

Days of Remembrance

Dear Friends,

I saw excerpts  
of your ad for the Washington  
post and I think it's just  
great. Please find enclosed  
my contribution toward it  
if please.

I'm in the middle of  
a book right now titled "Uprooted  
Americans," by Dyer (Director  
of the War Relocation). From it  
I gather that it was the news  
coming in of the bravery of  
the 100th Battalion and the  
442nd Regimental Combat Team  
(composed entirely of Japanese  
Americans) that changed  
the former prejudice against

us to just the opposite. On  
the East we were welcomed  
with open arms, as a labor  
force in the cities, so many of  
us were able to leave camp -  
snapping up job offers -  
mainly from the east.

~~What~~ What the 100th Battalion  
and 442nd did must have  
been to do too <sup>with</sup> the repeal  
of the Anti-Oriental Laws.

Therefore it isn't as  
Hayakawa said, ~~regarding~~  
us as J.A. internees, "they  
overcame those injustices"

Rather it was the whites  
overcoming their injustices  
and prejudices against  
us. Of us "overcame  
injustices" why the Redress.

Sincerely

Mary Jini

March 16, 1979

Dear Day of Remembrance Committee:

The other day as I was leaving the house I grabbed the Rafu Shimpo from the mailbox, which contained excerpts of your full-page ad for the Washington Post. I hurriedly read the article while at the bank, made out a money order donation for your ad, scratched out a communication to you and rushed on to some other errands.

Well, today I was rereading the aforementioned excerpts and noticed a passage which must have escaped my consciousness before. The term "our success" occurs three times. So I said to myself, "Hayakawa can't be entirely blamed if the vocal ones among Japanese Americans flaunt their "success" and nobody hears about the poor, the uneducated and the needy in our ethnic group."

I believe the idea of "success" in the world is more pronounced in the Japanese culture; perhaps because I'm so familiar with it <sup>(the term)</sup> myself. "Be somebody" seems to be the watchword. Or else stay in the closet and don't shame the rest of the JA community.

I am enclosing an open letter to Hayakawa in which I drag myself out of the closet. It was a painful thing to do going back over the miserable days of the past, let alone write to a stranger and for other strangers to see, since I sent it to the Rafu Shimpo and Pacific Citizen, and I don't know who else I'll send it to. I'm really a very private person but I do get weary of being stereotyped by persons who usurp to themselves the authority to speak for everyone. So I felt I had to let him (Hayakawa) know there were some of us, as in any other race in America, who don't fall into his category of JA-Superrace.

I hope that I can prevail upon you, also, to modify your ad to the extent of either saying you represent only certain ones among JA ex-internees, or, change "our success" to some other expression such as "our survival," perhaps, so that it truthfully represents All the now-living JA ex-internees.

I thought the rest of the ad was great and I truly appreciate your efforts to redress this past injustice against us which has stayed on the shelf for thirty years.

Sincerely,

*Mary Tani*

Mary Tani

*(enclosure)*

O P E N L E T T E R T O S E N A T O R H A Y A K A W A

Dear Senator Hayakawa:

In your public remarks you show a patronizing awareness of the poor, the uneducated, the needy among all races in America except Japanese American - ex-internees of WWII American concentration camps in particular. We get stereotyped, by you, as a people who came through the War and Evacuation unscathed, who emerged in 1970 with a higher median income and higher level of education than "the rest of the population."

It stands to reason that it was our being stereotyped that got us thrown into those camps, contrary to your and Lillian Baker's claim that the mass Evacuation wasn't racist. Were Americans of Italian and German ancestry similarly abused? No. Only individuals belonging to known pro-enemy organizations such as the "Bund," were made suspect. The fact that German P.O.W.s fared better than we interned JAs ought to tell you something.

You said that "the median per capita income of American people as a whole in 1970 was \$9,500. The median income of Japanese Americans was \$12,500. In fact they're better off than the rest of the population. So they're not a disadvantaged minority." Your "median income" rating didn't differentiate between those who were interned and those who weren't. Your 1970 income, for example, was figured in though you were never interned, which of course raised the median. It's a racist thing to do - taking a median income rating according to race in America. It's not as though the total JA incomes were pooled and equally divided and that we all had identical life styles. So what's the point of the JA median income? It muddies the true picture and in effect denies us the rights accorded other races in America. You lumped the Whites, Blacks, Chicanos, Chinese and all the other non-Japanese Americans together as "the rest of the population," setting us JAs apart as some kind of super race impervious to the vicissitudes of life and immune to any

humiliations and deprivations inflicted on us by our government.

The Whites and the Blacks have their millionaires. Where are ours? Even more to the point, of what value was a \$12,500, or even a \$9,500, 1970 median income to a JA whose 1970 income was less, and even as low as less than \$2000? My husband's 1970 income, as a lathe operator, was \$7,400, with me as his dependent. But your "median income" rating of us assumes that we are "better off than the rest of the population." Why then are we living in a ghetto?

You described us ex-internee JAs further, ". . . won themselves full equality and better because their level of education income exceeds that of the rest of the population." For your information, my husband was taking a pre-med course when war broke out. He was interned in the Gila River camp. From there he went to a sugar beet farm and from job to job until he was drafted into the army the year the war ended.

My older sister and I don't have even a high school diploma, my father having forced us to quit school and go to work to help provide for our family of ten when I was fourteen years old. In retrospect, child labor laws evidently didn't apply to us of Japanese ancestry and we kept off the welfare rolls. I'm told my family was not unique. Many families were large and poor then and usually the oldest children had to quit school and support the family.

Lillian Baker (and you seem to echo her every word) claimed that 4000 of us went straight from camp into colleges and that we were all free to leave camp anytime we wanted. Not true. The only ones I knew who went directly from camp into college were two of my brothers and a few others who enrolled in a Christian seminary in the east. Another brother went to work on farms as did hundreds of others, if not thousands. During WWII there was a labor shortage and job offers began coming into camp - first from farms then from the cities. We were not permitted to leave until

leave clearance came through from Washington D.C. and jobs were offered by outside employers. I went from job to job and what with my mother urging me to make extra money in order to get her and the others out of camp I wound up with two jobs - 8 hours in a laundry plus 4 hours in a book store. So I was working 12 hours every day until my working brother told me he had enough money saved to get the family out. Many that I knew did the same thing - worked, saved money and got their dependents out of camp.

It took its toll on us I can tell you. My older sister and I have been disabled for years, and I know others that are also (ex-internees, that is); and many other ex-internees have already died, Nisei as well as Issei.

I've filled you in on a fact or two so, please, in the future quit stereotyping us. Enough is enough.

Sincerely,

*Mary Tani*

Mrs. Mary Tani