

Anti-Japanese resolution

still on books

Japanese American
County will consider rescinding '43 decision in 'heartfelt ... apology'

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WATSONVILLE.— Victor Kimura remembers rocks thrown through windows at night, paper messages attached that summed up the sentiment of many in post-World War II America: "Japs go home."

But, like his parents, Kimura, 57, of Watsonville, was American-born. Still, had it not been for his father's determination, Kimura might have taken his first breath behind the barbed wire of an internment camp in January 1945.

That is why Kimura says it would mean so much to him and other area Japanese-Americans for the county Board of Supervisors to rescind an anti-Japanese resolution approved by the board in April 1943. That resolution protested the release of Japanese-Americans from internment camps and their possible relocation to the West Coast.

"To have the government officials of the place you lived say you aren't welcome in your own home is a terrible thing," he said. "To have it rescinded now reinforces the fact the county does welcome Japanese-Americans back."

The board is set to consider a resolution Tuesday that not only rescinds the old one, but supports the Watsonville-Santa Cruz chapter of the Japanese-American Citizens League in its plans to hold a re-enactment of the removal and internment of Japanese-Americans from the Pajaro Valley during World War II.

"We now understand very clearly that the actions taken by various officials at that time were a tragic mistake and a gross miscarriage of justice," said Supervisor Tony Campos, who is set to propose the new resolution.

Campos recommends the board adopt the resolution rescinding the 1943 document as a "small, but heartfelt gesture of apology."

The re-enactment, "Liberty Lost, Lessons in Loyalty," is set for April 27, a month that marks the 60th anniversary of the April 1942 removal.

The county resolution came to light in July after Watsonville's Mas Hashimoto, league secretary, read an Associated Press article on the city of Stockton's move to rescind a similar resolution.

That resolution questioned the loyalty of Japanese-Americans after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, and opposed their relocation on the West Coast after their release from internment camps.

Hashimoto wondered if such a document

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VICTOR KIMURA

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Japanese

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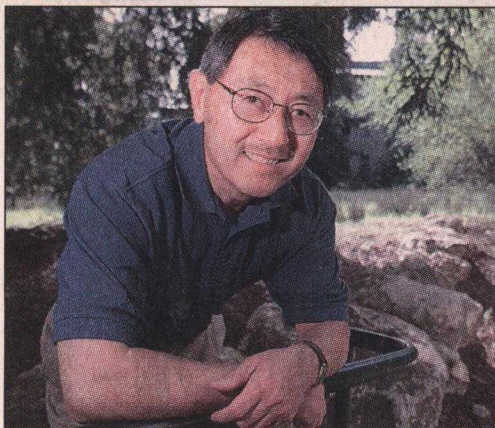
remained on the books in Santa Cruz County.

Kimura, who is retired from the UC Santa Cruz's finance department, visited Paul Stubbs, a special-collections librarian at the campus, which keeps board agendas of yesterday.

After searching for only an hour, Kimura found the resolution. The two men never found another rescinding it.

According to county documents, the 1943 board approved the resolution "based upon extensive experience with the Japanese, for more than 40 years, an intimate knowledge of their character, and our observation of what occurred on December 7, 1941."

"It is impossible to distinguish between loyal and disloyal Japanese," the resolution stated. The Japanese should contribute to the war effort, but should do so in an "area



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

Victor Kimura is hoping county supervisors rescind the forgotten resolution.

removed from the Pacific Coast and ... under full and proper control and supervision by the Army."

"In no event should they be dispersed

throughout the country without proper provision for absolute surveillance and control," the resolution stated.

Kimura's mother, Sayoko, a Watsonville native, was pregnant with Kimura during her internment in Arizona. His father, George, was determined no son of his would be born behind the walls of an internment camp.

The family was not allowed to return home to Watsonville, but they did have the option of transferring to a work camp.

Kimura was born Jan. 22, 1945 in Tooele, Utah — the location of a government-run ammunition-storage facility. Ironically, Kimura was born two days after the Jan. 20 deadline for reparation payment applications, which would have amounted to \$20,000, he said.

After Japanese-Americans were allowed to return to the West Coast in late 1945, the Kimura family came back to Watsonville,

unaware local officials had lobbied against their return.

"Most Japanese-Americans today are not particularly interested in benefiting from anything," Kimura said. "What they want is to keep this from happening again. An acknowledgment that the government was wrong is very symbolic."

Kimura understands that imperfect people run imperfect governments. Still, he wants his youngest son, 2-year-old Carter Garcia-Kimura, to be proud of America and tolerant of all the diversity it holds.

"Countries makes mistakes," Kimura said. "His mother, Karen, and I are going to raise him to be very fair and even-minded."

Supervisor Campos is scheduled to present the resolution to the board at 9 a.m. Tuesday in the Board of Supervisors chamber, on the fifth floor of the county Government Center, 701 Ocean St., Santa Cruz.

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