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RESPONSE TO MIKE MASAOKA

Clifford I. Uyeda

In June 1988 the N.CA-W.NV-PACIF. district council heard the Golden Gate chapter resolution to the JACL national convention calling for JACL to acknowledge it erred in its counsel to the Japanese American community in the early days of the war and in its reaction toward Japanese American dissidents.

We did not want this resolution to come as a surprise to Mike. A copy was, therefore, forwarded to him. We have just received Mike's response being published in the Pacific Citizen.

To conclude that Congress passed the redress bill based on JACL's wartime advice to its own people is presumptuous. Under duress, JACL was effectively used by the government in its arrest and incarceration of innocent people. At the time, it was understandable that JACL saw no choice against expulsion and detention when confronted by armed soldiers.

The split in the Japanese American community which has festered for over 46 years was in JACL's reactions toward its own people who challenged the government orders. JACL labeled them "disloyal" and "un-American." The actions of the dissidents were also understandable, except to the government and to JACL.

The brilliant achievements of the Nisei soldiers on the battlefields was one reply to the government suspicion. The role of the dissidents was another reaction. We should be able to understand each other's reasons for respective behaviors.

The admission of error in no way diminishes the need for the government to redress Japanese Americans. Aside from material losses, the

emotional and psychological damages were enormous and beyond measure. The government had acted in gross violation of its own Constitution.

There is no disgrace in admitting error. The federal government had admitted its past errors. JACL should do the same. Such admission is an act of respect and compassion for the victims, and in turn receive respect for honesty.

The admission of error by JACL is necessary now before more Nisei pass on with their bitter memories unresolved. The Japanese American legacy should not be for the Sansei generation to try to resolve what the Nisei should have had the courage and the decency to do now.

The initial step in healing the Japanese American community should be made by JACL. There is no time like now for JACL to initiate the process for reconciliation.

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