

May 15, 1980-L.A.

Frank Abe/Karen Seriguchi

As you can see from the enclosed (to Frank) I'm mightily disappointed in the * local redress leadership, and Bill Hohri. Hohri's a nice guy but no thinker. The reaction of the local leadership to my question about the state of Japanese America under the stress of the redress campaign...and we all know that the Nikkei have been bearing the brunt of our rhetoric, thinking, loudmouth and rumor mongering while the whites have only had to bear our successes and occasional events...with indifference, contempt ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ for the non-participants or the Nisei... At the very least, it shows a lack of enlightened ~~the~~ leadership. Leadership that refuses to ~~and~~ include in their ~~xxxxxxx~~ ~~the~~ Japanese American community in their field, except to use the community name as a rhetorical device.

Beyond the bucks and high and mighty mouth about insuring the camps never happen again, we ~~xxxx~~ were looking for redress to provide the final catharsis of the gunk and ugly out of the guts of Japanese America, once and for all, Any redress that leaves the former internees with all their fears and camp created prejudices and silences intact, is to leave them sick with camp, and that's not redress. To my mind, Hohri, ~~xxxxxxx~~ Nakano, the rest of them are all hot air. ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ ~~Why~~ While they bandy lofty political realities and iron their ~~xxxx~~ clothes for Washington, they ignore the immediate reality of the former internees...the way student government ignores the student body...the student body is the administration's business, and Hohri and Nakano, the JACL, NCJAR, ~~xxx~~ and all the other letter societies are waiting for approval of the faculty advisor.

~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ All the rhetoric about the need for "grass ~~xxxx~~ roots" participation and involving the community, is just gas and smoke going the wrong way up the community's asshole. There is this political ~~xxxxxxxx~~ reality; the group most visibly identifying with and ~~xxxxxxxx~~ demonstrating a concern for the effects of their actions on the community, whether or not the community advocates or actively supports the group, will be the group to win the community's confidence. ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ To start a grass roots movement you have to get down on your knees and get your hands dirty.

The role-playing and ~~xxxx~~ intellectual ineffectual ~~xxxxxxxx~~ whirling worded in cliches and couched in pomp out of the spongy mouths of Nishio, Nakano, Hohri, the JACL and other "leaders" smacks of ~~xxxxxxxx~~ demagoguery. Their entire vocabulary ~~ixx~~ screeches with the arrogance of moral superiority. They talk of the need to "educate the public", their language they use, identifies themselves as the teachers, the moral superiors (with nothing to learn) of the "public." Of course ~~xxxxxxxx~~ taking the position of teacher, here protects the ~~the~~ leaders, and those they lead from having ~~xx~~ anything demanded of them, from examination, interrogation, challenge. Those who talk of "educating the public" both JACL and non-JACL are trying to rig the game, ~~xxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxxxx~~ fix the ~~xxxx~~ ever changing rules of the ~~fixxxxx~~ political, historical field. "EDUCATION" is the wrong word. It's offensive. Informing the public is ~~xx~~ one thing. Providing information to the public they didn't have before is ~~xxxxxxxx~~ not offensive. ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ Do the leaders really want to characterize the Japanese Americans as arrogant moral superiors, too good to ~~xxxxxxxx~~ go one on ~~x~~ one with the whites, because of the camps? "We have nothing to prove," Hohri says, dumping any consideration of proving personal damages. "We were wronged. We were the victims." ~~xxxx~~ Practice getting arrogant and you ~~xxx~~ won't have to confront your past, make peace with it, before you testify or find yourself caught in the storm of talk, headlines, and news that's 1942 all over again for Japanese America.

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The very language they use, "educate", insulates them from dealing with ~~the~~ what they really did and what really ~~happened~~ was done to them in camp. ~~xxxxxxx~~

~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ The Nikkei redress leadership far from encouraging and leading the process of draining the festering ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ pus~~xxxxxxxx~~ of 38 year old abscesses, has merely provided a new rhetoric to justify ~~the~~ keeping the wounds sealed in fear. Against those Nikkei who quake and rattle their eyes in fear ~~of~~ and awe of whites and say, ~~if~~ they fear white backlash, ~~xxxx~~ our leaders ~~xx~~ say, "We have nothing to prove. We were wronged. We were the victims."

For practical political purposes, if nothing else, ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ I'd think the leaders would dump the ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ catch phrase "educate the public" and try to humanize and equalize the ~~xxxxxx~~ relationship of white and yellow in the camp question and redress issue. Dialog, not confrontation. Share, not educate. Share the experience. Share the knowledge. The ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ whites and white sources have ~~xx~~ new information on the ~~x~~ camps and their effects ~~that~~ on the internees that the Nikkei themselves never heard before. ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ The language of the leadership is the language of us good guys, them bad guys. Us teachers, them ~~xxxxxxxxxxx~~ ~~xxx~~ students. There's this great need to get the whites on the defensive, hard. If this really is an American issue, let's carry that ~~x~~ notion in the language.

I'm hoping to make contact with Nikkei churches here and counting on Monica Sone to pull together the ~~xxx~~ ~~xxxxx~~ psychological round table.

I'll be up the last weekend of May, with Lawson and Jeff to work up our new Aiiieeeee! essay.

I'm reading at Amerasia Books this Saturday. Maybe I'll get laid. Maybe I'll get beat up. Maybe I'll get a good dinner at Mon Kee on N. Spring before I read.

Later,

Chin
c/o Wong/Rasula

