



Banner

Winter
2015

DOR 2015: E.O. 9066 and the [In]Justice Today

By Kay Ochi

The 2015 Los Angeles Day of Remembrance program will be held on Saturday, Feb. 21, at the Japanese American National Museum from 2—4 PM.

The DOR continues to be dedicated to commemorating the impact of E.O. 9066 on the Issei, Nisei and subsequent generations of Japanese Americans and also demonstrates how the government's WWII violations of civil liberties and human rights toward one ethnic group- based solely on their race-relates to today's political and social milieu.

The program's theme, "E.O. 9066 and the [In]Justice System Today" was inspired by both the traditional commemorative nature of the DOR and the current critical issues of how the U.S. justice system continues to harm communities of color with unaccountable police violence, profiling and mass incarceration.

With the recent and on-going protests sparked by the deaths of unarmed black men including Michael Brown, Eric Garner, and Ezell Ford through police use of lethal force, and the lack of indictments, the nation's attention is

turned to the growing concerns of racism, state violence and the failure of political leadership toward African Americans.

Given the JA community's wartime experiences and the historic connections between the JA and African American communities, the DOR provides an opportunity for the two communities to dialogue.

Long-time community activist Mike Murase will join Rey Fukuda, an Asian/Latino activist, and Povi-Tamu Bryant, an LA-based organizer in the Black Lives Matter movement, in a conversation about the current events impacting the African American community and the JA experiences.

Murase works at Little Tokyo Service Center where he oversees Social Service programs and the Budokan capital campaign. Previously, he was District Director for Congresswoman Maxine Waters.

Fukuda is an Assistant Project Manager in the East LA Community Corporation's Real Estate Department. As a volunteer he enjoys supporting Dignity and Power Now and Black Lives Matter Los Angeles as an Asian and Latino ally.

As a black queer womyn, Bryant is committed to building understanding amongst people and furthering the work of Black Lives Matter Los Angeles.

Participating as emcees are Helen Ota, Director of Development & Marketing at the JACCC, and Dr.



Rey Fukuda, Asian/Latino activist.



Povi-Tamu Bryant, activist in Black Lives Matter LA.

Curtiss Takada Rooks, Assistant Professor, Asian Pacific American Studies, Loyola Marymount University.

In addition to NCR, the DOR's sponsors include the Japanese American Citizens League/Pacific Southwest District, the Manzanar Committee, and the Japanese American National Museum.

For additional information, contact NCR at (213) 284-0336.

Remembering Koichi Ichikawa

By Jim Matsuoka

As the new year begins, NCR pauses to remember Koichi Ichikawa, a popular Boyle Heights/Little Tokyo resident. Ichikawa was one of the many "shin Issei," who came to America to better their lives and wound up being part of the daily labor force in Little Tokyo. He was part of the Workers and Newcomers Committee of the Little Tokyo Peoples Rights Organization and translated educational material on workers' rights to help those workers who remain invisible and carry out the day to day work at the restaurants, hotels, shops and bars that are a major part of the industry

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Mike Murase, left, at the anti-Gates demonstration he organized in 1991 shortly after the Rodney King beating video was aired.

Education Committee Receives Grant to Update CWRIC Tapes

By Janice Yen

Courage of Japanese Americans as They Speak Out for Justice (CWRIC Los Angeles) is the title of the National Park Service (NPS) Japanese American Confinement Sites grant received by NCCR. The \$20,000 matching grant (\$12,650 funded by NPS) will be used to menu-drive the 13-DVD set of the 26 hours of testimony at the Los Angeles Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (CWRIC) hearings. In 1981 Visual Communications, with tapes supplied by NCCR, documented the three days and one evening of hearings capturing on film 157 testifiers, comments from Commissioners, and audience reaction. The grant will also help pay for an update of the Viewer's Companion, and a single DVD with "highlights" from the hearings will be produced. Digital expert Steve Nagano is our project director.



Charlie Hamasaki, center, on the Panel Discussion at the Katy Geissert Library. (Photo by Janice Yen)

Now that almost all the curriculum guides for Stand up for Justice: the Ralph Lazo Story (SUFJ) have been distributed to teachers, the committee is conducting fewer teacher training workshops. In 2014, SUFJ was screened by Kay Ochi at a DOR event at CSU San Marcos, by committee members at a UTLA Manzanar training workshop, and John Esaki, the film's director, introduced SUFJ and its producers to the audience at the November Boyle Heights and Little Tokyo Historical Societies event in Boyle Heights.

Interest in the 1981 Commission Hearings remained strong in 2014. A packed audience at the Katy Geissert Library in Torrance watched excerpts from the testimonies and listened to panelists Lane Hirabayashi, Miya Iwataki, Roy Nakano, Charles Hamasaki, Aiko Herzig, and Kay Ochi. Each provided insights—from organizing testifiers to appear before the Commission, to appearing as testifiers, and to doing research about the US government's role in the unjust incarceration. The Japanese American Historical Society of Southern California (JAHSSC) and Visual Communications (VC) were also co-sponsors. The event was one of the last co-sponsored by JAHSSC.

Due to advanced age, there are unfortunately fewer Nisei available to speak about their first-hand WWII camp experiences. NCCR has started showing excerpts from the Commission hearings, most recently to participants at Camp Musubi (a 1-week summer cultural immersion program for middle school youth). The emotional testimonies had a powerful impact on the youth, many of whom had never heard about the WWII incarceration of JAs.



Janice Yen introduces Digital Histories films at Visual Communications' film festival. (Photo by Steve Nagano)

NCCR Book on Grassroots Struggle for Redress On Track for Publication

By Richard Kastuda

For a long time, NCCR has talked about the need to write about the grassroots involvement in the Redress Movement and NCCR's role in activating the Japanese American community. We finally began work on a book, requesting stories from folks who have participated with NCCR over the last 35 years.

Lane Hirabayashi, who has agreed to be editor of the book, and the NCCR Book Committee—Kay Ochi, Kathy Masaoka, Suzy Katsuda, Janice Yen, and Richard Katsuda—have been working steadily on the book, tentatively titled "NCCR: The Grassroots Struggle for Japanese American Redress and Reparations". We have been busy editing submitted stories as well as conceptualizing and visualizing how to make the book engaging and readable. We know that such a book should have a lot of action photos—people in motion as they pushed for redress as well as justice in other arenas. We want to develop a book that will capture the reasons why people were inspired to fight not only for an apology and reparations from the government but also for dignity and redemption of the Japanese American community. We want to bring to life the emotions people felt when working with the grassroots community to get people to be heard by the government that had wronged them.

Qris Yamashita developed a mock-up sample for NCCR to see what the book might look like. The mock-up was very energizing, as it provided a good feel for how vibrant and eye-pleasing the final product could be.

Lane and the Book Committee are continuing to edit stories and determining how to organize the chapters and stories to make for a book that is easy and interesting to read as well as one that reveals the passion and dedication that drove our work with the community. We hope to publish the book by the end of 2015.

Efforts to Seek Reparations for Halmonis Continue

By Kathy Masaoka

The Japanese Government still has not given reparations or an apology directly to the remaining 50+ Korean Comfort women (“Halmonis”) who are still alive. Instead, Japanese media has been under scrutiny for their coverage and individual reporters have been threatened. The New York Times and the Los Angeles Times have published articles about the attack on the Asahi Shimbun (see links to articles at NCCR website—www.nccr-la.org).



Kathy Masaoka spoke at an event at the Glendale Korean Comfort Women’s Monument. (Photo by Janice Yen)

According to a Los Angeles Times op-ed piece, “Nationalist revisionists have attacked The Asahi newspaper and one of its former reporters who was among the first to bring the sexual slavery to light. Seizing on fabrications from a single source in a series of stories more than 20 years ago, the critics are arguing that Asahi alone was responsible for leading the world to believe a falsehood about Japan’s wartime behavior—an analysis that ignores the volumes of testimonies from the women themselves.”

The newspaper sent a team of reporters to talk with groups here, including NCCR, in an attempt to show that it is reviewing its reports on the Halmonis. NCCR continues to view this issue as a human rights and women’s rights issue that can be resolved by direct and individual reparations and an apology to each Halmoni from the Japanese Government.

The Los Angeles Times did print our response on 12/16/14 to their Op-Ed piece, where we strongly called upon the Japanese government to apologize and pay reparations to the Halmonis, just as the US government did to JAs which helped victims heal and provided a lesson about the importance of upholding the constitutional rights of all people.

Remembering Ichikawa, cont. of “J-Town.”

Koichi was a bartender for years at the old Tokyo Kaikan, but is remembered by NCCR for the volunteer time he put in as an example of our “people’s power” that was the critical factor in our grassroots movement. Ichikawa gave what spare time he had at NCCR events and meetings in Little Tokyo and provided us the ability to communicate with the Issei, especially those who were living in the Little Tokyo Towers. He passed away after an illness in May 2014. NCCR salutes his contribution to the cause of redress.



Koichi Ichikawa, (bottom center), after the 1991 DOR.

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Are You a Member? NCCR Needs You to Renew! Not a Member? Join Now!

NCCR is a not-for-profit organization that operates solely on grants and contributions from individuals like you. In order to keep up the fight for civil rights and justice, we need you to join or renew today.

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A Sustainable Future for Little Tokyo

By Kathy Masaoka

The vision of Sustainable Little Tokyo (SLT) is to transform Little Tokyo into Los Angeles' first cultural Eco District that is rooted in the culture and history of our community and helps to maintain thriving small businesses and an environmentally conscious community. In 2013, the community, under the guidance of the Little Tokyo Community Council, crafted a vision document to help guide this project and SLT now has three committees (Real Estate/Built Environments, Community Outreach and Engagement, and Arts and Culture).

One of the cultural values that SLT is building on is "Mottainai", or not wasting. In Japan, this is an actual campaign which is growing worldwide and supports the efforts to plant more trees in Kenya. They include the traditional "Three Rs—recycle, reuse and reduce" but have also added the "Fourth R—respect." Many churches and groups already practice Mottainai and we hope to share more of these examples.

SLT is conducting outreach presentations to residents and businesses in Little Tokyo, has participated in the Mottainai Eco Fest/Fandango with Great Leap and the JACCC, is working with community groups on "green" projects (possible solar panels for Nishi and JANM, storm water collection on Central in front of JANM) and with major festivals to implement water fountains and reusable water containers in order to eliminate the use of plastic throwaway bottles. In addition, as a "target city" of the Eco District organization, SLT plans to have at least one project in progress or completed in the next two years. For more information, contact Kristin Fukushima, Project Manager: Kristin@littletokyola.org or visit www.littletokyola.org.

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Details Inside!

NCRR Honors D. Maher Hathout

By Kathy Masaoka

Dr. Maher Hathout, a founder and Senior Advisor to the Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC), passed away on January 2, 2015. It was the words of Dr. Hathout that spurred the NCRR 9/11 Committee into action after 9/11. He talked about the need for our different communities to "get to know each other," a very simple idea that the committee took to heart when it joined with MPAC to initiate "Break the Fast" programs at Senshin and later at Higashi and Centenary to learn about and commemorate Ramadan.

He inspired us with his talk about courage and the importance of being "a light in the darkness—because if there is even a single light, then there is no darkness." Dr. Hathout was not just a light but a beacon that gave guidance to Muslims and to NCRR. We hope we can stand on his shoulders.



Haru Kuromiya (bottom center), whose father and uncle were detained at the Tuna Canyon Detention Center, and others are recognized for their efforts to preserve the site. (Photo by Janice Yen)