Finding aid for the William Hohri Papers

Marlon Romero
Japanese American National Museum
100 North Central Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90012
Phone: (213) 830-5615
Email: collections@janm.org
URL: http://www.janm.org/
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Finding aid for the William Hohri Papers

Collection number: 2006.113

Japanese American National Museum
Los Angeles, California

Processed by:
Marlon Romero

Encoded by:
Yoko Shimojo

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Descriptive Summary

Title: William Hohri papers

Dates: 1937-1988

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1942-1946 and 1981-1983)

Collection number: 2006.113

Creator: William Hohri, 1927-

Collection Size: 17 linear feet

Repository: Japanese American National Museum (Los Angeles, Calif.)

Los Angeles, California 90012

Abstract: William Hohri, was one of the leading contributors of the Japanese American redress and reparations efforts during the 1980's. Serving as chairman of the National Council for Japanese American Redress (NCJAR), he sought redress through the courts. This collection consists of personal correspondences, NCJAR administrative records, speeches, concentration camp materials, government publications, Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (CWRIC) transcripts, court cases, and photographs.

Physical location: Japanese American National Museum 100 North Central Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90012

Access

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Preferred Citation


Project Information

This finding aid was created as part of a project funded by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission. The project started in 2007. Project Director was Cris Paschild. Project Archivists were Yoko Shimojo and Marlon Romero.

Biography / Administrative History

William Hohri, the youngest of six children, was born in 1927 in San Francisco, California to Issei parents. His mother, a picture bride, and his father, a Christian missionary, immigrated in the United States in 1922. At the age of three, they fell ill with tuberculosis and Hohri and two siblings were sent to Shonien, an orphanage formerly located in the Silver Lake neighborhood of Los Angeles. Hohri remained at Shonien for three years and recalls this as a very negative, but important time of his life. At the age of six, he was reunited with the rest of his family in Sierra Madre, California. The family moved frequently during Hohri's childhood, but finally settled in the Sawtelle area of West Los Angeles and North Hollywood.

After the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941, Hohri's father was arrested and detained in Fort Missoula, Montana until he was sent to Manzanar. On April 3, 1942, Hohri and the rest of his family were sent to Manzanar where they were detained until August 25, 1945. In 1944, Hohri graduated from high school and left Manzanar and moved to Madison, Wisconsin. In March 1945, he attempted to visit his father, but was jailed for traveling without a permit (despite the rescindment of the exclusion order in January 1945) and forced to leave the state at gunpoint under an individual exclusion order. Hohri has
stated that it is incidents like these that fueled the redress movement.

Hohri graduated from the University of Chicago and in 1951, he met his wife Yuriko in Chicago. During the 1960s and 1970s, Hohri actively participated in anti-war protests and civil rights rallies as a member of the United Methodist Church. After participating in the Iva Toguri campaign, he began his involvement in the redress movement. In May 1979, Hohri and others founded the National Council for Japanese American Redress (NCJAR). Although Hohri initially worked with the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), he and the NCJAR definitively split in May 1979 after the JACL moved towards supporting a congressional commission to study the WWII incarceration of Japanese Americans. In 1983, Hohri and twenty-four plaintiffs sought redress through the courts and filed a class-action lawsuit against the government for 27 billion dollars in damages. The Supreme Court heard the case in 1987 but the U.S. Court of Appeals dismissed the case in 1988. The NCJAR disbanded soon thereafter. Nevertheless, as Mitch Maki and other scholars of redress have pointed out, the NCJAR lawsuit contributed significantly to the redress effort. The archival research conducted for the lawsuit (by Aiko and Jack Herzig) uncovered valuable documentation of constitutional and civil rights injustices. Furthermore, the suit and the large monetary sum attached to it may have also made Congress more amenable to the passage of redress legislation, which included a substantially smaller financial award.

Scope and Content of Collection

The William Hohri papers focus on the redress and reparation work done by the NCJAR. There are some personal correspondences as well as some of his speeches and sermons for the United Methodist Church but the bulk of the collection spotlights the research work done to support the class-action lawsuit against the government. The principles of provenance were closely followed to preserve William Hohri's original filing arrangement. The documents are divided into nine series: Camp Materials, Government Correspondences, NCJAR, CWRIC Hearings, Photographs, Publications, Newspaper clippings, Speeches and Sermons, and WRA Research Materials.

Indexing Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog. Hohri, William, 1927-
Japanese Americans
World War II
National Council for Japanese American Redress

Box 1

Series 1 Camp Materials
Series Scope and Content Summary
This series contain materials relating to camps. The majority are correspondences between government agencies regarding the riots in Manzanar and the resisters in Heart Mountain.

Box 2-3

Series 2 Government Correspondences
Series Scope and Content Summary
This is a collection of interagency correspondences between agencies such as the WRA, Executive Office, and the FBI. These correspondences are photocopies retrieved from National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) by Aiko Herzig-Yoshinaga. The series is arranged in chronological order by the year the correspondence was transmitted.

Box 4-7

Series 3 NCJAR
Series Scope and Content Summary
The NCJAR series is divided into two sub-series: Correspondences, and Administrative Records.
The Correspondences sub-series contains William Hohri's personal and NCJAR related letters. There are two boxes of NCJAR correspondences. The first is arranged chronologically, while the second is in alphabetical order. The two-level arrangement was maintained in order to preserve William Hohri's original order. The Administrative Records sub-series contains financial records, events, and newsletters.
Correspondences

Administrative Records

Box 8-10  Series 4 CWRIC Hearings
Series Scope and Content Summary
This series offers the complete CWRIC hearings. The first two boxes are loose documents arranged by the date and location of the hearing. The third box contains bound copies of the hearings printed by the U.S. Government Printing Office and miscellaneous files that William Hohri labeled CWRIC.

Box 10  Series 5 Photographs
Series Scope and Content Summary
This series includes two folders of photographs. The first folder contains photographs used for William Hohri’s book. A listing of the photographs and captions are included.

Box 11-13  Series 6 Publications
Series Scope and Content Summary
This series houses opinion pieces, government publications, and court cases. The first box contains opinion literature and government publications that focus on the WRA and the internment of Japanese American citizens. The second box is a combination of bounded and loose publications of landmark court cases including William Hohri, et al., v. the United States and Korematsu v. United States.

Box 14  Series 7 Newspaper Clippings
Series Scope and Content Summary
A series of newspaper clippings collected by William Hohri during the redress movement.

Box 14  Series 8 Speeches/Sermons
Series Scope and Content Summary
This series contains speeches and sermons given by Mr. Hohri. Some of the speeches focused on the efforts of the NCJAR, and others were sermons given through the United Methodist Church.

Box 15-17  Series 9 WRA Research Materials
Series Scope and Content Summary
This series consists of correspondences and administrative records of the WRA.