

Exploring Boston’s Nisei Sources and Contributions to the Japanese American Redress Movement

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INTRODUCTION

Recursive references to the causes and consequences of the World War II incarceration of Japanese Americans—such as George Takei’s acclaimed Broadway musical, *Allegiance*—have cascaded in recent years across multiple domains, including politics, law, and popular culture. These references have emerged in direct response to current constitutional challenges over presidential authority, war powers, civil liberties, and white nationalism.¹ Though I am not Japanese American, my interest in both the legacy of the incarceration, and more pointedly, the successful movement to gain redress and reparations from the United States government for Japanese American survivors during the late 1970s and 1980s, is two-fold. First, my interest stems from personal participation in Boston’s redress movement during that decisive period. Second, it is informed by my access to Asian American Studies archival sources at the University of Massachusetts Boston (UMass Boston) and the University of California, Los Angeles

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1. See generally Frank H. Wu, *Necessary But Not Sufficient: Two Case Studies of Government Apologies Failing to Bring Closure*, 16 HASTINGS RACE & POVERTY L.J. 193 (2019). The official 2018 trailer for *Allegiance* may be found at East West Players, *ALLEGIANCE LOS ANGELES - OFFICIAL TRAILER*, YOUTUBE (Mar. 8, 2018), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=327z6Dv_3xE [<https://perma.cc/Q8YX-NRV9>].

(UCLA), each of which include relevant but under-studied Japanese American reference materials focusing on contributions by second-generation Nisei² living in New England. This short essay highlights such neglected source materials and adds to the body of work on legacies of the Japanese American incarceration by revealing the unacknowledged significance of Boston-area contributions to the redress and reparations movement of Japanese Americans and their allies during a critical historical period of engagement.

I. ARCHIVAL SOURCES IN ASIAN AMERICAN STUDIES

One example of primary source materials informing this study is the Tetsuo Scott Miyakawa Papers special collection at UCLA (Miyakawa Papers). The premiere sociologist of his early Nisei generation, Scott Miyakawa was born in Los Angeles in 1906. The final thirty-five years of his post-war life and academic career from 1946 to 1981 were based at Boston University and my own university, UMass Boston.³ Miyakawa's pioneering sociological research and participant observation focused on the history and social organization of Issei living and working on the East Coast United States.⁴ He documented some of this important empirical research in his ground-breaking 1972 article on early Issei merchants in New York, though a much larger corpus of work is available through the Miyakawa special collection in UCLA's Charles E. Young Research Library.⁵ The Miyakawa Papers is an especially valuable archival collection for twentieth century Japanese American history in Boston and New York.

Notably, Miyakawa also taught the first Asian American Studies course as a sociology professor at UMass Boston in 1973. I met Miyakawa in his UMass Boston office in February 1981, six months before his death. Given his pioneering importance to the Asian American Studies field in Boston and his esteemed elder status within the Japanese American community, I sought his advice regarding outreach for the April 1981 Boston film premiere of *Hito Hata: Raise the Banner* produced by Visual Communications⁶ and how best to link the showing with expanding local support for redress. Six years

2. The Japanese generational terms, Issei (一世), Nisei (二世), and Sansei (三世) are used in this essay to refer respectively to the first, second, and third generations of Japanese in the United States. Issei represent the immigrant first generation who came from Japan to the United States. Nisei, the children of the Issei, were born in the United States as a second generation, followed by the grandchildren of the Issei, the Sansei or third generation.

3. Brian Niiya, *T. Scott Miyakawa*, DENSHO ENCYCLOPEDIA, http://encyclopedia.densho.org/T._Scott_Miyakawa [https://perma.cc/V2E9-3US4].

4. Yasuo Sakata, *T. Scott Miyakawa (1906–1981) and Japanese American History*, 8 AMERASIA JOURNAL 2, v-viii (1981).

5. See *Finding Aid for the Tetsuo Scott Miyakawa Papers, 1946–1981*, ONLINE ARCHIVE CAL., http://www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/tf4v19n99h/entire_text [https://perma.cc/7K9F-U5RH].

6. See Brian Niiya, *Hito Hata: Raise the Banner (film)*, RES. GUIDE, [https://resourceguide.densho.org/Hito_Hata:_Raise_the_Banner_\(film\)](https://resourceguide.densho.org/Hito_Hata:_Raise_the_Banner_(film)) [https://perma.cc/3GMJ-VHA6]; 1979/1908 – *Hito Hata: Raise the Banner*, VISUAL COMM. (Nov. 25, 2016), <https://vcmedia.org/vcyears/1980-hito-hata-raise-the-banner> [https://perma.cc/Z575-W8H8].

later, I began teaching the same Asian American Studies course he initiated—a course I have continued to teach at UMass Boston for over thirty years.

My initial interest in exploring the Miyakawa Papers during a research trip in 2016 was to gather documentation about the beginnings of Asian American Studies at UMass Boston. However, I quickly realized while going through his archived boxes of file folders and papers that Miyakawa not only participated in Nisei social, cultural, and educational events in New England, including redress activities, but he had also personally protested against the incarceration while living in New York during the war years. For example, Miyakawa's own curriculum vitae as a UMass Boston professor listed responsibilities carried out in 1942–43 for the New York Emergency Committee for Japanese Americans and the Japanese American Citizens League, New York “to help counter the pro-evacuation propaganda of the West Coast racists.”⁷

In addition to the Miyakawa Papers and my personal files, I also draw on relevant source materials housed in archives of both the Asian American Studies Program and Institute for Asian American Studies at UMass Boston. Archival materials informing this essay primarily relate to the histories of the New England Nisei (NEN) social organization and the Japanese American Citizens League—New England (NEJACL) chapter as well as the history of local community organizing that led to the 1981 Boston hearing of the Commission on the Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (CWRIC). Throughout the remainder of this essay, I offer insights and examples gleaned from these files.

II. OVERVIEW OF NISEI HISTORY IN BOSTON

Little has been published about the history of Japanese Americans in Boston. Scholars typically cite Nakahama (John) Manjiro (中濱 万次郎) as the first Japanese in Massachusetts based on his remarkable story of shipwreck and rescue in the Pacific by a Yankee whaling ship captain⁸ who brought him to New Bedford, MA in 1843.⁹ By 1900, a small number of Japanese nationals representing Japanese transnational business companies

7. See curriculum vitae page *infra* Attachment 1; an example of the local source materials contained in the Miyakawa archives may be found *infra* Attachment 2.

8. See *Yankee Whaling*, NEW BEDFORD WHALING MUSEUM (Aug. 3, 2016), <https://www.whalingmuseum.org/learn/research-topics/overview-of-north-american-whaling/american-whaling> [<https://perma.cc/8QTY-PQ3Y>].

9. *Photo Possibly of John Manjiro, First Japanese to Live in U.S., with Skipper Found in Massachusetts Library*, JAPAN TIMES (Apr. 24, 2015), <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/04/24/national/history/photo-possibly-john-manjiro-first-japanese-live-u-s-skipper-found-massachusetts-library/#.Vpqq4DydDdl> [<https://perma.cc/ZUQ8-J4U9>]; National Endowment for the Humanities, *Timeline of Manjiro's Life to supplement Voyages of Manjiro Map Interactive*, EDSITEMENT, <https://edsitement.neh.gov/sites/default/files/2018-08/Manjiro-narrative.pdf> [<https://perma.cc/73SK-DEFU>].

had established branch operations in East Coast cities,¹⁰ particularly in New York.¹¹ Children of these early East Coast Issei businessmen would have been among the first Nisei in the United States, but they are absent from published scholarship.¹² For example, Ichioka's West Coast-focused discussion of Nisei children's education does not mention them.¹³

The only Japanese Americans living within the city of Boston at the time of World War II to have received any public acknowledgment is the Hamano family from the city's Charlestown neighborhood. In a 1987 news article from the *Boston Globe* metro section, journalist Kevin Cullen writes:

Hamano, the clerk-magistrate at Charlestown District Court, experienced bigotry firsthand, growing up Japanese in blue-collar Charlestown during World War II. They say members of his family were once held in California internment camps during the war. And, they say, a generation later, Hamano's children endured taunts and racial slurs Turmoil is nothing new to Hamano. He was 11 years old, living in Charlestown, when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor Michael Powers, a Charlestown attorney, said Hamano became an accepted member of the community, despite the climate of the war years. "It was a difficult time for someone Japanese to live through, so he's quite a success story," Powers said.¹⁴

Hamano's obituary from August 3, 1999, in the *Boston Herald* notes that he was born in Charlestown in 1930 and graduated from Boston English High School in 1947, having attended secondary school there during the war.¹⁵ However, no other publications discuss the Hamano family's history or legacy in Boston.

Following World War II, the Japanese American community dispersed on a large scale from its historic concentrations on the West Coast to areas throughout the country. Some Nisei migrated to New England, in part because of the region's colleges and universities.¹⁶ Midwest and East Coast college opportunities during the war years further facilitated migration by allowing roughly 4,000 college-age Nisei to enroll in colleges and leave their

10. T. Scott Miyakawa, *Early New York Issei: Founders of Japanese-American Trade*, in EAST ACROSS THE PACIFIC; HISTORICAL & SOCIOLOGICAL STUDIES OF JAPANESE IMMIGRATION & ASSIMILATION 176-77 (Hilary Conroy & T. Scott Miyakawa eds., 1972).

11. *Id.*; see *infra* Attachment 3 for an example in the Miyakawa papers of an undated draft manuscript with handwritten edits about Issei contributions in New England, including specific references to Boston.

12. See generally DANIEL H. INOUE, *DISTANT ISLANDS: THE JAPANESE AMERICAN COMMUNITY IN NEW YORK CITY, 1876-1930S* (2018).

13. See generally YUKI ICHIOKA, *THE ISSEI: THE WORLD OF THE FIRST GENERATION JAPANESE IMMIGRANTS, 1885-1924, 196-210* (1988).

14. Kevin Cullen, *Supporters Rally Around Magistrate Say Hamano Has Known Bigotry; Charge Unfair Treatment*, BOS. GLOBE, Oct. 1, 1987, at M25.

15. *Memorial: Sadazo John Hamano*, FIND A GRAVE (Aug. 3, 1999), <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/189311228/sadazo-john-hamano> [<https://perma.cc/3TGC-PHQ3>].

16. ALLAN W. AUSTIN, *FROM CONCENTRATION CAMP TO CAMPUS: JAPANESE AMERICAN STUDENTS AND WORLD WAR II* 49-51 (2007).

incarcerated families.¹⁷ The National Japanese American Student Relocation Council (NJASRC) enabled these educational opportunities. Religious and social justice groups, such as the Quaker-based American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), also provided strong advocacy and funding. The AFSC had national headquarters in Philadelphia and regional offices in New York, Boston, and other East Coast and Midwestern cities.¹⁸ From 2010 to 2011, Dr. Paul Watanabe and the Institute for Asian American Studies at UMass Boston collected video oral history interviews from eighteen surviving Nisei in their eighties and nineties who had received NJASRC support. Recordings and transcripts of these interviews from the “From Confinement to College” project are available online.¹⁹ They include individual interviews with Nisei, such as Yutaka Kobayashi, Glenn Kumekawa, and Robert Naka, who settled in New England after the war and played important local community leadership roles.²⁰

As organizational archives reveal, Boston-area Nisei established more formal organizations during the late 1970s by convening the NEN as a social support group and by creating and sustaining NEJACL. Core members of the NEN also then established and endowed the Nisei Student Relocation Commemorative Fund (NSRCF) in 1980, which still thrives today through regular meetings, a robust scholarship program, and an annual newsletter. The NSRCF is currently the most active representation of Nisei legacy in New England. Its history, mission, and continuing commitments, sustained for almost a half-century, deserve much fuller attention.²¹ For example, Yukata Kobayashi is one of an ever-shrinking group of still-active, recognized Nisei leaders in Massachusetts. Born in San Francisco in 1924, he served as president of the NSRCF in the immediate shadow of 9/11 in 2001 and explained:

As WWII becomes a more distant memory with each passing year, it is clear to me that we need to look at the Nisei experience of that time, not so much as a Japanese American experience, but as a lesson in

17. See generally GARY OKIHIRO, *STORIED LIVES: JAPANESE AMERICAN STUDENTS AND WORLD WAR II* (1999).

18. *Id.*

19. See *From Confinement to College: Video Oral Histories of Japanese American Students in World War II*, JOSEPH P. HEALEY LIBR. DIGITAL COLLECTIONS, <http://openarchives.umb.edu/cdm/search/collection/p15774coll5> [<https://perma.cc/39UX-UX3G>].

20. See *Interview with Glenn Kumekawa, 2011*, JOSEPH P. HEALEY LIBR. DIGITAL COLLECTIONS (Oct. 23, 2010), <https://openarchives.umb.edu/digital/collection/p15774coll5/id/55/rec/7> [<https://perma.cc/CL9N-D3LX>]; *Interview with Yutaka Kobayashi, 2011*, JOSEPH P. HEALEY LIBR. DIGITAL COLLECTIONS (Nov. 18, 2011), <https://openarchives.umb.edu/digital/collection/p15774coll5/id/50/rec/18> [<https://perma.cc/PE8D-EKGQ>]; *Interview with Robert Naka, 2010*, JOSEPH P. HEALEY LIBR. DIGITAL COLLECTIONS (Oct. 22, 2010), <https://openarchives.umb.edu/digital/collection/p15774coll5/id/65/rec/10> [<https://perma.cc/Z92W-WWKW>].

21. See NISEI STUDENT RELOCATION COMMEMORATIVE FUND, <http://www.nsrcfund.org> [<https://perma.cc/VK6P-2TRX>]; see also *Who We Are: Overview*, NISEI STUDENT RELOCATION COMMEMORATIVE FUND, <http://www.nsrcfund.org/who-we-are/overview> [<https://perma.cc/KWD6-9HWA>].

American history. It is a lesson of how democracy can fail in a time of crisis. Persons of the Islamic faith in America, both immigrants and their American children, have experienced what happened to the Nisei in 1942, in part, since September 11, 2001. We must take a firm stand to defend the civil liberties guaranteed by our Constitution to all of its citizens. The Nisei experience during WWII must not be allowed to happen ever again to any other ethnic group in America. Our democracy, which is the envy of the world, is our birthright. To have any real meaning, democracy must work equally during war as it does so well during peace. It is this aspect, an important lesson of democracy failed, which is timeless.²²

The organizational archives of the NEJACL that are housed at UMass Boston's Institute for Asian American Studies include an undated, unsigned, handwritten, two-page local history timeline that highlights the following:

- 1945 – NEJACL founded. Lasted about two years. Scott Miyakawa. Chapter was made up of students and some non-Japanese Americans.
- 1976–77 – Formation of “New England Nisei.”
- 1979 – Creation of NEJACL. Earliest record of a public meeting is from May 20, 1979 –called “America’s Concentration Camps.”
- 1979–1981 – Major task—trying to convince the Commission on the Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians to hold a hearing in Boston.
- Major event—co-sponsored showing of film “Hito Hata” with Asian American Resource Workshop at Harvard, April 1981. Several hundred attended.
- August 1981 – Scott Miyakawa died.
- December 1981 – CWRIC hearing (final one) held in Cambridge.²³

III. LOCAL NISEI LEADERSHIP LEGACIES

Scott Miyakawa's name appears prominently in the brief NEJACL chronology, suggesting his significant influence. Although my initial purpose for reviewing the Miyakawa Papers at UCLA focused on his East Coast Issei research project and his Asian American Studies contributions in Boston, I also discovered evidence of his personal participation in the NEN's local organizing activities of the late 1970s. For example, an outreach letter dated August 1, 1977, in the Miyakawa Papers describes an initial local organizing activity of the NEN to follow-up on a national discussion, sponsored in 1976 by JACL and the National Institute of Mental Health, regarding Nisei retirement issues.²⁴ The letter, sent from the Connecticut

22. Peter Nien-chu Kiang, *Checking Southeast Asian American Realities in Pan-Asian American Agendas*, 2 AAPI NEXUS 48 (2004).

23. See *infra* Attachment 4 for the handwritten, two-page local history timeline that highlights from the archives of the NEJACL at UMass Boston's Institute for Asian American Studies.

24. See *infra* Attachment 5 for outreach letter dated August 1, 1977 in the Miyakawa papers.

home address of NEN and NSRCF co-founder, Nobu Hibino, specifically highlights the “Uniqueness of New England Nisei in Retirement” and asks:

Do you have anxieties regarding parents who live with you and feel isolated from their peers? . . . Have you thought about moving to a warmer place . . . one that’s familiar to you like the West Coast? . . . How can we locate Issei and Nisei who are in need of support? . . . Are we so assimilated now that we don’t need even this type of dialogue?²⁵

Gary Okihiro’s NJASRC study briefly references the NEN group and this initial NEN gathering as “the first time they had been in the company of such a large group of Japanese Americans since wartime detention.”²⁶ From that point on, through the 1980s and 1990s, the NEN continued to meet regularly for social gatherings, including Oshōgatsu new year celebrations, which annually rekindled a sense of community for the small and dispersed Nisei population in New England. These much-loved new year celebrations have continued to the present thanks to faithful organizing by Sansei and Yonsei descendants of the NEN founders and other extended family members and friends.

Included in the NEJACL archives are the sign-in guest books from some of the early Oshōgatsu celebrations. The guest books provide evidence of Nisei community life in New England during the years when the national campaign for redress was still evolving. For example, the guest book of the fifth annual event in 1982 shows an entry for the previously-mentioned Hamano family from Charlestown in Boston as well as other prominent Nisei such as the World War II veteran, Sus Ito (with Minnie Ito). In 2015, the Japanese American National Museum (JANM) gallery featured Ito’s life story and his acclaimed collection of black-white photographs documenting his military service as a member of the segregated, all-Nisei 442nd Regimental Combat Team—the most highly decorated unit for its size in US military history. Ito’s rare collection of photographs from World War II, including those depicting his 552nd Field Artillery Battalion’s leading role in the liberation of the Dachau Jewish death camp, are part of JANM’s permanent archives in Los Angeles.²⁷ Through the GI Bill, Ito pursued higher education after the war, earned a Ph.D. in Biology from Cornell, and became a professor of anatomy at Harvard Medical School. Though born in California, Ito passed away at age ninety-six in Massachusetts in 2015.

In the following year at the sixth annual NEN Oshōgatsu on January 15, 1983, the first three families listed in the sign-in book are Sus and Minnie Ito, followed by Eji and Virginia Suyama, and the Hamanos.²⁸ This listing is

25. *Id.*

26. See OKIHIRO, *supra* note 17, at 141–42.

27. For the NEN Oshōgatsu sign-in book first page dated January 2, 1982, see *infra* Attachment 6; for more about Ito’s life, military service, and World War II photographs, see *Before They Were Heroes: Sus Ito’s World War II Images*, JAPANESE AM. NAT. MUSEUM, <http://www.janm.org/exhibits/sus-ito> [<https://perma.cc/88WG-KCAF>].

28. See *infra* Attachment 7 for the sign-in book for the sixth annual NEN Oshōgatsu on January

noteworthy because Eji Suyama, like Ito, also served heroically in Italy and France as a member of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, and he later also pursued higher education through his GI bill benefits. Born in Seattle, Suyama completed an M.D. at the University of Chicago and eventually became Chief of Surgery at Maine Coast Memorial Hospital in Ellsworth, Maine. Despite the five-hour drive to Boston, he and his family came each year to attend the Oshōgatsu celebration. With his decorated military service background, Suyama actively advocated for redress throughout the 1980s, and, until his death in 2009, he also publicly defended those Japanese Americans in camp who resisted draft registration and thereby faced federal imprisonment. In one of many letters he wrote on this subject, Suyama explained in 1992: “My view is that the resisters and some of the other protestors are political and historical heroes no less than those who remained in the camps or served in war. Will it remain for the future generations to vouchsafe the redress of the protestors and is it too late for the Nisei?” Like the Miyakawa Papers, Suyama’s valuable personal archives are also housed at UCLA in the Suyama Project special collection, which “aims to preserve the history of Japanese American resistance during World War II.”²⁹

With the exception of local Asian American Studies units, New England educational and cultural institutions have failed to recognize the historical legacies of NEN leaders such as T. Scott Miyakawa, Susumo Ito, and Eji Suyama. In discovering their names among the first-to-arrive attendees in the NEN Oshōgatsu guest books, one can easily imagine Ito and Suyama—both combat survivors of the legendary rescue of the Lost Battalion from German enemy forces in the mountains of France—arriving punctually, as veterans do, at the 1983 celebration, ready to share new year mochi and old war stories along with photos of Yonsei grandchildren and commentaries about how to win redress. Their humanity and heroism warranted far wider recognition then, and deserve public acknowledgment now.

IV. BOSTON’S CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE COMMISSION ON THE WARTIME RELOCATION AND INTERNMENT OF CIVILIANS

Through providing social support and cultural gatherings, the NEN attracted not only combat veterans of the 442nd such as Sus Ito and Eji Suyama, but also others who had benefited directly from the college opportunities provided through the NJASRC during the war years, such as Nobu Hibino, the original initiator of the NEN.³⁰ All of these NEN members were well aware of the activities of the national JACL, the National Coalition for Redress & Reparations (NCRR), and other organizations that were

15, 1983.

29. See *The Suyama Project*, UCLA ASIAN AM. STUD. CTR., http://www.suyamaproject.org/?page_id=5 [https://perma.cc/TPW7-RZ9V].

30. See AUSTIN, *supra* note 16; OKIHIRO, *supra* note 17.

intensively organizing and advocating for redress and reparations through a variety of grass-roots, legal, and legislative strategies. With the activation of the NEJACL chapter in 1979, members of the NEN and allies from the Boston Chinatown-based Asian American Resource Workshop (AARW)³¹ launched their own local campaign, noted in the NEJACL's handwritten chronology as their "major task—trying to convince the Commission on the Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians to hold a hearing in Boston".³²

Appointed by President Carter and Congress in 1980, the bipartisan, nine-member Commission on the Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (CWRIC) included well-known legal and political leaders. One of these members was an East Coast Japanese American, Justice William Marutani from Philadelphia.³³ In addition, two of the commissioners, one Republican and one Democrat, were from Boston. The former was Senator Edward Brooke, a World War II military veteran who served in a segregated, all-Black infantry unit and later became the first African American to be elected to the US Senate in the post-Reconstruction era.³⁴ The latter was Father Robert Drinan, an anti-Vietnam War activist, Jesuit priest, and five-term Congressman from Greater Boston.³⁵ Interestingly, the NEJACL archive includes a letter dated July 24, 1980, from Father Drinan to Ms. Kei Kaneda, a Nisei leader of the NEJACL, that reports the successful passing of H.R. 5499, the Act to Establish the Commission on the Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, which Father Drinan had co-sponsored in the US House of Representatives.³⁶ The social justice-centered life stories and relatively progressive political contexts of Boston shared by Senator Brooke and Father Drinan deserve further consideration as contributing factors in Japanese American redress and reparations history. As Niiya notes, quoting from the Senator's autobiography, Brooke reflected, "From personal experience, I knew the sting of inequitable treatment, but I was not prepared for the agonizing testimony about what our government did to its Japanese American community."³⁷

31. See Peter Nien-chu Kiang, *Asian American Resource Workshop: Art and Culture for the Community*, 2 E. WIND 11 (1983).

32. See *infra* Attachment 4 for the handwritten, two-page local history timeline that highlights from the archives of the NEJACL at UMass Boston's Institute for Asian American Studies.

33. See *William Marutani Discusses Being the Only Japanese American Commission Member*, DENSHO ENCYCLOPEDIA, <https://encyclopedia.densho.org/sources/en-denshovh-mwilliam-01-0012-1> [<https://perma.cc/6VWB-2ZBG>].

34. See *Edward Brooke, Former CWRIC Member, Dies at 95*, RAFU SHIMPO (Jan. 7, 2015), <http://www.rafu.com/2015/01/edward-brooke-former-cwric-member-dies-at-95>

[<https://perma.cc/3L9M-JR34>]; Brian Niiya, *Robert F. Drinan*, DENSHO ENCYCLOPEDIA, <http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Robert.F.Drinan> [<https://perma.cc/HL6E-MXN2>].

35. See Niiya, *supra* note 34.

36. See *infra* Attachment 8 for Congressional Representative Robert F. Drinan, letter to Kei E. Kaneda dated July 24, 1980.

37. See EDWARD W. BROOKE, BRIDGING THE DIVIDE: MY LIFE 276 (2007); Brian Niiya, *Edward W. Brooke*, DENSHO ENCYCLOPEDIA, <http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Edward.W.Brooke>

As an integral part of its national investigation, the CWRIC conducted eight hearings in cities throughout the country, including Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle, Anchorage, Chicago, New York, and Boston, along with initial and culminating Commission meetings in Washington, D.C. Importantly, the bulk of testimony gathered at the hearings came from well-organized grass-roots advocacy campaigns by the JAACL, NCRR, and local organizations in each respective city. News reports, film documentaries, research articles, and books have consistently noted the cathartic release of Issei, Nisei, and Sansei testimony through the CWRIC hearings.³⁸ The CWRIC completed its work in 1982 and released its historic final report, *Personal Justice Denied* in 1982–1983.³⁹

V. CWRIC AND THE BOSTON HEARING

Different from prior CWRIC hearings, where testimony focused primarily on multigenerational Japanese American community perspectives, the Boston hearing strategically enabled legal, political, and constitutional experts to testify on issues and historical precedents of government reparations. The NEJAACL archive includes a letter dated October 26, 1981, from John Tateishi, director of JAACL's National Committee for Redress, to David Sakura, the NEJAACL chapter president at that time, in which Tateishi stated:

Unlike the hearings in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle, and Chicago, the intent of the Commission in holding a meeting in Boston will be to solicit testimony of constitutional and legal experts. In this regard, the Boston hearing will be a legal conference rather than a hearing . . . please keep in mind that the Commission has already heard from over six hundred so-called community witnesses and that further testimony on the camp experience is therefore unlikely to be accepted.⁴⁰

Consistent with the decision to privilege the expertise of legal experts over community witnesses for the Boston hearing, the target host site was Harvard University. Evidence in the NEJAACL archive, for example, reveals a letter dated September 1, 1981, from Kiyoko Morimoto, director of a student counseling center at Harvard, to Harvard President Derek Bok, seeking Harvard's sponsorship of the CWRIC hearing. In his letter, Morimoto—a member of the NEN and NEJAACL, and a 442nd veteran himself—noted the

[<https://perma.cc/L862-FMAZ>].

38. See KAREN L. ISHIZUKA, *LOST & FOUND: RECLAIMING THE JAPANESE AMERICAN INCARCERATION* (2006); MITCHELL TAKESHI MAKI ET AL., *ACHIEVING THE IMPOSSIBLE DREAM: HOW JAPANESE AMERICANS OBTAINED REDRESS* (1999); NCRR: *THE GRASSROOTS STRUGGLE FOR JAPANESE AMERICAN REDRESS AND REPARATIONS* (Lane Hirabayashi et al. eds., 2018); KASUKO I. TAKEZAWA, *BREAKING THE SILENCE: REDRESS AND JAPANESE AMERICAN ETHNICITY* (1995).

39. COMM'N ON WARTIME RELOCATION & INTERNMENT CIVILIANS, *PERSONAL JUSTICE DENIED* (1997).

40. See *infra* Attachment 9 for letter dated October 26, 1981 from John Tateishi to David Sakura from the NEJAACL archive.

intended focus on expert testimony and emphasized in a freestanding, one-sentence paragraph, “There is considerable interest on the part of Commission staff, Edward Brooke, Father Drinan, and others in a Hearing in the Boston area.”⁴¹ This is a savvy reference to the two Boston-based CWRIC commissioners, each of whom also had considerable influence over federal and local policy-making and funding allocations that might matter to Harvard’s President. The reference also suggests a pragmatic realpolitik for Harvard to host the CWRIC hearings, independent of any ethical or educational rationale to have legal scholars clarify the basis for reparations principles and practices. Indeed, the Boston hearing held at Harvard University—the final venue in the Commission’s itinerary of national outreach—provided commissioners with a viable legal framework to consider recommending monetary redress and reparations, beyond simply calling for an official national apology.⁴² Though the Boston hearing seemed less compelling or community-engaged than the grass-roots testimony organized by the other seven sites, it nevertheless, represented a unique and necessary step in the overall redress process. The NEJACL archive includes a flyer for the CWRIC Boston hearing held on December 9, 1981.⁴³

Here, it is also worth noting the leadership role of Barney Frank who succeeded Drinan in Congress from the Massachusetts 4th Congressional District in 1981. As Chair of the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Administrative Law and Governmental Relations in 1987, Frank successfully helped champion the legislative campaign to enact the CWRIC recommendations through Congressional passage of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, which President Reagan then signed into federal law. May and Taka Takayanagi, Rep. Frank’s closely trusted Nisei constituents from his metro Boston home district, were also active participants in NEJACL meetings and NEN Oshōgatsu gatherings, the archives significantly document.⁴⁴

VI. CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE

In a 2012 interview conducted for an Asian American Studies course project at UCLA, Ameena Mirza Qazi, former Deputy Executive Director and Staff Attorney for the Los Angeles branch of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), directly connected her own work with Japanese American community history. As a leader of arguably the best organized civil rights advocacy network for Muslim Americans nationally, she observed:

I think one of the things when we learn about the histories of our communities, especially like the K-12 version, you know, it’s very

41. See *infra* Attachment 10 for Morimoto’s letter dated September 1, 1981 to Derek C. Bok, Harvard President.

42. See COMM’N ON WARTIME RELOCATION & INTERNMENT CIVILIANS, *supra* note 39.

43. See *infra* Attachment 11 for flyer for panels on wartime relocation and internment of citizens.

44. See *infra* Attachment 13. It documents the program for “The World War II Incarceration of Japanese Americans: A Case for Redress” event, dated May 4, 1980, which references the Takayanagis.

glossed over. And you see the victories, and you see, you don't see all the politics even within the movements, right, and you don't see the struggles just in creating that momentum within the community. So you read about the JA community. I remember I was talking to somebody and cuz in one of the workshops I used a picture of the JACL early in the 1940s and how they started working against the internment and for JA empowerment and inclusion, so I don't know if they were so much against internment, but regardless, and then somebody told me how actually a lot of people in the Japanese American community had a lot of problems with the JACL at first. They thought they were like elitist and very far from the community, too. And I thought that was really interesting to hear, but it's also encouraging to understand their struggles because when you're in the midst of trying to build momentum and you deal with all the sort of politics and intrigues within your own community. . . I think what my biggest thing is right now is just working specifically with our community, the Muslim community on not feeling victimized, cuz when you feel like you're a victim, you become disempowered. You develop a negative, reactionary identity and a narrative for your community that will stick with you forever, you know. And then you are useless to everyone else and every other cause out there. And so my big thing right now is to really help our community see its strength and its potential and its role in this country and in this nation's history of civil struggle. And to see that's our role. We're not victims. We're the next group, with other groups, to push this nation's history forward into the direction of preserving freedoms and liberty and justice. That's where we fit in. We're not gonna just go down in history as victims. And to me, I think just that piece, if we can accomplish that, if I could work for the next 10, 15, 20 years, and that's all we accomplish, whether people have a favorable opinion about us then as Muslims or whether we're still being abused or not, at least if we understand the power of our own conscience, then that is more important to me than anything right now.⁴⁵

Since then, the human terror and racist toxicity of contemporary US national policy and political discourse regarding Muslim populations, immigrants and refugees, and communities of color have intensified. However, it is important to recall that, seven decades earlier in 1942–1943, Dr. T. Scott Miyakawa worked with similar intention and dedication to counter “pro-evacuation propaganda of the West Coast racists . . .”⁴⁶ By highlighting unexplored archives from Boston-area Nisei sources, one can more clearly recognize how local individuals such as Scott Miyakawa and Eji Suyama and organizations such as the NEN and NEJACL chapter contributed to the movement for Japanese American redress and reparations. Their contributions enabled the local community—in Mirza-Qazi's words—

45. Interview by Jazz Kiang with Ameena Mirza Qazi in Anaheim, Cal. (Dec. 7, 2012).

46. See curriculum vitae page, *infra* Attachment 1.

to “see its strength and its potential and its role in this country and in this nation’s history of civil struggle.”⁴⁷ With a sense of purpose akin to such contemporary commitments, during the US-Iran hostage crisis of 1979–1981, Eji Suyama asserted in one of his letters found in the NEJACL archive, dated March 18, 1980:

We had been assured that “it can’t happen again.” Yet today the same words, slogans and threats are being directed at Iranian Americans, permanent and temporary Iranian aliens. Ironically Senator Hayakawa recently Advocating [sic] incarceration and repatriation of Iranian “nationals” seem to have forgotten that he was under such threats during WW II!⁴⁸

Not coincidentally, on May 4, 1980, just six weeks after writing this letter, Eji Suyama delivered opening remarks at a community forum, “The World War II Incarceration of Japanese Americans: A Case for Redress.” The NEJACL archive in Boston and the Miyakawa Papers includes a flyer for this forum.⁴⁹ According to the forum agenda, Suyama and a panel of local Japanese American community members then shared their personal experiences of incarceration, and Dr. T. Scott Miyakawa delivered closing comments at the conclusion of the panel. Occurring eighteen months before the Boston CWRIC hearing at Harvard, this community panel created the necessary space where NEN could visibly voice their testimony in ways that the Boston CWRIC hearing—with its similarly necessary prioritization of invited legal experts—could not accommodate. With no transcription of the 1980 Case for Redress forum available in the archives, however, only those present were witness, and their numbers become fewer with every passing year. Indeed, the energy and evidence of local Nisei history-making contributions would have inevitably dissipated from direct participation and personal memory to obscure footnote and eventual erasure if the mission-driven Asian American Studies units at UCLA and UMass Boston had not preserved the primary sources referenced throughout this essay.

CONCLUSION

At a time when contemporary threats of “racial prejudice, wartime hysteria, and a failure of political leadership” eerily echo those historic motive forces for Executive Order 9066 identified by the CWRIC, the voices and activities of Boston-area Nisei offer modest but much-needed insight and inspiration.⁵⁰ The process of sustaining a coherent and connected post-war Nisei identity amongst a physically dispersed community in New England is, in and of itself, a remarkable accomplishment that prior studies

47. See Kiang, *supra* note 45.

48. See *infra* Attachment 12 Eji Suyama’s letters found from the NEJACL archive dated March 18, 1980.

49. See *infra* Attachment 13 program for The World War II Incarceration of Japanese Americans: A Case for Redress dated May 4, 1980.

50. See COMM’N ON WARTIME RELOCATION & INTERNMENT CIVILIANS, *supra* note 39, at 18.

of post-war Japanese American communities have not documented. Moreover, the persistence of organizations such as the NEJACL and NSRCF and their commitment to annual gatherings such as the Oshōgatsu new year celebration established originally by NEN offer relevant lessons for newer communities of color and other Asian American populations in metro Boston that have similarly experienced collective historical or cross-generational trauma.⁵¹

Finally, as unprecedented steps towards reparations for American descendants of slavery begin a pathway through the US Congress, Boston's role as a highly engaged site in the process to gain Japanese American redress during the decisive decade of the 1980s underscores the importance of accounting for a wider range of participants and actions than previously recognized in the redress literature. Therefore, exploring Asian American Studies archives dedicated to examples of Nisei in Boston suggests the importance of developing even greater nuance in strategy and tactics in order to address the daunting legal and political challenges that accompany today's demands for reparations and historically-accountable racial justice.⁵²

51. See, e.g., MONICA CHIU, *ASIAN AMERICANS IN NEW ENGLAND: CULTURE AND COMMUNITY* (2009); GREG ROBINSON, *AFTER CAMP: PORTRAITS IN MIDCENTURY JAPANESE AMERICAN LIFE AND POLITICS* (2012).

52. William Darity, Jr. & A. Kirsten Mullen, *How Reparations for American Descendants of Slavery Could Narrow the Racial Wealth Divide*, NBC (June 20, 2019), <https://www.nbcnews.com/think/opinion/how-reparations-american-descendants-slavery-could-narrow-racial-wealth-divide-ncna1019691> [https://perma.cc/3CLZ-KXVV].