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Title: Donald K. Tamaki Interview
Narrator: Donald K. Tamaki
Interviewer: Naoko Wake
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<Begin Segment 9>

NW: Um, tell me, now about your, uh, the other organizations that you were involved, uh, you mentioned Asian Law Caucus and I know that, uh, US survivors sometimes communicated with Japanese American Citizens League and their attorneys to sort of, you know, make their cases more visible. Um, could you please give me a sense of which organization that US survivors work together? Including the organization that you were a member of?

DT: I think you'll have to talk to, um, Mariko or Jack, you know. Or Karen. I—I don't really remember. The . . . whether we did any work when I was, I was executive director of the Asian Law Caucus from . . . '80 to '83. And we were principally consumed with . . . the internment camp cases. And then I went into private practice with my current group here, like in '84, '85.

NW: Right. Right.

DT: And so, um There were issues we were working on. I mean one of them was, um . . . A-bomb survivors. Another was uh . . . Dan Lungren. I don't know, it's kind of a side issue. But during the um, hearings of a reparations . . .

NW: Mhm.

DT: Dan Lungren, Congressman from California, was point-person opposing . . . a rep—redress and reparations bill.

NW: Mhm.

DT: And, um Dan Lungren he felt he could do this without any consequence. You know. Japanese Americans are nothing, and Dan Lungren et cetera. And, and then in doing so, he, he um Dan Lungren he raised these arguments against the bill, and you know, about Japanese Americans being disloyal and evidence of spying and, which were all discredited. They were all false. And so he was circulating Dan Lungren basically um, false information. And we—we had just gone through explaining, um, no, even the FBI, the Office of Naval Intelligence knew none of those charges were true. And, he's resurrecting these. I think it was um, intercepted cables from Japan during World War II. And one of the cables was Dan Lungren well, you know maybe there are Japanese Americans who might be . . . express some loyalty to Japan and maybe we can recruit them. And uh, even the Japanese government concluded no, that's not going to work.

NW: [chuckling]

DT: [chuckles] And, here Dan Lungren is saying, you know and the cables were magic cables they were being called. And they were in his evidence they there were disloyalty, disloyal and the, um, internment was justified. So anyway, as politics happens, you know, he, um, a guy named Jesse Unruh died in office. He was Treasurer of the State of California. You know, very liberal, democratic guy. And, Deukmejin, the Governor at the time, wanted to appoint Dan Lungren to be Treasurer, and then Dan, with the idea that he would be eventually Governor and maybe a presidential candidate someday.

NW: [gasp]

DT: And so we went after Deukmejin

NW: [laughs] Somebody has to. [laughing]

DT: And uh, we organized up and down California. And um . . . and we lobbied, uh, the uh, senators in the State Senate.

NW: Mhm.

DT: About why this guy should not be appointed. And his record was really at the extreme right. Didn't fit with California anyway. But on top of that, he led the fight against reparations. Which was a bipartisan issue. I mean, it passed because of so much Republican support for that. It was both conservatives and Dem . . . liberals saw that there was a civil rights issue. There's something wrong with imprisoning American citizens for no good reason. Except Dan Lungren. And so we, we um, publicized this whole thing and uh, he lost. He lost by like one or two votes. And then, he then tried to resurrect his political career. He spent another stint in Congress, but we, we never forgot that. And so, uh, we were doing that. And uh, because we thought there was a point to be made. And um . . . somewhere in between there it was Friends of Hibakusha. And then I got involved in a, you know, couple of other uh, lawsuits on other things. And so, FOH was just kind of in the middle of that.

NW: Yes.

DT: So, that—that's what I was saying. I'm not the, the authority, you know, on this. You know, there are other people that were a lot more involved than me.

NW: Mhm. Yeah, but what I'm seeing—learning, really, by talking to people in my project is—is that there's no single authority about any event. Because people have different memories and recollections. And, um, so that's part of the reason why this project is very, um, interesting to me. Um, 1982 and uh, a few years to come after that were uh, when U.S. society was very much engaged in a mass level, uh, with the anti-nuclear, um, nuclear freeze movement. And there were huge marches [at] many locations including Washington D.C. Were you involved in any of that?

DT: No, I was not. I mean, you know, like I've said, I've forgotten a lot of that stuff. Um . . . but I do remember that the—it was timely. It was timely. Because there was interest in A-bomb survivors at that time. And it did get, um, local coverage. This is before the internet, really. And um, so people depended upon television news and . . . and um, newspapers. So, um . . . in getting the message out is no social media so it's a lot more difficult.

NW: Right. Right. Yeah. So you have to have a institutional support and organizations to actually give visibility.

DT: I think so. Yeah. They organized and actually talked to the press. Get them interested on the story. Give them an angle. Convince them that, you know, that this is worthy of news time. So that was a lot of what we did.

NW: Right. Yeah.

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