



# NEWS

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**For Immediate Release**

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## **Japanese American Siblings to Receive Honorary Degrees from Compton Community College District October 16**

On October 16, siblings Yoji Ozaki and Lily Teraji Ozaki will be awarded associate degrees by the Compton Community College District during a special ceremony as part of the California Nisei College Diploma project. It's a statewide effort to provide honorary degrees to Japanese Americans whose studies were forcibly suspended in 1942 when they were ordered into internment camps during World War II. The California Community Colleges, California State University and University of California are all participating in this project.

When Japanese American siblings and former Compton Junior College students Yoji Ozaki and Lily Ozaki Teraji were forcibly evacuated in the spring of 1942 as a result of Executive Order 9066, the one thing they feared most was having their family separated.

Ozaki was told that if he went to Manzanar to help build the internment camp, his family would not be separated. So he went to Manzanar while the rest of his family spent six months sleeping on straw ticks (mattresses made of course cotton and filled with straw) in the stables of the Santa Anita Race Track which was transformed into an assembly center for Japanese Americans.

"At the Assembly Center at Santa Anita, we had to have jobs," said Teraji. "So I worked 9 to 5 as a secretary. They eventually built us barracks in the parking lot, but soon after we were moved to the Jerome Internment Camp in Arkansas where we were reunited with Yoji." The Ozaki family lived at the Jerome camp for an additional eight months.

According to Teraji, internees were not allowed to leave camp until they could show proof of employment and a place to live. "The government did not want us to be a burden to society," explains Teraji. The closest large city was Chicago and the city recruited Japanese Americans who were released from the camps to come work in there in the summer of 1943. Teraji first accepted a position as a nanny and later took a secretarial position with the American Friends Service Committee, a Quaker organization instrumental in helping in relocation activities of released Japanese American internees.

Teraji meet her husband in Chicago in 1946; they soon married and had four children. From 1950 to 1952, she and her family lived in Japan for her husband's work. After the family's return to the United States, Teraji eventually re-entered the workforce as a secretary in Chicago after her children were grown. She says she is the only one in her family who did not earn a college degree.

Her brother, Yoji's path was a bit different after the Ozaki family's release from the Jerome Internment Camp. Yoji and his older brother Sam were recruited into the 442nd Regimental Combat Team composed completely of Japanese Americans. They served in both Italy and France with the 442nd.

After the war, Yoji joined his sister, Teraji, in Chicago where he earned a degree in psychology from Roosevelt University. He later served his community as a social worker aiding immigrants from many different countries. Ozaki, who passed away in 2007, spent a lifetime as a dedicated volunteer committed to community service. He also married and had two daughters. His sister, June, will accept his honorary degree from the Compton Community College District on October 16, 2010, on his behalf, accompanied by Teraji who will accept her own degree.

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### **About the Compton Community College District**

The Compton Community College District serves the communities of Carson, Compton, Enterprise, North Long Beach, Lynwood, Paramount and Willowbrook. The District is governed by a state-appointed Special Trustee, who works with the five-member elected Board of Trustees. Board meetings are held the third Tuesday of each month and are open to the public. The District is located at 1111 E. Artesia Boulevard, Compton, CA, 90221.