

May 28, 1979

Dear Clifford Uyeda,

This is a semi-public letter, in contrast to my previous letters. I am sending copies to the persons you copied and to others. I am responding to your letter of May 17, 1979. We are dealing with an extremely serious issue, an issue of justice and of history. It is far greater than any committee, individual, organization, or even nation. I acknowledge that the JACL and the National Committee for Redress (NCR) are doing their best. I acknowledge the sincerity, the expertise, the "long years of experience." None of this, however, is an adequate substitute for a just and honorable solution. The concept of seppuku applies here. There are times when sincerity, effort, expertise, and experience still result in the wrong decision. Seppuku recognizes that possibility and takes an action to remedy the ~~is~~ dilemma. I'm not sure I agree with the remedy, but I think there is true merit in the analysis. We sometimes come up with the wrong solution despite our best efforts.

I have learned that the Commission approach is supported by Senator Inouye, was suggested by Kaz Oshiki and Mike Masaoka, and then ratified by the NCR; that it represents an attempt to neutralize Hayakawa -- pitting the Commission findings against Hayakawa; that Mineta will not support any bill for monetary redress. (By the way, my source is not any person present at the NCR meeting in March, 1979.) This is political reality.

The Nikkei legislators do not support monetary redress, even though they recognize its moral and historical correctness. Inouye says that while twenty five thousand per person is not enough, three billion is too much. Further, I understand that any legislation affecting Nikkei must have the support of Nikkei legislators, even if the legislation were introduced by non-Nikkei members of Congress. So, we seem to be boxed in by political reality.

I will now raise several points which were not raised by the NCR:

1. "political reality" is based upon the present condition in Congress as viewed by only four legislators and two experts. Clearly, since we are a democracy in which the people, the ordinary citizens, play a major role, the present condition is subject to change. I would imagine that any serious campaign for redress would imply changing the attitudes of people and changing the political reality. The argument put forth that bills languish in committee or sub-committee year after year has truth. If we cannot change the political reality to avoid this kind of death, redress deserves to die. To put it quite bluntly, the Nikkei legislators and our experts are far too timid.
2. The idea of neutralizing Hayakawa is just plain dumb. Oshiki and Masaoka are too impressed by Congress. Hayakawa is an ass and most people realize this. Hayakawa, believe it or not, is our strongest ally; he gives his own positions the kiss of death. When he so outspokenly opposes redress and resorts



to smears like calling it a "fashionable hustle," I would guess that his colleagues either laugh or cringe. His most recent outburst which concludes by saying that "we ought to forget the whole thing" clearly contradicts the expectation of our experts. Even though it's only a Commission, he still opposes the idea.

3. Our vision is not visionary. One of the differences in meaning between "redress" and "reparations" is the subject. The injured party seeks redress. The party inflicting the injury pays the reparation. I can certainly work with redress but I think we do tend to lose sight (vision) of the fact that this issue is fundamentally American, not Japanese American. As we say in the United Methodist Church, it is "Reparations for America." The call is to all Americans to join in repairing this wrong. Therefore, the legislative scope must include the entire Congress. If the Nikkei legislators feel so reluctant to support redress, we ought to let them off the hook, with the clear understanding that they allow other legislators to sponsor legislation. At the very least, they must not be allowed to obstruct legislation.

Clifford, I am deeply distressed by the situation we find ourselves in. You say you are not upset. I am puzzled. The people who have done the most homework on this issue, the Seattle group, have been shunted aside for a proposal made by Oshiki and Masaoka. Oshiki further characterizes the fact-finding Commission as the "less you ask for the easier it is." Are we the rank-and-file, to believe that our leaders are taking the easiest possible course? And what are we to make of secrecy -- which apparently didn't work. You leaders seem determined to protect Nikkei legislators and yourselves at the expense of the rest of the organization and community. What knowledge do Yashutake, Ishiyama, Kimura, and Sakaguchi have? How are they supposed to deliberate on this issue at the National Board? What enlightenment are they to give to the Midwest District? (we)

A fundamental question I put to you is this: will you allow open, fully informed deliberation and debate to be a prerequisite to a decision of this historic magnitude? Or will you be satisfied to take a narrow, legalistic, vote-by-mail of the chapters? The vote-by-mail circumvents debate and amendment, the full deliberative process. The tight censorship by you leaders of both the Washington and San Francisco meetings of MCR preclude even an informed opinion. Your wisdom is not superior to ours! You may argue that it is too expensive to hold a full, deliberative assembly. But such an assembly was held in 1973 and the resolution on this issue was quite clear and explicit. (it)

I fully realize that there is a very hard "political reality" with the JACL. So these words will have little effect. The vote-by-mail will prevail. At the very least, then, you should demand that the ~~vote~~ motion on which the vote is to be taken be accompanied by statements pro and con. The statements should be formulated by ~~ex~~ advocates of both persuasions.



Given the absence of both negative and positive response to the Commission approach within the pages of the PC, my guess is that the JACL will follow the line of least resistance and commit to the Commission approach. As I've said before, this leaves no alternative for those of us who find this approach unacceptable but to pursue our own program for reparations. I am happy to see that an alternative organization is forming. It gives me something to channel my heart, energy, and money into.

Peace,

*W.H.*

William Hohri

