



A MOTHER'S TAKE

A Vision for LGBT Families of Seattle

By Marsha Aizumi

On March 7, 2013, a meeting took place in Seattle that brought together individuals and organizations that support Asian Pacific Islander and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender families who struggle to face the shame, guilt and fear when their child “comes out.”

We wanted to provide LGBT individuals with support through the coming out process. As the mother of a child who first came out as lesbian and then five years later announced that he was transgender, I know the pain, the sadness and the fear that coming out brings into the hearts of families. These families love their children and want them to have a future full of possibilities and not a future filled with discrimination. I also know the importance of having a place to receive support and resources when you feel so isolated and afraid. And so I applaud Seattle for taking on this challenge and wanting to make a difference in the lives of LGBT/API individuals and their families.

In 2012, I was able to work with a group of individuals in Southern California to start an API PFLAG (Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) in the San Gabriel Valley. Supported by longtime LGBT pioneers — Harold and Ellen Kameya and Andre Ting —

we began to dream about a safe space for API families to share their hopes and fears. This month, the San Gabriel API PFLAG chapter will celebrate its one-year anniversary. But it is not just the accomplishment of reaching our one-year milestone that we celebrate, it is also the sense of community that has been created.

Seeing a mother cry because in her fear she also now realizes she is no longer alone, or seeing a young, worried gay man who says that he is going to come out to his parents and fears their rejection. Then he comes back the following month and shares that his family has accepted him and said, “We already knew you were gay, and we have never stopped loving you.”

Also at the end of 2012, a Korean mother courageously (and with the support of PFLAG) decided to open up an API PFLAG group in New York City. New York now has a place every other month where API families can get support or give support to LGBT individuals who are struggling with sexual orientation or gender identity. It is also a place where LGBT individuals can bring their parents, who face a similar process of coming out. Parents also need support and resources.

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VERY TRULY YOURS

New Pope, Argentina and a Nisei Angle

By Harry Honda

With the election of Pope Francis last month, and Argentina in the news worldwide, there is a Nisei angle, perhaps long forgotten.

In short, Argentina, Brazil and Chile did not send their Japanese to the United States to be exchanged for American prisoners of war during World War II, like Peru and other Latin American countries.

To dispel the thought that American priests in Japan after Pearl Harbor were prisoners of war, the Hague Convention of 1899 defines POWs as fighting men who lay down their arms and by the Geneva Convention of 1929 to be decently treated. Japan was different and made no attempts to treat their POWs humanely during WWII.

Approximately 1,800 Peruvian Japanese, believed to be dangerous, were interned at American expense in the United States. According to a *Rafu Shimpō* story published on Dec. 19, 1989, “at least 2,000 were deported to the U.S. from their homes in Latin America.” They sought eligibility for redress as their 80,000 counterparts had won by the Civil Liberties Act of 1988. Incidentally, the national JACL convention, which will be held in Washington, D.C., in July, will commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Civil Liberties Act.

As the war in Europe intensified, the 1938 Pan American Conference in Lima stressed hemispheric unity in the face of totalitarian aggression. The collapse of France in 1940 mobilized U.S. military and naval attention about the Pacific front. This atmosphere is detailed in C. Harvey Gardiner’s “Pawns in a Triangle of Hate: The Peruvian Japanese and the United States,” published by the University of Washington Press in 1981.

At a pan-American meeting of foreign ministers in Rio de Janeiro in January 1942, better known as the “Rio Conference,” the U.S.’s objective was to obtain a joint pledge from all Latin American states that did not declare war on the Axis powers (Germany, Italy, Japan) and would, at least, sever relations. The conference also established an Inter-American Defense Board to monitor pro-Axis activities and begin investigations that led to the internment of Latin American Japanese aliens and a few Nisei.

The U.S. ambassador to Peru had hoped Peru would deport 300 undesirable Japanese in several weeks from a blacklist of “nationals aimed at economic strangulation through government-sponsored boycott.”

Gardiner immediately points out the list had limited clout in Peru. Japanese businesses were mostly small and insignificant; of the few imports, none of their financing came from the U.S. Furthermore, the Dec. 9 listing encouraged Peruvian authorities “to adopt more cavalier attitudes in dealing those individuals.”

A seven-member (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, U.S., Uruguay and Venezuela) emergency advisory committee “for political defense” was established in Montevideo in April 1942 that acted within the Western Hemisphere to comprise the blacklist for internment of dangerous pro-Axis nationals to safeguard hemispheric security. Some republics were unable to detain such aliens, Gardiner adds.

The 39 holding camps around Lima and Callao were called “hacienda.” Local Chinese were expected to aid Peruvian officials in the roundup, but a lack of contact between Chinese and Japanese in the rural and urban areas outside of Peru minimized their effort. State Department expert on Japan, John K. Emmerson, later recalled of his seven years in Peru, “We learned nothing reliable or convincing about subversion.”

There were 10 different ships filled with Latin American undesirables. Two ships for diplomatic personnel and Japanese in Costa Rica, Panama and the Canal Zone, departing ports on the Pacific side to be interned in Texas, Louisiana or Oklahoma. Repatriation to Japan through Spanish effort only occurred after the war. The MS Gripsholm, from Rio de Janeiro on the Atlantic side, carried Japanese diplomats and their families to Japan.

When President Franklin D. Roosevelt vaguely promised to intern Japanese in Peru at America’s expense, the untested Cuban internment scheme arose and “the likelihood of extending the plan to Peru momentarily increased.” But Peru didn’t have a comparable island with a sizable alien Japanese population.

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