

## JACL AND THE CAMPAIGN FOR REDRESS

The program of a panel of former JACL officials was held Sunday, March 10, at Faith United Methodist Church in Torrance. It was cosponsored by the Greater L.A. JACL and Faith UMC's Social Action Committee.

### PANELISTS:

RON IKEJIRI, Moderator, JACL Washington Representative, 1978-1984

FRANK SATO, National JACL President, 1984-1986

FLOYD SHIMOMURA, National JACL Vice-President of Public Affairs, 1978-1982;  
National JACL President, 1982-1984

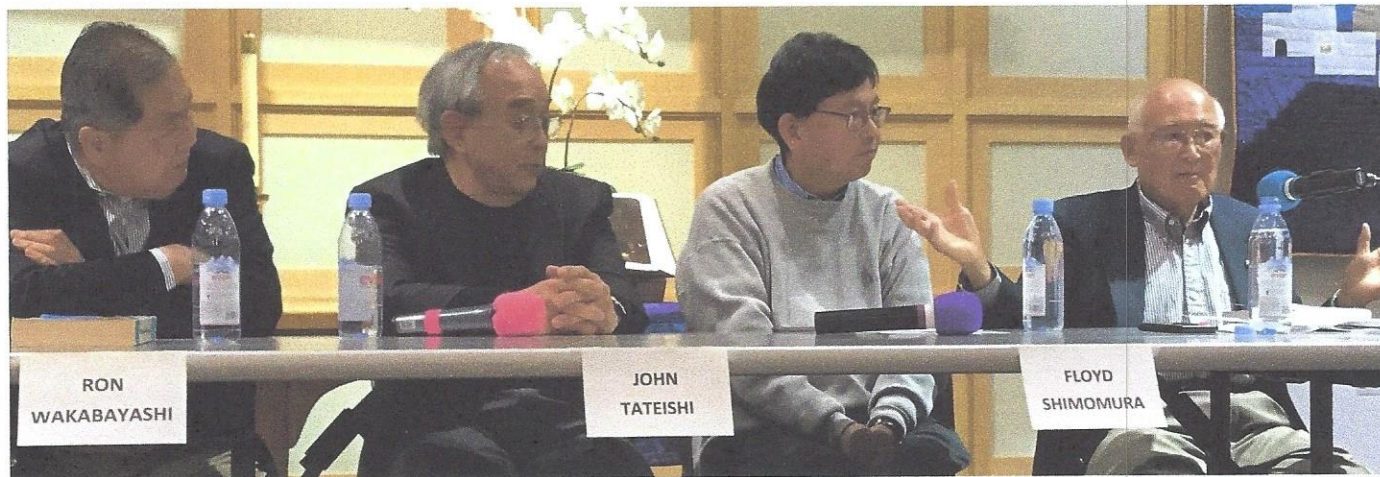
JOHN TATEISHI, JACL Chair of the National Redress Committee, 1978-1981;  
JACL National Redress Director, 1981-1986;  
JACL National Director, 1999-2007

RON WAKABAYASHI, JACL National Director, 1981-1988



from left: Ron Wakabayashi, John Tateishi, Floyd Shimomura, Frank Sato, Ron Ikejiri

Miyako Kadogawa



Miyako Kadogawa



## JACL AND THE CAMPAIGN FOR REDRESS

The program of a panel of former JACL officials was held Sunday, March 10, at Faith United Methodist Church in Torrance. It was cosponsored by the Greater L.A. JACL and Faith UMC's Social Action Committee.

### PANELISTS:

RON IKEJIRI, Moderator, JACL Washington Representative, 1978-1984

FRANK SATO, National JACL President, 1984-1986

FLOYD SHIMOMURA, National JACL Vice-President of Public Affairs, 1978-1982;  
National JACL President, 1982-1984

JOHN TATEISHI, JACL Chair of the National Redress Committee, 1978-1981;  
JACL National Redress Director, 1981-1986;  
JACL National Director, 1999-2007

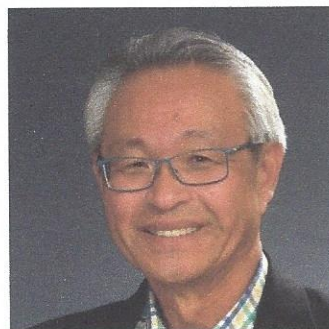
RON WAKABAYASHI, JACL National Director, 1981-1988



John Tateishi, Senator Dan Inouye and Ron Ikejiri are looking at CWRIC report "Personal Justice Denied."



Ron Wakabayashi



Ron Ikejiri



Frank Sato, Floyd Shimomura and Ron Ikejiri at the White House (early 80s)



# JACL and the Campaign for Redress

By LOUISE SAKAMOTO

A panel of former JACL officials, co-sponsored by the Greater L.A. JACL and the Social Action Committee of Faith United Methodist Church, was held at Faith UMC in Torrance on March 10. The panelists were:

- Ron Ikejiri (moderator), JACL Washington representative, 1978-1984;

- Frank Sato, National JACL president, 1984-1986;

- Floyd Shimomura, National JACL vice president of public affairs, 1978-1981; National JACL president, 1982-1984;

- John Tateishi, chair of JACL National Redress Committee, 1978-1981; JACL national redress director, 1981-1986; JACL national director, 1999-2007;

- Ron Wakabayashi, JACL national director, 1981-1988.

The panelists discussed JACL's national legislative effort in 1970s through the 1980s to seek redress for the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II. The Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of

Civilians Act was signed into law by President Jimmy Carter on July 31, 1980. The commission held public hearings in 1981 and issued a report that became the basis of redress legislation.

The Civil Liberties Act of 1988 was signed into law by President Ronald Reagan on August 10, 1988. It granted wartime survivors a public apology, individual reparations of \$20,000, and a public education fund. The panelists acknowledged that many individuals and organizations worked for redress and there were several paths that led to a common goal.

One of the stories told was about Sato and a meeting at the White House in 1984. From 1953, he worked in various audit departments in the U.S. government. President Carter appointed Sato inspector general at the Department of Transportation. President Reagan appointed him inspector general of the Environmental Protection Agency. He became one of the highest-ranking Asian American officials in the U.S. government.

"I was reappointed, we were meeting much more frequently," Sato said. "Gov. Reagan brought in his war on fraud...in government to Washington. And he went one step further. He set up a presidential council on integrity and efficiency, and all of us presidentially appointed inspector generals and all the major departments were on that council, and they asked me to chair the audit committee of that council. So I had more frequent reasons to meet with the leadership in the White House."

The chairman of the council was Jack Svahn, Reagan's top domestic policy advisor.

Shimomura recalled that there was going to be a JACL convention in Hawaii in 1984. "We were trying to get the meeting with the White House so that we could give a nice, rosy report to the delegates when they got to the convention because the redress bill was introduced earlier that year. We sent nice letters to the White House and we were turned down. And so it looked like no meet-

ing with the White House."

Ikejiri suggested that they ask Sato to arrange a meeting using his personal contacts. Sato at the time was JACL secretary treasurer. Ikejiri had persuaded him to run for JACL national president. As a presidential appointee at the time, Sato's help was needed.

According to Sato, "Ron said to me one day, 'You should run for national president of JACL.' I said, 'Ron, you're out of your gourd. I don't know JACL. I've never held office or anything.' But Ron was not letting me go. He said, 'We need your help now.' He got my attention and he laid out a plan. He

with the JACL and he's got a conflict of interest' ...

"The other thing is in order for me to run for national president of JACL, I had to clear it through counsel in the VA and the legal counsel in the White House. And they all approved. The only caution that they gave me was, 'Be sure you don't cause embarrassment to the Reagan Administration.' So again, I couldn't afford to have anything negative to be said about my involvement with JACL. ... I didn't want to say anything that would jeopardize my position or the redress effort. So with that, do you understand why you may not have even heard about this?"

Sato became JACL national president 10 days after the meeting.

Because Sato was so "adamant," as Tateishi recalled, the White House meeting was not talked about and was nearly forgotten. Shimomura revealed that Svahn wrote about the meeting and "some of the significance of it" in a memoir published in 2011 ("There Must Be a Pony in Here Somewhere: Twenty Years with Ronald Reagan," Langdon Street Press).

After the JACL meeting, Svahn became an advocate for redress in a divided White House, reminding Reagan in late 1984 about his 1945 speech for Masuda. After Svahn left his position in September 1986, according to the memoir, he told Rep. Robert Matsui that his "inside assessment of the president's feeling on the issue" was that "in my opinion, in the end the president would sign HR 442."

Tateishi noted that there have been differing accounts of who reminded Reagan about the Masuda speech and whether that persuaded him to sign the bill. But in the end, he said, the campaign was a collective effort and the important thing is that it succeeded.

The story about Sato and the 1984 White House meeting is but one vignette, as Ikejiri called them, from the redress campaign. To listen to other recollections, thoughts, events, and emotions told in 2 hours and 20 minutes, go to <https://studio.youtube.com/video/I31LpshYveY/edit> in unlisted YouTube. Thank you to Robert Shoji for his help with the recording.

The JACL redress panel will next appear Aug. 2 at the JACL National Convention in Salt Lake City, Utah.

*Louise Sakamoto is vice president-programs for the Greater L.A. JACL. She can be contacted at [Lsakamoto@sbcglobal.net](mailto:Lsakamoto@sbcglobal.net).*

The Rafu Shimpo management and staff continually strive to maintain high editorial standards for professionalism as well as accurate and balanced news coverage. The inclusion of a particular piece, including columns and op-ed submissions by contributing writers in print and/or digitally, does not necessarily reflect the policy or position of the owners, management, individual staff members, and editors. The Rafu Shimpo welcomes responses to any article published in print or digitally. Responses



J.R. YAMAMOTO/Rafu Shimpo

The JACL redress panel consisted of (from left) John Tateishi, Ron Wakabayashi, Frank Sato, Floyd Shimomura and Ron Ikejiri.

said, 'Look, you're a financial guy. You run for secretary treasurer, get to know JACL, and if you're comfortable with it, run for national president.'"

Ikejiri called Sato and asked if he could set up a meeting. Sato called Svahn and asked if a meeting could be arranged for the JACL national president, Shimomura. Svahn said, "Why, by all means." A meeting was set up for Aug. 10, 1984, less than a week away.

A black binder of information on redress was presented. Wakabayashi said the excellent JACL staff, Shimomura, Tateishi and others did a good deal of research and detailed work to study and be prepared for what might come up at the White House meeting.

One item included in the presentation was a copy of a document that related to then-Capt. Ronald Reagan and Staff Sgt. Kazuo Masuda, who was killed in action during WWII. In December 1945, Gen. Joseph Stilwell presented Masuda's Distinguished Service Cross posthumously to the family. At a rally at Santa Ana Bowl later that day, Reagan commended Masuda and other Japanese Americans for their patriotism, saying, "The blood that has soaked into the sands of the beaches is all one color."

Shimomura recalled, "We left and we didn't really hear any feedback from what happened at that meeting. So, you know, we weren't sure if it had a real impact on the White House thinking, or if after we left they just threw the stuff in the wastepaper basket."

Sato added, "I'll tell you, honestly, I never knew from that meeting whether or not there was any discussion with the president ... The reason is I was the inspector general of Veterans Affairs. Your job is audits and investigations, and one thing you've learned in a job like that is you better watch your backside because if they want to get you out of government, they're going to find dirt on you. I couldn't afford to let the Lillian Bakers and others who were negative on redress say, 'Hey, Frank Sato was lobbying



By Louise Sakamoto  
Greater L.A. JACL  
Vice President – Programs

A program of a panel of former JACL officials, cosponsored by the Greater L.A. JACL and the Social Action Committee of Faith United Methodist Church, was held at Faith UMC, Torrance, Sunday, March 10, 2019 at 1:00 pm. The panelists were Ron Ikejiri (moderator), JACL Washington Representative, 1978-1984; Frank Sato, National JACL President, 1984-1986; Floyd Shimomura, National JACL Vice-President of Public Affairs, 1978-1981, National JACL President, 1982-1984; John Tateishi, JACL Chair of the National Redress Committee, 1978-1981, JACL National Redress Director, 1981-1986, and JACL National Director, 1999-2007; Ron Wakabayashi, JACL National Director, 1981-1988.

The panelists discussed JACL's national legislative effort in 1970s through the 1980s to seek redress for the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II. The Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians Act was signed into law by President Jimmy Carter on July 31, 1980. The Civil Liberties Act of 1988 was signed into law by President Ronald Reagan on August 10, 1988. It granted wartime survivors a public apology, individual reparations of \$20,000, and a public education fund. The panelists acknowledged that many individuals and organizations worked for redress and reparations and there were several paths that led to a common goal.

One of the stories told was about Frank Sato and a meeting at the White House in 1984. From 1953, Frank Sato worked in various audit departments in the U.S. government. President Jimmy Carter appointed Sato to be Inspector General at the Department of Transportation. President Ronald Reagan reappointed him to be Inspector General of the Environmental Protection Agency. Sato became one of the highest ranking Asian American officials in the U.S. government.

Frank Sato, "I was reappointed, we were meeting much more frequently. Governor Reagan brought in his war on fraud...in government to Washington. And he went one step further. He set up a presidential council on integrity and efficiency and all of us presidentially appointed inspector generals and all the major departments were on that council and they asked me to chair the audit committee of that council. So I had more frequent reasons to meet with the leadership in the White House." The chairman of the council was Jack Svahn.

Floyd Shimomura said Jack Svahn was President Reagan's top domestic policy advisor. There was going to be a convention in Hawaii in 1984. "We were trying to get the meeting with the White House so that we could give a nice, rosy report to the delegates when they got to the convention because the redress bill was introduced earlier that year. We sent nice letters to the White House and we were turned down. And so it looked like no meeting with the White House."

Ron Ikejiri suggested that they ask Frank Sato to arrange a meeting using his personal contacts. Sato at the time was JACL secretary treasurer. Ikejiri had persuaded Sato to run for JACL national president. As a presidential appointee at the time, Sato's help was needed. According to Sato, "Ron said to me one day, you should run for national president of JACL. I said, Ron, you're out of your gourd. I don't know JACL. I've never held office or anything, but Ron was not letting me go. He said we need your help now. He got my attention and he laid out a plan. He said, look, you're a financial guy. You run for secretary treasurer, get to know JACL and if you're comfortable with it, run for national president."

Ikejiri called Sato and asked if he could set up a meeting. Sato called Jack Svahn, chairman of the presidential council, and asked if a meeting could be arranged for the JACL national president, Floyd Shimomura. Svahn said, "Why by all means." A meeting was set up for August 10, 1984, less than a week away.

A black binder of information on redress was presented. Ron Wakabayashi said the excellent JACL staff, Floyd Shimomura, John Tateishi and others did a good deal of research and detailed work to study and be prepared for redress and what might come up at the White House meeting. One item included in the presentation was a copy of a document that relate to Captain Ronald Reagan and Staff Sergeant Kazuo Masuda. In December 1945, General Joseph Stilwell presented Masuda's Distinguished Service Cross



posthumously to the family. At a rally at Santa Ana Bowl later that day, Captain Reagan commended Kazuo Masuda and other Japanese Americans for their patriotism. "The blood that has soaked into the sands of the beaches is all one color."

Shimomura recalls, "We left and we didn't really hear any feedback from what happened at that meeting. So, you know, we weren't sure if it had a real impact on the White House thinking, or if after we left they just threw the stuff in the wastepaper basket."

Sato recalls, "And I'll tell you, honestly, I never knew from that meeting whether or not there was any discussion with the President." The White House meeting was not talked about. People did not know about it. "The reason is," according to Sato, "I was the inspector general of Veterans Affairs. Your job is audits and investigations and one thing you've learned in a job like that is you better watch your backside because if they want to get you out of government, they're going to find dirt on you. I couldn't afford to let the Lillian Bakers and others who were negative on redress say, hey, Frank Sato was lobbying with the JACL and he's got a conflict of interest." The meeting was not spoken of at all.

Sato continues, "The other thing is in order for me to run for national president of JACL, I had to clear it through council in the VA and the Legal Counsel in the White House. And they all approved. The only caution that they gave me was be sure you don't cause embarrassment to the Reagan administration. So again, I couldn't afford to have anything negative to be said about my involvement with JACL. ...I didn't want to say anything that would jeopardize my position or the redress effort. So with that, do you understand why you may not have even heard about this?" Sato became JACL national president 10 days after the meeting.

Because Sato was so "adamant," as Tateishi recalls, the White House meeting was not talked about and was nearly forgotten. Shimomura revealed that a memoir written by Jack Svahn\*, the White House advisor who set up the meeting, was discovered. Published in 2011, Svahn writes about the meeting and "some of the significance of it."

The story about Frank Sato and the 1984 White House meeting is but one vignette, as Ikejiri calls them. To listen to other vignettes of recollections, thoughts, events, emotions told in 2 hours and 20 minutes, go to <https://studio.youtube.com/video/I31LpshYveY/edit> in unlisted YouTube. Thank you to Robert Shoji for his help with the recording. For information: Louise Sakamoto, [LSakamoto@sbcglobal.net](mailto:LSakamoto@sbcglobal.net) The JACL redress panel will next appear August 2<sup>nd</sup> at the JACL National Convention in Salt Lake City, Utah.

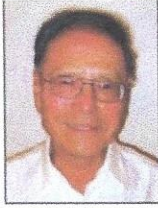
(Ron Ikejiri added the following.)

\*"There Must Be a Pony in Here Somewhere: Twenty Years with Ronald Reagan, A Memoir" by John A. (Jack) Svahn. Paperback – December 1, 2011. Publisher: Langdon Street Press (After the JACL meeting, Svahn becomes an advocate for redress in a divided White House, reminds President Reagan in late 1984 about his 1945 speech for Kazuo Masuda, and, after Svahn leaves his position in September 1986, tells Congressperson Matsui his "inside assessment of the President's feeling on the issue" that "in my opinion, in the end the President would sign HR 442." pp. 275-279, 367.)

(J.K. Yamamoto, RAFU journalist added the following.)

Tateishi noted that there have been differing accounts of who reminded Reagan about the Masuda speech and whether that persuaded him to sign the bill. But in the end, he said, the campaign was a collective effort and the important thing is that it succeeded.





## SENIOR MOMENTS *By Phil Shigekuni*

### Michael Cohen, John Dean and Redress

Marion and I attended the JACL Redress Panel held March 10 at Faith United Methodist Church in Torrance.

Moderated by Ron Ikejiri, the panel consisted of former national presidents Floyd Shimomura and Frank Sato, former national director Ron Wakabayashi, and John Tateishi, former national director and chair of the National Redress Committee. They all agreed that the passage of the redress legislation was a result of a joint effort on the part of each of them as well as numerous individuals throughout the country.

After the panel, a 90<sup>th</sup> birthday reception was held for the venerable Frank Sato. I had a chance to chat with ever-present *Rafu* writer J.K. Yamamoto.

I told J.K. that as I sat through the panel presentation I recalled how the term "redress" came to be adopted for our cause.

In the early days of our redress discussions, I attended a redress

planning meeting at the home of a prominent WLA dentist, Dr. Harold Harada, in Bel-Air. We were surprised by a visit by John Dean, the main testifier in bringing down President Richard Nixon.

Dean was convicted of providing false testimony and was sent to a federal prison. One of his guards was a Nisei who was incarcerated in one of the WWII camps. With his background, and being a former attorney, Dean became very interested in his story, and even considered writing a book about the subject.

He was aware of our intention of calling our government into account for the outcome of EO 9066. Prior to our meeting, we used the term "reparations" to describe our cause. His thought was the term reparations was not appropriate in that reparations was typically paid after a wartime conflict to a former enemy. Redress was a term from our Constitution whereby citizens called upon our government to redress grievances.

His suggestion was presented to the JACL Pacific Southwest District Council, which was then adopted by

the National Redress Committee.

It is somewhat ironic that we should owe a debt of gratitude to John Dean, with his infamous connection with President Nixon, for making his important suggestion. At the same time we consider the misdeeds of his counterpart, Michael Cohen, at a time when our community is remembering our redress victory.

---

*Phil Shigekuni writes from San Fernando Valley and can be contacted at [pshig2000@verizon.net](mailto:pshig2000@verizon.net). The *Rafu Shimpō's* management and staff continually strive to maintain high editorial standards for professionalism as well as accurate and balanced news coverage. The inclusion of a particular piece, including columns and op-ed submissions by contributing writers in print and/or digitally, does not necessarily reflect the policy or position of the owners, management, individual staff members, and editors. The *Rafu Shimpō* welcomes responses to any article published in print or digitally. Responses may be sent to author directly or emailed to [info@rafu.com](mailto:info@rafu.com).*



J.K. YAMAMOTO/*Rafu Shimpō*

Former JACL National President Frank Sato (second from left) and his wife June celebrate his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday with (from left) former National President Floyd Shimomura, former National Director Ron Wakabayashi, and former Washington Representative Ron Ikejiri.