

This is the testimony I gave at the D.C. hearing. Was asked to cut down to 2 minutes. Thus, the deletions.

Testimony for Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians
July 16, 1981, Washington D.C.

Madame Chairman and Members of the Commission:

My name is Mary Yuri Kochiyama; member of Concerned Japanese Americans in New York; born and raised in San Pedro, California; spent $6\frac{1}{2}$ months in Santa Anita Assembly Center, 2 years in Jerome Relocation Camp, Arkansas.

On Dec. 7, 1941, around 11 a.m. three F.B.I. men came to our home and whisked away my father without an explanation. My father had just returned from the hospital the day before following an ulcer surgery. It was several days before my family learned that he was taken to the Terminal Island Federal Prison. Because of the seriousness of his illness, my mother frantically called numerous government officials daily requesting him removed to a hospital until he was out of danger. A few weeks later, he was finally moved to the San Pedro Hospital where merchant seamen injured in the South Pacific were also being taken in. He was placed in the same ward as they—only around his bed, enclosed by a curtained sheet, ~~sheet~~, was a sign "Prisoner-of-War." Because of the taunts of the seamen, my mother had him removed to a private room.

On Jan. 13, my two brothers, Arthur, 23, my 20-year old twin brother, Pete, and I were allowed to see our father for the first time since he was apprehended. (My twin brother had dropped out of U.C. Berkeley and had immediately enlisted despite my father's incarceration). He came back proudly wearing his uniform for the emergency visitation. On seeing our father what startled us was not so much his emaciated frame, but how greatly in such a short time his mental condition had deteriorated. He mistook my uniformed brother for a guard and would not believe it was his own son. We could only surmise what he had undergone during interrogations, remembering too, an Issei

inmate had committed suicide in that prison.

A week later, my mother was notified that my father would be released to come home. We could hardly believe the good news. He was brought home in an ambulance on the evening of Jan. 20th, escorted by a nurse.

We were shocked that he could not seem to speak; only make guttural sounds; did not seem to be able to see or hear. We could not communicate with him, nor he with us. Our short-lived joy and relief of his home-coming was shattered when the next morning we were awakened by the nurse who informed us he had passed away. Within a few hours the F.B.I. called to say that anyone attending the funeral would be under surveillance....but friends did attend the funeral, and sure enough, the F.B.I. were at the funeral parlor door.

When my father was first apprehended, he was surprised to learn that the F.B.I. had been watching him for about 20 years. My father owned a fish market and provided fish to Japanese steamships as a ship chandler. He was constantly asked to tour-guide ship officers. Their request was usually to drive them to their favorite past-time—a golf course. This, he did often through the years.

During the interrogation, he was accused of pointing out to Japanese officers--military installations, aircraft plants, and power lines, when there were none at that time.

They also showed him 8 x 10 photos that were taken at various Japanese dinners and affairs that he attended in some 20 years' time. Innocuous as the dinner occasions were, it revealed the F.B.I. and U.S. government's suspicion of Japanese gatherings and the quiet surveillance on the Japanese that must have been an on-going activity for an unknown period of time.

Thirty-nine years have elapsed. We have all grown. We have had time

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to think. From apolitical, naive, provincials, we have become more conscious of racism's impact on American policies, both foreign and domestic; and we have learned the buried histories of other ethnic people's struggles.

I believe we should remember our past not only in relationship to the Japanese war-time experience in America, but to the over-all historical experience of all Third World/ peoples of color, and the poor of whatever color who have a commonality of oppression by race and class, of which we Japanese are only a part.

Peoples—whether indigenous to this continent misnomered American Indians; or those who came from Asia or Latin America seeking a better way of life, or as harshly-driven "contract laborers"; or the Africans who have perhaps undergone the worst holocaust in human history, captured/kidnapped/^{into slavery,} brought here in chains, with untold millions dying in the mid-passage—are all statistics of human rights violations. America's history has been replete with^{the} concentration of peoples forced in isolated areas out of the visibility of the mainstream, Reservations, plantations, migratory workers' camps, railroad camps all tell a similar story. Also, death camps were not needed to decimate a people. Look at Hawaii and Alaska.

Each nationally oppressed group, victims of dispossession, dispersement, and dispowerment by the U.S. government has both a right and a responsibility to expose their own grievances—that the common denominators that generate racism and hate; that create hysteria and rumors, that ramify in inequities and injustices; that validate, culminate, and climax into concentration camp experiences can be obliterated.

We Japanese in America must speak up now. We are not just fighting to win monetary compensation for ourselves. It is a moral duty at this awesome, unpredictable time in history to fight for human rights, human dignity, and

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human enhancements when constitutional avenues for basic needs are dwindling and being modified.

Much has been said about "great American traditions"--but there is a world of difference between lofty pronouncements and actual practise.

Violations for ethnics and the poor have never halted. This is our responsibility and yours to stop it. Does money really tarnish justice? Injustices sully justice. Reparation is a just restitution in a society such as this. And those in high places who decry the 'extravagance' of monetary compensation--let us call to mind that trillions of dollars are being allocated for weaponry, nuclear technology, and space research and travel; billions for foreign aid (or control); and millions for covert action programs.

May you...the commission...utilize everything in your collective sensitivity and political acumen to conduct the most thorough investigation the conscience of and reach Congress that this issue of redress for Japanese Americans will set a precedence of justice that will become historical.