Well, maybe....Is there a Japanese American alive who has not heard of Michi Weglyn? I doubt it. Is there a Japanese American who searched for redress for the unconstitutional concentration camps, who has not used her research, been inspired by her anger, written her a letter and received an answer, or even more surprising, a telephone call? No.

FRANK EMI: Is there a published scholar of Japanese America, the Evacuation and Internment, the campaign for redress, any campaign, every campaign for redress who has not received pounds and pounds of documents, from Michi Weglyn full of new information on every page? And then, more than likely, a phone call from New York. It's Walter Weglyn. Michi wants to talk to you, but she's very tired, near exhaustion, and he made her promise not to be on the phone any longer than ten minutes. And for the next hour and half Michi gushes information from the archives and library and issues marching orders. No.

AYAKO HAGIHARA: Even before before her book YEARS OF INFAMY, Michi was leading Japanese America into spheres of America few of us had ever been--the world inside show business. Live TV. The New York Fashion business. Examples of her work as a designer for the Perry Como Show and her own fashion house are on display in the North Gallery.

On the set of the Perry Como Show, one day, she approached the star Perry Como to tell him of her brief career as a midnight disk jockey at Seabrook Farms. The song most requested by the Nisei students at Seabrook was Perry Como's recording of PRISONER OF LOVE. She thought Perry Como would enjoy her story. "Perry," she said, "You know, I used to be disk jockey. And the song the students requested most, was PRISONER OF WAR!"

She says it was a Freudian slip.

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Ruth Mizobe

William Hohri

Frank Emi:

I hope it's no secret to anybody here that I was arrested in camp and tried and convicted of being one of seven leaders of the Heart Mountain draft resistance, in Cheyenne, and did two years at Leavenworth Federal Penitentiary.

Eighty five Heart Mountain young men served two and a half years of a three year sentence at McNeil Island and Leavenworth. One of those young men was David Kawamoto.

There was a time, just a few years ago, when men like Dave Kawamoto and myself would not have presented ourselves in public as Nisei who had violated the law, to test the constitutionality of the Evacuation and Internment, in camp-- and expected to be received politely, much less with any respect.

The convictions of the resistance leaders were reversed on appeal. Two hundred and sixty three Nisei draft resisters from all the camps including eighty five from Heart Mountain, were vindicated in a Presidential Amnesty, in 1947 that affirmed their right to resist to petition for a redress of constitutional grievances. We won. But not everyone saw it that way.

There was a time, well within all of our memories, when the idea of a resister emceeding an awards show in Li'l Tokyo would have been unspeakable. Now, thanks to people like Michi Weglyn, we are speakable.

I didn't know Dave Kawamoto in camp. I met Dave Kawamoto and his wife Toshiko in San Jose. The Kawamotos and many of the resisters in the Mountain View-San Jose area already knew Michi Weglyn. Michi didn't write about the draft resistance in YEARS OF INFAMY, but follow the clues, like her quote from James Omura, and you'll find us. As soon as Michi found us she lent her influential voice to reversing the years of ostracism from polite Japanese American society that used to attend Nisei resisters. To thank Michi for helping to restore what we stood for, to the community, Mrs. Toshiko Kawamoto.

Toshiko Kawamoto

"My husband was Dave Kawamoto. He was an NCAA wrestling champion, a senior at San Jose State College, and a Heart Mountain draft resister. For years Michi and Walter's friendship encouraged the resisters to return to the community and stand up for what they did. When she learned Dave had never really graduated from San Jose State because of the Evacuation, she wrote the President of the University Robert Caret. Her letter must have been effective, because President Caret awarded David Kawamoto, a posthumous Bachelor's Degree. I'm happy to be here, and meet you again, and on behalf of Dave and myself, personally, thank you, Michi."

FRANK EMI:

She means it, Michi. There was a panel on the resisters followed by a small pot luck at San Jose State, a few years ago. As soon as the program was over, there was Toshiko Kawamoto marching up and down in front of the audience, holding a copy of YEARS OF INFAMY over her head, and saying, shouting, "Read this book!"

AYAKO HAGIHARA:

Michi is the one force in Japanese America that transcends all the otherwise, insoluble differences in the Japanese American community. Our differences may remain as they were, but on three

things we all agree: (1) We won redress. All of us. (2) We owe Michi Weglyn. (3) Today is a day to celebrate the Spirit of redress and thank Michi and Walter Weglyn, for Michi's book, her courage, and her fight.

NCRR AWARDS CEREMONY-

FRANK EMI:

Each year

The National Coalition for Redress/Reparations honors individuals who have dedicated themselves to the struggle for justice and who exemplify the fighting spirit that enabled the Nisei Community to win redress and reparations. Past recipients of the Fighting Spirit Award are Rev. Paul Nakamura, Amy Uno Ishii, Tom Shiroishi, Frank Emi, Bert Nakano, Lily Okamoto, Bernadette Nishimura, Jim Matsuoka, James Omura, Jim Saito and David Monkawa, Gerald Sato, Linda Consolo, Bruce Iwasaki, Yuri and Bill Kochiyama.

AYAKO HAGIHARA:

The winner of the 1997 Fighting Spirit Award -- Michi Nishiura Weglyn.