

Sid Chow Tan: Text of oral presentation on Bill C-333 (inappropriately named Chinese Canadian Recognition and Redress Act) to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, Ottawa, Ontario, October 25, 2005.

The Association of Chinese Canadians for Equality and Solidarity Society, acronym ACCESS, acknowledges the Anishinabe Ottawa First Nation and their traditional territory where we hold this meeting.

Mister/Madame Chairperson and members of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

ACCESS is a not-for-profit human rights and social justice society and community television corporation. We are the successor group to the Vancouver Association of Chinese Canadians, organised to combat racism and discrimination, to advance the rights of citizens and migrants in Canada and to redress the Chinese Head Tax and Exclusion Acts.

We thank the Standing Committee for this opportunity to comment on Private Member's Bill C-333, the poorly-named named Chinese Canadian Recognition and Redress Act. Poorly-named because it is not an acceptable redress for many Lo Wah Kiu (old overseas Chinese) head taxpayers, spouses and descendants.

However, Bill C-333 maybe be a beginning to just and honourable redress. It should either be renamed or provide direct individual recognition and restitution, where possible, to surviving head taxpayers, spouses and their estates.

All Canadians can be inspired by the heroic Lo Wah Kiu struggle for citizenship rights while oppressed for 62 years by racist legislation. For the parliamentary record, I will read a statement by 98-year old head taxpayer Quan Song Now, also known as Charlie Quan. To my knowledge, he is one of four surviving head taxpayers and I have worked on this redress for twenty years.

Charlie Quan's handwritten statement and voice recording was made shortly after my confirmed attendance at this hearing. He asked me to read his statement to you. He is a true champion and one of the mightiest Lo Wah Kiu. His statement is addressed to Prime Minister Paul Martin, to whom I have mailed a copy.

Greetings Prime Minister Paul Martin.

My name is Quan Song Now. I came to Canada in 1923. At that time, I paid the \$500 head tax. This \$500 head tax is unjust. As it was not applied to people from other parts of the world, it is discriminatory. I hope the government will refund the head tax in a fair way to all head taxpayers or their families. This is my sincere quest. I hope you accept my proposal.

***Quan Song Now aka Charlie Quan
October 20, 2005, Vancouver, BC***

For the parliamentary record, I want to acknowledge 83-year old Gim Wong for his recent cross-Canada motorcycle Ride for Redress he began in Victoria, BC on June 3, 2005. A

pensioner, a Royal Canadian Air Force World War Two veteran and resident of Burnaby, BC, he and his son Jeffrey arrived in Ottawa on July 1, 2005, Canada Day. Gim and Jeffrey Wong are descendants of mighty Lo Wah Kiu. Gim Wong's father and mother paid the head tax. He made his ride to call attention to what any Canadian would want – an apology and refund of an unjust tax at current fair value.

Fifteen years ago I told Chow Wong Nooy, my Grandmother on my Father's side, about my involvement in the Chinese redress campaign. Her initial reaction was to tell me not to oppose the government. She feared government authorities would come to our home, tie me up, take me away and throw me in the river.

I bring this up because her fear of the Canadian government and its laws had harmed our family. The Chinese exclusion law separated her from Chow Gim (Norman) Tan, her husband and my Grandfather who paid the head tax. They were separated for over a quarter century. Wong Mun Sang, my Grandfather on my Mother's side, also paid the head tax and experienced the same separation. The cry for justice spans many generations of Lo Wah Kiu.

We humans are a species of ideas and language. We will all be judged by our families, our neighbours and history. I say Bill C-333, in its present form as named, is a perversion of language and travesty of justice. Without any attempt at direct individual recognition and restitution, this so-called redress legislation is just another humiliation for surviving head taxpayers such as 98-year old Charlie Quan of Vancouver and 93-year old James Wing of Montreal.

As a Canadian who wishes to contribute to a country where freedom of speech and ideas are Charter rights, I fear this legislation will be referred to as the Chinese Canadian Humiliation Act. For the Lo Wah Kiu, July 1, 1923, then Dominion Day and now Canada Day, was referred to as Humiliation Day because that was the day Chinese exclusion became law.

ACCESS is very concerned Bill C-333 specifies the Canadian government negotiates the so-called agreement for redress with the National Congress of Chinese Canadians. Chinese head tax and exclusion redress is an issue of human rights and the NCCC formed to be an apologist for the Republic of China's appalling human rights record, particularly the Tiananmen massacre of June 4, 1989.

We stand before history. In 1992, the Honourable Raymond Chan, current Minister of Multiculturalism and then a human rights activist, often ridiculed the leadership and actions of the NCCC. I ask the members of the Standing Committee to examine the suitability of the National Congress of Chinese Canadians to negotiate a human rights agreement with.

A just and honourable redress will lose much of its meaning if there are no surviving head taxpayers to accept it. Redress will lose all of its meaning if surviving head taxpayers, spouses and second generation descendants do not receive direct individual recognition and restitution. Individuals and families paid the tax and suffered the

hardships of separation. Where possible, they must be the focus of any just and honourable redress.

I thank those who encouraged me to be at this hearing, particularly Victor Wong of the Chinese Canadian National Council and the members of its National Redress Committee. I also thank Avvy Go of the Metro Toronto Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic for her counsel. ACCESS supports the amendments to Bill C-333 as proposed by the Metro Toronto Chinese and South Asian Legal Clinic.

ACCESS and the BC Coalition of Head Taxpayers, Spouses and Descendants support the Position Statement of the Ontario Coalition of Head Tax Payers and Families. They demand:

- 1) An apology from the Canadian Government for the injustice perpetrated on Chinese Canadians under the Head Tax and Chinese Exclusion Act**
- 2) Direct redress for the Head Tax payers, widows and their families to be negotiated between the Canadian Government and those directly affected by these racist laws; and**
- 3) Community redress in the form of education funds and other social programs to be developed in consultation with the broader Chinese Canadian community.**

Redress now. It's only fair.

Thank you.

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