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Immigrant Communities: The Cases of Japanese-Canadians and Japanese-
Americans**

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**Commemoration, Redress, and Reconciliation in the Integration of Immigrant
Communities: The Cases of Japanese-Canadians and Japanese-Americans**

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Abstract: In contrast to the outpouring of scholarship on the causes of what was called the “internment” of Japanese-Americans and Japanese-Canadians and on the quest for redress in these two cases, little research has yet addressed the question of whether redress “works.” That problem is the focus of this article. We report the results of a comparative study of the consequences of “coming to terms with the past” among the Japanese-Americans and the Japanese-Canadians. We seek to understand whether and how the initiatives grouped under the rubric of “coming to terms with the past” actually contribute to the greater integration into the larger society of previously marginalized and maligned groups. We conclude that these measures do help those who benefit from them to feel more integrated in their societies, but the broader consequences of internment and redress depend on larger forces, which differed in the two countries.

Keywords: commemoration, integration, internment, Japanese-Canadians, Japanese-Americans, Nisei, reconciliation, redress, reparations, War Measures Act

Introduction

There has been much talk in recent years of “coming to terms with the past” and of “historical justice.” In this context, the notion of “reparations” has come to be perhaps the most frequently used single term connected with these widespread efforts to “come to terms with the past.” The term “reparations” refers to a broad range of activities intended to mend past wrongs – e. g., restitution of stolen objects, compensation for suffering and for opportunities foregone, and rehabilitation. The disparate efforts to overcome the consequences of past injustices, which we refer to as “reparations politics,” can be conceptualized as *field* of related activities oriented to repairing past wrongs (Torpey 2003: 3). Within the larger discourse of reparations politics, the psychic harms and trauma of the victims play a central role. The emphasis of many of the activities associated with “reparations” has thus been on their therapeutic function in repairing “unjustly violated selves” and on the “healing” and “reconciliation” that are expected to flow from reparations processes.

Despite the widespread assumption that these eminently desirable outcomes will result from efforts to “come to terms with the past,” however, there is little research demonstrating that “healing” and “reconciliation” actually result from efforts, whether chiefly symbolic or mainly monetary, to “come to terms with the past.” Indeed, in her comprehensive recent study of truth commissions, one of the chief institutions of “transitional justice,” Priscilla Hayner (2001: 135) has noted that “there has been no study to date of the psychological impact of truth commissions on survivors.” Similarly, Heribert Adam (1999) has argued that, whatever the benefits of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), it did not lead to reconciliation between the majority black and minority white populations in post-apartheid South Africa. These findings raise questions about the consequences of efforts to redress past injustices generally. Do such efforts result in “reconciliation,” as their advocates claim? If so, for whom do they do so – all members of the putative “community” in question? For only some? And, if they do lead to reconciliation, how so and what does that mean? In short, while there is much talk of “reconciliation” among those concerned with righting the injustices of the past, there is very little (if any) empirical research on the *outcomes* of redress. This paper seeks to begin to plug that large gap in our knowledge about the experiences of once-maligned groups who have achieved some sort of reparations settlement.

In contrast to the outpouring of scholarship on the causes of what was called the “internment” of Japanese-Americans and Japanese-Canadians and on the quest for redress in these two cases, little research has yet addressed the question of whether redress “works” – that is, whether redress actually

achieved the aim of giving these previously wronged groups a fuller sense of membership in the societies of which they are a part and from which they were once so egregiously segregated. That problem is the focus of this article. In the following, we report the results of a comparative study of the consequences of “coming to terms with the past” among the Japanese-Americans and the Japanese-Canadians. We focus on these two groups because, whereas others are still pursuing various forms of redress for the wrongs they insist have been done them, the Japanese-descent populations in these two countries have already obtained “redress” in the form of official apologies as well as compensation in the amount of approximately \$20,000 for each person incarcerated by their respective government as an “enemy alien” during World War II.

In addition to reviewing extant research in this area, our data is mainly derived from interviews with former internees and redress activists, brief written statements about responses to the redress agreement, and examination of the representations of internment and redress in several museums devoted to commemorating this history. The possibility of the sequestration of specific ethno-racial groups in times of crisis is with us once again in the aftermath of the U.S.-led war on Iraq, and this “post-9/11” context informs the questions we are asking in this research. Given the worldwide spread of reparations politics in recent years (see Barkan 2000 and Torpey 2001), we seek to understand whether and how the initiatives grouped under the rubric of “coming to terms with the past” actually contribute to the greater integration into the larger society of previously marginalized and maligned groups. We hope that this research will shed light on other efforts to “come to terms with the past” elsewhere as well.

Background: The Internment Experience

Soon after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, Japanese-Americans and Japanese-Canadians on the West Coast of their respective countries came under the intense scrutiny of their governments as an alleged national security threat. Both governments forced the Japanese-descent community to undergo mass evacuation and removal from coastal regions to assembly centers, from which they were soon moved to internment camps and other areas deemed less militarily sensitive that were scattered throughout the western half of their countries. In Canada, the British Columbia provincial cabinet passed Order in Council P.C. 1486, according to which, under the blanket powers of the War Measures Act, some 22,000 Japanese-Canadians were relocated from the coastal “protected area” and sent to internment camps in the interior of the province as well as to sugar beet farms in southern Alberta and Manitoba (Daniels 1981: 188, Omatsu 1992: 94). In the United States, meanwhile, on February 19, 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066,

allowing governmental authorities to designate restricted zones and to determine which people, if any, should be removed from those zones. Although the order mentioned no specific racial or ethnic group, it was in fact directed at and came to focus on the Japanese-American community and soon resulted in their mass evacuation from these areas. In the event, nearly 120,000 Japanese-Americans were moved to internment camps (Daniels 1993: 3).

After the end of the war, the majority of Japanese-Americans returned to the West Coast. Although some stayed behind or even went back to Japan, by 1950 the Japanese-American populations of Los Angeles and San Francisco had returned to their pre-war levels. In contrast, however, it took another decade for the Japanese-American population of the Seattle area to be restored to its pre-war level (Spickard 1996: 135).

In contrast to their American counterparts, Japanese-Canadians generally did not return to the West Coast after their release from internment. First, Japanese-Canadians were not allowed to travel freely until 1949, when the War Measures Act and the last of the wartime restrictions were lifted (Canadian Race Relations Foundation 1999). Once they were free to leave their places of confinement, the Japanese-Canadians were not allowed to concentrate in major urban areas; the Canadian government used its regulatory powers to keep them dispersed, restricting their numbers and distribution in cities such as Winnipeg, Toronto, and Montreal. As a result, of the total of 22,000 who were removed from the West Coast under the War Measures Act, some 13,000 Japanese-Canadians remained in the provinces east of Alberta after the end of restrictions. As of 1947, only 6,776 Japanese-Canadians remained in B.C., less than one-third of the 1942 population (Sunahara 1981: 145). Contrary to their American counterparts, by the time the Japanese Canadians were allowed to return to the West Coast, it was “too late for reconstruction” (Miki and Kobayashi 1991: 55). The very foundations of the community had disappeared, so most Japanese-Canadians had no choice but to rebuild their lives in the places to which they had been dispersed. Unlike their American counterparts, the Japanese-Canadians had to rebuild their lives after having been not only uprooted and stripped of their property, but also scattered across Canada.

For many years after the end of the war, the internment experiences of the Japanese-descent populations were relatively neglected as political concerns and were frequently downplayed or avoided even by those who had endured them. Instead, like Holocaust survivors, those who had undergone the internment generally sought to “get along by going along,” channeling their energies into rebuilding their involuntarily interrupted lives. In the 1970s, in the wake of the U.S. civil rights movement and the subsequent rise of various movements devoted to the empowerment of ethnic minorities (see Blauner 2001), second- and third-generation Japanese-Americans (also known as the

Nisei and the Sansei, respectively) increasingly began to demand “redress” for the incarcerations. As a result of this pressure, the goals of securing an official government apology, payment of reparations to individual survivors, and creation of a public education fund came to be broadly debated within the Japanese-descent communities in both the United States and Canada.

These efforts culminated in 1988 with legislation in both countries that was designed to make amends for the earlier wrongs. In the United States, on August 10, 1988, President Ronald Reagan signed into law the strategically named Civil Liberties Act of 1988. The bill mandated that the surviving internees should receive individual payments of \$20,000 and an apology from the president of the United States acknowledging the injustice of the internment. Shortly thereafter, on September 22, 1998, Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney offered a formal apology in the House of Commons to Japanese-Canadians who had been interned, and announced that each of the survivors would be eligible for compensation in the amount of \$21,000. The extra \$1000 in the Canadian case was, according to a redress activist and leading scholar of Japanese-Canadian life, intended to reflect the greater severity of Canadian mistreatment of its Japanese-descent minority (interview).

Reparations and Reconciliation

The Japanese-American and Japanese-Canadian redress movements illustrate the point that “reparations politics” has permeated the political sphere in the last years. The core principle behind reparations derives from the compensatory theory of justice, which affirms that injuries must be compensated and wrongdoers should pay victims for losses (Minow 1998: 104). Yet reparations are at one level an impossible challenge, as Charles Maier (2003) has noted, for they can never make up for what has been lost: possibilities for personal and professional development, personal relationships, physical health and well-being. Material reparations by themselves do not generally suffice to make good on past wrongs, but they try to shift the losses from the terrain of the irrecoverable and to place them in the realm of the politically negotiated. Such negotiations indicate that communications between perpetrators and victims are being resumed. By rejuvenating a political dialogue, the hitherto opposed parties engage in a process that will allow them to live together and resume political, commercial, and cultural interaction.

Moreover, not only are material reparations incapable of “making whole what has been smashed,” but monetary compensation in the absence of an apology is likely to be dismissed by at least some of the potential recipients on the ground that their claims are “not about the money.” The wrongdoers, or at least their putative heirs, must offer some statement of apology for wrongdoing as

well; otherwise, the recipients may well view financial compensation as mere “blood money.” An official governmental apology to the victimized group explicitly acknowledges the wrongdoing, and this is normally an important aspect of the process of coming to terms with the past. In his trenchant study of the “social alchemy” performed by apologies, Nicholas Tavuchis (1991: 17) argues that “to apologize is to declare voluntarily that one has no excuse, defense, justification, or explanation for an action that has insulted, failed, injured, or wronged another.” According to Tavuchis, the essence of apology lies in the wrongdoer’s acknowledgment of the fact of violation, the acceptance of responsibility for the wrong, and the implicit or explicit promise that similar acts will not be repeated in the future.

The ultimate goal of reparations and apologies concerning official misdeeds would be to achieve what Maier (2003: 298) calls “political reconciliation.” In these contexts, reconciliation is not merely a desirable outcome, but is rather the primary objective of efforts to “come to terms with the past.” In contrast to apologies among private parties, where publicity could vitiate the whole effort to accept personal responsibility for wrongdoing and to make amends to the specific person or persons in question, political reconciliation necessarily implies *public* acknowledgment, *public* recognition of harm, and *public* accountability (Balint 2001: 130). The public acknowledgment of and acceptance of responsibility for past injustices is regarded as essential if the parties involved are to move forward in the future. In addition to its public dimension, reconciliation requires a structural and institutional dimension, a framework of rights and justice. As Balint (2001: 144) has argued, reconciliation entails institutional change that will ensure a durable reconciliation and guarantees of non-repetition of the previous wrongdoing.

Beyond these considerations, we understand the term *reconciliation* to involve recognition by the wrongdoer that the past actions in question were indeed wrong, as well as a sense on both sides of the wrong that there is some basis for moving ahead without excessive or persistent rancor and without constantly re-raising the painful past as a point of contention in the present.¹ In general, to the extent that those once wronged remain present in the country in question, reconciliation should involve a fuller sense of membership in the society, for it was precisely equal membership of which they were previously deprived. The larger society, alas, may or may not take much notice of the process designed to achieve reconciliation. Yet the official efforts to make amends for past injustices are frequently – though not always – an important concern for persons who share the “racial” or phenotypical characteristics on the basis of which the reparations-seeking group were once wronged.

¹ The persistence of the issue of the Japanese mistreatment and occupation of the Chinese is a good example of a situation in which reconciliation has *not* been achieved; see Fogel 2000.

Reconciliation, in short, is about moving on, and hence is more about the future than it is about the past.² In order to explore whether redress or reparations leads to reconciliation in these and similar cases of past injustices, we have sought answers to the following questions:

- To what extent did the redress arrangements for Japanese-Americans and Japanese-Canadians actually lead to a sense of reconciliation, understood in the above terms, among those once wronged?
- What place do the past wrong – in this case, the internment experience – and the redress arrangements occupy in the self-understanding of these groups today?
- How is the internment experience represented in museums, and do the representations of this experience in museum exhibitions bespeak a sense of reconciliation?
- To what extent have events since “9/11” revived remembrance of the internment experience and perhaps undermined the sense of reconciliation among Japanese-descent persons in the United States and Canada?

In order to address these questions, we interviewed a number of key figures in the redress movement and visited museums in the United States and Canada that represent the internment and redress experiences. In the following, we discuss these data in the light of the questions motivating our research.

The Redress Movement and its Consequences

For the once-wronged Japanese-Americans and Japanese-Canadians, we found, the struggle for redress reflected a search for public acknowledgement of the injustice inflicted by their governments upon them. But its success depended on a specific set of conditions. According to Brooks (2003: 16), successful redress movements have been able to reach “the hearts and minds of lawmakers and citizens alike.” Yet Brooks also emphasizes that the success of any redress movement depends above all on the degree of political pressure exercised by the claimants and their supporters. Strong political pressure was, indeed, a crucial variable in the success of the redress campaigns of Japanese-Americans and Japanese-Canadians.

² For an extended discussion of the meaning of “reconciliation,” see Dwyer 1999.

The Redress Movement in the United States

As we noted earlier, the movement for “redress” of the internment of Japanese-descent persons in North America was some time in coming. Indeed, it seems fair to say that, whereas those consigned to the internment camps were mainly Issei and Nisei (first- and second-generation immigrants), the redress movement in the U.S. was mainly the result of the activism of the Sansei (third-generation immigrants) and their emergence as a political force. Unlike other non-white minority groups in American society, Japanese-Americans were able to break through the political barriers and to achieve a measure of political representation at the highest levels of government, including the federal government. According to a prominent leader within the Japanese-American community and a major architect of the Japanese-American redress campaign of the 1970s and 1980s with whom we spoke, the willingness of the Japanese-Americans to abandon their traditional ways and to assimilate into American society played a major role in this development. In this person’s view, it is only through assimilation that ethnic groups in American society can break through the barriers they face in gaining political influence. He emphasized that, in order to become American, Japanese-Americans had to give up their culture of origin: “Assimilation was one of the key factors for us. It was one of the prices we were willing to pay to become American” (interview).

The legislative success of the redress campaign was in considerable part the result of the Japanese-American community’s ability to provide economic, political, and community support for the redress movement, which in turn depended upon its relatively successful assimilation into the larger society subsequent to the internments. In this respect, the achievement of Japanese-American redress legislation mirrors the success of the Jewish community in calling attention to the injustices suffered by Jews during World War II. Like the Japanese-Americans, Jews at first tended to avoid calling attention to their suffering; only later, after they had become assimilated into and prosperous in postwar American society did they seek to call attention to the Holocaust (see Novick 1999). To a certain extent, therefore, when it comes to commemoration of and compensation for past wrongs, “the rich get richer,” whereas less powerful and less well-funded groups have greater difficulty generating attention for the injustices once done to them. Still, and in part on the basis of the successes of these two groups, “reparations politics” has come to be a much more widespread phenomenon in recent years, providing a frame for activism from a great panoply of groups calling attention to past wrongs and commanding attention to their claims.

Yet ethnic assimilation has had an ambiguous relationship with political involvement in the United States. “Assimilation” into American political life, with its ever-declining levels of active participation, might well be a negative outcome. Indeed, what we might call “apathetic assimilation”

would be the political equivalent of Portes and Rumbaut's (2001: 59) notion of "downward assimilation," whereby "the learning of new cultural patterns and entry into American social circles does not lead... to upward mobility but to exactly the opposite." At the same time, contrary to those who worry about the fragmenting characteristics of identity politics, engagement in ethnic group-oriented activity may not necessarily promote division. According to Fugita and O'Brien (1991), for example, involvement in ethnic community organizations serves to integrate individuals into the larger political system. Rather than competing with involvement in the mainstream, in other words, participation in an ethnic community may also act as a conduit to political involvement in the broader polity. Japanese-American cultural traditions and historical experiences have both encouraged their members' involvement in ethnic voluntary organizations and led to a high degree of political participation (Fugita and O'Brien 1991: 152). This finding helps to explain the high level of participation in the redress movement that has been reported by several authors (Fugita and O'Brien 1991, Nagata 1993, Maki, et al. 1999, Shimabukuro 2001).

Despite the Japanese-Americans' extensive assimilation into American society, a number of our interviewees also agreed that the rise of the redress movement reflected a growing view that, after years of reticence and an emphasis on assimilation into the mainstream society, they could no longer remain silent about the internment and the injustices they had experienced. Several interviewees stressed that the Civil Rights Movement had strongly encouraged Japanese-Americans' pursuit of redress. Though heavily focused on the black-white divide in American life, the Civil Rights Movement had made them realize that they had to "force their voice on the public," as one interviewee put it, if their concerns were to be paid attention to. In other words, the Civil Rights Movement taught them a lesson with which they had previously been largely unfamiliar: namely, that they had to stand up for their rights. Many of those with whom we spoke suggested that this was a departure from traditional Japanese attitudes of deference. Indeed, one person indicated that it was precisely by speaking up about the injustices done them that the Japanese-Americans became more genuinely American.

As in the Civil Rights Movement, the architects of the movement for Japanese-American redress came to believe that it was strategically important to frame their demands in terms of constitutional violations – transgressions against the rule of law itself – rather than in terms of the wrong inflicted on a particular group. Instead, they stressed that, as a violation of the Constitution, it was a wrong done to the entire country. As Mr. T. put it, the position was, "don't emphasize your own pain, because no one cares about the pain of the Japanese-Americans. You have to emphasize the pain and wrong to the country." One interviewee attributed the widespread support for the

movement to this framing of the internment as a violation of the U.S. Constitution, which enjoys a remarkable reverence among many Americans, rather than a wrong against the Japanese-Americans as such. This campaign strategy is reflected in a sign at the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles that reads, “Even though the United States Constitution guarantees all citizens equal protection, it failed to protect Japanese Americans. This failure affects all Americans.” This approach to the campaign is also reflected in the legislation that made redress a reality, the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, at least the title of which made no mention of Japanese-Americans at all.

The Redress Movement in Canada

The Canadian redress movement was rather different from its American counterpart. In contrast to the situation in the United States, where Japanese-Americans had come to hold important political positions, the Japanese-Canadians had no representation among the country’s power elite; there were no Japanese-Canadian judges, senators, or politicians to influence the state apparatus. In this regard, Mr. M., a prominent leader in the Japanese-Canadian redress campaign, stated that “the advantage in the United States is that Japanese-Americans had important political positions, [whereas] the Japanese-Canadians had none. We had to work with the Prime Minister, engage in public dialogue, and have press coverage” (interview).

Whereas the Japanese-American campaign relied crucially on support from high government officials but was largely restricted to Japanese-Americans and a few non-Japanese-American supporters, the redress campaign in Canada was a grassroots movement in which the leaders devoted themselves to rebuilding morale among the community and to creating a national coalition comprising most of the country’s ethnic groups, churches, unions, and human rights organizations (Omatsu 1992: 151). Moreover, according to Makabe (1998), unlike the American Sansei, the Sansei in Canada have not been especially active politically. In her book *The Canadian Sansei*, she reports that the majority of the Sansei she interviewed were not active in any formal organization – a striking contrast with their American counterparts. At the time of the redress movement, Makabe argues, the Canadian Sansei had successfully established themselves among the Canadian middle classes. The redress campaign was not an important issue for many of them, she argues, and they couldn’t see its relevance to the contemporary Japanese-Canadian community. “From the beginning to the end,” she writes, “the involvement of Japanese Canadians as a whole in the redress movement was limited to a very small segment of the population” (Makabe 1998:149).

This claim contradicts the view of some of the leaders of the Canadian redress movement, however. For example, one movement activist, Ms. K. claimed that “Japanese-Canadians were much more invested in the redress movement [compared with their American counterparts]; it was seen as the responsibility of everyone” (interview). Mr. M. agreed with this view, arguing that the community played a very active part in the implementation of the redress settlement and that a proportionately large number of Japanese-Canadians were employed in national, regional and local offices involved in carrying out the agreement (interview). In part as a result of the relatively small size of the Japanese-Canadian population, there may well have been proportionately high participation of its older generations in the redress movement.

Yet our interviews and visits to several Japanese-Canadian organizations and cultural sites left the distinct impression that the younger generations have a declining interest in specifically Japanese-Canadian ethnic, cultural, and historical activities. An interview with one of the leaders of the Japanese-Canadian movement confirmed this impression; he claimed that the people who attend the events organized by Japanese-Canadian cultural organizations are mainly from among the older generation. In contrast, Nagata (1993: 181) found that approximately 71% of all the Sansei (third-generation) respondents in her study reported membership in organizations consisting primarily of Japanese-Americans. Despite the assimilation experienced by the younger generation of Japanese-Americans, according to Fugita and O’Brien (1991: 9), a high level of involvement in and psychological identification with their ethnic community persists. Meanwhile, according to the sociologist Larry Shinagawa, the intermarriage rate of Japanese Americans is 50% (for men) and 60% for women (quoted in Aratani 2001), yet in Canada the rate is even higher, between 75% and 80% (Makabe 1998: 122). The Japanese-Canadian community appears to face much more significant challenges than its counterpart south of the border.

The lack of community participation among younger Japanese-Canadians may be in part a result of the fact that such persons remained a dispersed community that was compelled by circumstances, after the end of the internment period, to retreat from ethnic group consciousness and to assimilate into the wider society. In Canada, leaders with whom we spoke were much more concerned than their Japanese-American counterparts about the community “dying out” as a result of their integration into the broader society and the weakening of ethnic consciousness. While the Japanese-Canadian redress campaign ultimately appears to have done relatively little to sustain the group’s ethnic consciousness in Canada, the Japanese-American preoccupation with past injustices to the group may have helped, paradoxically, *both* to sustain ethnic consciousness *and* to stimulate a sense that Japanese-Americans are nonetheless full members of American society.

As in the Japanese-American case, it was strategically important that the Japanese-Canadian redress campaign framed its demands in terms of a universal principle. The misdeed of internment was framed as a matter of human rights violated; similarly, making amends for that mistreatment was portrayed as a matter of living up to a peculiarly Canadian sense of “fairness” that concerned all Canadian citizens, not just a specific group. Kobayashi (1992) argues that the redress settlement must be understood as reflecting a transformation of the whole society, not only a concern of the Japanese Canadians. As she put it, “It’s an agreement for all Canadians, both because it establishes an important precedent, procedurally and in principle, for recognizing and righting official wrongs of the past and because, by including legislative change and especially a provision for a Canadian Race Relations Foundation, it has potentially shifted the ground for human rights provision in Canada and for overcoming the effects of racism” (Kobayashi 1992: 1). These are precisely the kinds of measures that fit the criteria for durable reconciliation outlined above, and the appeal to the broader Canadian citizenry echoes the terms of the Japanese-American redress settlement.

Yet the creation of a “Race Relations Foundation” intended to address questions of racial discrimination against any group signals another difference with the American experience. While the 1988 Civil Liberties Act set aside funds for education, the terms of the legislation were designed specifically to avoid any generalization of the Japanese-American internment experience to that of “race” generally in United States history. Members of the United States Congress involved in drafting the legislation were aware that such loose talk might stimulate claims from American blacks – a potentially much costlier and more divisive threat than the redress demands of 100,000 or so Japanese-Americans.

The Impact of Redress

So much for the achievement of the redress legislation itself. We now ask: what effect did the legislation – and the accompanying apology and compensation – have on Japanese-Americans and Japanese-Canadians? Did it enhance their sense of reconciliation with the country that had once wronged them?

For many Japanese-Americans, the achievement of redress legislation had a major effect on their sense of belonging to the larger social and political body of Americans. The redress arrangements reinforced – or perhaps gave them for the first time – a sense that they were integrated into the country and that they were full citizens of it. Ms. J. asserted that “redress affirmed that we were full-fledged citizens of this country. If they [the government] could get away without doing

[anything], it would indicate that we, as a body of people, were less” (written statement). For Mr. J., redress had everything to do with recognition of his status as a citizen equal to all other citizens. He said: “To me, the critical issue was whether they’d see me as a first-class citizen,” adding, “I don’t care if you like me, just treat me as equal. If they weren’t willing to treat me as equal, there’d be no reconciliation” (interview).

For some Japanese-Americans, at least, the redress campaign was viewed as a search for the restoration of lost honour, an attribute that remained a widely held concern despite its perceived “Japaneseness.” For these people, redress gave them a sense of having been vindicated. Mr. T. argued, “Honour is a guiding motive for the Japanese American, and the camp experience dishonoured the Issei and Nissei.” He added: “Redress was a way to restore our sense of honour, be part of America and feel vindicated. If redress hadn’t happened, it [the wrong involved in the internment] would always fester” (interview).

Japanese-Canadians experienced similar feelings of vindication and re-integration. Some Japanese-Canadians read the Canadian government’s official acknowledgement of the past injustice as a way of saying that they genuinely belonged to the country. As one person put it, for example, “I finally feel as though I’m a real Canadian” (interview). Another interviewee explained, “Nissei felt like they were Canadian as a result of redress” (interview). Similarly, Mr. K. said, “The redress was a milestone for the Japanese-Canadians because many of us felt like second-class citizens before it.” For others, however, this acknowledgement of their membership in the society also enhanced their sense of ethnicity, stimulating pride in their Japanese heritage. Mr. M. stressed that “many community members had lived with the feeling that it was negative being Japanese” (interview). Mr. M. explained that for other Japanese-Canadians, redress lifted a feeling of guilt from them; some had felt that being interned had been their fault (interview). For others, the official acknowledgment confirmed their sense that “we knew the government was wrong, [and] it was time they apologized” (interview). Omatsu (1992:171) notes that for the first time in their lives, the redress settlement made many people feel proud of being Japanese-Canadians.

In general terms, our interviewees agreed on the “healing” quality of the redress experience. Mrs. M. summarized this point when she said, “Generally the whole process was a healing process” (interview). According to Omatsu (1992), the long years of discussion regarding the redress became part of a healing process. There was a psychological transformation within the members of the community, for now they started to talk and discuss the internment after years of avoiding it. “By bringing a shameful past into the open, and more importantly, by demanding and fighting for its

rights,” she writes, “the community became engaged in an important healing process” (Omatsu 1992:171).

This emphasis on the “healing” character of the redress experience reflects what Torpey (2003: 4) characterizes, borrowing Phillip Rieff’s phrase, as the “triumph of the therapeutic” in processes of coming to terms with the past. While it is doubtless true that many people experience improvements in their psychological well-being as a result of redress efforts, the tendency to view these efforts in therapeutic terms sometimes leads to problematic interpretations of the aims of reparations politics.

Monetary reparations

We also explored the effects of monetary reparations and apology for individuals and for the broader community. The reactions of Japanese-Americans and Japanese-Canadians to the financial aspects of the redress settlement point to the role of symbolism in reparations politics. The monetary payments offered by governments to the survivors of the internment were intended to substitute symbolically for the loss of time, freedom, dignity, privacy, and equality arising from the internment experience, even though “no amount of money can fully compensate the excluded people for their losses and sufferings” (see Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians 1997: 460). Yet, as many people have noted, “even as an ideal, and certainly in practice, [monetary] reparations fall short of repairing victims” (Minow 1998: 103). Money matters in these contexts, but it is not always clear in what way.

The issue of financial compensation was a source of much dispute within the Japanese-descent communities in both Canada and the U.S. For example, many criticized the monetary component of the redress settlements for its insufficiency. According to Mr. T., one of the principal architects of the redress campaign in the U.S., he was initially uninterested in an apology; on the basis of the notion that “talk is cheap,” he wanted to demand monetary compensation above all else.³ In contrast, one frequently encounters the view in reparations politics that all the money in the world cannot compensate people for what they have lost as a result of previous injustices, and this is of course unavoidably true. As Mr. K told us: “The \$20,000 we got can’t repay the humiliation we went through.” Even if money plays a role in many of these processes, cases of compensating for gross

³ Mr. T related that it was Senator Daniel Inouye, eventually a key Congressional supporter of the redress effort, who dissuaded him from this approach.

violations of human rights – rather than those designed to rectify economic disparities – are not “really” about the money.⁴

On the other hand, an exchange of valued goods – in the modern world, usually money – is about all that can be done as a practical matter to make amends. Thus despite his insistence that the \$20,000 was insufficient to compensate for what was done to the Japanese-Americans, Mr. K. quickly added: “It’s easy to say you’re sorry, but not without money to make it seem more serious.” Mr. T. regarded the monetary compensation as appropriate, reminding us that “the jurisprudence system in the US says: ‘You violate someone’s rights, you pay’.” Likewise, Mr. M., a key figure in the Canadian redress movement, told us: “Monetary compensation was symbolic of the seriousness of what happened, yet you can never equate it with the losses.” He also added that monetary compensation is important even though it doesn’t reflect the material losses; “the claim for money was for the loss of basic rights” (interview). As politics grows more “juridified” generally (see Habermas 1981: 356-73), a tort model for dealing with past wrongs grows ever more widespread.

Still, like others involved in reparations politics, our interviewees tended to say that redress wasn’t about the money; rather, it was the apology issued by the government that made the redress settlement truly meaningful. A Japanese-Canadian interviewee said, “Money was not so important. At one point, money didn’t matter so much because a lot of people never expected it” (interview). Acknowledgment of wrongdoing by the government and its acceptance of responsibility became the paramount issue for many members of both communities. As one Japanese-American interviewee put it, “The money had no impact (for me), but the letter from [then-President of the United States] George Bush was very meaningful.” In a statement about the impact of redress on her, Mrs. J. wrote, “The apology from the U.S. government was very significant. We always knew that it was wrong to be put in camps and this vindicated our deeply held beliefs.” Similarly, a Japanese-Canadian respondent, Ms. K., said, “For me it was extremely significant that the government apologized. Prime Minister Mulroney’s formal apology gave me the sense that finally the government had acknowledged the injustices committed to the Japanese-Canadians during World War II.” (interview). These varied views of the importance of money in reparations politics reflect a broader issue in these processes. While “it’s not about the money,” money may be crucial for any successful attempt to come to terms with the past because it demonstrates the seriousness of the perpetrator in assuming a responsibility to repair past damage that goes beyond mere words.

Finally, according to Takezawa (1995: 197), the redress legislation enhanced the legitimacy of the U.S. government in the eyes of many Japanese-Americans whose respect for the government

⁴ On the distinction between these two types of reparations claims, see Torpey 2001.

was deeply shaken by the internment experience. One of our interviewees confirmed this view, however grudgingly. Although he prefaced his remark with the caveat that racism remains rife in American society, Mr. J. said, “I think this is a more impressive country for doing redress.” The capacity of a society to face up to its past injustices may do much to enhance its legitimacy, both in world opinion and in the eyes of its own members.

Despite the different meanings that the redress legislation had for different individuals, it does seem to have provided some measure of reconciliation – a sense of closure, of vindication, of restoration of lost honour, and of membership in the larger society. Still, one must bear in mind that responses to redress within the Japanese-descent “community” in each country differed from person to person. One must be cautious in using this term, for ideas of common descent and shared culture and physical characteristics (a.k.a. “ethnicity”) do not mean that all individuals saw the issues in the same way. Indeed, in our interviews in the United States, we encountered a quite sharp divergence of views among those affiliated with different ethnic organizations sustained by Japanese-Americans. Ultimately, however, we share Takezawa’s view (1995: 210) that the campaign for redress can be understood as a simultaneous manifestation of the reawakening and enhancement of their sense of ethnic identification and of the Japanese-Americans’ embrace of American values.

In Canada, according to Kobayashi (1992), the redress movement reflected a transformation within the Japanese-Canadian community, in the course of which the group became politicized and acquired the power to challenge the Canadian government. Kobayashi describes this development in terms of the group’s “ability to take possession of their cultural heritage and assert that heritage politically as an expression of multiculturalism” (Kobayashi 1992: 4). Mr. M., a key figure in the Japanese-Canadian redress movement, explained how the redress campaign generated a certain amount of pride about being of Japanese origins and a corresponding interest in ethnic affairs. He also noted, however, that most Japanese-Canadians have assimilated and that the group now married outside itself at a rate of 95%. Contrary to the reigning, officially endorsed ideology of “multiculturalism” suggested by Kobayashi’s remark above, Mr. M. said flatly, “if you maintain your ethnicity, you are not Canadian.” Another of the Japanese-Canadian leader claimed that the community largely fell apart after redress (personal communication). Partially because of the very small numbers of people involved, the redress campaign was unable to counter-act larger forces leading to a decline of Japanese-Canadian ethnic consciousness.

Japanese-American and Japanese-Canadian leaders agreed that for the Sansei and later generations, the internment experience is not a central component of a distinctive ethnic identity. The children of those who suffered the indignity of the camps do not, according to these elders, consider

themselves the heirs of the internment experience. Mr. K. said, “My children are aware of the past discrimination, but they are not activists, they won’t go and march” (interview). Similarly, Mr. M. said, “Young people see the internment as something that happened to their parents or grandparents and they are not preoccupied with it.” The old adage “time heals all wounds” is of some relevance here, but one cannot say whether this would have been the outcome had there been no redress agreement.

Museums and Commemoration

Among other efforts to promote reconciliation in the aftermath of past wrongdoing, states have funded commemorative projects such as memorials and public education programs. Indeed, the creation of the Civil Liberties Public Education Fund was an important element of the overall redress legislation for Japanese-Americans. In Canada, the \$12 million community fund had a similar function. Charles Maier has stressed that part of public reconciliation involves nationalizing the memory of previous misdeeds and commemoration of those misdeeds among groups beyond the circle of survivors (Maier 2003: 296). The task of commemoration involves making atonement for the past wrong a wider public commitment, an issue that concerns the larger society. For what happens to a particular group is something that pertains to the whole society – or at least making it so is the aim of many activists seeking commemoration of past wrongs.

Against this background, one may say that the redress movement was not just about confronting the past, but also about how this past was going to be incorporated into the history of the Japanese-American and Japanese-Canadian communities, as well as into that of the larger society. After all, in the view of many who had lived through it, the internment experience “was and is the central event in Japanese-American history... the event from which all other events are dated and compared” (Daniels 1999: 184). It was perfectly natural, therefore, that this experience would find a dominant place in efforts to represent and commemorate the Japanese-American experience. In this project, we also explored how the internment experience has been portrayed to visitors in museums and other public *lieux de memoire* (sites of memory).

Karpf (1991: 15) has noted that museums constitute powerful agents in the construction of identity. They play a major role in representing, chronicling, revising, and displaying the past that supplies the raw materials of identity, and the experience of the internment has been no exception in this regard. But what exactly is the role of the internment in representations of Japanese-American

history? Have those representations contributed to foster in the community members a sense of “reconciliation” and of having “come to terms with the past”?

The Japanese American National Museum (JANM), located in the city of Los Angeles, aims to depict the experience of the Japanese-descent population in the United States. As an undertaking largely financed by Japanese-Americans themselves, the museum reflects one version, at least, of the community’s sense of its own history. The World War II experience takes the lion’s share of the exhibition; the museum narrates the long story of discrimination and racism towards Japanese-Americans that culminated in the internment experience. The internment experience is narrated as a “national disgrace – a tragedy that must never be forgotten” (text of a sign at the JANM). The message it attempts to send is the now-familiar rallying cry, “Never again!” Nor was this only the message of the prominent Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles; one finds similar narratives in other museums that depict aspects of the Japanese-American experience, such as the Wing Luke Asian Museum in Seattle and the nearby Bainbridge Island (Washington) Historical Society. The internment experience constitutes the main concern in these museum displays as well.

These portrayals of the Japanese-American experience reflect the prevailing view among older Japanese-Americans, at least, that the internment episode is the cornerstone of their ethnic identity. The JANM and the others we visited thus contain permanent exhibits on the internment experience. Furthermore, special exhibits focus on various aspects of the experience of confinement. For example, “The View From Within,” a major exhibition of artwork produced during the internment, opened at the JANM in conjunction with the 50th anniversary of the Executive Order. While the perception of the centrality of the internment experience obviously contains a substantial degree of truth for older Japanese-Americans, however, one must bear in mind that the political and ideological perspectives indicated in the museums’ representation of the internment experience reflect the viewpoint of those who control the means of representation.

Our interviews with members of different Japanese-American organizations suggested that the community is a fractured one, in which vigorous debates over the legacy of the internment and over the process of redress continue to the present day. In part because of the large sums of money necessary to mount the displays in the JANM, for example, the representation of the Japanese-American experience tends to reflect the point of view of the more mainstream elements in the community. As Duncan (1991: 93) has noted, what a museum presents as the community’s history, identity, and values may represent only the interests of certain powers within the community. The emphasis on the internment experience in ethnic museums depicts what for a particular segment of Japanese-Americans constitutes the core of their ethnic identity. Yet this self-understanding may or

may not be generalizable to the entire community, and such a generalization should be regarded with some skepticism. Indeed, we have already seen evidence that the younger generation feels less connection with the internment experience than do their predecessors; the sensibilities of the JANM may or may not be in tune with those of younger, increasingly assimilated Japanese-Americans.

In Canada, we found a similar story. Part of the \$12 million community fund mandated by the redress settlement was earmarked to fund historical and cultural projects that would aid in “remembering our past, our culture and heritage” (Miki 2003). These funds constituted an important part of the funding necessary to build the Japanese Canadian National Museum located in Burnaby, B.C. In contrast to the Japanese-Americans, their Canadian counterparts were too few in number with too little wealth to bankroll such a project themselves. In any case, an important part of the museum’s mission was to transmit to future generations of Japanese-Canadians and to the broader public an account of the history of Japanese-Canadians. One leader in the Japanese-Canadian community told us, “The idea of the museum was that the redress movement was to be kept alive.” The inaugural exhibit, “Re-shaping Memory, Owning History,” was designed to convey this narrative. It depicted the Japanese-Canadian experience of internment and redress. In addition to the Japanese Canadian National Museum, the Nikkei Internment Memorial Centre in New Denver, B.C. (in the relatively remote interior of the province) aims to remind visitors “what is now acknowledged as a dark a shameful period of Canada’s history. It is an all-too-vivid reminder of the pain and anguish that so many were forced to endure, but which so many also survived and overcame” (Tom Shomaya’s address at the opening ceremony, cited in Miki 2003: 75).

According to Crane (2000), modern museum exhibitions tend to “freeze time” and to fix the memory of the viewers by selecting what “deserves” to be remembered (Crane 2000: 3). In this respect, it should be emphasized that the stress on the internment experience in Japanese-American and Japanese-Canadian ethnic museums foregrounds the experience and the worldview of a particular generation. This generation is not only characterized by its historical proximity to the events; in addition, it is the product of a wider contemporary discourse emphasizing that those pasts worth representing are ones marked by suffering. Museum exhibitions are privileged arenas for presenting stories of suffering and survival. In such contexts, the exhibit encounter becomes a moral and emotional story of identity and survival (Mullen 1992: 371).

Despite the apparent harmony of interpretation conveyed by museum representations, the meaning of the internment experience is a matter of debate and disagreement among community leaders and members. The exhibitions we visited seek to convey the message that the internment experience remains the cornerstone of Japanese-American history and is the anchor for the group’s

ethnic identity. The internment experience is socially constructed as *the* central experience for those putatively sharing this ethnic identity. There is a similarity here with Novick's argument (1999) in terms of the way in which the Holocaust came to be regarded as the core of Jewish identity. Yet it is not clear that this view of the past will be appropriate for subsequent generations of Japanese-Americans and -Canadians. As we have already noted, some argue that the internment plays a less central role in the self-understanding of the younger generations. Even Mr. T., a central figure in contemporary Japanese-American cultural and political life, said, "Young people can look at the internment historically." By contrast particularly with Jews, who in his view were unlikely to ever get over a preoccupation with the Holocaust, the younger generations of Japanese-Americans don't see themselves as the bearers of their parents and grandparents' painful memories.

This lapse of memory, so to speak, raises the concern among the Nissei and Sansei that later generations will forget about the internment experience, and that such forgetting enhances the risk that it might happen again. As Mr. K. put it, "As memory fades, the danger of this happening again returns." We need further research to illuminate whether future generations will subscribe to the view that the internment is the heart of Japanese-American ethnic identity, or whether, in fact, the redress legislation and the passage of time will consign this view to the past. Waters (1990: 4) points out that, without political or economic reasons for maintaining ethnic solidarity, the importance of ethnic identification tends to decline and other means of identification intervene. If this occurs, individuals identify increasingly with characteristics associated with class or status rather than with ethnic concerns.

The creation of the Japanese-American and Japanese-Canadian national museums was intended to ensure the preservation of the heritage and cultural identity of the two groups, as well as to bring an awareness to future generations of the "hardships and triumphs of earlier generations" (www.janm.org/general/history.html). Yet the two institutions operate under dramatically different conditions. The JANM has a budget of US\$8 million, some 100 staff members, many hired consultants, and hundreds of volunteers (*Nikkei Images Newsletter* 2001: 14). The museum is a state-of-the-art work of architecture that occupies a substantial site in the Japantown district of Los Angeles. The building itself and the surrounding grounds comprise a significant tourist attraction.

The Japanese-Canadian museum experience has been very different from that of its American counterpart. One of the leaders of the Japanese-Canadian redress campaign explained that the community modeled its project to create a national museum on that of the Japanese-Americans. Yet in contrast to their American counterparts, who had wealthy elites to provide funds and a number of academics to supply relevant expertise, the Japanese-Canadians lacked these economic and human

resources. The creators of the Canadian museum had expected that the community members would donate funds to the museum, but this expectation was not realized. According to Mr. K., one of the founders of the museum, the people that visit the Japanese-Canadian museum are mainly the older generation. Although assisted by federal government funds, the museum operates with a very limited budget, and only one full time staff person. Moreover, according to one of the founders, keeping the museum operating and bringing people in is one of the museum's major challenges.

The differences in the experiences of the two museums reflect the different experience both communities had during World War II. The harsher conditions of their internment (economical, political and social) and the dispersal that occurred afterwards made it more difficult for Japanese-Canadians to achieve the level of wealth of their American counterparts. As Mr. K. explained, "The Japanese-American situation is quite different because a lot of them were able to go back [to the places they had been forced to evacuate] and get their land back. They got rich, while Japanese-Canadians lost everything. They were dispossessed" (interview). In addition, of course, the numbers of Japanese-Canadians are roughly an order of magnitude smaller than the Japanese-American population, reflecting the approximately 10-1 ratio of population in the two countries. Even had it been able to attain the kind of wealth acquired by Japanese-Americans, it would have been difficult – though not necessarily impossible, of course – for the Japanese-Canadian "community" to finance and sustain a large museum devoted principally to its own experience.

Similarities between past and present: 9/11

Despite the relative economic success of Japanese-Americans, however, have the political factors that generate ethnic identification really subsided for them? A large literature has developed around Asian-Americans as a "model minority," a group lacking the negative social and cultural traits associated with other non-white minorities in the United States, especially blacks. But does this mean that Asian-Americans need not be concerned about discrimination in the present and future? According to Evelyn Hu-de Hart (2003), "while Asians are seen as the model minority exhibiting good American behaviour, they are still aliens, outside the boundaries of white America." Is this the case? Alternatively, have Japanese-Americans attained the degree of reconciliation necessary to move on from the past?

Members of the Japanese-American community have actively engaged in activities intended to educate the entire national community about the internments. Despite the various public acts of reparation – a presidential apology, monetary compensation to the victims, and attempts to

commemorate the internment – our research suggests that, rather than achieving closure and a sense of reconciliation, those who had lived through it still tended to regard the internment as a sort of unfinished business, a violation of human rights that could happen again – if not to them, then to some other group.

Against this background, it is perhaps not surprising that the events of 9/11 catapulted Japanese-American organizations such as the Japanese American Citizens' League (JACL) and the National Coalition for Reparations and Redress (NCRR) into a very active role in civil rights issues. In particular, they have spoken out against restrictions on civil liberties and for the rights of Arab-Americans, whom they see as potential victims of constitutional violations. The arrest without charges of many persons (mostly men) of Arab descent (and of others mistaken for them) in the U.S. since late 2001 reminded several of our interviewees of what had happened to the Japanese-Americans in the early 1940's. Mr. K. said, "In a way it is happening again now... I cringe when I see the government bypassing judicial procedure by using military tribunals... You wonder where it's going to end." In response to a question concerning the extent to which the deterrent aims of redress ("never again") had been achieved, Mr. T. replied that "the current climate is an echo of everything that was said in 1942." Moreover, he continued, "Under the wrong climate of crisis and with a non-white population involved, it [mass arrests and internment] could happen again despite the Japanese-American redress settlement. Every Arab could be targeted and the administration won't care about the Constitution and government protocol" (interview). Similarly, when the Los Angeles NCRR announced the themes of the annual Day of Remembrance in 2003, they were "race, prejudice, war hysteria, failure of political leadership – then and now." One of the organizers of the event wrote in the publicity materials, "As we commemorate February 19, 1942 and its aftermath, American Arabs, Muslims, and South Asians are being targeted based on the same factors" (*Banner* [NCRR Newsletter], Winter 2003).

The former statements raise questions about the extent to which the redress settlement really contributed to the reconciliation and integration of Japanese-Americans. In this regard, Balint (2001: 147) argues that even if victims' claims are met, this does not mean that reconciliation will ensue. In her view, reconciliation must be grounded in the everyday realities of people's lives and fears. The situation facing persons of Arabic descent in the United States since 9/11 has led Japanese-Americans to recall again more vividly what was once done to them because of their ethnicity. Fears of possible government abuses remind us that, notwithstanding redress of past wrongs, many non-whites doubt that they can count on full acceptance in and equal treatment by the society. John Tateishi, Executive Director of the San Francisco-based Japanese American Citizens League, illustrates this point when

he says: “As Nisei who suffered the war hysteria, evacuation and internment, I understand the humiliations and harassment that can be heaped upon innocent people if they only look like the enemy” (Davila 2001) According to another observer, “Japanese Americans – so traumatized by their World War II internment that they spent the next half century relentlessly pursuing the American dream of assimilation – were among the first to step up and stand behind Muslims and Arabs in the days after September 11” (Nakao 2003).

In comparison with the Japanese-Americans, the Japanese-Canadian community has experienced the aftermath of 9/11 very differently. The National Association of Japanese Canadians (NAJC) joined a number of other organizations in condemning the war against Iraq. They also wrote a letter to the government to be cognizant that “facts could get out of hand” and that “the recent practices of racial profiling and the enactment of the Canadian ‘Anti-terrorist Act’ constitute a wake-up call for all Canadians.” The president of the NAJC stated in her letter to the media, “We know this danger from our own experience.” (Internet media notice by the NAJC, March 31, 2003). But due to the fact that there were no 9/11-related racial incidents in Manitoba, the Winnipeg-based NAJC played a fairly limited role in public discussions, in contrast to the active political stance taken by the Japanese American Citizens League in San Francisco. For its part, the NAJC has assumed an active role in advising other wronged groups – e.g., First Nations aboriginal groups, the Ukrainian-Canadian community, and those in the Chinese community pursuing the “head tax” issue – how to pursue their claims against the Canadian government.

Still, the situation triggered by 9/11 made many Japanese-Canadians aware that visible minorities could be easily targeted groups in times of fear. Biles and Ibrahim state that after 9/11, the largest spectre that emerged was the question of internment, but “no domestic crises emerged that indicated any fundamental failures of the ‘Canadian diversity model’” (Biles and Ibrahim 2002: 58). In regard to the possibility of repetition of the internment experience with Iraqi Canadians, Mr. K. responded that the internment experience “could happen again, but the redress made people aware that this did happen and that it shouldn’t happen again” (interview). Our interviewees appeared confident in the government’s official stance against racism and the effectiveness of the culture of inclusion implicit in the official policy of multiculturalism. Kobayashi’s conclusion on the effects of redress summarizes this attitude: “The recent settlement between the federal Government and the Japanese Canadians strikes an important blow against racism. It sets a precedent for officially redressing the wrongs of the past...[it] provides a model for understanding the experience of racism and the social changes through which racism’s effects can be ameliorated...” (Kobayashi 1992: 13-14). Comparatively speaking, Canada seems to have been more persuasive in atoning for its past

misdeeds vis-à-vis Japanese-Canadians, and this has paid dividends in terms of political legitimacy and social cohesion.

Conclusion

The goal of this project has been to understand the consequences of redress for the integration of immigrant minority groups once deprived of the full equality of citizenship. We are mainly concerned with the question of the extent to which reparations and “coming to terms with the past” can bring about a sense of reconciliation for previously wronged groups. Our research indicates that reconciliation is more of a process than a clear-cut outcome for once-victimized groups. At one level, acknowledgment and attribution of responsibility by the government did bring a sense of vindication and the restoration of a sense of honour and equal status. At another level, our interviews highlighted the varying degrees of reconciliation achieved by redress. Our findings confirmed Balint’s view that, in order to achieve an enduring reconciliation, this has to be framed by institutional change (Balint 2001:145).

Yet events since 9/11 have made Japanese-Americans and Japanese-Canadians realize that the “never again” can happen again, because there are structural conditions in the society that haven’t changed, such as the targeting of certain ethnic groups as “threats without evidence.” Even though both groups contemplate the idea of repetition, the structural conditions created in Canada by its official policy on multiculturalism and its relatively stronger stance against racism made Japanese-Canadians more confident than their American counterparts about their government’s likely response to a crisis. In contrast, the Japanese-American leadership in the United States perceived the historical causes identified by the 1982 Commission on the Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (CWRIC) for the internment of 120,000 Japanese-Americans during World War II – namely, racial prejudice, war hysteria, and failure of political leadership – as threatening the nation again. This has led Japanese-Americans to re-evaluate their own experience in terms of what is happening to another ethnic community and to mobilize around civil rights issues. Their political participation has been more vigorous than that of their Canadian counterparts, who see their role as that of actively helping other wronged groups make their claims for redress.

Our research also examined museum representations of the internment experience. Representations of the internment experience in American and Canadian society aim to consecrate a particular view of the past. Within this perspective, the internment was the seminal event in the history of the Japanese-American and Canadians. Yet this is the point of view of a group that, while once mistreated, subsequently grew relatively successful. Having re-established themselves after the

internment, their experiences are relatively less significant for the younger generations. As the generation of those who went through the camp experience fades from the scene, younger Japanese-Americans and -Canadians – themselves increasingly assimilated and intermarried with the larger population – seem unlikely to continue to regard this portrayal of the ethnic experience as reflecting their own perspective.

On another level, as part of the redress, in both Canada and the US, government established special foundations to “sponsor research and public education activities so that the causes and circumstances of this and similar events may be illuminated” (Daniels 1999: 189). In the United States, the impact on the broader society of the violation of Japanese-Americans’ constitutional rights remains vague. As Mr. T. put it, “I don’t know what the larger society thought of this [the internment and redress].” It would be valuable to know to what extent the broader public has learned lessons from this past and may thus be prepared to take a stance when similar circumstances arise. Certainly the history of Japanese-American internment has had some effect on recent discussions of the treatment of Arab-Americans, putting knowledgeable observers on guard against the possibility of repetition. In Canada, the broader society appears more aware of the importance of supporting multiculturalism as a core Canadian value to help fight intolerance and racism, separate and apart from the internment experience (Biles and Ibrahim 2002: 58).

In conclusion, we want to emphasize that, although reparations have not necessarily led to a full sense of reconciliation among Japanese-Americans and Canadians, the redress legislation does seem to have provided “a specific, narrow invitation for victims to walk between vengeance and forgiveness” (Minow 1998:106). Comparatively speaking, the wrong done to those of Japanese-descent persons was mild; none were intentionally killed or tortured in carrying out the policy of “evacuation.” In cases where more severe harms have been perpetrated, the achievement of reconciliation is likely to be correspondingly more difficult. One hopes that the experience of redress among Japanese-descent populations in North America can nonetheless serve as an example, for our research suggests that it has been relatively successful in achieving its aims.

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