

FULL DRAFT

Feb. 19, 1992

Editor
PC

I want to thank Cherry Kinoshita for remembering my part in organizing the first Day of Remembrance in Seattle in 1978 ("Video Volleys, P.C., Jan 3-10), but like the JACL redress video upon which William Hohri comments, Cherry enlarges JACL's role in hindsight to the exclusion of the true players.

The beauty of the first Day of Remembrance was that it identified the one experience common to all local Japanese Americans and rigorously stuck to that, without regard for institutional labels. We knew that many groups, the Nikkei-jinkai, the Nisei Vets, the Nikkei churches, remained wary of JACL in bitterness over the JACL's role of collaboration with internment. The event drew more than 2,000 Nikkei and friends precisely because it was NOT a JACL event or any other group's. It belonged to everyone who came and remembered the camps.

The posters made it clear the invitation was extended not by any group but by "The Memory of 120,313 persons of Japanese ancestry..." The sponsors deliberately buried in small type at the bottom rooted the event in known mainstream community groups. I will always

united parts of the community that hadn't worked with JACL since resettlement, from the Nikkei-jinkai to the

Everyone played a part in securing passage of redress, whether it was in showing the community it was safe to come out of hiding to stand for redress, or

Let's remember it that way.

I will always be grateful for the trust Clifford Uyeda and John Tateishi had in us to give us the \$2,000 in seed money to stage the Day of Remembrance on Nov. 25, 1978. To pull it off we had to draw support from ALL parts of the Japanese American community, including those that hadn't formally spoken to each other since the return from camp.

Cherry says William's National Council for Japanese American Redress cannot claim credit for leadership on the first redress bill introduced by Congressman Mike Lowry. Cherry forgets the group was founded here in Seattle. The photo on page of William's book, Repairing America, was taken on the day we first met in the same brick law offices where we'd plotted the Day of Remembrance, the Open Letter to Hayakawa, and would later work in support of Gordon Hirabayashi's coram nobis suit. The same Seattle JACL members who first brought the redress bill to Lowry had to form the separate NCJAR to lobby it when National JACL turned against Lowry in defense of its

The proof is in the House hearings. Hohri, representing NCJAR, testified for the Lowry bill. Former JACL field secretary Mike Masaoka, representing something called the Nisei Lobby as a stalking horse for JACL, attacked the Lowry bill. An incredulous Mike Lowry reportedly turned to a companion to ask, "Who is this guy?"

Since Cherry chose to involve Lowry in her differences with William, I've checked with Mike and reminded him of

The JACL policy was to back Senator Inouye's idea of a study commission that was bitterly opposed by those of us who had created and experienced the groundswell of support for redress. The JACL's directive to what was then commonly called the "maverick" group in Seattle was to drop support for the Lowry bill and get in line with JACL policy. Our response was to take out the full page ad in the Pacific Citizen of June 1, 1979, taking our challenge of JACL directly to the readers. No one responded.

This is the same Seattle Redress Committee that, along with the Chicago Redress Committee, took out a full page ad in the Pacific Citizen (June 1, 1979) to separate itself from the JACL's decision to pursue a study commission instead of a direct redress bill. That's not what I would call a JACL
?? ?

?Cherry's loyalty to JACL prevents her from recalling how hard we had to distance ourselves

technically correct, and in the context of the facts, disingenuous.

As manager and publicist for the Day of Remembrance, Frank Chin, Henry Miyatake, Shosuke Sasaki, and the late Min Masuda all had to bury the JACL's participation in its planning in order to ensure the event was embraced by the entire community. That included the Issei-based Nikkeijinkai and Meiji-kai, the local Nisei Veterans Committee, which at the time was highly skeptical of redress and the JACL, and the Nikkei churches. Like it or not, many non-JACL Japanese Americans did not then and still do not trust the JACL for what they view as collaboration with the government in our wartime incarceration, suppression of resistance, and the forced segregation of those it branded as disloyal for disagreeing with the JACL's wartime policies. I need not remind you that those scars, like the scars of internment itself, have never been erased.

The poster to which Cherry refers buries the JACL's participation deep. It was deliberately designed so that the invitation came from "The memory of

To Lowry the Seattle JACL and NCJAR were interchangeable because we were the same faces. But we had to go in as NCJAR, because national JACL forbid us and threatened us if we went

ahead with the individual payments bill.

As anyone who knows them can tell you, Shosuke and Henry are two of the most disillusioned and vocal CRITICS of the JACL in all Nikkeidom, after having tried to work the issue through the JACL through the late 70's and early 80's. Laying claim to their work is technically correct but morally wrong.

National JACL threatened Seattle to conform to its policy, once again choosing to crush well-intentioned grassroots activism that did not conform to national policy instead of more wisely encouraging activism on the cutting edge that could make JACL's programs more palatable as an alternative. JACL did the same in when it suppressed the principled draft resistance at Heart Mountain that it now recognizes had its merits.

The spirit of the event was that for the first time since internment itself we were uniting various factions of the community that I was told hadn't worked together since internment. Part of that

The premise guiding the success of the first Day of Remembrance was that it unite the

Those of us who first lobbied Congressman Mike Lowry to introduce his redress bill late in 1979 had to act on behalf of the newly-formed National Council for Japanese American Redress, because the JACL at the time vehemently opposed any work on a direct redress bill.

The breakthrough in public consciousness we in Seattle made in drawing more than 2,000 Nikkei and friends to the site of our hometown concentration camp was achieved through a clear strategy of uniting a Japanese American community still divided over the collaboration of the JACL in WW2. For the first time, we made

The poster made it clear that it was "The memory of 120,313 persons of Japanese ancestry" extending the invitation, not the JACL or any one group. Our weeks of planning

We coined the term "A Day of Remembrance" as a means of lending a certain dignity to the event, and to soften the bold political stand we were asserting through the petition for redress. The term is now a part of Japanese American culture. The irony is that it was coined by the same Chinese American writer that many have rightly or wrongly have a low tolerance for, Frank Chin.

I was pleased at Cherry's determination to ensure the JACL video recalled the work of the Seattle Evacuation Redress Committee in launching the popular campaign for redress. But a fair observer would have to ask why those two are the most bitter critics of the JACL, even then. Ask them and they'll tell you of successive years of disrespect and ridicule they endured from within the ranks of JACL. They'll tell you the most receptive audiences they had for the concept of redress in the 70's came

from OUTSIDE the JAACL and the veterans groups.

As for the Lowry bill, Cherry forgets the National Council for Japanese American Redress was founded here in Seattle. The photo on page of William's book, *Repairing America*, was taken on the day we first met in the same brick law offices where we'd plotted the Day of Remembrance, the Open Letter to Hayakawa, and would later work in support of Gordon Hirabayashi's coram nobis suit. The same Seattle JAACL members who first brought the redress bill to Lowry had to form the separate NCJAR to lobby it when National JAACL turned against Lowry in defense of its

As for the video itself, I was amused at how hard it tries to portray redress as a smooth march towards a shared goal. I cannot blame videographer John Esaki, who could only go by the materials at hand, and who did incorporate Shosuke Sasaki's "An Appeal for Action." He could not have known that nearly every chapter to which it was sent promptly ignored it -- and the issue -- for another 6 years. Despite the presence of a professional journalist as narrator, the video itself is not a piece of journalism, commissioned as it is by the very group it champions. The video can best be understood as a JAACL fundraising tool, and left at that. There will be other articles, books and, yes, videos on the history of redress.

As a JAACL outsider I can testify that Hohri is correct as to the degree of hostility JAACL old-timers showed to the concept of redress and its proposed implementation. I later served on the Seattle JAACL board of directors, but that doesn't change the degree to which I witnessed JAACL's institutional stubbornness, fear and ineptitude, fear and incompetence. Having worked with both William and Cherry, I can tell you, we had to break away from JAACL to form the NCJAR in Seattle to pursue redress when the JAACL chose to pursue the Congressional study commission. All of the communitcaions with Lowry had to bear

fundraising tool for the JAACL Legacy Fund, and attempts to lay claim to a portion of the redress money being paid out.

As a journalist I have certainly had to leave things out and summarize events in a few words, but always with the obligation of still conveying a true sense of events. I will always admire Cherry's steely determination towards winning our common goal of redress. Part of redress has always been an accurate retelling of history, and I only regret her deep institutional loyalites understandably prevent her from presenting a more candid history in the JAACL's institutional video.