



DAY

OF

REMEMBRANCE

remembrance booklet 1994

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credits

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program.*

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Remembrance
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JUSTICE, EDUCATION, COMMUNITY.

These three points have been the basis of organizing the annual Day of Remembrance these last 15 years.

This year in an effort to re-emphasize our commitment to these three points and acknowledge the diversity and breath of our community, we offer to you a remembrance booklet reflecting the experiences, creativity, and expressions of New York Nikkei.

As we pondered how to renew our mission, we arrived back at this truth:

It is empowering to everyone if we encourage people to share their stories.

It became clear this would be a powerful contradiction to the shame and isolation which surrounds much of our historical struggle as a community in the U.S.

Producing this booklet has empowered us in several ways: First it has reminded us to reach for each other as Japanese Americans. Sometimes in this society it is hard to remember that our heritage is important, and that we matter. It has also allowed us to continue to pass on our rich legacy of culture, struggle and resistance to our young people and future generations. Finally, it has provided an opportunity to reaffirm our humanity and goodness. It has been very rewarding.

Thank you to all who contributed.

This is our story.

With Peace and Love,

MICHAEL ISHII

*letter
from
the
DOR
committee*

tribute to Bill Kochiyama 1921 - 1993

Bill Kochiyama was a truly extraordinary man whose life was touched by tragedy, but whose later years were characterized by a state of grace.

Bill Kochiyama was a dedicated, tireless warrior for redress and reparations who went the whole nine yards in the struggle, and refused to compromise.

He helped initiate the first Day of Remembrance program in New York City fifteen years ago in 1979.

He pressed the Commission on wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians to include New York as a scheduled site. He carried petitions into the community, helping to activate grassroots participation. He, along with other New Yorkers went to Washington and met with the Commission and staff to present the petitions and persuade the Commission to come to New York City.

After the Commission decided to come New York, Bill worked to help form East Coast Japanese Americans for Redress (ECJAR), a coalition which included organizations, churches and groups in the New York Japanese American Community. ECJAR helped to mobilize community participation in the NY Hearing. Bill's testimony at the hearing, against a backdrop of Byron Goto's art work, attracted national media attention. Bill testified before the New York City Council, getting them to pass a resolution recommending that Congress pass the redress legislation.

Bill was a member of the National Coalition for Redress and Reparations delegation to Congress. Bill and fellow 442nd vets testified before the House Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, State, the Judiciary and Related Agencies. They went to lobby some of the toughest Southern conservatives in Congress who were swayed by the heroic wartime record of the 442nd, and pledged to vote for the legislation.

Since its inception, Bill participated in every yearly DOR committee, encouraging the participation of fellow Niseis, and serving as a role model for Sanseis and Yonseis. Bill's artistic contributions were visible in the flyers and programs he prepared announcing the annual programs.

We will always remember:

Bill, dedicated to fighting injustice.

Bill, reliable in his community work.

Bill, member of the 442nd.

Bill, Yuri's husband, father of six, grandfather of seven.

Bill, a public person whose home was always open — to family, to friends, to movement people.

Bill, forever young.

*Kochiyama
testimony*

EXCERPTS FROM THE TESTIMONY OF WILLIAM KOCHIYAMA

AT THE HEARING OF THE COMMISSION ON WARTIME
RELOCATION AND INTERNMENT OF CIVILIANS,
NOVEMBER 23, 1981. NEW YORK, NEW YORK

My name is William Kochiyama. I was born in Washington, D.C. When I was an infant, my father and I moved to New York City where I have resided ever since.

During the Depression I was raised at the Sheltering Arms, an institution for half-orphans. Supported by the Protestant Episcopal Church, it was located in the area known today as West Harlem. Of 120 children, I was the only one of color. Not surprisingly, I grew up believing I was a White, Anglo-Saxon Protestant.

In the spring of 1940, I traveled to the West Coast to enroll at the University of California in Berkeley. Because tuition for non-residents was too high, I had to seek employment.

In my quest for a job, I faced an insurmountable wall of prejudice. Unions would not accept Asians as members and the white collar world was exactly that -- for whites only. For the first time in my life, I felt like a second-class citizen. Everywhere I was advised to find work with my "own people" -- a dismal prospect because I did not know a single word of Japanese nor anything about my cultural heritage. Desperate, I located a Japanese employment agency which directed me to a large dry cleaning and laundry establishment in Oakland. Owned by an Issei, the firm serviced whites while all the employees were Japanese.

About a week after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the firm was forced to suspend operation. Subsequently, I tried to enlist in the

*Excerpt
from the
Kochiyama
Testimony*

Armed Forces: first with the Army, then the Navy, and finally, the Marines. At each recruiting station, I was thrown out on my ear. No Japs were wanted.

In swift succession an 8 o'clock curfew and a 5-mile travel ban were imposed on all persons of Japanese descent. This was followed by the sweeping Executive Order 9066. My exit door to New York was slammed shut.

On May 6, 1942—four days before my 21st birthday, I entered Tanforan Assembly Center in San Bruno, where most of the Japanese in the San Francisco/Bay Area were incarcerated. At the entrance of the converted race track stood two long lines of troops with rifles and fixed bayonets pointed at the evacuees as they walked between the soldiers to the prison compound. Overwhelmed with bitterness and blinded with rage, I screamed every obscenity I knew at the armed guards—daring them to shoot me.

According to Colonel Karl R. Bendetsen, the chief architect of the evacuation scam, the soldiers, the weapons, the barbed wires, and the watch towers were there to protect us. Hogwash!

At Tanforan I lived in a horse stall with two other young men who had no family ties. There we lingered until September 16, 1942. On that day we boarded ancient trains for parts unknown. Several days later we arrived in central Utah. Situated in a desert, the stag-lag-looking camp was named Topaz—an obscene misnomer.

At Topaz I shared a barrack's room with five Nisei bachelors including two from Hawaii. Sometime later my bunkmates and I signed up for seasonal work leave to pick apples and pears in Provo, Utah. We labored five arduous weeks in the orchards owned by a Mormon family.

On January 7, 1943, I volunteered for the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. Next day, I was riding a freedom train to New York.

In New York I was reunited with my father after 2-1/2 years of separation. He told me that soon after the outbreak of war every Issei in the metropolitan area had been visited and investigated by the F.B.I. I also learned that some permanent resident Japanese were taken into custody by federal agents and police and whisked off to Ellis Island. A number of them were subsequently sent to Justice Department Internment Camps located in isolated parts of the United States. To this day, few of these victims will speak of their experiences of wartime captivity.

...[F]rom June 16, 1943 to December 30, 1945, I served as a rifleman with Company K, 442nd Infantry Regiment. In France--in one action alone--while we were effecting the rescue of the "Lost Battalion," my company suffered 90 percent casualties. Only 23 men remained unscathed-- and I was among the traumatized survivors. I had not intended to dwell on the exploits of the 442nd. But when I heard John J. McCloy, the former Assistant Secretary of War, allege that if the Battle of Midway had been lost, some of us Nisei in uniform might have pledged our allegiance to the other side McCloy's supposition tore through me like a dum-dum bullet. For the record, I bitterly resent his assumption and categorically deny that some of us would become turncoats.

... [A]s a pre-World War II Nisei New Yorker, who was imprisoned by my own country solely on the basis of race; and as one of approximately 33,000 men and women of Japanese ancestry who served in the Armed Forces of the United States while our people were held in American concentration camps, I feel I have sufficient and justifiable cause to press you--the members of the Commission--to consider and to recommend to Congress . . . demands for redress and reparation:

(1) To pay . . . restitution to each former internee . . . for gross violation of civil and human rights, as well as for financial and material losses incurred by imprisonment.

(2) To establish a community trust . . . [and] to help fund programs for their elderly, the sick, the handicapped, etcetera.

(3) . . . [T]o [help] reverse the Supreme Court decisions regarding the wartime cases of Korematsu, Hirabayashi, and Yasui, which are still on the books.

and--

(4) To educate the American public about the flagrant injustices perpetrated by the government against United States citizens and permanent residents of Japanese and Aleut ancestry during World War II--the lesson being that such crimes should never, never be permitted to happen again to any ethnic, religious, and political group in America.

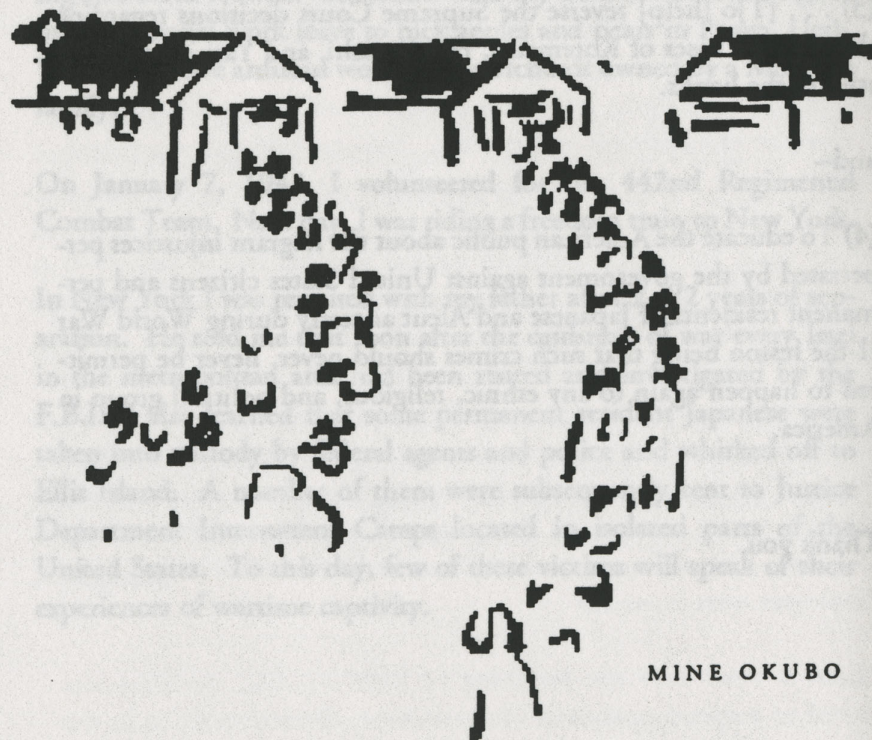
Thank you.

*Excerpt
from the
Kochiyama
Testimony*

A VIEW FROM "THE ORCHARD"

The moon travels
above a concentration camp
reflection in the eyes
a vision of freedom.

T. WATADA
New Denver B.C.



MINE OKUBO

DAY OF REMEMBRANCE

51st Anniversary of the Internment of Japanese Americans

On February 19, 1942 in response to anti-Japanese hysteria and the growing pressures of the press and the media, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 which gave the U.S. military the power to forcibly relocate 110,000 Japanese American men, women and children to ten desolate and barren camps for the duration of the war. They did nothing to the Italians and the Germans.

In 1988 the Japanese American community won an historic struggle in proving the injustice of the evacuation and internment, and President Reagan signed the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 which officially apologized for the Japanese internment during Word War II.

Today, the ten camps are gone. Only stone memorial monuments with few things representative of each camp remain to mark the campsites. In May 1993, in conjunction with the "Return to Topaz Reunion '93", the Topaz Museum was dedicated. One of the barracks was removed to Delton, Utah and restored to appear as it did in 1942. Inside, exhibits will depict camp life in various modes and ways, and artifacts will be displayed.

More than two-thirds of the evacuees have died and soon all of us will be gone. To know what it was like, one would have had to live the shock, humiliation, loss, misery, sorrows and tears of people losing homes, businesses, farms and everything in the space of three weeks and to be forcibly removed by armed soldiers to half-finished camps in the most remote, desolate and barren areas. We helped to finish the barracks and even helped to build the barbed wire fences around the camps to fence ourselves in. However, we endured and survived and the experience made us strong and we became a united group so, after the war ended, we were able to form strong learned organizations to challenge and to right the injustices of the evacuation and internment and the world now knows what happened to the people of Japanese descent in the United States during World War II.

MINE OKUBO
1994

*history
of
Day
of
Remembrance*